

Pathways for Turbulent Times

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If you want more out of life,

this book is for you!

Be prepared for some surprises, though. It may challenge some of your ideas. It may stretch your mind in ways that make you feel uncomfortable at first. But if you are the kind of person who isn't satisfied with the status quo, if you wonder sometimes if life couldn't be better than it is, read it.

Read it with an open mind and a willingness to be searchingly honest about everything you think is important. If you do, you'll discover that there *is* a road to real success and fulfilment, even in today's world. But there's a risk involved. You may need to make some changes—and that's never easy! Is the struggle worth it? This book will help you decide. It will set before you the crucial facts you need to know.

Let's begin by finding out where we are right now. What's happening in the world, and what impact has it had on us?



*sometimes the world around us
doesn't seem to make any sense.*

1

Understand the Trends of Today

“Who guards the guards?”-Juvenal

Sometimes the world around us doesn't seem to make any sense. There are high rates of unemployment, and unstable national currencies. Stock markets plunge. Disarmament negotiations end with disappointing results. Terrorists set off bombs and hijack planes. Newspapers and the media regularly carry accounts of crime, violence, and racial tension. On a personal level, people face problems with drugs, alcohol, stress, and disturbed relationships. It is no wonder that many of us often have a feeling of anxiety and confusion as we look at what is happening — not just in society, but even at times in our own lives.

Do politicians have any real control over events, or are they just carried along by them? Is today's society being shaped by new kinds of forces? Are these forces creative or destructive? What impact do the modern developments in communication, medicine, and technology have on us? And what does the future hold? Will a nuclear holocaust end it all?

Certainly there aren't any simple answers to the kinds of problems and challenges that we face in today's world. But we don't have to be totally at the mercy of the forces that seem to be at work. Even in the midst of change and uncertainty there is a way that we can achieve a greater degree of mastery over our

own lives. We can even experience genuine success and fulfilment.

Our first step is to find out what factors are actually at work in society and how they have affected us.

TOPICS

Tidal Waves of Change
Critical Points of Stress
An Uneven Landscape

FOCUS

This chapter will help you to:

- Identify some of the factors that influence your life.
 - Relate specific problems in society to their underlying causes.
 - Understand how the pressures of modern living have affected you personally.

“Change is avalanching upon our heads and most people are grotesquely unprepared to cope with it.”
—Alvin Toffler in *Future Shock*

TIDAL WAVES OF CHANGE

Focal Point 1. *Consider ways in which your society has changed.*

One of the most important factors that influences our lives is change. Many changes, like the coming and going of the seasons, add interest and variety to our lives. Others, though, are unwelcome and disruptive.

In recent years the Western, industrialized nations have experienced a large number of fundamental changes. In fact, there have been so many that sometimes the old rules don't seem to apply anymore. Some observers have even gone so far as to say that society itself as we have known it may be disintegrating.

The Overall Picture

Let's look at examples from five basic areas of modern living to illustrate the kinds of things that are happening.

1. In the economy, there have been basic shifts in patterns of production. Steel mills and coal mines have been shut down in many places, and manufacturing industries of all kinds have been invaded by “smart” robots. People have bought cheaper imports rather than the more expensive goods which are produced locally, forcing many domestic industries to go out of business.

All of these factors have brought about higher and higher levels of unemployment — perhaps the most serious single problem that faces most nations in Western Europe today. A tragic result of this change is that many young people who want to work find the doors closed to them. Month after month, they find themselves with no place to go and nothing to do.

2. In law and government, there is a general pattern of growing inefficiency, injustice, and waste. For a while, the welfare state was able to solve some of the difficult post-war problems of European society. But today, many people feel that their government no longer has the ability to provide security or to guarantee an adequate standard of living. The rights of minorities are often ignored. Criminals and terrorists seem to be able to strike at will, seldom receiving punishment for their acts.

3. In the family, widespread unemployment causes serious problems for many. For others, the struggle to “get ahead” with its compulsion to buy more and more things means that parents spend long hours at work and less time with their children. Marriages are under stress. The traditional values of marital faithfulness and fidelity have been subjected to criticism and questioning, especially in an indirect way through television programmes, magazine articles, and films. Ideas about the family itself have been re-examined. As a result, many husbands, wives, and children are no longer sure about their roles. This uncertainty creates stress and tension. In addition, a large number of people have been affected by divorce and remarriage. Many end up living in single-parent households, having to cope as best they can from day to day. Others form “blended” families where the children of one parent and the children of another share a home with adults who themselves need to cope with both their current partners and their partners from former marriages. Relationships in these situations are often extremely complicated.

4. In education, there are sharp differences of opinion about what ought to happen in the classroom. Some are convinced that students should have a great deal to say about what they will study. Others do not believe they are able to make such decisions. Those who favour corporal punishment find themselves at odds with those who oppose it. There are financial strains. Salaries of teachers are often considerably lower than those paid to people in other professions. Teachers who feel forced to strike for higher pay face the anger of the community as a whole — the very people whom they are supposed to be serving. A large number of schools find it increasingly difficult

to prepare young men and women to find employment in today's extremely complex and fast-changing job market.

5. In religion, there has been a massive movement away from the traditional forms of Christian practices and teachings. Religion has lost its role as a cohesive, unifying force in Western society. Instead, it is seen as a matter of private conscience. The Christian Church in general, whether Protestant or Catholic, no longer has much credibility. Many people feel that its leaders have little to say to them.

In this book you'll find questions and surveys included in each chapter. These are opportunities for you to express your personal reactions to the ideas that have been presented. After responding to each item, look at the feedback to it that is given at the end of the chapter.



1 RATE YOUR SOCIETY

Think about your society. No doubt you have seen problems and changes over the last several years. Perhaps some of these have had (or now have) a direct effect on your life. Here is a chart you can use to evaluate these effects. Indicate your responses and/or add your descriptions.

| MAJOR AREA | The most serious problem or change that has affected me and/or my family in this area is . . . |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. ECONOMY | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment <input type="checkbox"/> Low wages <input type="checkbox"/> Redundancy Or? |
| 2. LAW & GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> Crime rate <input type="checkbox"/> Inefficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Violation of my rights Or? |
| 3. FAMILY | <input type="checkbox"/> Role uncertainty <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce <input type="checkbox"/> Remarriage <input type="checkbox"/> Being a single parent |

| | |
|--------------|--|
| | Or? |
| 4. EDUCATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The growing expense o The lack of its practical application o Conflicts in the classroom Or? |
| 5. RELIGION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Its irrelevancy o Its lack of credibility o Prejudice Or? |

Why does society seem to be in such a turmoil today? Is there some pattern or explanation that can help us understand what is happening?

An X-Ray of Society

For the sake of analysis, let us think of society as if it were a building: the **values** are the foundation, the **norms** are the ground level, and the **institutions** are the pillars. These all interact to shape the society. The illustration on the following page is a diagram of this analogy.

The values of a society are its beliefs and ideals. The norms are the customs and traditions through which its beliefs and ideals are expressed. The institutions, or “pillars” are its organizations, the ways in which it meets the needs of its members. As the diagram shows, the values are the key element, since the rest of the structure is shaped by them.

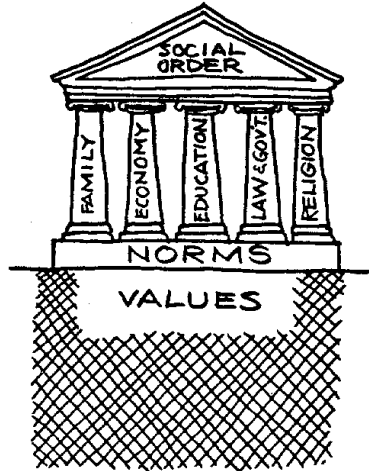
Within this framework of society it is perfectly normal for gradual changes to take place. The structure can absorb the impact. But if changes in one or more of the pillars or in the foundation occur too suddenly or too drastically, the entire structure is affected. It can even collapse completely. Are we about to see this happen to Western society?

In the past several years, many observers of Western society have tried to pinpoint causes for its problems. Some see them as the result of a basic change in its economic structure — the economic pillar. Others are convinced that they also stem from a shift in its foundational values. It is probably true that there are a number of factors involved. Let us examine, however, these two

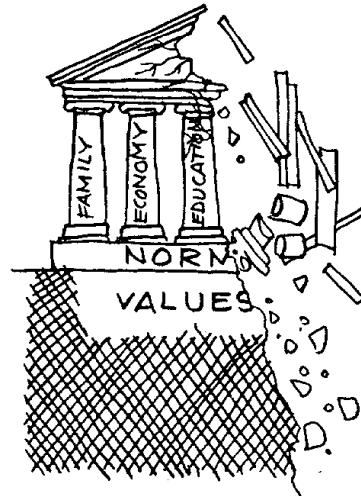
explanations and see what help they may be able to give us as we try to understand what is happening.

Significant Economic Patterns

Those who put forward the economic explanation say that the economic system of a society is a powerful force—perhaps the most powerful—in shaping the way people live. They think that many of the current problems of Western society are the result of a basic change that is taking place in its economy. This change has two aspects: 1) the economy is losing the traditional base it developed during the industrial, mechanical age; and 2) the economy is struggling to make a transition to a position in which it will be based—providing it can make the change—on the new occupations and energy sources that are being developed during the high-technology, information age. These observers point out the fact that when an entire society must change the way it provides for its basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing, there are difficult times of adjustment and transition.



... let us think of society as if it were a building.



... if changes in one or more of the pillars, or the foundation occur... it can collapse completely.

To put it another way, they say that the problems of Western society are being caused by a clash between the dying industrial society with its way of living and the rising information society with its way of living. Those who hold this view say that the conflict between these two types of societies is as great as the conflict between an agricultural way of life and an industrial way of life. In order to understand their ideas, let us compare three basic kinds of lifestyles with each other: the agricultural, the industrial, and the information. (Although we will not discuss it, there is also the nomadic lifestyle, which is often the norm in pre-industrial societies where the land is not suitable for farming. Problems can also arise when there is an attempt to replace this style with one of the other types.) **This is not just an academic exercise; it will help you understand what is happening today.**

In a pre-industrial, agricultural society, most people farm the land and raise their own food in order to survive. Large families are the rule, and women must be strong in order to share the



*... a woman must be strong to share
the labour.*

burden of manual labour. Oxen pull simple wooden plows, or people till the ground by hand. Life revolves around the home and the village and is tied to the rhythms of nature and the seasons of crop planting and gathering. Everyone participates in the work, especially during harvest time. People seldom travel very far away. Communities are basically self-sufficient, making for themselves practically everything that they need. Some handcrafted goods, such as baskets or pottery, are produced for trade or barter in nearby marketplaces.

In an industrial society, most people live in urban centers and are employed by factories or large corporations. Families are small and streamlined in order to relocate quickly when necessary. Businesses are run from the top down, with little input by the workers. Few people make anything for their own use.

Instead, they are paid to produce goods for others. They buy what they need with money, the all-important medium of exchange. The market is a complex system of sellers, middlemen, and buyers, many of whom never deal directly with each other. Transportation lines are well-developed so that mass-produced goods can be moved rapidly and efficiently from place to place. At peak hours, commuters crowd on and off the trains and buses and jam the roads with their cars. Life is organized and synchronized and tuned to the methodical, relentless pace of the clocks and machines that dominate existence.

In an information society, a large number of people are involved in gathering, processing, and transmitting information. They work as secretaries, travel agents, translators, insurance brokers, writers, science researchers, teachers, journalists, television and radio broadcasters, and intelligence experts. They often have a high degree of participation in making decisions that affect their work. Computer networks make it possible for some of them to work at home or while travelling as well as at the office. Many people do practical tasks for themselves in order to save high labour costs. With the help of detailed “do-it-yourself” manuals, they remodel and repair their houses or flats, assemble furniture, and make clothing. There are hundreds of special interest magazines and journals, video and music cassettes, and local newspapers. People see the limits of technology and are concerned about a wide array of issues, from ecology to nuclear power to animal rights. In general, life presents an almost overwhelming variety of options, choices, and styles.



2 IDENTIFY ECONOMIC PATTERNS AND CONFLICTS

Which of the above patterns do you think your society resembles the most? If there seems to be no obvious pattern, do you think it may be in a time of transition, conflict, decline, or change?

Here's a survey to help you analyze and identify what is happening . . .

- Your choices:
- a** Pre-Industrial (Agricultural)
 - b** Rising Industrial
 - c** Industrial
 - d** Declining Industrial
 - e** Rising Information
 - f** Information
 - g** Other:

The time-frames: for each period, circle the letter or letters that match your choice. You may need more than one letter for your analysis (such as **d** Declining Industrial + **e** Rising Information).

- 1** When my grandparents were children **a b c d e f g**
 - 2** When my parents were children **a b c d e f g**
 - 3** While I was growing up **a b c d e f g**
 - 4** Now **a b c d e f g**
 - 5** What my children will probably live in as adults **a b c d e f g**
-
-

Shifting Foundations

Now let us examine the second explanation for some of the problems we see in Western society. Those who put forward this explanation believe that economic change is not the only influence, though they would agree that it accounts for some of the facts. They say that there has also been a major shift away from the traditional Judeo-Christian values. This has produced a general and widespread collapse of moral standards because people no longer agree on what is right and what is wrong. Consequently, there is a vacuum at the core of society. The problem is that people have no adequate values to live by.



*... there is a vacuum at the core
of society.*

The way people regard marriage today is a good example of the effect this collapse has had. In the traditional view, marriage was considered to be a lifelong, exclusive relationship. Generally speaking, people were expected to be faithful to their spouses

and proof of adultery was the only legal ground for divorce. Then things began to change. As society changed, so did people's commitment to those traditional values. More and more marriages began to fall apart under the pressures of modern life. People who moved to the cities were often separated from their relatives and left very much on their own to cope with the ups and downs of married life and family living. Reliable birth control methods made extramarital sex "safer," and at the same time the role of sex in both advertising and entertainment increased greatly. This fostered a general mood of sexual permissiveness, which made marriage seem less restrictive.

In many societies, divorce laws were eventually liberalized, and divorce for any one of a number of reasons became socially acceptable. In this way a change in values regarding marriage caused a corresponding change in the laws and in the way people behaved towards each other. In today's society, there are those who are convinced that legal ceremonies are unnecessary and undesirable. Some have even concluded that traditional family structures are a thing of the past.



3 WHAT DO YOU THINK?

You have read a second explanation for some of the changes in society. Now, what is your opinion? Mark your answers.

- a** Have you observed any changes in society that could be traced to a shift away from traditional values?
- YES NO NOT SURE
- b** Do you think your values are different from those of your parents? If so, in what areas of life?
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> MONEY | <input type="radio"/> MARRIAGE |
| <input type="radio"/> FAMILY | <input type="radio"/> EDUCATION |
| <input type="radio"/> ENTERTAINMENT | <input type="radio"/> EMPLOYMENT |
| <input type="radio"/> RELIGION | <input type="radio"/> POLITICS |

Changes can create tensions. Let's take a closer look at some of them.

CRITICAL POINTS OF STRESS

Focal Point 2. *Identify the kinds of stress in your life.*

One of the unique tensions of modern life is the disorientation that has come because of rapid and intense change.

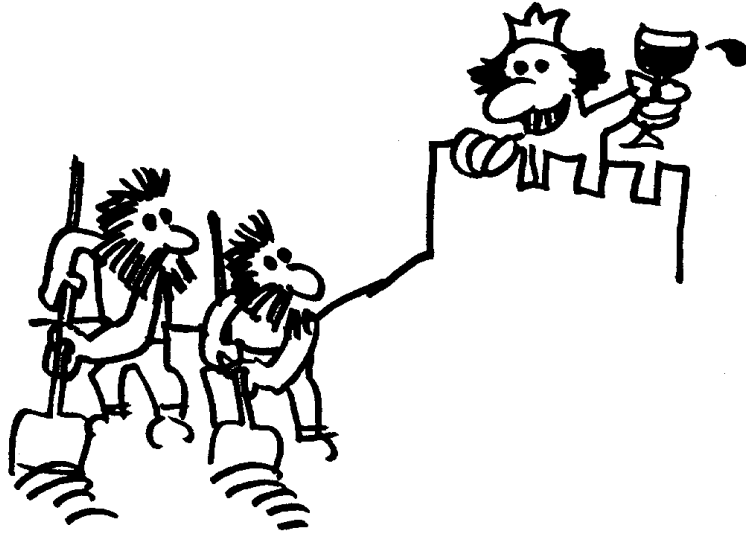
Too Much Too Fast

Of course, we all know that change is nothing new in human history. But what is new about change today is that it is much faster and greater than ever before. In exercise 2, for example, you may have stated that your parents were born in an agricultural community. You may have also said that you live in an industrial (or perhaps a “dying industrial” or information) society. The fact that it is even possible for so much change to occur in a few generations is a dramatic departure from previous eras.

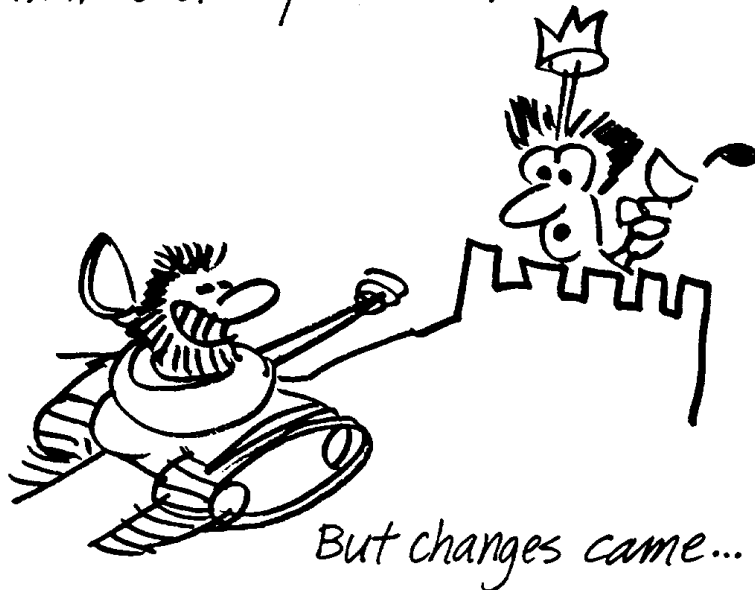
In medieval Europe, by contrast, families often lived on the same land generation after generation. For hundreds of years, sons did things the way their fathers did, and their fathers before them. Certainly that society was oppressive for the peasants, who rebelled against their rulers from time to time. Yet at least it was stable. Everyone knew who was in charge: like it or not, it was the feudal lord in his castle up on the hill. Year after year, life followed the same basic patterns.

But changes came—the Protestant Reformation, the Renaissance, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution, to name just a few. In a few hundred years, society was re-shaped around the new forms of energy and labour. Gleaming railway tracks laid out in straight, parallel lines replaced the meandering carriage roads. Students were seated in rows at school, and fathers manned assembly lines in the factories. Housewives used identical washing machines, and clerks did their work under electric lightbulbs which were produced by the hundreds of thousands from the same types of components. On a larger scale, nation-states were formed.

Powerful military leaders arose to impose their will within and beyond their borders using tanks, guns, and bombs and the mass media of the press and the radio. Two world wars pushed the capabilities of the European nations to their greatest efforts.



Everyone knew who was in charge:
like it or not, it was the feudallord
in his castle upon the hill.



But changes came...

Now the technological revolution has risen to challenge the industrial, mechanical society. The pre-war power structures have been weakened. Multinational companies, world class banks, and international cartels now exert their influence. Secessionist movements use guerrilla warfare and terrorist tactics to oppose centralist governments. There has been an explosion of information in every field of knowledge, matched by the invention of powerful, efficient computers to manipulate it. Satellites circle the globe relaying signals in a matter of seconds, and networks of computers store and exchange vast amounts of data at electronic speeds.

As all this has happened, many people have felt a profound sense of confusion and dislocation. It is as if a person who grew up in a small village all his life were suddenly to find himself abandoned on a street corner in Paris. Modern man, of course, has not been taken *to* Paris. Instead, "Paris" has been taken to him. That is, a different kind of society has taken shape around him, almost overnight. While the world still looks somewhat the same, all the rules have changed - in many cases, within a generation. People who have been brought up in homes where their fathers had factory jobs and factory minds find themselves facing a world where the factory has been shut down and is rusting away. Children who learned to obey their parents and their teachers find themselves having to cope with a world their parents and teachers never lived in. The sheer speed with which all this has happened has been deeply disturbing.

Clashing Lifestyles

A second kind of stress is that which is caused by conflict among the opposing lifestyles which are created, to some extent, by the different economic systems. Let us imagine what can happen when there is this type of conflict in a family.

Case Study No. 1: Tony and Maria

Tony and Maria have a small farm which provides a living for them, their six children, and Tony's mother, and aunt. Each person, except for the two smallest children, is responsible for some part of

the work. But then like many other families in the area, Tony and Maria are forced to sell their land to a new developer.

The family moves in with Tony's uncle in the next village until they can decide what to do. Tony finds out that a textile plant in a city some distance away is hiring workers. He applies for a job, and they employ him as a factory hand. For a while he travels for several hours back and forth every day. Eventually, the family moves to a small flat in the city. Tony's mother and aunt decide not to move, and Tony promises to send them some money each week.

Life in the city is different. Prices are high, and Tony and Maria find it hard to survive and to feed and clothe their six children. Tony makes new friends at work. They begin to influence him and his attitudes. One of them remarks that it is a pity he has so many children and has to send money to his mother and aunt. If he didn't, this friend points out, he would be



able to buy things like a television set or a motorbike. He would also find it easier to move if there were better jobs available in another city. Tony wonders if his friend is right.

For Maria, things have become very difficult. Now there is no one to help her with the children or with the cooking and cleaning. Her husband's life seems ruled by the clock and he often works late into the evening. When he is not at work, he spends a lot of time with his new friends instead of with the family. She often feels that he resents her and the children and the demands they make on him. Before they moved, she was the

one who could sell their extra vegetables for the best price. Now there is little for her to do except the daily round of household chores. After school the children have nowhere to play except on the street, and she is afraid for them because of the rough neighbourhood they live in.

Case Study No. 2: Harold and Tom

Harold has spent most of his working career in a metal products manufacturing industry. He is punctual and dependable, and very rarely absent. He has earned several promotions and increases in salary because of his ability to carry out the orders of his superiors. He often feels bored by the routine and repetitive tasks assigned to him, but he convinces himself that the pay he receives is a sufficient reward. He spends a good deal of his time thinking about the new car he would like to buy and where he plans to go on his next annual holiday.

Betty, Harold's wife, has taken care of their home since she and Harold were married. Before getting married, she had thought she might study a business course and get a job as a secretary. But after she met Harold her plans changed, and she has contented herself with being his wife and rearing their two children. When Harold comes home at night, she often feels that he is not very interested in the things she has done during the day. It seems that he would rather watch television than talk with her or pay much attention to their son and daughter. But she tells herself that she is lucky that he is dependable and that he gives her a generous allowance to spend on things she wants for herself. Lately, though, she has become very concerned about their son Tom, who is trying to find a job. She mentions this to Harold, and one evening Harold decides to talk to Tom and give him some fatherly advice.



I want a job with some real meaning - something creative.

Tom has just come home after being with his friends. He's in the kitchen, piling up a plate of snacks. Harold walks in.

HAROLD: Well, son, how did things go today?

TOM: *Closing the refrigerator door . . .*
Not so good, Dad. There just isn't anything much.

HAROLD: What do you mean?

They go into the living room. Harold turns the television on and they both sit down.

TOM: *Setting his plate down and taking a few bites.*
There just aren't any decent jobs.

HAROLD: What do you mean, "no decent jobs"? It doesn't sound like you've tried very hard. Have you been to the Employment Agency?

TOM: Oh sure. There are a few jobs for mindless idiots who want to punch a time clock in the morning and then stare at a conveyer belt full of pieces of junk going by all day . . . then get up the next morning and do the same dumb thing all over again, day after day. What a waste.

HAROLD: I don't understand what you're talking about. They get paid for it, don't they?

TOM: So what's so great about a paycheque?
He looks around the living room.
I suppose it buys you a house full of stuff like this. Who needs it? I want a job with some real meaning—something creative.

HAROLD: Now listen, son, I've worked hard to make a good life for us. You're making no sense at all. You have to eat, don't you? Have a place to live? I never heard of anything so ridiculous.

TOM: But I could live on a lot less . . . raise my own food and have time to enjoy life and do things. You know . . . listen to music . . . be with my friends . . . help save the environment.

HAROLD: Well, you just try it. You'll find that the real world is a lot different from what you think **it** is.

TOM: *Finishing his snack and getting up.* Oh Dad, you don't know anything. *He takes his plate to the kitchen.*

HAROLD: That's a fine comment, coming from you.
He waits for Tom to come back in, then continues.
When I was young I was glad to get any kind of work. Hard work never hurt anybody.

TOM: *Sitting down again . . .* Look, Dad, things aren't the same as when you were young. I just want something to do that makes sense.

HAROLD: Oh you do, huh? Good luck. You're going to need it.

TOM: *Sarcastically . . .* You're sure a lot of help.
He gets up . . . I'm going to bed.
He goes to his room and slams the door.

Betty comes in to see what has happened . . .

BETTY: What's the matter? Can't you two talk to each other?

HAROLD: I'll never understand that boy. Hasn't he learned *anything* all these years? I'm not surprised he can't find a job—not in those weird clothes he wears.



4 WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The people in the case studies above have different ways of looking at family relationships, money, and work. Their problems may be seen partly as the result of clashes between the lifestyles associated with the different types of economies we have identified—agricultural, industrial, and information.

- a** What lifestyles do you think are in conflict in case study no. 1 (Tony and Maria)?
- Agricultural Industrial Information

- b** In case study no. 2 (Harold and Tom)?
o Agricultural o Industrial o Information
- c** Do you find that one of the characters has a point of view like your own? If so, which one?
o Tony o Maria o Tom
o Harold o Betty

Check your answers.

In today's world, there are many such clashes among lifestyles and their customs and traditions. But as we have already pointed out, the level of values, beliefs, and ideals, is deeper and more significant because it is the one that determines how people actually react to the pressures and changes that they face. A shift away from the traditional foundations that have existed at this level is the third, *and perhaps the most important*, reason for the kinds of stress people feel today.

Inadequate Value Systems

When there is an inadequate value system, there is a lack of a worthwhile purpose for living. This lack creates a pervasive type of frustration and dissatisfaction that colours all of life. In order to describe this subtle kind of stress, let us return to the example of the loss of traditional values which we mentioned before: changing beliefs about marriage.

The erosion of the traditional view of marriage has caused many problems. Yet there seems to be no real substitute for the marriage relationship. Marriage continues to be popular. The divorce and remarriage statistics show that most people who get divorced get married again at some point. And even those who openly reject the idea of a lifetime commitment still seem to want some kind of intimate, lasting relationship; otherwise they would not stay together at all.

In today's society where marriage is often considered to be primarily a matter of temporary personal convenience, people often choose to separate or to get divorced instead of trying to work out their problems.

Ironically, a large proportion of them find that similar kinds of difficulties resurface in their new relationships. They have suffered the pain and rejection of divorce, yet they have no system of values that prevents them from making the same kinds of mistakes again. In short, they want to be married, but they find it hard to *stay* married.

Other examples of the loss of traditional values could be given. In general terms, though, it appears that this loss has affected every area of life because it has occurred on the foundational level of values. Although some have felt liberated, others have experienced a profound sense of emptiness and futility. Certainly it seems that people living in the affluent Western nations today face a unique situation.

Few societies in the history of mankind have offered people more options, models, designs, styles, accessories, colours, flavours, sights, sounds, textures, activities, images — even beliefs and causes — from which to select. At the same time, few have offered so little to really believe in and live for. The constant need to choose creates its own kind of stress, for not all choices are possible or equally satisfying. Without an adequate set of foundational values, people have no guide for making decisions. Life becomes a series of purposeless motions and unproductive experiments which lead ultimately to nothing and nowhere.

In summary, it seems that the structure of Western society has been under pressure at several points. Its foundational values have been eroded, its traditions and norms have been challenged, and its economic institutions have been drastically weakened. These changes have had far-reaching effects on every part of the system. It is no wonder that our time of history has been called “the age of anxiety.”



5 WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL STRESS PATTERN?

We have identified three main factors that have contributed to stress in society as a whole. Perhaps you would like to evaluate your personal experience in relation to these pressures. Opposite the type of stress named, circle the number that indicates how much it affects your life.

1 = a little 2 = some 3 = moderately
4 = significantly 5 = very much

- | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a | Too much too fast | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b | The clash of lifestyles | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c | Inadequate foundations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
-
-

As a result of all these pressures and changes, how do people cope with the kind of society they face today? Are some able to succeed in spite of the problems that exist?

AN UNEVEN LANDSCAPE

Focal Point 3. *Describe your reaction problems of modern living.*

People today show a wide variety of responses to the pressures of life. Some of the ways they react seem to be unique to our times. Others, perhaps, are as old as mankind.

Exploiters and Victims

Of course, there wasn't much to do on that bright, Tuesday afternoon, except drift to the park. Ryan and Lester were already there. They were starting to work their way through a supply of several bottles they had bought with Lester's unemployment allowance. Magda lit up one of her carefully hoarded cigarettes, the kind she got from Ned. That dreamy effect felt so good.

"So where's Larry?" she asked, sitting down on the grass and taking a deep drag.

Lester opened one of the bottles. "Haven't you heard?" he said, throwing the top into the bushes. "He got beat up by Jeff's boys last night . . . so he's at his place trying to recover." He

took a swallow and wiped his mouth on his sleeve. "He owes Jeff a lot of money."

"For crack?" she said, puffing a small cloud of smoke into the soft sunshine.

"You got it," he answered. "He hasn't been able to pay up for a couple of weeks now, and he needs more of the stuff all the time."

"It sure doesn't seem fair," Magda observed, taking another drag.

"What d'you mean?" said Ryan, putting down the bottle he had been drinking. He leaned over towards Magda, eyeing the cigarette. "Hey, love, give us a taste."

"Sure . . ." She handed it to him. "I mean it isn't fair about Jeff," she continued. "He has that big house and those sports cars and everything he wants. Why can't he just forget about what Larry owes him?"

"Don't be stupid," Ryan remarked, lying back on the grass. He inhaled slowly, then exhaled. "No dealer in his right mind could do that. If word gets around that Jeff is a soft touch, the rest won't pay up, and Jeff won't be able to pay the people who give him the stuff to sell. Then he'd be in for real trouble."



"What a mess," Magda said. Ryan took another drag. "You bet it is."

“What a mess,” Magda said.

Ryan took another drag. “You bet it is.”

“Hey, leave some for me!” she protested.

“Huh? Oh, sure thing, love.” He rolled over and handed the cigarette back to her. Then he picked up the bottle he had started.

There was a silence for a while. A woman went by, pushing a pram. She glanced at the unkempt trio, frowned, and disappeared down the path.

Magda slowly stood up. “I’ve got to leave now,” she said, looking down at them. It was getting chilly.

“Suit yourself,” Ryan said. “See you later.”

“Yeah, see you later,” Lester nodded, tipping his bottle up.

Drug dealers, blackmailers, thieves, corrupt public officials — the world seems full of them. Even the new computer revolution has created its own generation of sophisticated electronic criminals. In every class of society there are those who have learned how to take advantage of the weak, the unwary, and the fearful. They have also learned how to use the ordinary desires of other people for their own profit.

Winners, Losers, and Cheaters

Of course, not everyone suffers from direct exploitation. Some are simply shuttled aside as the mainstream of society surges by. Those who are elderly, poor, and disadvantaged often find that the governmental agencies they are forced to depend on are unable to respond to their needs. Consequently, the ones who require the most help are often the ones least able to get it. Well-meaning political candidates make glowing promises. But as soon as they are elected, they are faced with the same mountains of paperwork and snarls of red tape that bedeviled those who were elected before them. And once inside the system, some fall into the temptation to misuse their position. Sad to say, there are probably dishonest people in all levels of public service.

But governments have their problems too. In today’s tense international climate, large amounts of public funds must be

spent on defence. High levels of violence, crime, and social unrest mean that more policemen must be employed to protect people from each other. On occasion, political leaders are compelled to give financial help to failing industries in order to prevent the serious problems that massive unemployment would create. Yet such measures do not really seem to make much of a difference in the long term. Those who do have jobs add to the difficulties by finding ways to avoid paying taxes.

They feel their behaviour is justified in view of their own financial struggles and the government waste that is everywhere visible. For all these reasons, and more, public funds are often in short supply and social needs go unmet.

Rescuers and Builders

The picture is not totally dark, though. Some people have learned how to deal with the changes and problems around them. They have organized volunteer neighbourhood “crime watch” networks. They have taken business risks to form new companies and provide employment for others. They have started hospices for the terminally ill and shelters for battered women. They have learned new jobs and helped to train others. They have pioneered innovative ways of using technology to save lives. But perhaps most important of all, they have refused to allow the apathy and cynicism of the times to deter them. They give us much to admire.



6 A SELF-PORTRAIT

If you could choose just one word to describe the way you have reacted to the pressures of modern life, what would it be? Mark it or write it in on the blank space.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> SUCCESSFUL | <input type="radio"/> COMPETENT | <input type="radio"/> COPING |
| <input type="radio"/> SURVIVING | <input type="radio"/> STRESSED | <input type="radio"/> CONFUSED |

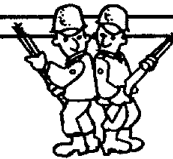
- o INADEQUATE o ANGRY o FRUSTRATED
- o ESCAPING o FAILING

Or?

Now that we have taken a look around us and examined our general situation, let's focus on some specifics. First, the economy — money, jobs, prices, wages — how we pay for the food we eat and the clothes we wear. Making ends meet these days isn't always easy. Somebody said, "It's a jungle out there!" Most of us would agree. But there are some trails through the underbrush if you know where to look . . .



*Now that we have taken a look
around us and examined our
general situation...*



SOME FEEDBACK TO THE INTERACTIONS ...

- 1 Your answer. It may be that this interaction has helped you become more aware of some specific problems that change has brought to your life.
- 2 Your answer. You can see that if your parents were brought up in one type of society and you in another, a great deal of change has taken place. If you think your children will face yet another type of life-style, this means that even more adjustments will be needed.
- 3 Besides the problems mentioned in the chapter, you may think of others that are the result of a shift in the value system of society. These problems show that values have a significant place in the social structure and influence the way people behave.
- 4 Your answers. In case study 1, the values that are in conflict are probably those of the agricultural and industrial life-styles (they could also be called rural and urban). In case study 2, while the so-called "generation gap" is part of the picture, it doesn't seem to explain all of the conflict that is evident. The industrial "view" appears to be at odds with the information (or "post-industrial") view.
- 5 If your total is 12-15, no doubt you are under a great deal of different kinds of stress. A score of between 9 and 11 would indicate that you are somewhat average in your reactions. A sum of 3 to 8 might mean that your society is not in a period of rapid change or that you have been able to find ways of dealing with the changes that have occurred. A high number response (4 or 5) to item c shows that you probably lack an adequate overall value system to help you deal with the other kinds of pressures that you may be experiencing.
- 6 Of course, a number of answers are possible. It might be interesting to compare how you feel now with the way you might have felt 8 or 10 years ago or the way you think you will feel 8 or 10 years from now.



"Lack of money is trouble without equal." -- Rabelais

2

Make the Economy Work for You

“Lack of money is trouble without equal.” -Rabelais

. . . so said the famous French author of the 1500s, and most of us would certainly agree! Whether we have a lot or a little, money is a highly significant part of our lives. It represents our time, our energy, and our abilities. Perhaps more than anything else, the way we use it and spend it shows what is really important to us. The decisions we make about it have a great deal to do with the kind of persons we become.

Any discussion about money brings us up against one of the most complex aspects of modern living—the economy. Governments are burdened by huge amounts of debt, whole industries appear to be vanishing, and long-term unemployment troubles the lives of a large percentage of the population. These days stockmarkets can plunge without warning, sending shock waves in all directions. While some countries have managed to reduce inflation, in others it is still totally out of control. It doesn't look as if there is any real connection between hard work and financial security.

In today's world, what is the relationship of money to genuine achievement? How can we use the money we have to bring us the best results? If we are unemployed, what approach to the job market should we take? What about those of us who

want to work and are able to work but find ourselves having to depend on the government dole for our living? Is there some way to cope with the feelings of discouragement and hopelessness that often overwhelm us as a result?

These are some of the issues we will examine in this chapter. There are no easy solutions, for problems can be very different from place to place. But no matter what your financial situation is, you can learn how to deal with it successfully and invest your life in ways that will bring you the best kind of results.

TOPICS

- Coping with the World of Work
- Dealing with the Hidden Persuaders
- Taming the Money Monster

FOCUS

This chapter will help you to:

- Develop effective methods of facing problems related to employment.
- Avoid financial manipulation.
- Maintain control over your personal resources so that you can invest them wisely.

COPING WITH THE WORLD OF WORK

Focal Point 1. Discover constructive methods of facing your particular employment (or unemployment) situation.

To begin with, let's consider some practical issues and problems related to earning the money we need to survive. Three basic strategies can help us deal with the complex employment situation we face today. First, we need to achieve and maintain a sense of inner poise. Second, we need to choose worthwhile goals. Third, we need to learn how to adapt to changing conditions. Now let's look at the kind of self-concept we need to develop so that we can have a sense of confidence when facing employment difficulties and challenges.

A Firm Base

Though we enjoy (and need) diversion and novelty in our lives to some extent, most of us want to have a secure sense of personal identity. For many people, their job or occupation defines who they are. The answer to the question, "Tell me about yourself," will usually be something like "I'm a steelworker," or "I'm a doctor," or "I'm a housewife." Stages in the movement toward a career or role in life can also be part of a person's sense of identity: "I'm a medical student," or "I'm studying art" or "I'm engaged to be married."

Consequently, the loss of either the actual job or the prospect of having it is a serious blow. Being declared "redundant," failing to pass one's exams, receiving news that the government will no longer pay for one's education - all of these experiences have traumatic results. But many people in today's society, particularly young people, face situations that are even worse. They confront the possibility that they may never find work because there just aren't enough permanent, "full-time" jobs to go around.



1 Following are listed some problems related to employment and society. Mark those that apply to you or important people in your life.

| Problem | You | Your husband or wife | Someone in your family |
|--|-----|----------------------|------------------------|
| a Unemployed now | | | |
| b Looking for a first job without finding one for more than 6 months | | | |
| c Unemployed for more than 6 months | | | |
| d Unable to continue education or training for the career that was chosen | | | |
| e Other major problem related to social status or employment | | | |

The failure to find and keep a job is a destructive experience because a career or occupation is far more than simply a way of earning money. It is the social space into which people fit themselves, the niche which shapes them. If they are unemployed, they feel dislocated and worthless. Some become apathetic, listless, and bored. Others become hateful and violent toward the system that they believe has betrayed them and denied them a place. Tragically, some even turn the anger they feel toward themselves and destroy their own lives.

But is our role in society the only source of our identity? Are we to be summed up by where we were born, who our parents were, and what we do to make a living? Do we reach the end of our existence if society shuts us out in one way or another? If we are handicapped or disabled?

The truth is that *if* your self-concept depends totally on the way you are treated by “the system” or “the establishment,” you will always be at its mercy. To some extent, you will always be unable to control your life, for things around you can change overnight. Your job, your role, your position may be relatively secure today, but there is no way to make certain that things will stay as they are. If conditions are bad, it is possible that negotiations by trade unions may help to modify them. But even if they do and you are able to carve out a place in society, even if you are acknowledged or beyond that, envied by those around you, isn't there still something missing?

What you need to realize is that your significance as a human being is an inner quality. It *is yours because of* what you are, not because of what you do. It does not come from your “position.” You need to remind yourself of this fact if you are faced with a serious loss of self-esteem because of unemployment. You also need to remember it when your work does not bring you the kind of recognition you think it should. This may be difficult to do because right now you may feel exactly the opposite.

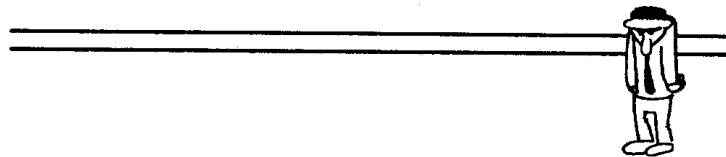
You may be convinced that no one really sees your value or gives you the kind of appreciation you deserve. You may feel angry at the way you are treated and the way your rights are disregarded. All of these negative feelings can rob you of your ability to cope with the problems you face. They can become a fixed pattern in your life. The question is, can they be changed? The answer is yes. They not only can be changed; they must be changed.

Here's how: begin to treat others with the kind of genuine respect and appreciation that you wish they would give to you. This may be hard to do at the beginning. But if you keep at it, a very important shift will take place. You will no longer be the victim of the way others act toward you. Why? Because by

giving away the valuable gifts of respect and appreciation to others—gifts that are in your power to give—you will have actually assumed control of your situation.

And another interesting thing may happen besides. What you give away may very well come back to you as people respond to the fact that you appreciate them and what they do, however much or little it is. A leading radio producer in the BBC said, “When you interview someone for a radio programme, say thank you—even if the recording is useless. Say it sincerely, because he has given you his time, and that alone deserves thanks.”

It would be impossible to exaggerate the difference that taking the initiative can make in a person’s life. It’s the difference between the political prisoner who writes books and poems while in prison and the one who broods on the injustice of his situation. It’s the difference between a handicapped person who uses whatever skills he or she may have to make objects of beauty and the one who complains all day.



2 ATTITUDE CHECK

We have pointed out the value of treating others with respect and appreciation. Are there some situations in which you need to apply this principle right now? If so, mark or name the most important one.

- o WORKPLACE
- o BUSINESS/PROFESSIONAL LIFE
- o SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT
- o PERSONAL LIFE

Or?

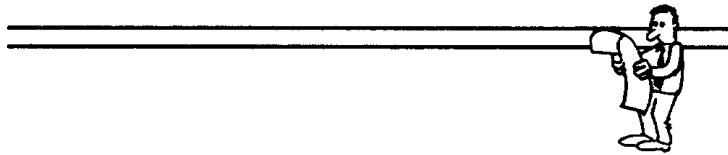
But don't just think about taking the initiative. Take it! Find something you have to give, and give it. As you experience the rewards that come, your sense of confidence will increase. You will grow in your ability to handle the pressures and uncertainties of today's marketplace. You will develop the kind of inner strength and patience that will keep you moving towards your goals. It is even possible that new employment or advancement opportunities will come your way as a result of your positive attitude and actions. But remember: you have to take the first step. You have to take the risk of trying.

If you cultivate your inner sense of worth by taking positive action, you will be free to choose goals for working that will keep your motivation at its maximum level. This is the second strategy for dealing with the world of employment. What are these goals?

A Double Agenda

These goals have to do with the idea of investment. Once you develop a firm sense of personal identity, you are free to invest your resources in genuinely profitable ways. This concept of investment has two facets. 1) It means that you must provide for your family. 2) It means that you must widen the horizons of your concern to take in the needs of others who are outside your family circle. The first purpose for working is one that most of us would readily accept. The second is a little more difficult.

Certainly the social services have a duty to use our taxes to help those who need it. But people need more than a handout to pay the rent and buy a few groceries. They need a neighbour who cares. You can be that person. The issue here is not *what* you decide to do to help other people but the fact that you decide to help them.



3 A RESOURCE INVENTORY

Think about the personal skills and assets that are under

your control or direct influence. Under each of the headings listed, briefly describe the three most important ones.

| What I Have | What I Can Do |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |

4 AN INVESTMENT PLAN

Now look again at the resources you have just listed. Is there room for improvement in the way you are using them? If so, indicate how you could start to follow the double agenda we have described. Circle the number of the asset or skill, and mark or state your target.

- a Use asset **1 2 3** for: 👤 Family 👤 Community
Or?
- b Use skill **1 2 3** for: 👤 Family 👤 Community
Or?

The secret of this double agenda is to keep both concerns in balance. Don't wait until you think you have a surplus before you begin to give. As you lead the way, your children will catch the spirit of generosity and compassion from you. They will experience the joy of giving to others as well. But if you set before them a pattern of self-centered living and indulge their every whim, don't be surprised if they grow up to be selfish, insensitive adults.

If you become an investor in the true sense of the word, you will put yourself in a position where you can actually reap long-term rewards of a kind that will always be yours. No thief will be able to rob you of the satisfaction you can have by making investments in the lives of other people. Your real rewards - the ones that make you truly rich - will be secure!

When you examine these two purposes carefully, you will realize that you can fulfil them no matter what kind of job you have. If you take the next step and actually adopt them, you will

discover that you will be able to adjust to changes in your employment situation without losing your motivation or purpose. This kind of flexibility is a distinct asset in today's fluctuating employment market. It's the third strategy we need to have when dealing with the world of work.

Free to Adapt

If your inner sense of worth does not depend on your position, you can adapt to changing employment conditions without fear. Instead of constantly worrying about what others think of you, you will be free to explore alternatives and try new solutions. You will understand more and more clearly that it doesn't matter, in a sense, what you do to earn money as long as your work is honest and does not exploit others. You will see that the standing (Or lack of it) which you have in society as a result of your occupation is basically irrelevant to your real worth and your goals for working. Consequently, you will be able to adjust upward or downward in the system without losing your balance.

Of course it would be good if you could use your skills and talents to their full capacity. By all means, try to get the best job you can. But if you find yourself having to operate far beneath your potential in order to be employed, do not allow yourself to become bitter. You can still bring dignity and beauty to your work, whatever it is, simply by the way you perform it.

It may be that you will need to move to another place in order to find work or improve your situation. Don't be afraid to do this if it is necessary. Others have made drastic moves some across oceans and into completely different cultures - and survived. They discovered that the challenge of coping with new surroundings and problems brought out qualities in themselves they never knew they had.

Do not restrict yourself by holding on to the idea that the only kind of work that is worthwhile is traditional, full-time, paid employment. This mentality prevents many people from being able to accept their situation and deal with it realistically. Instead, start with whatever materials and abilities you have.

Learn some new skills if you need to. Take a part-time, temporary job if that is all you can find. Volunteer your time and energy for community projects.

Your actions will help you to escape one of the most crippling effects of being shut out of the traditional work force — the conviction that you are powerless and useless. Aside from the personal rewards you will receive and the actual good you will do, there may be unexpected results. Some of the most successful businesses that exist have been pioneered by people who turned their imaginations loose and found novel and practical ways of making life better for others.



5 IF YOU ARE UNEMPLOYED . . .

Note: You may want to use these questions to help someone you know who is looking for work if you aren't seeking employment yourself.

a In your view, what is the most important reason why you are unemployed? (Mark or state)

- o BAD ECONOMIC SITUATION
- o LACK OF EDUCATION
- o HEALTH PROBLEMS
- o DISCRIMINATION
- o NEED RETRAINING
- o LOW SELF-ESTEEM

Or?

b Can you do anything to remove this obstacle? If so, what?
.....

c If the type of work you want isn't available, is there some other kind of useful work you can do or be trained to do? If there is, what is it?
.....



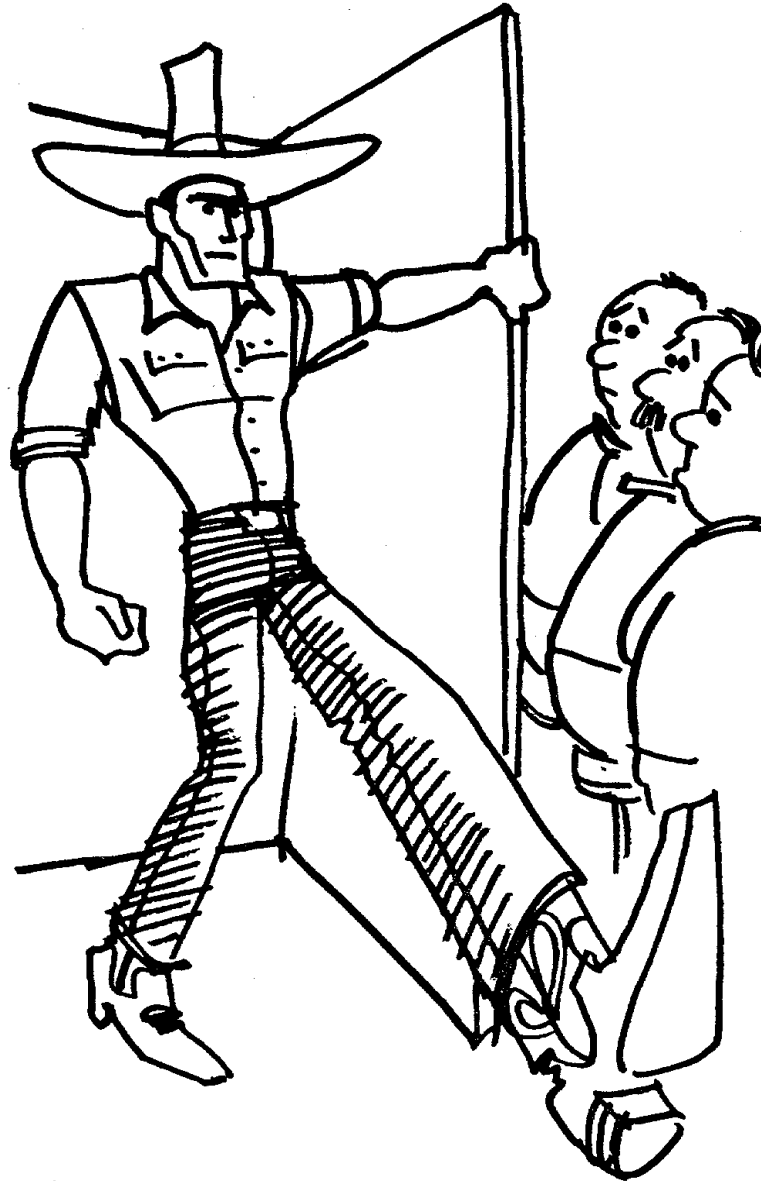
We have explored the world of employment and techniques for dealing with some of its problems. As we have done this, we have touched on the subject of needs in connection with the idea of investment and motives for working. But just exactly what do we need? This brings us to another feature of today's economy that we must examine: the powerful voices that claim to tell us what our needs are and how to satisfy them.

DEALING WITH THE HIDDEN PERSUADERS

Focal Point 2. *Know how you can avoid being manipulated by the advertising media.*

We have said that two worthwhile goals for working are to provide for the needs of our families and to help others. But in our present discussion, we must define our terms, for the word "need" certainly doesn't mean the same thing to everyone. Many of the commercial interests "ho compete for our money in today's society have convinced us that we need a lot of things that we can easily live without and would be better off not having. They have done this by appealing not to our real needs, such as those for food, clothing, and shelter (which we know about without being told), but to our desires. Of course, many of their products are useful and some of their sales methods are fully legitimate and justified. Others, however, are not. How can we avoid being manipulated? How much is enough?

In modern society there is practically no way to escape hearing the voices of those who want us to buy something. They are all around us. We are the deliberate targets of an army of admen and promoters who use magazines, radio, television, newspapers, posters, and signs to bombard us with messages telling us what we must have in order to be happy and fulfilled. They fill our TVs with insistent songs and brilliant, colourful pictures. Their messages are frequent, intense, and carefully designed for maximum effect. Products are associated with the fulfilment of almost every kind of human desire imaginable freedom, sexual gratification, mastery, love, belonging, security, health, social position-to name just a few.



The stranger walks in, tall, lean
and mean.

The Dream Machine

The camera closes in on the scene in the bar. Bursts of laughter. Glasses clinking. Fat waiters carrying huge trays full of beer mugs. Suddenly, the door bursts open. The Stranger walks in, tall lean, and mean. There is a hush. The crowd parts to let him through. In total silence, he strides toward the bar the wooden floor creaking under the impact of his bold, deliberate paces. He stops at the counter his back to the ordinary folks in their ordinary clothes. He leans slightly forward and pats his foot on the rail. They begin to murmur. Look at those expensive, hand-tooled leather boots! Motionless, glass and dishcloth in hand, the perspiring bartender stares up in awe at the cool, rugged profile. Then, a shaft of sunlight pierces the gloom and illuminates the label on the Stranger's blue jeans. What is he wearing? The camera tilts down for a closeup. Aha!

. . . of course it doesn't really matter if you're bald and overweight. Buy a pair of those blue jeans, and you 'll have a little piece of the dream. In your mind's eye, you'll be just a little thinner, meaner, more commanding. Somehow, you'll stand out from the crowd.

Or will you? Where is the line between the product and the image? Such advertising, at first glance, seems harmless enough. If we're not careful, though, it can spin a web of illusion around us. We begin to really believe that "clothes make the man," that there can be instant satisfaction for every desire. We begin to pursue materialistic answers to needs that can never be satisfied by mere "things." In that pursuit, there is never enough. No amount of toys or amusements can meet the longing that children have for the love and attention of their parents. No jewels or perfume, however costly, rare, or coveted, can rescue a marriage gone sour through neglect. No kind of self-indulgence, however refined or cultivated, can fill up an empty life.

But in the vast wasteland of trivial diversions that occupy the minds of so many, the dream merchants have found eager buyers. Sensing the void of spirit and the obsession with the here and now, they make their appeal. Do you feel unsure about your identity? Here's a designer shirt (or dress or set of matched

luggage) that will let everyone around you know that you are an individual of taste and refinement. Do you feel insignificant and inferior? Here's a powerful, sleek car, a machine of machines responsive to your every command that will let you dominate the motorways and push lesser breeds aside.



*Envelope yourself in this exotic
scent, and you'll attract all the
attention you could possibly want.*

Do you feel lonely and undesirable? Envelop yourself in a mist of this exotic scent, and you'll attract all the attention you could possibly want. Do you feel isolated? Subscribe to this magazine that everybody is reading to find out what smart, tip-to-date people are doing and wearing, and, of course, reading. Is life tedious and boring? Drink this beverage, and you'll be magically transported to a sunny, tropical isle of pleasure and passion.

When it is all said and done, they end tip with our money, and we end up with our real needs and ambitions. still unmet. In the meantime, we have allowed them to form in us an appetite for a superficial style of living that has no substance or authentic fulfilment. The perfume evaporates, the magazine is outdated, the luggage gets worn and battered. And we are still lonely, isolated, insignificant.

An Effective Antidote

The cure to all of these fantasies is a good dose of reality. There are real ways to meet real needs that bring real results. Simple logic tells us that the need and the answer should match. So, the first step in dismantling the dream machine is to recognize materialistic solutions to non-materialistic problems for what they are: lies and insults. They are lies because they do not work, and they are insults because they dehumanize.

If you have allowed the image-makers to programme your responses, it may take some time for you to change your thinking. And be prepared for an inner resistance at first, especially if you have developed a fixed pattern of relying on stopgap measures. Real solutions usually take longer and require more determination. But in the end, they pay off in real results.



6 **CONSUMER PROFILE ACTION ANALYSIS**
How do advertisements affect your spending habits at the present time? This analysis can help you identify some problem areas that may need your attention.

Section A. Overall Reactions

- a** There is a high degree of manipulative advertising in my environment.
- o Strongly Agree
 - o Agree
 - o Disagree
 - o Strongly Disagree
- b** Because of advertising, I often spend money on products that cannot fulfil my real needs.
- o Strongly Agree
 - o Agree
 - o Disagree
 - o Strongly Disagree
- c** I know that some products that are advertised are harmful to me, but I buy them anyway.
- o Strongly Agree
 - o Agree
 - o Disagree
 - o Strongly Disagree
-

Section B: Specific Reactions and Actions (Mark or write-in)

- a** The kind of advertising I find the hardest to resist is the kind that appeals to my need or desire for .
- o LOVE
 - o GOOD HEALTH
 - o RECOGNITION
 - o POWER
 - o EXCITEMENT
 - o PLEASURE
- Or?
- b** Most of the advertising that affects my spending patterns comes to me through . . .
- o MAGAZINES
 - o TV
 - o POSTERS/BILLBOARDS & SIGNS
 - o RADIO
- Or?
- c** The most effective step I could take to reduce my exposure to the kind of advertising that affects me adversely would be to . . .
- o LIVE ON A DESERT ISLAND (!)
 - o STOP BELIEVING EVERYTHING I SEE & HEAR
 - o TURN A DEAF EAR TO THOSE DISHONEST SALESMEN
 - o STOP WATCHING SO MUCH TV
 - o STOP BUYING SO MANY OF THOSE MAGAZINES
 - o ADD A BIG DOSE OF SKEPTICISM TO MY DIET OF COMMERCIALS
 - o READ SOME HONEST CONSUMER REPORTS
- Or?
-

Some Sensible Limits

This is a true story. A very wealthy widow became obsessed with the huge mansion she was living in. She became convinced that *as long as* she kept building on to it, she wouldn't die. She hired scores of workmen to carry out her wishes and paid them out of her vast fortune. At first, there was space to add rooms that were useful. But before long, all reasonable purposes had been exhausted. Yet she insisted that the workmen keep building. Month after month they laboured. They built stairways to nowhere and doors that opened upon blank walls. They built

useless towers and turrets, bannisters and hallways. The house grew more and more grotesque with each passing year, and the woman grew older and older. One day while the carpenters were hammering and sawing and the painters were painting, she died. People said she was crazy. Wouldn't you agree?



*Maybe it's time to take a good look
at some of the "carrots" you're
following around.*

But if you and I aren't careful, the same dementia will take hold of us. We'll find ourselves driven by an incessant compulsion to acquire more and more, far in excess of what we need. Our possessions will multiply and mount up higher and higher around us while we shrivel up inside.

The way for you to prevent this from happening is to set reasonable limits on your desires. Let enough *be* enough. Don't allow advertisers to rob you of your true human dignity by making you into a mindless consumer, an unthinking robot they can programme to respond to their manipulations. Don't let them — or other people who follow their ideas — dictate a certain kind of lifestyle for you or your family. Simply say "no" when you feel pressured to keep spending, keep buying, keep adding more and more to what you have, to keep reaching and striving for an ever "higher" and "higher" standard of living.



7 PERSONAL BALANCE SHEET
 Are you like this infamous donkey? (No insult intended!)
 Maybe it's time to take a good look at some of the "carrots" you're following around! In the spaces below, make note of the ways you could change your spending patterns so that there is a better overall balance in the way your resources are distributed. (Mark or write in your responses.)

| THE SUBTRACT SIDE | THE ADD SIDE |
|--|---|
| If I spent less on . . . o My house o My clothes o My habits o My car o My entertainment Or? | I would have more for . . . o Family needs o Community needs o Creative projects o Constructive hobbies Or? |
| THE BOTTOM LINE | |

The long-term benefits and rewards this change would bring would be. . .

- o REAL PERSONAL GROWTH
- o FAMILY FULFILMENT
- o COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

Or?

This idea of balance brings us to another side of the subject — how to stay in control of our financial situation. We live in a materialistic society. What kind of influence does this have on us? How does it affect the way we live?

TAMING THE MONEY MONSTER

Focal Point 3. *Discover how you can stay in control of your money and resources.*

“Money is the god of our time,” said one observer. Many would agree with him. If the price is right, they point out, you can find someone to do anything, regardless of how degrading, disloyal, or destructive it may be. No one can deny that money is a powerful force in society. It has gathered a set of creeds and beliefs around it like a religion. These beliefs flow like a strong current. Perhaps the strongest one of them all, the one that carries all the others, is the idea that life consists of how much you have and what you can buy. But does it?

The Nature of the Beast

The story goes of one businessman who became so rich on the stock market that he decided to cash it in, put his entire fortune in a Swiss bank account, and retire on the proceeds. “I’ll have a good time,” he said to himself. “I’ll go anywhere I want and do anything I like.” But that very night he had a heart attack and died. Hard luck? Not exactly. Good while it lasted? Not exactly that either. There’s a deeper frustration.

Between the idea
And the reality

Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow.

— T. S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men*

Of course, not everyone who makes money on the stock exchange dies of a heart attack! But there is a moral here. No matter who you are or how much you have, life is uncertain. You may not live to enjoy the things you've worked so hard to buy, or to spend your savings the way you've planned. Your health may deteriorate, or some other unforeseen disaster could overtake you.

We may not be rich, and money and possessions by themselves certainly are not the actual problem. It is the love of money and possessions - and the power they give us - that is the difficulty. This love becomes a beast with an insatiable appetite, demanding more and more of our time and energy. We eventually become so attached to what we have that we simply cannot let go of it. In effect, we become prisoners of our possessions, not the masters of them.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, a number of businessmen who had lost their fortunes in the stock market crash committed suicide. What more dramatic proof could there be of the death-grip that their money had on them? When it died, they died too. In 1987, the market collapse in New York, Tokyo, and London taught the same lesson. In the United States, an investor who had lost millions of dollars shot and killed the branch manager of his stock brokerage firm, seriously wounded an investment broker, and finally killed himself.

Harnessing the Monster

Can you stay in control over your money? The answer is "yes." The way for you to keep the upper hand is to *continue to invest* your resources. Earlier in this chapter, we explored this idea of investment to some extent. We said that it speaks of having a double agenda for earning money: 1) to provide for your family, and 2) to help others who are in need. Here, we will look at the same idea but in a broader and deeper sense. We will

look not just at money, but at all our resources and why it is important to keep investing them properly.

Perhaps we can see our resources as existing in two basic forms: a) our personal abilities, and b) our material possessions, including our money. The material possessions are actually secondary, though. We have them only because we (or the people who gave them to us, if we have inherited them) have used our abilities in some way to acquire them. In other words, money is simply the symbolic evidence that someone has worked.

Let's imagine, for example, that you are employed by the telephone company. In exchange for a salary, you use your skills to repair phones. You take some of your money and use it at the supermarket to buy vegetables that someone else has harvested. The supermarket pays him with your money (minus their cut as the middleman, of course). What has happened? One kind of work has been traded for another. You have traded part of your time repairing phones for part of someone else's time harvesting vegetables. In effect, you have actually "harvested" the produce.

What this means is that in reality, *our abilities are our primary resources*. What we can *do* is the source of what we *have*. This fact pushes the discussion back one step. When we look at our abilities, we discover a very interesting thing about them: none of us was given the power to decide what kind or how many abilities he or she would have. That is, we did not choose whether we would be male or female, handsome or ugly, dull or brilliant. Besides this, we did not choose our parents or have any control over the circumstances of our early lives. In this respect we are all products of our heredity and our environment. The result is that some people start out life in a better position to become successful — as their society defines it — than others. They simply have more of the qualities that will enable them to exploit the system to their advantage. Is all this "unfair"? It most certainly is!

But the fact that we did not choose what our starting point would be in this scramble we call life is only part of the story. Has it ever struck you that you had nothing to do with choosing the kind of world that you would live in either? Everything was

already here when you arrived. Out of the infinite variety of possible forms that matter could take, you and I find ourselves on this spinning mass we call planet Earth with its elephants and mice, its palm trees and potatoes, its Alps and its Atlantic Ocean and its Sahara desert.

And there's more. We also find ourselves unavoidably thrown together with those creatures who are, no doubt, the world's puzzling, contradictory, and troublesome inhabitants: Man. The Human Race. Your mother and my uncle. The thief who robbed your grandmother and the baby who cries next door. What are we doing here? We didn't design this house - or build it. We didn't pick who else would be part of the scene. As Alice in Wonderland said, "Curiouser and curiouser!" What does it all mean?

A Trial Run

There's a story from the ancient East about a powerful merchant and his three assistants. We shall call them Omar, Ah, and Khalid. One morning the merchant called these men together and loaned them his money so they could invest it for him while he was away trading in a distant land. To Omar he gave fifty thousand gold dinars, to Ah twenty thousand, and to Khalid ten thousand. Omar and Ah wasted no time. With careful trading and investment each of them succeeded in doubling the money that had been loaned to him. But Khalid just put his gold pieces in a



*...to Omar he gave fifty thousand
gold dinars, to Ali twenty thousand,
and to Khalid ten thousand.*

strong box, and one dark night he hid it where none would find it except himself.

The great merchant was gone a long time. Then one day the lateen sails of his dhow appeared on the horizon. Soon the magnificent ship was moored at the wharf and started to unload a cargo of spices, and pearls, and gems — rubies and emeralds, sapphires and amethysts. Now the merchant summoned his three assistants to bring him their original loans and what they had

earned with them. Omar came with a hundred thousand dinars. First there were fifty thousand gold pieces representing the original loan. Then another fifty thousand he had earned with it.

The merchant was very pleased. Re told Omar that he would be promoted because he had proved his ability to make profitable investments. Ah came in with the twenty thousand dinars he had been loaned and the twenty thousand he had earned. He also was promoted. Khalid came in with only the original loan of ten thousand gold dinars. Since he knew that he would have to give it all back when the merchant returned, he didn't feel the effort to invest it was really worthwhile. And anyway, he said, at least the money had always been safe with him — no risky investments.

Angrily, the merchant told Khalid that he was stupid and lazy. Re said, "You should at least have deposited my gold with a reliable money lender so I could have had some interest." Re clapped his hands twice. Two Nubian servants silently entered the room. Khalid fell to the floor and grovelled for mercy, but it was too late. The merchant gave the slightest movement of his head. The Nubian servants picked up the lazy Khalid and threw him out into the street. Khalid had lived in a house provided by the merchant, his food had come from the merchant's estates. Now he had nothing. Omar was given the ten thousand dinars and went out to make another investment.

Stupid story? No, there's more to it than meets the eye. For one thing, some bosses are actually like the one in the story. For another, it suggests some intriguing ideas about abilities, profits, and promotions and the way they relate.

To follow our scheme, then, we might analyze the story in this way:

A. The Loan

- 1) Size fixed by owner
- 2) Matches personal ability

Represents individual assets in terms of innate abilities

B. The Profits

- 1) Result of using loan
- 2) Same proportional gain (100%)

Represents results when a person correctly uses his/her abilities

C. The Promotions

- 1) Based on using loan
- 2) Unrelated to amount of loan

Represents inner growth that comes from proper use of abilities

Obviously, other meanings are also possible. But if we assign these particular ones to the story, what conclusion emerges?

It could very well be this: if you have the wrong attitude towards your resources, you will see them as something to hoard. You will end up with nothing. On the other hand, if you see them as something of value “loaned” to you to keep investing correctly, you will benefit. You may not like the fact that you were not consulted as to what abilities you would have — or how many. But note this: the story shows us that the useless assistant was dismissed by the merchant not because he had less to start with than the others, but because he refused to invest what he was given. Did you notice what his excuse was? Don’t waste valuable energy wishing that things were different! Instead, evaluate what you do have and use it constructively.

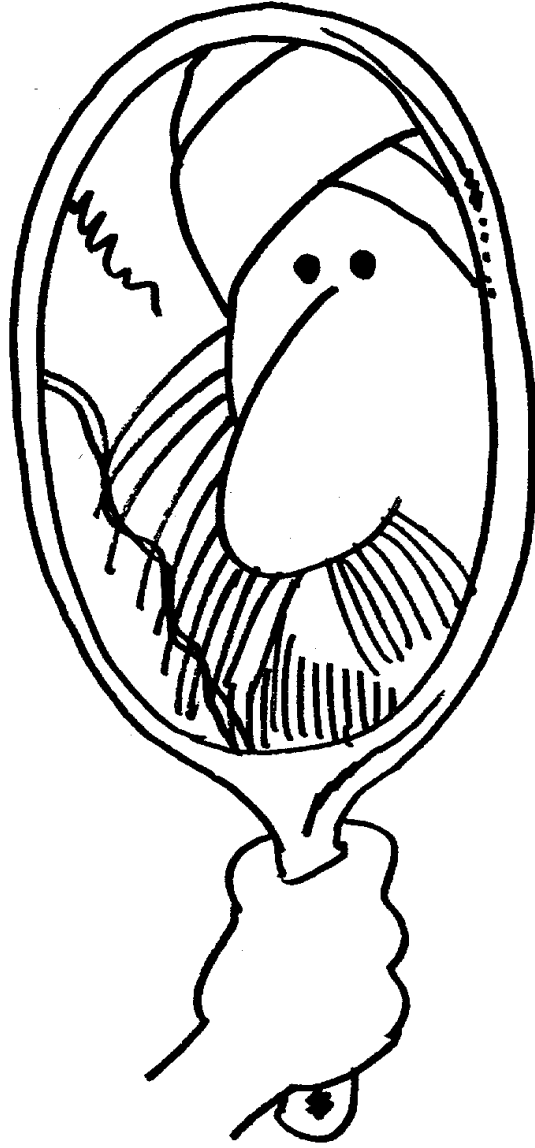


8 LOOK IN THE MIRROR

One of the assistants may look like you. If so, which one?

- o OMAR?
 - o ALI?
 - o KHALID?
-

All of us recognize the futility and emptiness of a self-centered lifestyle. We instinctively avoid people who are opportunists and exploiters and who live only for themselves. At the same time, we find ourselves drawn to those who are generous and truly unselfish in their manner. Judge for yourself. Who do you think has really made a profit? The person who has won the love of his family, neighbours, and friends by the way he has used his resources, or the one who has kept everything for himself and ends his life alone, despised and resented by everyone around him?



*Look in the mirror: one of the
assistants may look like you.*



9 INVESTOR vs. HOARDER

At the present time what are you doing with your resources? Where are you on the following scale?

- 1 I keep as much as I can to spend on myself.
- 2 I keep as much as I can to spend on myself and my own family.
- 3 After caring for my family, I sometimes help needy people in my community.
- 4 After caring for my family, I often help needy people in my community.
- 5 After caring for my family, I consistently help needy people as much as I can both in my community and in other places as well.

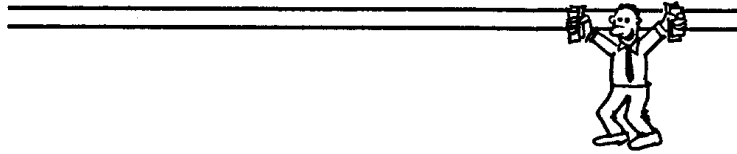
Having the right attitude about our resources so that we will keep using them correctly is very important: it's the way we stay in control.

We have discussed several important financial strategies in this chapter. You will notice that the essential factor in all of them is this: *you must take and keep control*. That is the place to begin. Take control over your employment situation by acting as a giver rather than a victim. Take control over your needs by unmasking media deceptions and setting reasonable limits on your desires. And keep control over all your resources by continuing to invest them in ways that bring genuine profits.

If these strategies become part of your life, you will be able to deal with the problems you have no matter what happens in the economy. But you need to be aware of one thing: some people might not understand why you aren't on the same

treadmill they are. They might find your attitude, your goals, and your freedom upsetting. But think of the rewards! Though at first you may see no immediate results, they will certainly come.

In a later chapter we shall have more to say about why these particular strategies work. But we have some other important subjects to explore first. Our next topic is relationships. In today's fragmented and confused society, is it possible to actually experience the kind of love that brings true, lasting happiness?



SOME FEEDBACK TO THE INTERACTIONS . . .

- 1** Your reply. If several problems in this area of life affect you directly, don't be discouraged. The next paragraphs in this chapter offer you some practical steps you can take to deal with your situation.
- 2** Your answer. The value of this principle is that it works with anyone at any time. But remember, you must be sincere in your appreciation. It's not a means of manipulation. It's a way for you to gain control over your own feelings.
- 3** Your descriptions. If you find it difficult to identify or recognize what you have, a friend or someone in your family may be able to help you.
- 4** Your plan. Keep an even-handed approach. Be sure to provide for your family, but don't ignore others who are in need.
- 5** Your response. These questions can help you identify situations in which you can apply the strategies that have been described.
- 6** Your analysis. If you could, even a desert island wouldn't be safe! In the meantime, learn to recognize the way you personally are influenced by dishonest advertising. Don't hesitate to make changes that would minimize its effects on you.

- 7 Your balance sheet. If you combine this summary with your responses to interactions 3 and 4, you should have some workable guidelines for seeing how to distribute your resources more productively.
- 8 Your reflection.
- 9 Your level. Are you going to stay where you are? Make plans now to move up the scale if you want to end up with genuine profits.



*...those wonderful, smiling families
of bright-faced children, radiant
mothers, and untiring fathers...*

3

Keep Love Alive

“To love, and to be loved, is the greatest happiness of existence.” —Sydney Smith

There they are again . . . those wonderful, smiling families of bright- faced children, radiant mothers, and untiring fathers. . those scenes of unflinching joy — at least that’s what the advertisements for breakfast cereals show us. If only life could be like that! But have you ever tried to get the children off to school?

As members of society today, we live in many kinds of situations. Some of us are single parents, some of us live alone. A good many of us are married (happily or unhappily!). Quite a few of us, as the statistics show, are undergoing the painful experience of divorce. And all of us are coping with our particular circumstances with varying degrees of success.

The truth is that for many people in our world, relationships are often troubled and family living is frequently a disheartening experience. Parents feel disappointed by their children and children by their parents. Husbands and wives react to pressures in ways that hurt their marriage. Everyone is affected by the stresses and strains of modern life.

Yet we all want satisfying relationships. How can we have them and how can we make them work? They don’t happen by

chance. On the contrary, they're the direct result of the way we view and treat others. In this chapter, we'll look at some basic guidelines that can lead us to real success in this important area of our lives.

TOPICS

Will Families Exist in the Future?
 Help! I'm Out of Tranquillizers!
 What Is this Thing Called Love?
 A Survival Guide for Parents
 The Essential Bond

FOCUS

This chapter will help you to:
 —Improve your home life.
 —Relate successfully to your children.
 —Build satisfying friendships.

WILL FAMILIES EXIST IN THE FUTURE?

Focal Point 1. *Consider the value of the family in society.*

Going Bigger?

In recent times, there have been efforts to modify the role of the family. Lenin envisioned state-run nurseries for Russian children where they would be cared for day and night. These would be the “germ cells” of the new Communist society. However, the nurseries were discontinued after only a brief existence.

The agricultural *kibbutz* of the modern state of Israel offers an alternative type of household. Children are raised within the community by trained nurses and teachers. Meanwhile, the parents work together in farming the land. Many observers think that the *kibbutz* is actually a type of extended family, since families spend time together and the basic family unit remains intact. Life on the *kibbutz* appeals to some. There is a danger, however, that it prepares people for *kibbutz* living, but not for life in an industrialized, urban setting.

In some Western societies, such as the United States, people have experimented with various types of communal living. Groups have been formed by individuals who share a certain political, religious, or artistic philosophy. For the most part, these groups have been unstable and short-lived, seldom lasting more than one generation.

Going Smaller?

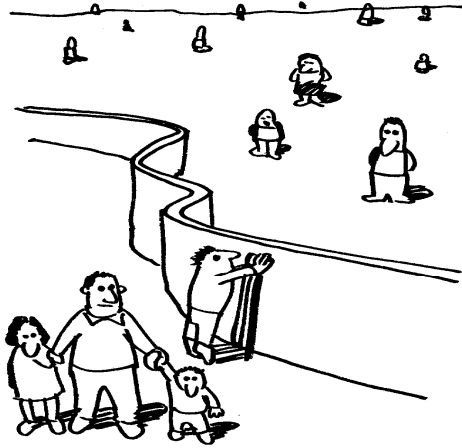
But these larger family-type groups are actually exceptions to the overall picture. For many people, the exact opposite is taking place. High rates of divorce have fragmented the family. Instead of both parents and their children living together, children live with either their mother or their father. The parent who has left the family may live alone. And the fragmentation doesn't stop there. Grandparents, aunts, and uncles live far away, some of them alone as well.

Merging Temporarily?

Then there is another trend — the rise of the “blended” family. Many divorced people remarry. As a result, there may be “his” children, “her” children, and perhaps “their children” all living together. People who live in these kinds of families can be torn by conflicting loyalties and demands which are almost impossible to meet. These conflicts can make families very unstable, like the communes we described earlier.

Controlled by the State?

Some think the family will change drastically as we enter the 21st century. They say that the state or public authority will assume more control over the family. Unfit people will be barred from parenthood. Only one-third of the marriages will produce children, and these children will be raised in model homes by individuals who are trained and licensed as parents.



*Grandparents, aunts and uncles
live far away, some of them alone
as well.*



1 YOUR OPINION PLEASE!

Imagine that you are part of a TV talk show audience. The subject is the future of the family, and a panel of guests are discussing it. At one point, the host says that he wants an opinion from someone in the audience. He comes down the aisle toward your row, then stops and asks you this question: "Do you think that people will be living in families 100 years from now?" After a moment, you give your answer. He then says, "Why?" and points the microphone back at you. How would you support your opinion?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

But in spite of all the uncertainties and pressures, people's needs haven't really changed. Most of us still want the things a good family provides — a place we can call "home," a circle of intimacy where we feel loved and needed, a haven where we can be who we are and express our cherished dreams and hopes without fear. Why does it seem so hard to create such a place these days?

HELP! I'M OUT OF TRANQUILLIZERS!

Focal Point 2. *Identify the specific pressures on your family.*

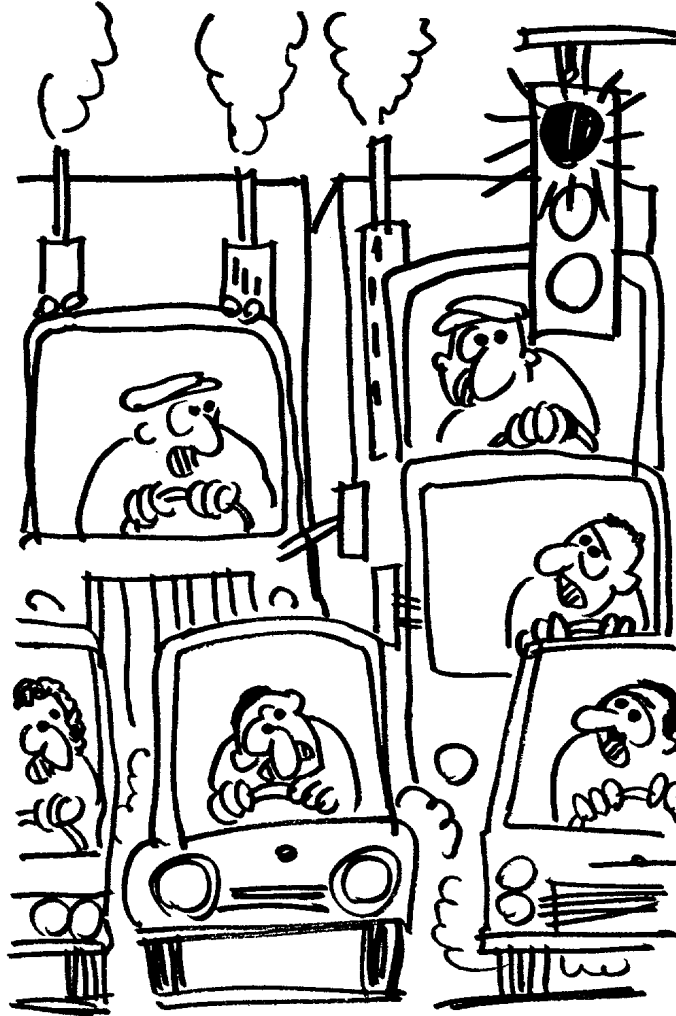
To begin with, many of us are trying very hard to keep up with our fast-moving society, and our personal lives are suffering as a result. One counsellor said that quite often his first task in helping his clients is just getting them to slow down.

Caution! Approaching Time Zero!

How fast are *you* going? Too fast to notice what is going on in your life? Perhaps you need to check your personal speedometer.

I honk my horn or flash my lights at the vehicle in front of me:

- a) within 4 seconds after the traffic light turns green. (2 points)
- b) as soon as the traffic light turns green. (3 points)
- c) when the opposing traffic light turns yellow. (5 points)
- d) in the car wash! (10 points)



*At time zero, all of life converges
to the vanishing point.*

At Time Zero, all of life converges to the vanishing point. The pauses disappear. Everything is *now*. Why wait any longer? You can have instant credit! You can take it home today! Your photos will be developed within minutes! Your cleaning will be

done in an hour! You can be divorced over the weekend! Here's the fast-breaking news story . . . the instant replay . . . the condensed version for busy people . . . the three, streamlined, easy steps . . . the latest look . . . the state-of-the-art design . . .

What do we do with all that time we "save"? Simple. We pack it full of more activities. Life becomes a mad rush to have it all and do it all. It's no secret that competition in the business world can be keen. Deadlines, appointments, meetings — all demand our attention. No matter if weeks have gone by since we have been with the family for more than a few moments snatched here and there between other commitments. They can wait.

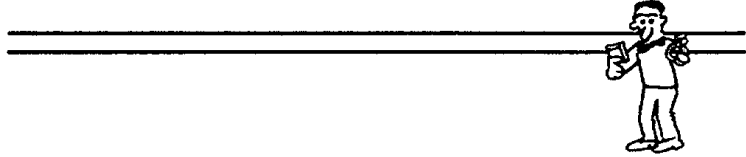
Or can they? In personal relationships, *there is no substitute for time*. The quick fix will not do. Token appearances at birthdays and anniversaries can't make up for months or years of neglect. If we expect to have relationships that are rewarding, we must give them the time and energy they require. None of us has more than twenty-four hours a day, though. We need to make certain trade-offs if we want certain results. That is, we cannot work overtime and weekends month after month and expect to have a good family life as well. After you have weighed all the factors involved, you may discover that you need to make some adjustments in your standard of living (in terms of materialistic goals) in order to improve the quality of your home life. But what will bring the most real happiness to you in the end? "Success" as society defines it, or the love of the people who are important to you?

Time is one of our most valuable resources. It speaks a strong language of acceptance — or rejection. Is so and-so "worth" my attention? If so, for how long? A whole afternoon just for my son? A weekend with my wife? How will that help me get ahead?

BOSS: OK, Smith, you've got five minutes.

SMITH: But it Will take longer than that! You gave Jones ten whole minutes. I timed it.

BOSS: Look, Smith, he's the third vice-president and you're just a lowly junior clerk. Now start talking. You should be glad you got five! Barnes only got three.

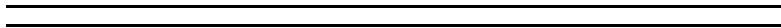


2 TIME FLOW ANALYSIS

What do *you* actually do with your time? Are you investing what you should in your important relationships?

Write in your responses. Be honest!

- a If I spent less time.....
I would have more time for
- b The one thing that would help the most and I could change is
.....
.....



Besides the time squeeze, what else makes it hard to have satisfying relationships with the people that matter to us? Modern families live under pressures and tensions that were unknown in the past. The home used to be the place where the family worked together to support itself, usually by fanning the land or making things to sell or trade. Few families do those things today.

Instead, most are dependent on outside employment and are subject to the ups and downs of an uncertain job market. Some have to move every few years to survive. Among executives competition is fierce and heads roll. Many struggle with huge debts. And in the workforce employees can be caught up in strikes which drastically reduce their income. Worst of all is the problem of long term unemployment.

To add to these kinds of economic pressures, there is confusion about how people should relate to each other. Does anybody know what the rules are anymore? Are parents supposed to be simply “friends” to their children? Does a wife have a right to get an abortion even if her husband opposes it? Does the marriage where each spouse is “free” to have other partners really provide a solution to marital unhappiness?

These are not easy questions to answer. And the advances in medical technology have made some human problems even harder to solve. Which is more important, the “quality” of life or the “sanctity” of life? Is euthanasia immoral? The traditional replies given by the Church and other authorities no longer satisfy many people. Today’s society often looks like a desert of shifting sand dunes blown about by the latest wind of public opinion.

Of course, not all families who have problems end up as divorce statistics. Some people try to compensate for an unsatisfying home life by turning to extra-marital affairs. Others try to escape it by burying themselves in their work. There are those who fill all their leisure time with endless activities like sports, travel, and hobbies. For some, alcohol and drugs is their way of dulling the pain of anxiety, neglect and rejection.



3 IS YOUR FAMILY UNDER PRESSURE?

Following are listed several life-events which can cause family stress. Mark each one that has happened in your family during the last year. (Note: any person who lives or has come to live in your home on a permanent basis should be considered a member of your family.)

- **a** Husband and wife have been divorced or have separated.
- **b** Husband or wife has remarried.

- **c** Husband has become unemployed.
 - **d** A family member has had serious problems related to alcohol or drug abuse.
 - **e** A family member has been added to the home.
 - **f** Unwise decisions and overspending have caused financial problems.
 - **g** Disagreements about family roles and relationships have increased markedly.
 - **h** A family member has left the home.
 - **i** Wife has either become employed or unemployed.
 - **j** The family has moved to another community.
-
-

Yet families have always had problems. They have had to face war, famine, poverty, natural disasters, racial prejudice and religious persecution. Some have emerged stronger than ever. And there are families who are strong today. What is their secret? How can husbands and wives and parents cope successfully with the pressures of modern living? Let's look at some guidelines that many have found to be helpful. The first ones are about keeping love alive in that very important relationship you have with the man or woman you live with.

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE?

Focal Point 3. *Discover ways of improving your marriage.*

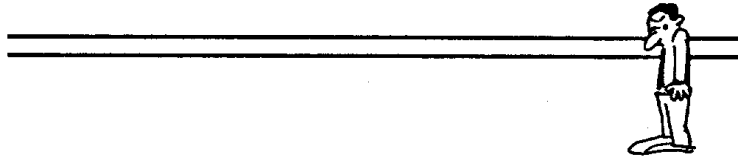
Getting married isn't too hard for most people. But staying married, *happily married* — that's certainly another story! Elizabeth Taylor, as everyone knows, has been married numerous times. None of her marriages has lasted longer than a few years. What is the problem? According to one psychologist, Elizabeth can't stay married for very long because she is unable to develop a genuine, in-depth relationship with the man she marries. What she craves is the first thrill of romance. Once the initial excitement fades, she becomes dissatisfied. She begins to feel that she is no longer the star of the show, and she starts looking for someone new to put her back in the spotlight.

Elizabeth Taylor isn't the only one who has a problem. Relationships between men and women are complex things, full of strong emotions and powerful cross-currents of needs and desires. They can bring exhilaration or depression, wonderful delight or bitter disappointment. They often require adjustments that aren't easy to make. In today's throwaway society, many people think divorce is the answer to their unhappiness. You love as long as love lasts, and when it is gone (whatever it is) you move on.

Yet marriage has never been more popular. The majority of divorced people seek remarriage. This is a revealing fact about modern life. It shows that what people want deep in their emotions is at odds with the independent chic or macho lifestyle that fills today's TV programmes, films, and glossy magazines. Most of us don't really want a series of casual affairs. We want an intimate relationship that is lasting and fulfilling. Is such a thing possible? Yes, it is. But it takes commitment and effort. There are three strategies that can help you make your marriage work, and keep working.

1. *Treat Your Marriage Partner with Full Respect and Dignity.*

You didn't marry a cook or someone to pay the bills! You married a human being. His or her point of view is as valid and worthwhile as your own; regard it as such. Never demean or belittle the person you married either in public or in private. Take his or her needs seriously. Appreciate his or her strengths. Instead of demanding your way or trying to maneuver your partner into doing what *you* want, learn how to negotiate as true equals. In your marriage, do you behave as a decent human being? Are basic courtesies a part of your relationship?



4 PARTNERSHIP PROBE

A person usually has two main kinds of family experiences in his life: those he had in the family he was

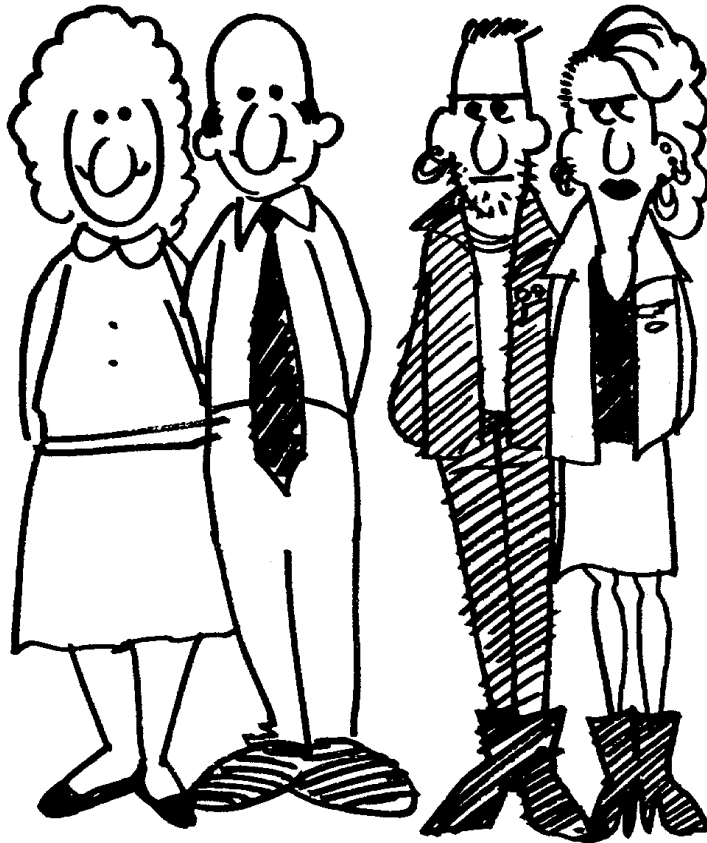
brought up in, and those he has in the relationships he forms as an adult. Here is a list stating qualities of personal interaction. Column A is for you to identify those which marked the relationship between your parents. Column B is for you to evaluate the way you relate to your spouse now. Add up the numbers to get your totals, then check the feedback to find an interpretation.

1 = almost never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes,
 4 = often, 5 = usually

| Quality | A. Parent's Relationship | | | | | B. Your Relationship | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|----------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Respect | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Cooperation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Appreciation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Courtesy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Generosity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Understanding | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Trust | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Loyalty | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| TOTALS | | | | | | | | | | |

2. Commit yourself fully to your partnership.

As you can see, this strategy grows out of the first one. Equality means equal commitment by both parties. In practical terms, this commitment must include every level of your relationship. A genuine commitment will give your partnership the foundation it needs.



*A person usually has two main kinds
of family experiences in his life...*

Men and women who give themselves fully to their partnership put themselves in a very advantageous position. They can experience not only the passion of love but also its patience. Then can know not just the pleasure of fulfilled desire, but also the deep joys of companionship, loyalty, and sacrifice.

And those who are sexually faithful to each other pay and receive the highest tribute of all. By their behavior they say to their mate: "You are a person of such worth to me that I will give you my exclusive, undivided attention." In real life, this kind of love produces treasures that are like rare fruits in sheltered gardens. They are unavailable to nomads and wanderers who will not build the walls or cultivate the soil.

Commitment sets the stage for complete, positive sexual expression. We could say that sexual energy is like an explosive force. When it is linked with marriage, it is like the power that can thrust a huge spacecraft through the barrier of earth's gravity and send it speeding toward the stars. Outside of marriage, though, it is like a fire raging out of control, burning everything in its pathway. Outside of marriage, too, it degenerates into a series of fleeting, ultimately meaningless experiences that build nothing and go nowhere. The modern media have succeeded in devaluing the currency of sexual love until whole stacks of it amount to hardly anything at all. Don't become a victim of this kind of dehumanizing inflation.

3. Give top priority to your partnership.

This principle follows the previous two. A healthy partnership is based on mutual respect in a framework of commitment. When those are in place, a true consensus can be achieved, one which both partners can support and work toward. In practical terms, what this means is that you need to learn how to balance your goals as individuals with your goals as a couple.

Your marriage is a unique combination. Talk to each other about your ambitions and agree on the things you want to achieve as a team. These are the goals which should have priority. Yet within that context, each partner needs room to develop personal skills and potential. For example, some wives want to devote their full energy to helping their husbands. Others want to pursue separate career paths. A husband may need to make some changes so his wife can have a chance to move towards some of her aims. He should not assume that his goals are the only ones that matter.

As some have said, marriage should not be a 50-50 proposition, but a 100-100 proposition. If each of you is truly

concerned for the other, both of you will benefit. Do not be confined by narrow ideas of “woman’s work” and “man’s work.” Instead, give your particular strengths to each other and do whatever is needed to make your mutual enterprise a success. Above all, value your partnership — and your partner — more than the things you can buy or the self-centred goals you can win. If your private ambitions as a person are destroying your marriage, take a good, hard look at them and ask yourself if they are really worth what you think they are. If you insist on them, you may find that you have forfeited something of far greater value.



5 GOALS WORKSHEET

At this point, take some time to think about your goals as a couple and your goals as individuals. Evaluate them in view of the fact that your partnership needs to have priority. (Note: focus especially on goals for your relationship and your family but include some of your personal dreams and ambitions too.)

| Goals | Evaluation |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Couple</i> | |
| Partnership/Relationship | ☞ More attention? ☞ Less? |
| Family development | ☞ More attention? ☞ Less? |
| Other? | Action needed:..... |
| | |
| <i>Husband</i> | |
| Career | ☞ More attention? ☞ Less? |
| Personal growth | ☞ More attention? ☞ Less? |
| Other? | Action needed:..... |
| | |
| <i>Wife</i> | |
| Career | ☞ More attention? ☞ Less? |

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Personal growth | More attention? Less? |
| Other?..... | Action needed: |



6 MARRIAGE QUIZ

a Circle the one or two words that best describe your marriage now:

| | | |
|------------|-------------|----------|
| Satisfying | Peaceful | Exciting |
| Fulfilling | Comfortable | Boring |
| Strained | Unhappy | Troubled |
| Painful | Failing | |

b Think about the three strategies that have been mentioned. Mark the one you could follow that would improve your marriage the most.

- ... 1) Treating your partner with respect and dignity
 ... 2) Making a full commitment to your partnership
 ... 3) Giving top priority to your partnership

If you are unsure about these strategies, try them anyway. They work! And the important thing about them is that you can start on your own, and you can start now. Remember that apathy is the greatest enemy of a good relationship. Very few troubled marriages are beyond help if at least one partner is willing to make the changes that are needed. And even good marriages need constant upkeep if they are to survive the wear and tear of modern living. Is the trouble worth it? See for yourself!

For most of us, a husband or wife isn't the only person around the house. There are those little tornadoes of energy whirling through the kitchen on muddy feet, or perhaps those

surly teenagers snarling at us from across the room . . .
Somebody help us! We're parents!

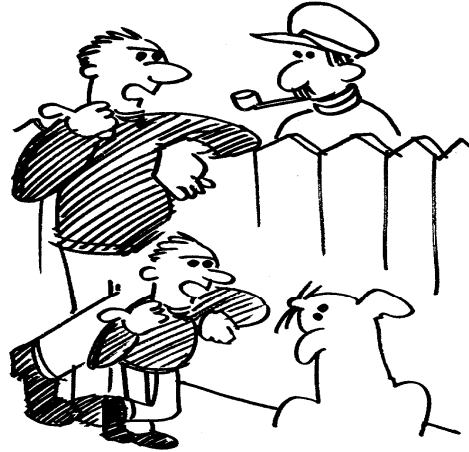
“The crime problem is the boy problem, and the finest prisons in the world are only monuments to neglected youth.” —James A. Johnson, former warden of Alcatraz Prison ,California, USA

A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Focal Point 4. *Cope more effectively as a parent.*

“Babies are an inestimable blessing and bother,” said one wit. Few statements could be nearer the truth! Our children keep us sleepless by night and worn Out by day. They amuse us, amaze us, provoke us, and frustrate us. They ask us “Why?” when we’d rather not explain. They mirror our oddities and repeat our opinions, and we are at once horrified and flattered. Yet they allow us to experience the world through new eyes and ears, and we can’t help being enchanted and delighted. They’re the next generation, our statement that somehow, in spite of it all, we want to believe in the future.

Being a parent in today’s world is a tough job, though. The forces that influence our lives as adults have an even greater impact on our children. Some of these forces are sinister indeed. Violence in society has increased to a point where children are becoming its victims, inside the home as well as outside it. The rise of drug and alcohol abuse has taken its toll on many young lives. The lack of strong moral values has left a vacuum that many young people have tried to fill with cults and strange, bizzare religions. How can we prevent our children from being affected by these things? And how can we turn the situation around if our children’s lives are at risk for one reason or another?



*...they mirror our oddities and
repeat our opinions...*

One young drug addict said, "Neither of my parents ever cared about me or showed me any love. I had nobody." This young man left school, started to spend his time with youths involved in crime, and became addicted to drugs. Whether the family is rich or poor doesn't seem to matter. If there is no real love at home, children may try negative ways to get the attention of their parents. Many social workers and psychologists are convinced that anti-social and self-destructive behavior is a child's way of crying, "Look at me! Notice what I'm doing! Show that you care what happens to me!"

Tragically, all too often these kinds of pleas go unheeded. Sometimes the behavior is dismissed as childish pranks or youthful experimentation. Of course, not all children from homes without love become delinquents. They simply grow up to become adults who cannot express love. So the cycle repeats itself.

How can we bring up our children successfully in today's society? How can we give them the kind of love they need? Here are four tested guidelines to help you survive as a parent *and* build healthier parent/child relationships. Whether you are

rearing your children alone or with your partner, these can help you create an atmosphere in which they can grow into mature, responsible adults.

1. *Treat Your Children as Individuals of Worth and Value.*

In a very real sense, your children are “yours” only for a short time. Before you know it, they are out on their own, having to make their own way in the world. This means that you must not exploit them while they are with you by taking advantage of their natural desire to please you. They must not be forced to earn your approval by pursuing your unfulfilled dreams. Instead, you must give them the freedom and help they need to develop the unique set of abilities and talents that they have.

In some cultures, sons are highly prized while daughters are viewed as burdens. No secret is made of the fact that female children are not welcomed into the family. But even where these forms of rejection are not practised, subtle kinds of discrimination can exist that are just as destructive. The competitive society we live in rewards those who meet its superficial ideals of beauty, strength, physical ability, and pleasing personality. Those who meet these standards are considered superior to those who do not. Parents should not apply such measurements to their children. Instead, they should praise and reward them when they demonstrate inner qualities like integrity and self-discipline.

Of course, placing equal value on all of your children does not mean they should all be treated in exactly the same way. They are individuals, and no two are alike. But it does mean that you should not show favouritism to one child at the expense of the others, or continually compare him or her with someone else. All of your children are entitled to your full love and acceptance. Their worth comes not from what they can do or accomplish, but from the fact that they are human beings like yourself.



7 CHECK FOR DISTORTIONS

Have you been seeing your children from the wrong viewpoint? Think about the kinds of messages you have been giving each one.

Here's a chart to help you plan the corrective action you should take.

| Child's Name: | Find specific ways to . . . |
|---------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o show that he/she is a person of worth and value o reward behavior that shows positive inner qualities Or? |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o show that he/she is a person of worth and value o reward behavior that shows positive inner qualities Or? |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o show that he/she is a person of worth and value o reward behavior that shows positive inner qualities Or? |

2. Present a United Front as Parents.

Many new parents find — to their dismay — that the arrival of children causes conflicts to surface between them as a couple: they discover that they have different ideas about discipline in the home. Children are quick to sense this lack of agreement. As they grow older, they use it to play one parent off against the other: “But *Mother* said I could. . . .”

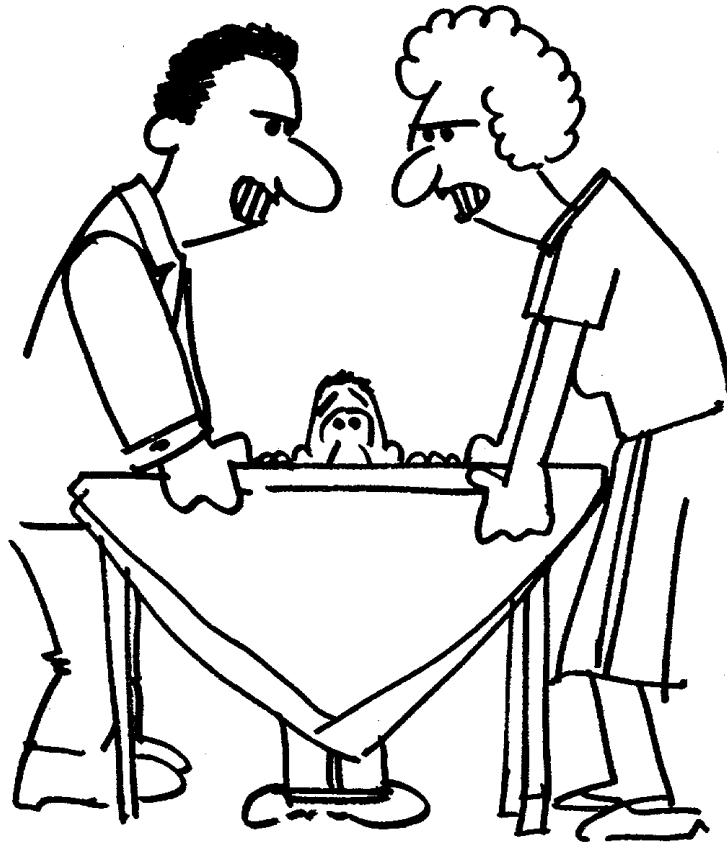
Children who grow up in a home where there is constant disagreement between their parents feel insecure and anxious. If you and your spouse continually argue about what to do in front of them and one of you behaves one way and the other behaves another, you add to their confusion and perplexity. This is why you should make a determined effort to resolve your differences about discipline *before* the problems arise. If you haven't been able to anticipate a certain kind of situation that has come up, you may need to let your husband or wife go ahead and handle it. Do not oppose your partner openly if you disagree, but discuss the matter as soon as you can and decide what you will do the next time.



8 WHAT IS YOUR CONFLICT PROFILE?

Take time to mark or write in your answer. When dealing with our children, my husband/wife and I

- a) *agree* most about . . .
- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> DISCIPLINE | <input type="radio"/> FREEDOM | <input type="radio"/> RULES |
| <input type="radio"/> VALUES | <input type="radio"/> FRIENDS | Or? |
- b) *disagree* most about . . .
- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> DISCIPLINE | <input type="radio"/> FREEDOM | <input type="radio"/> RULES |
| <input type="radio"/> VALUES | <input type="radio"/> FRIENDS | Or? |
- c) usually avoid discussing . . .
- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> DISCIPLINE | <input type="radio"/> FREEDOM | <input type="radio"/> RULES |
| <input type="radio"/> VALUES | <input type="radio"/> FRIENDS | Or? |
- d) need to resolve differences about . . .
- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> DISCIPLINE | <input type="radio"/> FREEDOM | <input type="radio"/> RULES |
| <input type="radio"/> VALUES | <input type="radio"/> FRIENDS | Or? |



*Children who grow up in a home where
there is constant disagreement...
feel insecure and anxious.*

“Wait a minute,” you may be saying. “I’m married to a person who does not accept the goals I have for family living.” If you are in such a position, approach your situation with great sensitivity and awareness. Don’t spend a lot of energy trying to

convince your spouse that you are right. Just go ahead and love your children without arguing about it. Eventually, your husband or wife may be won over when they see the positive results that follow.

Single Parent Problems

If you are a single parent, your position is also a challenging one. Be careful to keep any problems you have as an adult from becoming serious burdens to your children. If you have been divorced, you will find that it is tempting to express your personal anger toward your ex-wife or ex-husband by demeaning them in front of your children. But if you do this, you will make the situation even worse. You may turn your children into emotional cripples by forcing them to carry not only their own insecurities, but also your hostility towards your former mate. Instead, allow them the freedom to love both their parents. For yourself, try to form positive friendships with other adults who share the kind of goals you have for your family. Those friendships are the place to talk about your experiences and reactions.

3. *Model the Behavior You Want.*

As a parent, you are in a powerful position with respect to your children. Your example — good or bad — will influence them in lasting ways. This means that the most effective method of helping them become responsible, caring adults is to be one yourself. If you want your son or daughter to listen to you when you talk, give him or her the same courtesy. If you want them to respect the property of others, treat their possessions with care.

From a very early age, children absorb attitudes and ways of looking at life and its problems. If you say one thing and do another, they are much more likely to imitate your behavior than to follow your instructions. So make a real effort to have a healthy lifestyle that matches the directions you give them. This does not mean that you have to be perfect. *But you do have to be honest.* When you make a poor decision, say so. You will discover that your children can handle your mistakes much more

easily than your hypocrisy. If you are willing to admit to your failings, they will be able to do the same.

4. *Work for Your Children's Best Interests.*

In practical terms, working for your child's best interest means wanting the very best for him or her. But what is the very best? Some would say it is financial prosperity or happiness. Yet those things are superficial. A far more valuable goal is to help them become people who have the right kind of attitude, both toward themselves and others.

Do not allow them to keep doing something that is harmful even if they become angry with you and are unhappy for a while. Be firm and consistent, and they will respond. It is important for you to set — and enforce — reasonable limits on their behavior. This will give them a feeling of security because they will know what you want from them. It will also help them develop the ability to control their actions. Keep a balanced approach. Notice, reward, reinforce, and praise their good behavior, and exercise firm but appropriate discipline when they disobey.

On the positive side, take time to teach your children how to do things so they can develop their skills. They have a powerful, inborn drive to be part of what is going on around them. If you prevent them from helping you because it is inconvenient, they will feel unimportant and useless. But if you help them to improve their skills, they will understand that they are needed and valuable. As they get older, recognize the fact that they will want to become more independent and self-directed. This is a legitimate desire. Don't create unnecessary tension by misreading their motives and accusing them of being obstinate or disobedient.

If you have helped your children develop good values from the time they are small, you should be able to let them have a greater say in the affairs that concern them as they grow up. In order to do this, you must allow them to experience the consequences of their decisions. But do not withdraw your influence. If they propose a certain plan of action, help them to visualize the outcome that will probably result.



9 TAKE AN INVENTORY OF YOUR PARENTAL SKILLS

Here's a survey to help you see areas where improvement may be needed.

1 = Never 2 = Occasionally 3 = Sometimes
4 = Frequently 5 = Nearly always

- | | | | | | | |
|----------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a | I treat my children with respect and dignity. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b | I encourage my children to develop their unique talents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c | My wife (or husband) and I take time to resolve our differences about discipline. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d | I am an example of the kind of behavior that I want my children to show to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e | I am honest with my children. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f | I notice and praise my children when they behave well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g | I discipline my children in a consistent and fair way when they do what is wrong. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h | I take time to help my children learn how to do things so they can contribute to the household. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i | I look for signs of growing maturity in my children and increase their freedom as they are ready for it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Total:

Surviving as a parent means learning how to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. You have a relationship with your children that is unique and significant. If you have not been successful up to this point, don't allow your past to imprison you.

Start now to follow the guidelines that will help you meet their long-term needs. Day by day, keep working toward your goals. You will be rewarded as you see them develop into adults who can be a positive force for good in society.

“Without friends no one would choose to live, even if he had all other goods.”

— Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

THE ESSENTIAL BOND

Focal Point 5. *Consider the focus true friendship needs.*

It had been a day like most others—ordinary and uneventful. Nothing forewarned me of the curious experience I was to have that night.

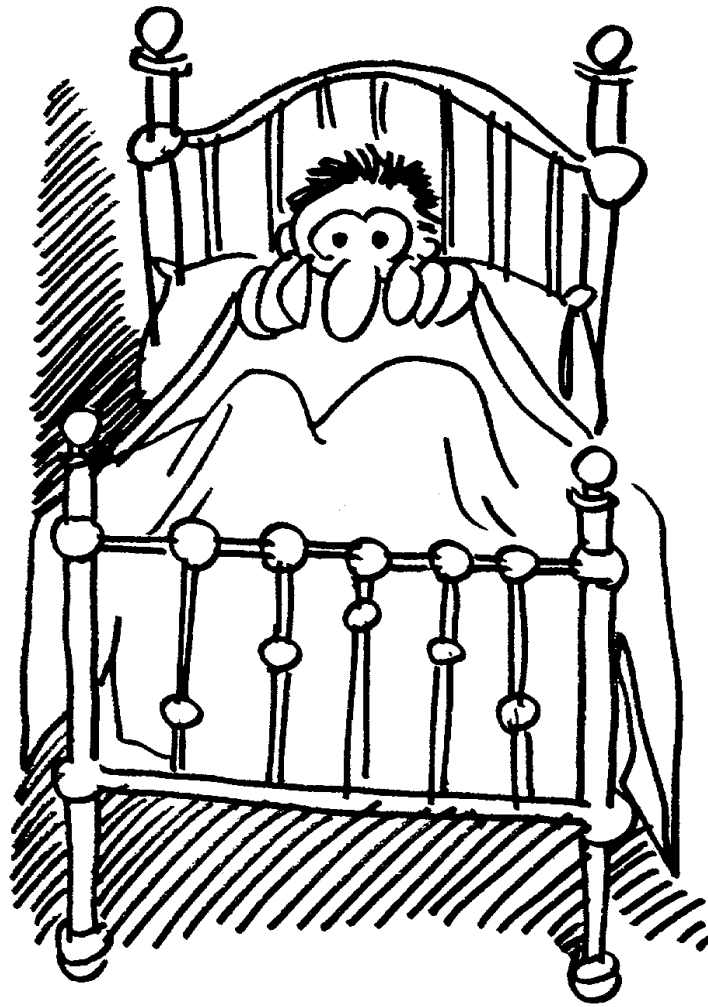
I turned out the lights as usual, and drifted off to sleep. And then it happened. I still don't know if what I am about to tell you really took place, or if it was only a dream. But anyhow, here it is, just as I remember it.

As I said, I had drifted off to sleep. Then, sometime during that strange night, I heard my bedroom door open, and a Person stood there. The odd thing that strikes me now as I tell this to you is that I wasn't surprised to see him—or afraid of him. I can't quite describe his appearance, though. If I were to say that his entire body glowed with an unearthly, incandescent light, you might be able to imagine what he looked like. But how he looked wasn't the important part. What he showed me was. He beckoned me to follow him, and I got up at once. It seemed the logical thing to do. As I went after him through the door, I suddenly found that I was somewhere else, walking behind him down a long hallway.

After we had walked some distance down the corridor, he paused in front of a door. “You wanted to see what Hell is like?” he said softly. “Here, take a look. “As he opened the door, a wave of deafening curses and harsh words assaulted my ears. I saw a large table surrounded by many people. They behaved like wild animals, pushing and elbowing each other while they tried to eat from the bowls that were set in front of them. When I looked more

closely, I discovered the reason why there was such chaos: the handles of all their spoons were too long, making it impossible for them to feed themselves properly. It was an ugly, disturbing sight. After my Guide shut the door and we continued our way down the corridor, the tableau replayed itself in my mind.

“Now I will show you what Heaven is like,” he said, taking hold of my arm and stopping before another door. He opened it, and inside I saw the same kind of table, the same kind of bowls, and the same kind of spoons. This table was also surrounded by



Then, sometime during the night, I heard my bedroom door open, and a Person stood there.

many people. But there were no curses or angry remarks — just the lively conversation of good friends eating together. I looked intently at the scene, trying to understand the mystery that now faced me. Then I suddenly realized that each person was feeding someone else with his or her long handled spoon. Everyone was occupied helping someone, and everyone was being fed. My Guide closed the door. Deep in thought over what I had just seen, I followed him down the hallway.

We walked on a little further. He opened another door, and motioned me to go on through. As I looked back at him that time, I saw that he had started to fade. I know that sounds weird, but that 's just what happened. He started to fade. The next thing I knew, the door slammed shut behind me with a terrific bang and I fell forward onto my bedroom floor with a thud. For a split second, I had the sensation that I had just been catapulted onto a fast-moving train. I laid there for a few minutes until my head stopped spinning. Then I grabbed the nearest chair and slowly pulled myself to my feet. After a few more minutes, the floor stopped swaying. I made my way unsteadily across the room and collapsed onto my bed where I awoke when I heard my alarm go off several hours later.

So, was it just a dream? First thing, I'd probably say it was crazy, wouldn't you? But then again, *I'm not sure.*

For now, let's keep moving along. Let's shift the focus away from ourselves and look outward again. The world around us is full of information. Many philosophies compete for our allegiance. Which ideas should we keep, and which should we throw out? Are there some that are actually destructive? And what about our schools? What problems are they having, and how should we respond to them? These are some of the subjects of our next chapter.



SOME FEEDBACK TO THE INTERACTIONS ...

- 1 Your opinion. How do you think your grandparents would have responded to this question as young people?
- 2 Your answer. Did you discover some persistent time wasters? Some steps you can take to redirect your energy?
- 3 The events have been listed in descending order of stress level. Here are the values they have been assigned on a scale of 1-100; the higher the value, the greater the stress. (Note: death of a spouse, which we have not listed, is rated at 100.)

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| a 70 | d 44 | g 35 | i 26 |
| b 50 | e 39 | h 29 | j 20 |
| c 47 | f 38 | | |

Of course, many other life-events could be named. If three or more of these changes have occurred recently, though, your family may be experiencing a high degree of stress.

- 4 How did you rate? Of course, the higher the score in each column (of a possible 40), the more satisfying the relationships are. A score below 28 would probably indicate that there are some serious difficulties. If you rated both relationships, did you notice any patterns that have repeated themselves?
- 5 This is not an easy exercise, as you have probably found out! However, I hope it has helped you discover ways of dealing with the needs of your marriage in a more realistic manner.
- 6 Your replies. Words like “boring” and “strained” might not seem to indicate that your marriage is in trouble. However, they are early warning signs. You may need to take a closer look at the way you treat your husband or wife. Have you started to develop some destructive patterns that you need to abandon?
- 7 Your descriptions. Besides the standards of society, there may be some other influences that have shaped your ideas about your children. Reflect on the way your parents treated you and the others in your family. Are you repeating any negative patterns that were part of your childhood?
- 8 There may be some serious problems here, especially if your home life was quite different from that of your husband or wife. Take time to discuss your childhood experiences and

feelings openly with each other. This will make it easier for you to move beyond your differences and decide how to deal with your children as a team.

- 9** If your total is between 36 and 45, you are certainly a model parent! A total of between 27 and 35 means that you have room for improvement. If your total is below 27, obviously you need to give more attention to your children. Again, remember that it is never too late to start. An honest effort to change will bring results.



...the fact is we cannot escape the sea of messages that surround us.

4

Maintain Your Mental Balance

“A lie, turned topsy-turvy, can be prinked and tinselled out, decked in plumage new and fine, till none knows its lean old carcass.”

— Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt*, Act I

One afternoon, four boys rent a video which has a detailed, realistic, and violent murder scene in it. They're at one of the boys' homes; neither of his parents is there. After watching the video, the youths leave the house in search of a victim. They find an elderly, defenceless pensioner, and kill him. Later on, they confess to the police that they got the idea for the killing from the video they had watched.

Shocking? Yes. Impossible? No. Incidents like this have happened recently. They illustrate the powerful effect the media can have. Besides violence, there are other themes which touch and influence people's lives. Day after day and in all kinds of ways, we are being “educated” about almost every conceivable subject.

There are newspapers, magazines, books, radio shows, television programmes, and films. There are billboards, posters, car stickers, and signs of every kind posted in every conceivable place. There are even angry, fevered protests — or simple, raw

obscenities — scrawled on subways and walls. Though sometimes we would like to, the fact is we cannot escape the sea of messages that surrounds us. Ours is certainly an “information society.”

There are all the official voices too — the teachers in our schools who are responsible for the formal education of our sons and daughters. And of course, our children are exposed to the opinions of their schoolmates.

Not everyone is telling the truth, either to us or to our children. Some people aren't malicious; they're just repeating the errors others have made . Because authentic success is built on truth, though, we must learn to separate truth from deception and teach our children how to do the same. Otherwise, we'll be diverted from our goals on detours and byways that are unproductive — possibly dangerous and life-threatening.

TOPICS

Admen, Supermen, and Centrefolds
 What's Going on in Today's Classrooms?
 Two and Two Make Five

FOCUS

This chapter will help you to:

- Understand how the media can shape your ideas of the world.
- Solve school-related problems.
- Know why you must analyze the ideas and information you receive.

ADMEN, SUPERMEN, AND CENTREFOLDS

Focal Point 1. *Avoid being manipulated by modern methods of communication.*

In recent years there has been an explosion of inventions that have affected the way we communicate. Each has its own particular style, its own special kind of power. Those who want to influence others are aware of this. What are their motives and techniques? How can their methods of communication affect us?

Persuasion by Design

Usually, those who manage to gain access to the biggest media megaphones want to sell us something—anything. Maybe it is a new car. Maybe it is an idea about ourselves. Maybe it is an opinion about how life should be lived or what ought to be done to set things right. But regardless of what they are wanting us to “buy,” one thing is certain. They are interested in some kind of response from us, or they would not spend their time and effort trying to get our attention.

Many of the messages are carefully arranged in order to have a certain effect. Just have a look at some perfume or cologne advertisements. Daub or spray on the right potion, they say (the more expensive it is, the more effective, of course!) and you will be totally irresistible. They’ll come after you in droves. And who doesn’t want to be sought after? To be thought attractive, even compelling?

There’s a negative side to this too. We’re made to feel inferior if we don’t look like the glowing men and women who advertise everything from laundry soap to new cars. Our legs are too fat, or too thin. We bulge, or maybe we’re flat, in all the wrong places. Some people spend vast sums of money on questionable plastic surgery. Their motto seems to be, “Get everything lifted that can be.” All for what? To look like the current crop of “beautiful people” — the Greek gods and goddesses of our time.



*Daub on the right potion... they'll
come after you in droves.*

But advertisements that tell us how we should think about ourselves and satisfy our needs are just part of the picture. There are other kinds of messages too. For instance, the way current events are reported can have a great deal to do with the kind of political opinions we choose to accept and the way we look at the world around us. Consider the following items of information:

- a) A separatist organization has killed a policeman.
- b) The policeman who was killed by the separatists was visiting a sick friend and leaves behind a wife and several children.
- c) A statement by an official of the government says that stronger measures should be taken against the separatist group.
- d) The separatist group states that the policeman made several arrests for which there was insufficient evidence.
- e) Pictures which show the policeman's wife and children.

Let us imagine that these items have been submitted to a TV station news desk. And let us say that the editor and the newscaster select and report them in the sequence a), b), e), c), which we'll label "TV-1":

- a) A separatist organization has killed a policeman.
- b) The policeman who was killed by the separatists was visiting a sick friend and leaves behind a wife and several children .
- c) Pictures which show the policeman's wife and children.
- d) A statement made by an official of the government says that stronger measures should be taken against the separatist group.

Let us also suppose that the same items have been submitted to another TV station news desk . But this time, the editor and the newscaster select and report them in the sequence a), d), and c). We'll call this "TV-2:"

- a) A separatist organization has killed a policeman.
- d) The separatist group states that the policeman made several arrests for which there was insufficient evidence.
- c) A statement has been made by an official of the government that stronger measures should be taken against the separatist group.



1 Now let us imagine that both programmes are broadcast. We will call the people who watch “TV-1” Group 1 and the people who watch “TV-2” Group 2. Which group do you think would be more likely to have the *strongest* agreement with the statement made by the government official (item c)? GROUP 1 or GROUP 2?

It is not easy for news reporters to present information in an unbiased manner. Of course, there are those who do better than others, and a good number have earned a well-deserved reputation for fairness and impartiality. In societies which are more open to the expression of opposing opinions, people usually have a reasonable opportunity to look at all the information. However, some facts may still be left out either deliberately or by accident. What is omitted may be vital information.

The Iceberg Effect

In some ways, popular shows about family living express certain beliefs about life, though they are not actually stated. These dramas are like icebergs: the actual story, like the tip of the iceberg, is just part of the whole.

TV serial, “Neighbours and Friends.” Setting: Bob and Flora’s kitchen. Bob and Flora are a middle-aged couple having breakfast on a Saturday morning.

FLORA: (*Sipping some coffee.*) Bob, we need to start thinking about where Mother’s going to live.

BOB: (*Rattling the newspaper he’s reading.*) Huh? . . . oh no, they lost again!

FLORA: (*Irritated and a little louder.*) Bob, I said we need to start thinking about where Mother’s going to live. Since Dad died, she’s had a hard time managing alone.

BOB: (Looking up from the paper.) Oh yes, dear . . . is that so?

FLORA: Yes, it is. I just think she needs to move to a place like Golden Oaks where there's someone around.

BOB: Hmm. I suppose you're right. But wouldn't Maytime Manor be better? I hear that Golden Oaks is really expensive.

FLORA: Maybe so. But we need to help her decide on a place soon so she can get on the waiting list.



"Bob, we need to start thinking about where Mother's going to live."

Notice one of the things that has *not* been included in this discussion. Neither Bob nor Flora has mentioned the idea of asking Flora's mother if she wants to live with them. The assumption that elderly parents usually go to retirement homes has already been made, and the discussion simply revolves around which place to choose. We could say that in a subtle way,

the characters have “taught” us how elderly people should be treated in today’s society. Such a scene would probably never have been imagined a few generations ago. At that time, most older parents and relatives continued to be part of the family unit as long as they lived.

Recall for a moment the description of the structure of society that you considered in Chapter 1. That description showed that societies are based on values—shared beliefs about life. What we are saying at this point is that the beliefs about life underlying a story are there, beneath the surface as part of the package, but they are not made clear.

Another example of this would be the films, videos, books, and television programmes (including those made for children) in which sex and violence play such a large part. In the stories that feature violence, people solve their problems or express their frustrations by taking aggressive action against others. The heroes of these dramas are not morally superior to the villains. They’re just smarter, faster, and bolder. They fight fire with fire, kill their enemies, and at the end, they get the money and the girls (the most beautiful ones, of course, but not to marry, mind you — just to take to bed).

In other stories, all kinds of sexual behaviour are glamorized and regarded as permissible. Sexual intercourse has lost almost any connection with trust, commitment, and fidelity between one man and one woman. Instead, it has been cheapened and twisted almost beyond recognition. Rape, incest, and other forms of sexual violence, deviation, and exploitation are regularly paraded in front of the viewer. The shallow and destructive values these stories represent are constantly being advertised and “sold” in our society — not just to us, but also to our children.



2 Think about the TV programmes and films you watch and the books or magazines you read. Are destructive or shallow values part of the package? Here are some samples. Mark the two or three ideas that you think are most frequently beneath the surface:

- o IT'S OK IF YOU DON'T GET CAUGHT
- o MIGHT IS RIGHT
- o MONEY IS EVERYTHING
- o BEAUTY IS EVERYTHING
- o POWER IS EVERYTHING
- o WINNING IS EVERYTHING
- o SEX IS EVERYTHING
- o WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON
- o REVENGE IS SWEET
- o THE END JUSTIFIES THE MEANS
- o LOVE THEM AND LEAVE THEM
- o MY WAY NO MATTER WHOM IT HURTS
- o LIVE FOR THE MOMENT

Or

The "Expert" Syndrome

Besides the ideas of those who deal in fiction and fabrication, there are the pronouncements of the experts — those who claim to know more about a given subject than ordinary folks do. Some of us are prone to depend quite heavily on these people because we feel at a disadvantage in today's complex society. We don't believe that we are capable of making judgements in areas where we do not have all the facts. As a result, we assign a great deal of authority and weight to the opinions of those who say that they have scientific support, evidence, research, and so on, to back them up.

We begin to think that because something *can* be done that it *should* be done. Science, though, is too important to be left

completely to the scientists. Who should make the decision whether a biologist should experiment with live human embryos? Does it make a difference if they were fertilized in a laboratory or a woman's body?

Sometimes it is a good idea to listen to the experts. On the other hand, they are not always right. Their research methods are subject to human error and bias. Certainly, many of them make a strong effort to remain objective. But they cannot completely escape the human need to interpret and evaluate, to see things in light of their beliefs about the world.

For example, consider the case of several football fans who have reacted with violence and rioting at the end of a match. In the aftermath of the outbreak, certain well-known sociologists and psychologists come forward. They tell us that the violence was caused by the high rate of unemployment in the area where the fans live. What are these experts really saying? Perhaps this: the behaviour of people is caused by their environment. If they don't have jobs or are otherwise under pressure, they will act in anti-social ways. According to the experts, then, people are simply victims of their circumstances. All evidence to the contrary is ignored, and the fans are excused somewhat for what they do. After all, they aren't completely to blame.

Another side to the "expert" syndrome is the "halo" effect. This effect occurs when a person who is well-known in one field says something about another. Here is Mr. So-and-so, a wealthy businessman who offers his solution to a foreign-relations problem, or there is Ms. What's-her-name, a famous and beautiful actress who reveals the diet that helps her keep in shape. He is not a politician, and she is not a nutritionist. But because both are successful in their own fields, their opinions on other subjects are respected also. Who says what is significant in communication — but so is how they say it.

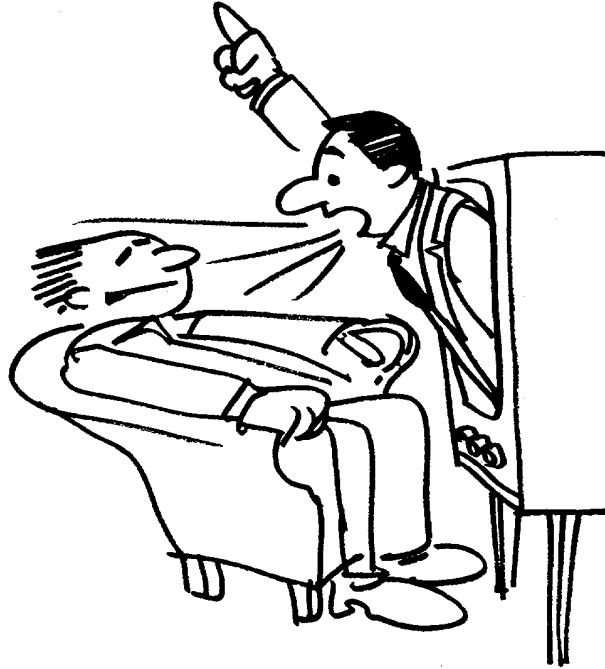
Bigger and Louder than Life

Several successive waves of technology have given us the printed page, the telephone, the radio, the motion picture, television, the electronic computer, and the global satellite

communications network. As each new medium has been introduced, it has motivated people to arrange the raw data of experience in certain ways to fit it. We live in a society where much of what we see and hear has already been processed before it gets to us.

We are consumers of pre-pack aged information and targets of advertising campaigns. In this respect, our lives are very different from those who lived before the modern era. Their days were filled with the sounds of human conversation with all of its hesitations, repetitions, and pauses, and with the slow-paced events and ordinary sights of home and village life. By contrast, we live in a knowledge-intensive environment. We are literally bombarded from every direction with information in many compact and condensed forms.

As each new medium has been introduced, it has also carried with it a certain air of authority. The printed page is a good example of this phenomenon. The first books to be printed included scientific and religious content. They were regarded with a great deal of respect. Even today many people still have a tendency to believe that anything that has found its way into a textbook, newspaper, or magazine must somehow be true. Now that television has made its appearance, the same kind of



The fact that someone has said something on television ... somehow makes his statement more important.

phenomenon has repeated itself. The fact that someone has said something on television, for instance, somehow makes his statement more important. If your neighbour or mine had said the same thing, we would probably pay little attention to it.

Besides this megaphone effect, television also has a way of creating the illusion that we are seeing life as it is. It gives us the feeling that we have opened up a window on the world. The result is that we are inclined to think that the programmes we see are like the original events almost exactly as they happened. Those who work behind the cameras and in the editing rooms know this isn't true.

As we have already pointed out, news stories and items must be arranged for broadcasting. Someone must decide what will be shown and what will not be shown. Even when an event is covered live at the time it is taking place, there are certain limitations. It isn't possible to show the happening from every angle or record everything that goes on. Groups of people can look larger or smaller, the police can appear to be more or less aggressive, and other impressions can be given, all depending on the way the cameras and microphones are placed and used.



3 You and your family live in a particular kind of information environment. Take a few moments to estimate how much your opinions and beliefs have been influenced by the factors that have been described. Use this key:

1 = very little or none, **2** = some, **3** = a moderate amount,
4 = quite a lot, **5** = very much.

| | Yourself | Your Children |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| a Persuasion by Design | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| b The Iceberg Effect | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| c The "Expert" Syndrome | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| d Bigger and Louder than Life | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Totals: | | |

The point of all this is that we must not allow ourselves to be unduly influenced by the mass media. The pressure to conform to unhealthy attitudes around us is strong. We need to evaluate carefully all the ideas that come to us through the modern channels of communication and reject those that would lead us away from the goals we have chosen. We must teach

our children to be discerning viewers, readers, and listeners also.

Now that we've looked at our general information environment, let's look at the more formal side of it. Are today's schools giving our children the kind of education they need?

WHAT'S GOING ON IN TODAY'S CLASSROOMS?

Focal Point 2. *Develop strategies for dealing with school problems.*

Besides those who use television, radio, and newspapers to inform us, there are the "official" teachers, paid by the government with our taxes. They are supposed to help our children learn what our society has decided they need to know to become responsible, useful citizens. This task isn't as easy as it used to be, though. Quite a number of schools are having serious problems today. What are these problems and what kind of impact can they have on us and our children? First, let's look at the overall picture.

In many respects, the problems in today's schools are direct results of the conditions that exist in today's society. They are related to social factors such as economic pressures, rapid urbanization, stressful family relationships, conflicts in values, and changing social conditions. The Johnsons — a typical family — illustrate some of the ways these factors have affected education.

Case Study: The Johnsons

Donald and Susan Johnson have two children: Mary, who is eleven years old, and Robert, who is seven. Both children attend a large comprehensive school. In her science classes, Mary has been studying the history of the discovery and use of nuclear energy. Her teacher has pointed out the dangers of using it as a power source, and they have discussed some of the accidents that have happened at nuclear power plants. Mary's teacher says that such stations should be outlawed and has asked the class to write

a paper on the subject. Mary feels upset and confused about the assignment because her father works in a nuclear power plant. That evening, she talks to him about what has happened. She tells him that he should quit his job right away and that the station should be shut down. How should Mary's father respond? He is convinced that her teacher has exaggerated the dangers.

One afternoon, Susan notices that Robert seems unusually quiet after coming home from school. She asks him to tell her what happened that day. After listening to him, Susan concludes that there seem to be several problem children in Robert's class who make it hard for him to concentrate on his lessons. Susan then asks Robert how his teacher acts towards those children. Robert says that she often shouts at them to sit down and tells them they are bad children. Robert says that he doesn't like going to school and that he would rather stay at home. What should Susan do?

These two situations illustrate the impact of several forces on traditional forms of education. In Mary's case, there is an apparent conflict between the ideas of her teacher and her father. Her teacher is against the use of nuclear energy; her father evidently sees no serious problems with it. There can be other kinds of differences between the ideas and values of parents and teachers. In today's society, people of many different backgrounds live side by side and their children attend the same schools. Besides this, teachers have their own opinions. While most make an effort not to impose these on their students, it is impossible for them to be completely objective about everything they teach. Conflicts, sometimes even serious ones, can arise because not all share the same beliefs.

Many schools have become increasingly involved in sex education. This topic was formerly left to the parents to deal with at home. The fact that it is being explored in the classroom raises many questions. Should it be taught at all? If so, what aspects of it should teachers cover? Should they deal with only the biological and medical facts, leaving the social and ethical issues to the parents? If teachers discuss social and ethical issues, what if their values are opposed to those of the parents? What about topics like homosexuality, birth control, and abortion? And what

about diseases such as AIDS which are transmitted by certain kinds of sexual contact?

The teaching of religion — or lack of teaching — is another area in which there is a conflict of values. In Europe, there has been a historic connection between religion and education. There was a time when churchmen were the educated class and practically all education was provided by the church. The religious establishment exercised a great deal of control at all levels of instruction. There are still many schools in Europe which have ties to the state church (or what was formerly the state church) and where classes in religion are required subjects. Today there are strong moves to modify the place of religion in school. Some want to omit it altogether, while others want children to study all religions.

As more people have moved to the large cities, many small, village schools have been replaced by large, consolidated ones. This change by itself would not necessarily have created difficulties. But homes have changed too. A higher proportion of them are unstable and troubled due to divorce, alcoholism, and other problems. As a result, fewer children have consistent discipline at home, which means that more of them have problems at school. In these circumstances, classroom control becomes a serious issue. Should teachers be allowed to use any means — including physical punishment — in order to maintain at least some kind of order?

Besides the kinds of factors that have affected the Johnsons, there are others at work too. The quality of education in many communities is being affected by economic difficulties. Many school systems simply do not have enough money to operate well. Low pay for teachers means that the teaching profession does not attract or hold enough of the bright, creative, dedicated people that it needs. Lack of funds also creates problems for students. Many who are otherwise qualified cannot continue their studies because government grants and subsidies are in short supply.

A further area of challenge for schools today is to know how to prepare students for the future they will face. Educators and

administrators can find themselves being pulled in opposite directions. Some parents can demand that schools provide students with all the latest equipment and offer them a wide variety of choices. At the same time, others can insist that schools concentrate on the basic learning skills and omit the “nonessentials.”



...more often than not, schools are followers, not leaders of social change.

All of them want to prepare children to live and work in the world they will face as adults. Yet at the same time, no one

knows what kind of situation today's children will actually encounter. Who is right about what should be done?

It is a fact that some of today's schools are obsolete. They were structured to meet the needs of an industrial society rather than the information society which we are becoming. When the industrial wave overtook the more simple, agricultural society, specialized "educational factories" — schools — made their appearance. The function of such schools has been to turn out the necessary numbers of electricians, factory workers, mechanics, and typists, as well as the right quotas of lawyers, doctors, and scientists. But most of us who live in the developed nations are now absorbing changes and features of the information age.

A history of education shows that more often than not, schools are followers, not leaders, of social change. They exist to pass on what has been, not to explore what will be. When there is rapid change, they are often the last institutions to adjust to it. Today's educators — like the rest of us — are having to cope with the many dislocations which the information age is producing. It is no wonder that there are problems. We could wish for schools and teachers that had all the answers. But there aren't any. The total effect of these problems has been to distort the positive role that education ought to have. Yet if we are committed to the goal of training our children to be responsible adults, we can find workable solutions for them.

Moving Toward Solutions

You and your family may live in a relatively quiet, peaceful town or community — or a busy, congested city. But don't make any assumptions about the kind of education your children are receiving. A placid, tranquil school may be failing to prepare them for the kind of world they will live in as adults. Whatever their particular situation may be, there are three general guidelines you can follow to help them profit the most from it.

1. *Form a dear idea of what you want the school to do for your child.* Before you try to deal with the specific strengths and weaknesses of your child's school, you must know what you want it to do for him or her. As a parent, the responsibility you have for your child is all-inclusive. We may say that healthy development involves four areas: mental, physical, moral, and social. We need to provide, as much as we are able, what our children require in order to become mature in all of these areas. None should be ignored .

How much of this total responsibility should we entrust to the school? Most of us would probably agree that schools should have a major role in helping our children develop mentally. As a general rule, we expect that most of the school day should be given to helping them develop the intellectual skills they will need to live in our society.

At the same time, we know that children grow in all ways at once and respond to life as a whole. They need to develop social skills and healthy personalities too. They also need to develop a sense of moral values and responsibility. To some extent, we expect the school to help them along these lines. But we must be careful that we do not depend upon our children's teachers to do everything. There is a limit to what they can do. They simply do not have the time or energy to give all their pupils the kind of personal attention that parents can. We need to do our part at home.



4 Here is a list of general educational goals. Are your children making progress in all these areas? Mark the one or ones that need more attention.

- o Preparation for future trade or profession
- o Formation of moral character
- o Development of intellectual skills
- o Development of social skills
- o Development of physical abilities

2. *Become informed.* Recall the Johnson family that was mentioned earlier. Mary is the one who shares feelings openly and spontaneously. Robert needs help in expressing them. But for both of them it is vitally important to know that their parents are interested in what they are learning and thinking.

There is no substitute for your active, informed concern. Find out how well your school is doing the job you expect of it. Encourage your children to describe their experiences during the day and listen carefully to what they tell you. Make an effort to get acquainted with their teachers and the others who work with them. If your children know that you are interested in their ideas and feelings, they will be more likely to share them with you. This does not mean you should ask them dozens of questions and expect them to give you detailed answers. But you do need to be sensitive to how they are responding and what their reactions tell you.



5 Rate your school system by indicating your response to the following statements. Use this key:

1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree for the most part, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree

(Note: if you have more than one child and if your children are in situations which are quite different from each other, rate each child's situation separately. Use another sheet of paper to make note of your reactions.)

- a** My child is being given adequate help in developing basic learning skills such as reading and writing. **1 2 3 4 5**
- b** In general, the atmosphere in my child's **1 2 3 4 5**

- school is wholesome and discipline problems are solved fairly.
- c My child's school is keeping up with new developments in technology in an appropriate way. **1 2 3 4 5**
 - d There is enough money to provide good facilities for my child and an adequate salary for his/her teachers. **1 2 3 4 5**
 - e Subjects are taught to my child in ways that support healthy values and moral guidelines for life. **1 2 3 4 5**
 - f The relationship between my child and his/her teacher is positive and constructive. **1 2 3 4 5**
 - g The school system is preparing my child to live in and contribute to society as a responsible adult. **1 2 3 4 5**

3. **Take action.** One of the serious problems in modern Society is that many of us have been conditioned into seeing ourselves as spectators and consumers. If things aren't going in the direction we want, often we just Sit back and say, "*Why don't they do something about it?*"

But this passive attitude won't solve anything. As a parent, your position with respect to your child's teachers and school officials is a strong one.

If the school has a major financial problem, there may not be much you can do. But there are other sorts of situations you *can* do something about. Your opinions and reactions probably carry much more weight than you think. You also have a powerful position in the lives of your children. Don't abdicate it. They will hear many voices as they grow up, and they will experience pressures from many directions. Use your influence while you can.



6 Review your ratings in interaction 5. If there are some serious imbalances or deficiencies in your child's school, why not decide now to get involved in finding solutions? Look at the following list and check the actions you could take right away that would make a difference:

- o *Pay closer attention to your children when they talk about school.*
- o *Have an informal discussion with your child's teacher or teachers.*
- o *Talk with other parents about working together to solve problems.*
- o *Find ways of helping your child learn what the school isn't teaching.*
- o *Contact people who are in a position to make the kinds of changes you think are needed.*

7 Remember Mary in the Johnson case study? Mary's father might insist that she make up her own mind. But that probably wouldn't help Mary very much. What approach would be the most constructive?

8 Let's suppose now that you're Robert's parent. What would you say to help him deal with the problem? What else should you do?

We've looked at our information society from two points of view: the media and the way it "educates" us, and our schools and the way they affect our children. Now let's think about some of the ideas that surround us. Why is it so important to evaluate them?

TWO AND TWO MAKE FIVE

Focal Point 3. *Sharpen your ability to separate truth from deception.*

Scene: Somewhere out in the Wild West, Slim and Jake, a couple of unshaven and ragged-looking prospectors, are wearily panning for gold. It's high noon, and they've been at it since early morning. Jake is somewhat of a newcomer; Slim is an old

hand. The stream is quietly rippling, and a soft breeze is blowing. Suddenly, the silence is shattered by a piercing yell.

Jake: WHOOPEE!!! (He throws his hat in the air.)
YAHOO!! Lookee here, Slim! (Holding up a large nugget) Lookee here! Gold, I tell yer! **Gold!** Look at this here chunk! I niver **seed** one this big! I'm going to be RICH, I tell yer, Slim, **RICH!!** (He dances around in the stream, kicking up sprays of water.) Here I come and I'm a-gonna have all the whiskey and wimmin I want! Yesirree! Jes' a-look at 'er, all sparkalatin' in the sun. HA, HA! Gold! Gold! **Gold!**

Slim: (Comes over, puts his hand on Jake's shoulder.) Now hold on thar jes' a minute, Jake. Lemme git a closer look. (Jake finally slows down, shows the nugget to Slim. Slim turns it over in his hand.) Yep, jes' as I figgered. That ain't gold, Jake, you ninny. (He hands it back to him.) That thar's fool's gold. How many times do I have to tell yer? Cain't you strike *nothin'?*

Obviously, Jake's problem is every fool's problem. He has put two and two together and come up with five. And he will remain a fool and arrive at the wrong conclusion again and again unless he learns how to make an accurate interpretation of what he sees. But Jake's plight isn't quite as hopeless as it might appear. *At least he has a friend who tells him the truth.*



*That ain't gold, Jake, you ninny.
That thar's fool's gold!*

Like Jake, we can be fooled by what is on the surface. Printing presses, video cameras, computers, recorders, all of these mean that people can print, tape, or film just about anything. They can tell the truth. They can also tell deliberate lies. Common sense tells us that the messages we receive are no more or less reliable than the people who send them. We don't need to be suspicious and skeptical all the time, of course. But we must learn how to interpret correctly what we see and hear.

Why? Because we cannot simply take in everything that comes along if we want to reach our goals in life. According to the objectives we have chosen, we must accept some things and reject others. We are like architects who want to build buildings that are safe and useful. We must select our materials carefully, and we must follow realistic, logical plans. Otherwise, we will end up with piles of rubble.

In 1978, the world was shocked to learn of the suicide deaths of 912 followers of the Rev. Jim Jones, the founder of a "church" in the United States called People's Temple. The victims included men, women, young people, children, and infants. Only a handful of survivors escaped Jonestown, Guyana, where the horrible event occurred, to give their chilling, eyewitness accounts.

The Rev. Jim Jones started the first People's Temple in 1955. At his meetings, he performed "miracles" of healing and prophesied future events. Gradually, he gained a following across a broad spectrum of society—whites, blacks, Hispanics, the middle-class as well as the poor. He promised his disciples a new world of peace, equality, and racial harmony, with himself as its ruler. He championed their cause among politicians and civic leaders. In exchange, he assumed complete control over their lives. He persuaded many of them to sign over their property and money to him and his noble programme of social justice. As his power grew, he became more and more demanding. He refused to tolerate any opposition or dissension. When eight members defected in 1973, he staged the first of his suicide drills to test the loyalty of those who remained.

In 1977, the press began to investigate more closely some of the strange things that were taking place in connection with the

People's Temple Jones had built in California. As the pressures intensified, Jones began to warn his followers. All was not well, he told them. They were being viciously persecuted, and they might have to die for their beliefs. During that year he moved to Guyana, South America, along with over 1,000 of the faithful. There he established Jonestown, which was to be the model community of the new order. He was allowed to talk about his project on Guyana National Radio. After seeing Jonestown, the minister of foreign affairs of Guyana called it "peace and love in action." But the placid exterior the commune presented to visitors was a deceptive facade. It concealed a ruthless, one-man dictatorship of intimidation, sexual exploitation, brutal punishment, and deception — a pattern which Jones had already set years earlier.

In Jonestown, news from the outside world was cut off. False reports of trouble in the United States were circulated. Jones became increasingly obsessed with the idea that there was a conspiracy against him. He told his disciples that they were being attacked, and they pledged again to die with him rather than give in. More suicide drills were practised. In November of 1978, a team of investigators, including United States' congressman Leo Ryan, came to Guyana to find out the truth. They visited Jonestown, but when they returned to the airport to make their trip home along with some 16 commune members who had decided to leave Guyana, they were ambushed by gunmen from the commune and shot. Five people in Ryan's party were killed, including congressman Ryan. Guyanese government troops were moved into Port Kaituma, the place where the massacre had occurred.

When Jones received word of what had happened, he called on his followers to make the ultimate sacrifice. The "communion" of cyanide poisoning was prepared. "Everyone has to die," he told them. Some drank willingly; others were forced. Then, while they lay dying around him, Jones shot himself. Among the dead were Carol Ann Kerns and Ellen Louise Kerns, the sister and mother of Phil Kerns, a former cult member who left it in 1970. In his book about the Jones' cult, *People's Temple-People's Tomb*, Kerns unmask the techniques Jones had used.

The so-called “miracles” and prophecies of Jones had all been staged. Several unexplained murders had occurred. There had been brutal beatings and sexual debauchery, yet the cult had continued to grow. Kerns himself finds it difficult to explain the control Jones was able to exert over others. *Even when people knew he was deceiving them, they continued to follow him.* And when he told them to do it, hundreds of men and women killed themselves and their children. Why?

Kerns believes that when Jones issued his last command, his followers had already passed the point of no return. “Many, perhaps most by [then],” he wrote, “had no personality, no life apart from People’s Temple.” Little by little, they had already surrendered themselves to Jones and his twisted view of the world. Like a malevolent, voracious parasite, he had drained them of their ability to think, to act, to be anything other than what he wanted.

We shudder at the macabre spectacle of Jonestown. In fact, it is so bizarre that we want to dismiss it as a weird exception, one which has no connection with us. But Jones is not the only one of his kind. History has seen its share of ambitious, power-hungry men who see a “new world” with themselves in control. The lesson of these examples is something we all need to learn, even if we feel we are well-insulated against such men.

At one point, many of Jones’ followers must have realized the web of deception that was being spun around them. But they did nothing. *Why were they vulnerable?* They weren’t complete fools, not to begin with. Most of them were just ordinary people. They simply wanted something to believe in and live for. Perhaps they were searching for a sense of belonging, a feeling of security, someone to tell them they were important. Like the rest of us, they had a need that couldn’t be fully satisfied by material things. When someone came along who promised them more, they followed. Jim Jones offered them himself and his vision. Tragically, the promises were cruel delusions.

The Jones example, of course, is one of the most extreme. Yet the search looks familiar. What is this “something,” this extra factor people try to find? What is this vacuum, this sense

of emptiness we all feel, no matter how successful or happy we may look on the outside? That's the subject of our next chapter.



SOME FEEDBACK TO THE INTERACTIONS...

- 1** Probably Group TV1. Items b) and e) would be likely to have the effect of “softening” the viewers. That is, the viewers would tend to see the policeman in a more favourable light after those items were given. As a result, they would be inclined to agree more strongly with statement c) than the other viewers.
- 2** Your answer.
- 3** Your estimates. If your totals are more than 15 for each set, you probably need to take steps to reduce the amount of exposure that you and your family have to these factors.
- 4** Your priority.
- 5** Your ratings. A total of less than 25 probably means that the school system is inadequate in several important areas. Ratings of less than 3 in any one category are especially significant .
- 6** Your replies. Low ratings, of course, can help you decide which problems to work on first. How you go about finding solutions is important. When you approach teachers and school officials-either on your own or along with other parents who share your concerns-have a positive, constructive attitude. Ask them to tell you what *you* can do to help solve the problem .
- 7** Mary’s father needs to approach the situation carefully. Though he may not agree with Mary’s teacher, he shouldn’t leave it there. He would probably help Mary the most if he would show her the other side of the picture by explaining the safety procedures and precautions that are followed. In this way, she could present all the relevant information. If Mary’s father did this, Mary would learn more than just the

facts. She would also learn that 1) both her teacher and her father have a right to their opinions on the subject, and 2) all sides of any given issue need to be examined.

- 8** Let Robert know you understand the problem he faces. Don't allow him to avoid it. Instead, guide him to find ways of responding constructively. You might try to encourage him to see it as chance to develop an ability to concentrate in spite of distractions. You should probably also meet with Robert's teacher to discuss the situation. If this doesn't bring results, take your complaint to the teacher's supervisor.
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-



Have we found the meaning of life?

5

Discover the Missing Dimension

“I have Immortal longings In me.” — Shakespeare,
Antony and Cleopatra, Act v., sc. 2, 1.282.

Many people turn to religion in their search for spiritual meaning. This is nothing new. In the past, the European continent was dominated by Christianity. If you lived somewhere in Europe, it didn't matter if you were a peasant or a king. Through the Church, you could reach beyond yourself and touch the infinite. The Church was there at every important occasion of your life. It baptized you, married you, and buried you. It replied to your questions and explained your dilemmas. Though in private you may have disagreed with the answers it gave, at least you knew what they were.

But what about today? The world has changed dramatically since then. Man has walked on the moon. He has probed the edges of the universe. He has dissected the atom. He has harnessed the forces of electricity and unravelled the genetic code. In every field of inquiry, his knowledge has exploded. Powerful computers now thrust him forward, shattering the barriers of ignorance and superstition that imprisoned earlier generations.

So, where are we? Has all our technology brought us any closer to the infinite? Have we found the meaning of life? Not

really. We've just become more efficient at analyzing it, quantifying it, and computerizing it. In the meantime, religion has faded into the background — or has it? For most of us, it has,

little to offer. Men with their collars on backward mumbling pious words. Stained glass windows, plaster saints, altars candles, and incense. Ceremonial robes and rituals. We've almost decided that no one really has the answer to the void we still feel.

But in the middle of all this, there *is* an answer to the missing dimension. Curiously enough, it isn't a "religion" at all. This calls for a bit of investigation—an open mind, if you will. What is this answer? Does it really satisfy? Could it work for us?

TOPICS

Religious Burn-Out
The Void that Remains
A Sensible Choice
A Lasting Solution

FOCUS

This chapter will help you to . . .

- State why many regard religion as irrelevant or harmful.
- Understand why you feel a sense of incompleteness.
- Evaluate the ways people try to find a deeper meaning in life.
- Find the solution that meets your need.

RELIGIOUS BURNOUT

Focal Point 1. Describe your personal reaction to religion.

In today's world, two opposite things seem to be happening in religion, both at the same time. For some people, religion is taking on a more important role. For others, the reverse is true. What's going on?

More Important

In some ways, religion seems more prominent than ever. Islamic missionaries are making converts in Europe. Yogis and gurus from India are gaining followers — and amassing huge fortunes — in the United States. North American sects like the Jehovah's Witnesses are penetrating the Roman Catholic strongholds of Latin America. And spiritism is increasing worldwide, with occult practices becoming more popular in Europe, Britain, and the United States.

But not all the activity is peaceful. Serious conflicts that have a religious element are in the news almost every day. Some of the rivalries are centuries old; others have a more recent origin. In Sri Lanka Buddhist and Hindu factions have had serious confrontations. In Northern Ireland, Catholics and Protestants continue to fight each other. In the Middle East, hostilities between Israeli Jews and Arab Muslims keep the area in a constant turmoil. These struggles aren't polite exchanges of opinion; they are pitched battles and reprisals that bring bloodshed and death.

Religion seldom appears to stand on its own as a force for peace in the world today. Instead, it often adds fuel to the fire. Religious persecution has always existed, of course. Yet there are signs that it is growing more intense. In many places around the globe, intolerant zealots and militant fundamentalists of all kinds are becoming more violent than ever toward those who disagree with them.



1 WHAT IS YOUR RELIGIOUS CLIMATE?

Choose the sentence that best describes the role of religion in your society.

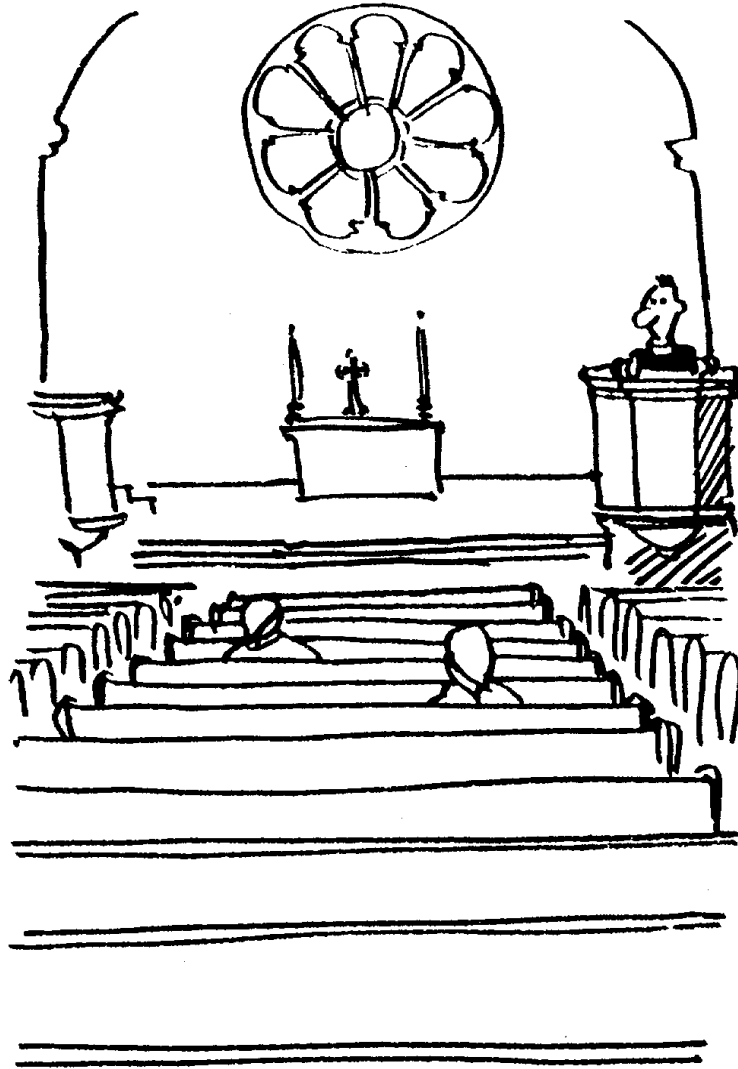
- a There are very few religious differences; most people either follow the same religion or have no strong religious ties.
 - b Some religious differences exist, but there is a general mood of tolerance among the various groups.
 - c From time to time there are conflicts involving religion-either among the different religious groups or between them and the government.
 - d Serious problems frequently arise in which religion is a major factor.
 - e Religious differences have fuelled violent confrontations in which people have been imprisoned and killed.
-
-

We've looked at some evidence that people are becoming more religious, and that religion is having a greater impact on world affairs. Now let's look at the other side of the picture.

Less Important

In much of Europe and the West, the traditional religion of Christianity has declined sharply in the past century. Many city cathedrals and village chapels have become hollow, empty shells. Once they were important community centres. Now they echo with the footsteps of tourists and the whispers of old ladies. The faith that inspired thousands to build them has vanished. Today, people no longer look to the Church for answers. They feel that it has no realistic solutions for problems like unemployment, overpopulation, racism, violence, immigration, global pollution, and war. What has happened?

For one thing, the Church seems to have lost its nerve. In an age when people need certainty more than ever, its leaders have fled in all directions at once. They seem unable to guide people through the complex difficulties of modern life. Who sounded the retreat? Not the worshipers in the pews, but some of the



For many men and women today in Western society, traditional religion is a thing of the past.

Church's most respected spokesmen. Beginning in the mid-1800s, they started to abandon the historic teachings of Christianity. By the late 1960s, the downhill slide was complete. They had left the altar, turned off the lights, and walked out the door. "God is dead," they announced. Today, well-known bishops openly discuss their unbelief on TV talk shows and in the newspapers. Listening to all this, what is the average person to think? If the leaders of the Church themselves don't really believe in God, what's left? In a word, *nothing*. Man must solve his problems strictly on his own. He must decide what is right or wrong the best he can. God is unnecessary.

Efforts to stem the tide of famine in Africa in the 1980s weren't spearheaded by churchmen, but by pop musicians and athletes. And there are more things that just don't add up. Consider the Church's stand on birth control, for example. Why should a celibate priest presume to tell husbands and wives what methods they can and can't use? Besides that, how can he understand the daily problems of family living?

For many men and women today in Western society, traditional religion is a thing of the past. The familiar rituals may offer a certain kind of comfort to some, just because they are familiar. But for the majority, they have little value. It seems clear that religion, *per se*, is not the answer people are looking for.



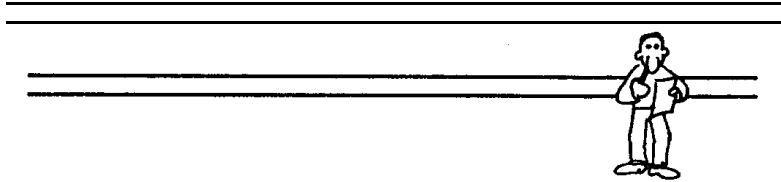
2 SKETCH YOUR PERSONAL RELIGIOUS PROFILE

First, answer the following.

- a Were you raised to follow a particular religion?
.....
- b If so, what was it?
- c Do you personally follow it today?.....

d If your answer to item **c** is “No,” what would you give as your main reason why you don’t follow the religion you were taught?

.....



3 Now, complete this survey by circling the number that best describes your reaction to religion. (If you don’t follow any particular religion, give your opinion of the one you know the best.) Use this key.

- 4 = strongly agree, 3 = agree, 2 = disagree,
- 1 = strongly Disagree, 0 = no opinion.

Then add your responses for a total score.

I would say that the religion I follow or know the best offers people . . .

- a** guidelines for solving everyday problems. 4 3 2 1 0
- b** leadership in showing compassion to the needy. 4 3 2 1 0
- c** a vital, caring community to belong to. 4 3 2 1 0
- d** positive spiritual experiences. 4 3 2 1 0
- e** effective ways of dealing with guilt. 4 3 2 1 0
- f** comfort in times of bereavement and loss. 4 3 2 1 0
- g** a philosophy of life that makes sense. 4 3 2 1 0

The religious scene certainly is a study in contrasts. There are aggressive, new forces at work. At the same time, the influence of the traditional church has disappeared almost completely. In the midst of all this, people continue to look for some kind of spiritual dimension or meaning in their lives, even those who don’t consider themselves to be religious. What is this search all about?

THE VOID THAT REMAINS

Focal Point 2. *Evaluate the ways in which you have tried to find a deeper meaning in life.*

It is an odd fact that we humans never seem to be satisfied with what we have, no matter how much it is. Even when we reach our goals and have every reason to be content, we still have feelings of boredom, unhappiness, depression, anxiety, dread, meaninglessness, and despair. Sometimes life looks like an endless treadmill. We go to work to earn the money to buy the bread to give us the strength to go to work to earn the money to . . . *is that all there is?*

Exactly what *do* we want? What's missing? It's not very easy to describe, is it? Yet a voice deep inside us keeps insisting that there has to be more to this business of living than what's on the surface. Perhaps one way to get at it is to say that what we want is the opposite of what we feel. Instead of boredom and frustration, we want excitement and fulfilment. Instead of depression and fear, we want satisfaction, peace, wholeness, purpose, and hope. We want our lives to have meaning. We want to know that we're not just insignificant specks on an unimportant planet in a heartless universe.



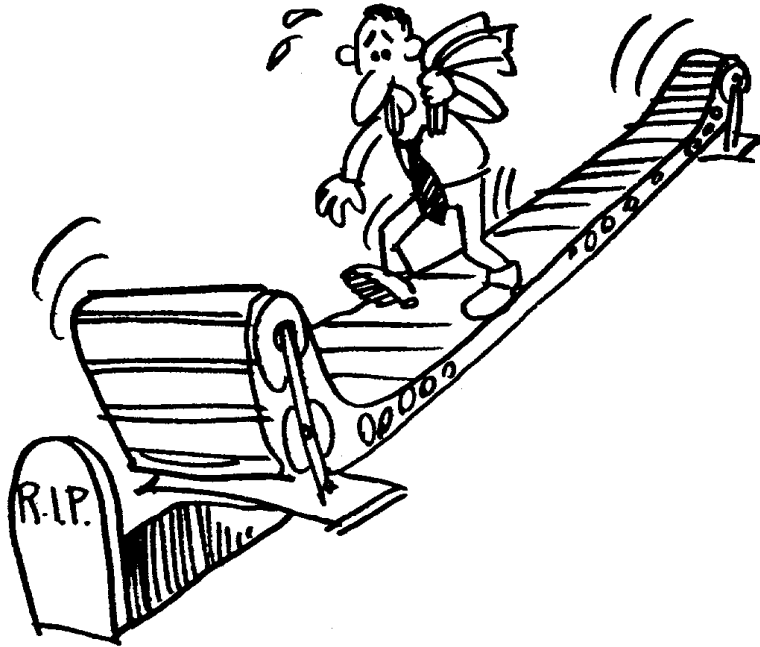
4 Here are some words that may describe what seems to be missing in your life. Mark those that come closest to what you feel, or write in your own description:

- FULFILMENT PEACE MEANING
 WHOLENESS PURPOSE

Or?

A Room with No Exits

There's no easy solution, though. When we set out to find what's missing, we come up against a serious obstacle: *nothing around us seems to be the answer*. Our real need can't be met by more money, more possessions, or more experiences. As long as we think it can, we are doomed to failure. We can stay busy for years at a time trying one thing after another, perhaps even for our whole lives. But our efforts will bring no lasting results. The happiness we are looking for will fade away each time like a mirage in the desert. It simply won't be there. Of course, we're not the only ones who have this need, this feeling of emptiness.



Sometimes life looks like an endless treadmill.

Others have sensed it too. People today are exploring many different pathways in order to find a deeper sense of purpose and meaning.

Who's Finding What?

Astrology, Eastern religions and meditation, even the occult and spiritism have attracted a significant following in recent times. Where do these roads lead?

Astrology

Astrology is the belief that the stars and planets influence the character and destiny of human beings. Through astrological horoscopes, people receive advice based on their sign of the Zodiac (the time of year they were born). Daily horoscopes are found in the newspapers of almost every major city and featured in countless books and magazines. Do the stars hold the key to life?

Not exactly. The facts show that astrology can't fulfil its promises. Its broad, vague predictions are impossible to verify. Many of them do *not* come true. Coincidence can easily explain the rest. Probably the most that could be said is that astrology demonstrates the power of the mind. For example, suppose I've been trying to decide whether or not to get married and I consult my horoscope for guidance. It says that this is a good time for making alliances. Aha! I should get married right away. My marriage will be successful because my horoscope says so.

But if I do, and if things go well, should the stars take the credit? More likely it's my positive mental attitude that has helped. But wait a minute. Before I even get that far there could be a snag. What if my prospective mate's horoscope says the opposite of mine? Now what?

The most serious inadequacy of astrology, though, is that it is based on the material universe. In other words, *it is a materialistic method of solving non-materialistic problems*. Even if the planets are in perfect, harmonic alignment, will that really help me? Human problems need personal, not cosmic, solutions.

Eastern religions

Several Eastern religions have recently become more popular in the West. Beliefs like Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and others offer explanations for the suffering of man, the existence of good and evil, and the purpose of life. Some have complicated

moral codes and dietary laws. Others emphasize meditation and religious experience. How satisfying are these beliefs?

Many of their founders thought deeply about the world and its contradictions. They sought a sense of balance. Do you see a crippled beggar on the street? Don't be overly concerned, the Hindu says. It's the law of *karma* at work. He is suffering for his evil deeds in some previous life. Are you constantly frustrated? Learn how to meditate, the Buddhist advises. Find unity with the origin and meaning of the world. Seek *nirvana*, the cessation of all desire. Are you upset by cruelty and violence? Understand the yin and the *yang*, the Chinese philosopher replies. Realize that darkness and light and good and bad are all part of the whole.

Certainly these religions acknowledge the fact that life has a dimension that can't be seen or measured. And they preserve the ideas of many wise men. No one could dismiss their teachings and insights as worthless babblings. But they are lacking in many serious ways.

Consider meditation, for example. Does this practice bring us closer to discovering the meaning of the world and our own lives? Not really. During meditation, no truly *personal* communication takes place. It can't lead us anywhere beyond the fact that what is, is. Examine the goal of *nirvana*. This aim is essentially a denial of all the longings that we feel. Does that really inspire us and give us hope? It seems more like a terrible kind of dead end to everything that makes us who we are. And what about *karma*? Is an attitude of resignation and acceptance the best response we can make to those who are suffering? Love and compassion would say otherwise. The *Yin-Yang* principle is equally discordant. Why do we instinctively avoid death and pain if they are a completely "normal" part of living?

To some extent, we must admit, the moral codes of these beliefs and philosophies are worth applauding. Yet they, too, are inadequate. Where is the actual power to live by them? Where is the remedy for failure? All of it still falls short of the mark .

Spiritism and the Occult

In a number of Western societies, spiritist and occult practices have increased recently. These include seances for consulting the dead, psychic “channeling” of messages from the spirit world, black and white magic, fortune-telling, witchcraft, sorcery, divination, and Satanism. Through these practices, people try to contact the supernatural and wield power over others. Many date back to primal religions of pre-Christian Europe.

Today, spiritist and occult activities have resurfaced and are spreading throughout society. Devotees gather at ancient holy sites, such as Stonehenge in England. Covens of witches regularly meet in some European towns. Seances are held by mediums. Psychics offer guidance. Books on sorcery and magic are sold in stores. Computer games featuring occult themes are available. Movies about demon possession and supernatural experiences are shown in cinemas and on television. Rock stars sing twisted, obscene lyrics; some even proclaim themselves to be Satanists.

What happens when a person becomes involved in these practices? At first glance, they seem harmless enough. Many who dabble in them discover that most of the so-called “manifestations” are complete fakes. But there’s another side to the story. Those who seriously and persistently search for contact with the supernatural through these methods place themselves in a very dangerous position. Some of them end up by touching something real. But what they find is sinister and malevolent.

They may experience a sense of power and excitement at the beginning. But fear, darkness, and confusion follow. Even those who think they are strong enough to keep the upper hand are eventually overcome. For some, the pathway that begins with an innocent experiment leads to insanity, murder, and death. Teenagers who have taken part in role-playing video games based on the occult, such as “Dungeons and Dragons,” have actually murdered others and committed suicide. In some spiritist and Satanist cults, human sacrifices have been made. These are high prices to pay.

Clearly, the evidence shows that there are unseen forces in this world that can’t be totally explained away. People are capable of contacting them. But they are not capable of completely controlling

what happens as a result. Instead of being the masters, they become the victims. Excitement and thrills? Yes, but destruction in the end.



5 SOME PROBING QUESTIONS

a If you have been searching for a deeper meaning in your life, mark the words that name the things you have tried, or write in your descriptions.

- Traditional religion
- Philosophy
- Astrology
- Meditation
- Drugs
- Spiritism
- Psychic guidance

Or?

b What results have you had?

.....

6 WHAT'S YOUR CHANGE POTENTIAL?

Mark the phrase that best describes where you are right now.

- 1-Not aware of a need
- 2-Dissatisfied with life but not looking
- 3-Trying various solutions
- 4-Disillusioned or seeking to escape
- 5-Ready to examine a new approach

Now let's take a look at a positive answer to the missing dimension in life. This answer is not a religious organization or a philosophy. But it completely fits the needs that men and women have for meaning and purpose in life. In fact, it is the only one that does.

A SENSIBLE CHOICE

Focal Point 3. *Discover the positive, authentic answer to the missing dimension in life.*

If none of the pathways we have explored so far is the solution to our need, what is? Philosophies, moral codes, and formal religions are all inadequate. They have no life or personality in them. The people around you are inadequate too. The void in your life is much greater than they can fill. You need complete acceptance, total love, genuine fulfilment, and lasting hope. These are not material needs. They can't be satisfied by anything you can buy. They are spiritual needs, and they need a spiritual solution.

If you have found genuine peace and fulfilment in the life you lead now, then you have no reason to search for something else. But if you haven't, this is your opportunity to examine an answer. This answer will meet your spiritual needs. You will find it by having a personal relationship with a personal God. Such a God exists, and He wants you to know Him.

The God Who Is There

We are not talking about the *word* "God," or the *idea* God. We are not talking about some sort of vague, mindless energy. We do not mean the notion that god-is-everything-that-is. Absolutely not. When we use the name, "God," we point to a specific Person. We mean God Himself. This God speaks, moves, and acts. He is alive today. He is the source of everything that is, yet He is not confined by it. On the contrary, He stands apart from what He has made in majestic, awesome glory. Everything that is good comes from Him. *He created you and designed you to know Him.* He is aware of you at this instant, wherever you are. He knows everything about you.

We are talking about the possibility of a unique relationship between you and this God. This relationship is the missing dimension in your life. In it, there is real communication and understanding. He speaks to you, and you speak to Him. There is genuine friendship. And there is much more — more that will continue to unfold far into the future. This God wants to bring you into a true, satisfying relationship with Himself. How can this be

done? You can't make it happen; the distance is too great. *But He can.* He has removed all the barriers that separate you from Him. Let's examine these barriers between us and this God we are speaking about. What are they, and how did He deal with them?

The Fatal Flaw

To put it simply, the barriers between us and God are there because we have set them up. We have chosen to shut Him out of our lives. *We have decided that we wanted to be left alone.* This is the reason for the void we feel, the gnawing sense of emptiness and futility. These are only the superficial symptoms, though. In order to understand our true condition, we must see ourselves from His point of view. He knows all that we can be, and He knows what we are. His judgement is incisive and accurate.

According to His analysis, we are in a state of revolt and anarchy. We have deliberately refused to accept the proofs of His existence that are everywhere around us. We have worshipped anything and everything but Him. We have disobeyed the laws that He gave us for our welfare and protection. In fact, we have turned our backs on Him completely.

Though we want to deny it, we know He is right. Something is drastically wrong with the world, and something is drastically wrong with us. No matter what is happening around us, good or bad, we don't have internal peace or contentment. Certainly we may love our families and friends, those who love us. But what about our enemies? What about those who persistently mistreat us and cause trouble for us?

The true outlines of what we really are may *be* blurred by the manners we have learned. But fault is still there, running all the way through us. When the pressures become too great and the price is too high, we end up by saying "me first." We have an obstinate tendency to want our way no matter who suffers. There are times when, rather than face embarrassment, we reject what we know to be true and defend what is false. Because of all this, we are now going down a road that will ultimately lead us to failure, defeat, and death.

Even the natural order of the planet has been affected by our rebellion. We have misused the power He gave us. We have wasted the earth and its resources. We have caused harm to ourselves and others. We have offended Him and broken His heart. He says that we are diseased, guilty, and unfaithful, and He speaks the truth. Our condition is serious. We are full of disease; now death is inevitable. We have committed crimes against Him; now prison awaits. We have rejected His love; now a final divorce is unavoidable.



7 What have you seen around you that supports what God has said about people and society?
 o War o Greed o Injustice
 o Exploitation o Crime Or?

8 God says that you need His forgiveness. What things have you done that show He is right?
 o Ignored Him o Led a selfish life
 o Envied and hated other people o Hurt other people
 Or?

Guilty on all counts? Keep reading. There's an answer!

The Total Cure

In the face of all this, what can be done? God has provided the only solution that is great enough. He is against everything that is destructive. He has said that He will remake the entire universe and remove all that is evil. In fact, His work of transformation has already begun. He has chosen to start with us, for we are the ones He has created to know Him. He offers us His pardon, healing, and forgiveness. He loves us in spite of everything we have done, and He wants our separation from Him

to end. If we will let Him, He will change us and bring us into harmony with Himself and all He intends to do.

At the same time, He will exercise complete fairness and justice. He can do this because He has already taken on Himself the full effect of our rebellion and all the damage it has caused. These effects could not be simply forgotten or ignored. Why not? *Because He gave us real power to affect our environment, and real power to know Him and respond to Him.* He is the only one who could reverse the terrible process of death and decay that we started. And He has done it! He personally defeated the forces of destruction and paid for our misdeeds.

In Jesus Christ, God suffered in our place. Let's take a closer look at what happened when Jesus came. It is important for us to understand what He did because it changed everything. He made it possible for us to know God in a new way.

A LASTING SOLUTION

Focal Point 4. *Begin now to experience the true solution to your need for meaning and purpose in life.*

Jesus Christ was not a myth. The events of His life are not a matter of hearsay. They were recorded by eyewitnesses in documents that can be verified historically. These testimonies show that Jesus was a man who actually lived on earth. But they also show that He was much more than that. He was both the son of man *and* the Son of God at the same time without conflict or confusion. He is both today. No one else is like Him! *This is why He is the only one who can help us.* You can have a true, living relationship with the true, living God. But in order to have that kind of relationship, you must be bonded to Jesus Christ, God's only Son. When and how did Jesus bring us back to God?

The Time and Place

For hundreds of years, God had spoken to men and women through the Jewish nation and its prophets. They said that one day, a Christ or Messiah would come, a person who would be authorized to do God's work. He would restore the broken relationship between God and the human race. These ancient

prophecies were fulfilled in the land of Israel during the days when the Romans ruled much of the Middle East.

The birth of Jesus Christ took place in the town of Bethlehem when Caesar Augustus was Roman emperor, Herod was king of the Jews, and Quirinius was governor of Syria. He reached adulthood and carried out His mission at the time when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea. As a Jew, He lived an exemplary religious life.

Many Jews accepted Jesus. His miracles proved that He was the Christ. But others found His words and His claims to be profoundly disturbing. Some were interested in freedom from Roman oppression; but this was not what He offered. Instead, He talked about knowing God. He said that their traditional, organized religion had become useless. His indictment infuriated the religious leaders. As He continued to heal the sick and teach about His Father, they became more and more opposed to Him. They began to look seriously for some way to get rid of Him once and for all.

The Midnight Betrayal

Late one night, one of the followers of Jesus came to them, a man named Judas Iscariot. In exchange for information about where and when they might seize Jesus, they had agreed to pay him a certain sum of money. Now the moment had arrived. According to Judas, Jesus had just gone to the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem to pray. He was alone except for a few of His followers. Here was their chance! Yet they were afraid. They could not deny the unique power and authority He possessed .

Armed with swords and clubs and bringing soldiers to bolster their courage, they followed Judas. But when they actually confronted Jesus, He was curiously unresisting. He said that though He could stop them from taking Him, He would not. He told them that the episode that was about to unfold was the supreme goal of His mission. By torchlight, the band made its way from the garden of Gethsemane to the courtyard of Caiaphas, the High Priest.

In front of the assembled leaders, Caiaphas charged Jesus to reply under oath whether He was the Son of God. Jesus said, "I

am.” Caiaphas turned to the leaders. “You have heard the blasphemy,” he said. “What do you think?” With one voice, they condemned Him to die. There was a problem, though.

They had no legal authority to execute criminals. Jesus would have to be tried by Pilate, the Roman governor. They bound Him and led Him to Pilate’s hall, and there He was examined again. Pilate could find nothing wrong with Him. Then suddenly Pilate backtracked on his verdict and, without securing a conviction, sentenced Jesus to death.

Throughout His trials during that long night and the morning that followed, Jesus was repeatedly questioned, slandered, spat upon, ridiculed, insulted, beaten, and flogged. At last, after He had suffered those hours of abuse, after He had been crowned in mockery with spines and thorns, after He had been led to the place of execution on a hill called Golgotha outside of Jerusalem, the soldiers carried out the sentence: death by crucifixion — slow, torturous, horrible, and agonizing. They nailed the hands and feet of Jesus the Son of God to a cross.

The Final Moments

Outwardly, Jesus Christ was just another convict being executed. Perhaps He was a somewhat unusual one, though, because His “crimes were religious,” according to His accusers. But what really took place when He suffered and died? Our language can scarcely begin to describe it.

The One whose power gave life to all things let His own life ebb away. His hands, the ones that had touched the sick with healing and compassion, were nailed to a Roman cross. He had already laid aside His honour as the Son of God in order to become a man. Now He laid aside everything else He had. The One who made the human race allowed Himself to be rejected and despised by them. The One whose word created the universe submitted Himself to derision and scorn. He was torn, disfigured, and murdered. It is an event which is too heavy, too awesome for our shallow, petty minds.

We want gods of our own making — handsome heroes, winners, and super-stars. But in the face of Jesus Christ as He

suffered and died we see the real God. We see the One who was glad to pour out all He had for us, who went the awful, final distance to rescue us. We see the One who willingly carried the weight of all our misdeeds — for all of us who have ever lived and ever will live — until at the end He was crushed by it.

He felt many blows in those hours, but one was the most grievous of them all. It was the wrenching, tearing separation from His Father whom He loved. That was the ultimate price. But even that He paid. Throughout the whole unimaginable ordeal, He never lost sight of us. He knew that we were unable to save ourselves, and as His life ended He pleaded forgiveness for us.

We are confounded by this sight. The enormity of what He has done haunts our thinking and troubles our minds. But we are not asked to completely understand it. No one really can. *What we are asked to do is to reach out and accept it.* He does not compel us. He respects our freedom of choice, a freedom He gave us when He made us. Still, our need and our guilt are such that we are faced with only two choices. We can continue to walk away from Him, proudly refusing to admit our guilt and our wretchedness. Or we can turn around, come towards Him, and embrace all that He is and offers to us. If we do, we discover that everything changes.

The Awesome Victory

His death was not the end of the story. Three days later, His Father raised Him to life again. His tomb was empty! His body had been transformed, and He was alive. More than 500 witnesses saw Him in the weeks that followed, before He went back to heaven. From that day until this, *His body has never been found.* He lives today. His resurrection is undeniable proof that He was who He said He was — God's Son and our Saviour!

Through His death and His life, our spiritual needs are met. When we accept His death for us, we are cleansed from our guilt and freed from our failure. As we experience His life in us, we are changed. We become like Him. Yet our individuality is not destroyed. Not at all! Through His power, *it is protected and raised to its full potential.* Each of us becomes a signed original,

overflowing with His life and creativity. At the same time, we are shaped to fit the grand design He is making.

He holds out His gift now, but the time for receiving it is limited. He has already announced that on a certain day, His Father will close up the history of the world like a man who shuts a book. He will gather to Himself everyone who belongs to Him, and eternity will begin. The hour when this will happen has already been set. At any moment, your chapter in that book could be ended. *None of us can guarantee that our own lives on this earth will continue even one more day.*

But while you read these words, His offer is wide open. Jesus Christ has invited you to receive His life, and He waits for your reply. You can accept His gift. By faith, you can look past the outward events of His career. You can grasp the unseen reality that He is the Son of God, as He said He was. If you believe that He is and that His Father raised Him to life again, He will answer you.

He will come into your life, and His light will fill every part of you. Through Him, you will know God. The Bible says that “He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him . *Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*” Will you believe in Him and receive Him?



9 If your answer is “Yes,” complete the following sentences. This will help you remember the steps you have taken.

I, (write your name)
 admit that I have sinned against God. I believe that Jesus Christ is His Son, and I accept the forgiveness and life God offers me through Jesus.

(write today's date)

(your signature)

If you have accepted God's offer, a miracle has happened to you. *God says that you have actually crossed over from death to life!* You have been born into His family. *You have a relationship with Him.* You are in a position to receive everything that He intends you to have. One day, you will know the full extent of your inheritance. What happens in the meantime? Your relationship with God means that your life changes for the better right now, today. We look at these changes in our next chapter.

But what if you refuse God's offer? What if you walk away, determined to exclude Him from your life? Only a fool would do such a thing! Yet some have. We live in a world where many people act as if God did not exist. Others blame Him for their problems. Some despise Jesus Christ and ridicule Him, even using His name to curse and swear. All of them are following a dangerous course of action that leads to darkness, isolation, and death. Eventually, they will meet God as Judge, rather than Friend.

Don't let that happen to you, though. Take what God offers you, and take it now! It doesn't matter where you are at this moment or what has happened to you in the past. Because of Jesus, God stands ready to forgive anything and everything you have done. He loves you. The emptiness in your life will be gone as soon as you reach out to Him. Start to pray, right now. Speak to Him. Tell Him what you feel and how you need Him. He is God and He will hear you. Because He is God He knows it already, but He wants you to communicate with Him — and that makes all the difference!

If you did not answer "Yes" to the last question (Question 9) but you want to do so, do it **now**.

**SOME FEEDBACK TO THE INTERACTIONS . . .**

- 1** Your choice. If you chose **c**, **d**, or **e**, is there anything you personally could do to help reduce the tensions?
- 2** Your answers. Do you think the answers of most people in your age group would be similar to yours?
- 3** Your reactions. A score of 21-28 would show that your religion is working very well for you. 17-20 would indicate some problems. Scores 16 and below mean that the religions you know about are negative in their effect. Later in this book, we will refer back to this interaction as a point of comparison.
- 4** Your answer. One word might not be enough! Would you say your feelings have changed a lot in the last few years?
- 5** Your replies.
- 6** Your description.
- 7** Your observation.
- 8** Your response. The point of this interaction is to see yourself from God's viewpoint. His estimate is the one that counts.
- 9** If you have taken these steps now, your relationship with God has begun! *Through His Spirit, He will make Himself real to you.*



Ours is an age of anxiety...

6

Put It All Together

“Hope keeps the heart whole.”

— Antony Brewer

His suicide note wasn't very long. But then, Eric wasn't very old. He said he did it because everything was black. He said he wanted the hurt to be over. He said it was the only way out, and he hoped they would understand. Through their tears and agony, his parents asked the same question that we do: Why?

Why, indeed? Why do people give up on life? There are no simple answers. One thing stands out, though. Ours is an age of anxiety, even for the young who seem to have everything to live for. Instead of hope, pessimism often dominates. And there is fear. Vague, formless apprehensions hover in the air. Other threats and spectres have names and shapes: war, poverty, disease. They cast their dark shadows on all of us. Sometimes we find ourselves wondering who or what will strike the next blow. Will we be victims of cancer? Of terrorism? Of crime? Of a nuclear holocaust? Will we be robbed of our loved ones by some terrible illness or fatal accident? Is there any reason to believe that we will ever reach our goals and experience fulfilment?

Maybe we have lived with a sense of doom for so long that we've grown accustomed to it. We've learned how to keep our masks in place and keep going somehow. Is this the way it has to be? No. *We have resources that can make a difference in every*

area of our lives. Because of them, we can overcome our problems. We can keep moving toward success day by day and look toward the future with complete confidence. What are these resources, and how do they help us?

TOPICS

Disarm Fear with Truth
Turn Obstacles into Assets
Experience Lasting Hope
Stay on Course

FOCUS

This chapter will help you to:

- Deal effectively with anxiety and apprehension.
- Use adversity to your advantage.
- Look beyond death with hope and positive anticipation .
- Know how to relate your resources to all areas of life.

DISARM FEAR WITH TRUTH

Focal Point 1. *Understand how truth overcomes fear.*

In our last chapter, we explained how we can be brought into God's family through His Son, Jesus Christ. Certain resources become ours when this happens. We are given a new kind of confidence which is an effective antidote to our fears. But in order to actually *possess* this confidence, we must do two things: 1) we must understand the truths about God that can deal with our fears, and 2) *we must act upon these truths*. Let's look at some of the fears we may have and how we can defeat them.

Overcome the Fear of Destruction

In today's world, many different threats seem poised to destroy us. There is nuclear war, for example. Several decades have passed since atomic weapons were invented and used in World War II. Today, the possibility of a global holocaust has become an unwelcome feature of our everyday lives. Have we grown so accustomed to it that we are no longer horrified, as we once were? Sadly, perhaps so. But the fear is still there.

Nuclear weapons are appalling, and the power to unleash them lies in the hands of just a few. You and I may be convinced that we would never approve their use under any circumstances. But there may be idealistic zealots or power-crazed madmen who would. Perhaps one day we might succeed in dismantling these hideous weapons. Yet that wouldn't bring a permanent solution, because the knowledge of how to build them would still remain. We cannot go back. Our position seems extremely vulnerable. Even if every nuclear weapon in the world *were* eliminated, a conventional air strike on a nuclear power station would result in unbelievable radioactive fallout. Chernobyl would look like a minor mishap by comparison.

There is another kind of destruction we may fear. We may be afraid of disease. We may wonder if cancer will strike. Other grim scenarios may unfold in our minds. If one of our relatives has had a

heart attack or has been crippled by some serious illness, we may worry that the same thing will happen to us. This fear can cause us to overreact to symptoms or problems that we notice. It can absorb our time, energy, and money, and rob us of our peace of mind.

Some of our fears are justified. War — be it nuclear, biological, or conventional — may come in spite of our efforts to prevent it. Disease seems to be a persistent feature of our environment. No sooner is a cure found for one illness than a new one rises up. AIDS was virtually unknown in the Western world a few decades ago. Now thousands are at risk because of it and many have already died. And certain illnesses are inherited. Even if we try, we may not be able to escape problems like these.

No wonder many of us find ourselves going through life with a sense of apprehension. But we do not need to! There is a powerful truth that outweighs these fears. This truth is that God *has not abandoned this world*. If you have accepted His Son, Jesus Christ, you have a relationship with Him. His purpose for you and for the universe will not be turned aside by anything that has happened or will happen. He is in charge of the future. Our ultimate destiny is not left to chance or to the caprice of our fellow human beings. Our God is the Supreme Master of everything. At any point, He can intervene directly in the affairs of the human race.

When Jesus Christ was on earth, He showed His authority over the forces of nature, death, and disease. He proved that God's power was greater than any of these things. God is the same today. He can reverse the progress of a malignant tumour and restore a person to complete health. Well-documented cases show that divine healing is a reality. But even if God does not intervene immediately when illness strikes, if a fatal disease runs its course and we die, we have not been defeated. He has said that at the right time, He will give us new bodies that are completely beyond the reach of death and decay. What this means we shall look at in a few moments.

God can also prevent mankind from destroying itself by nuclear warfare. He will step into the picture if it suits His plan

for us and for the world. The choice is His. But if the unthinkable does happen and nuclear war comes, that is not the end. He has already vowed to recreate the entire cosmos. And He will!

Certainly we should do everything we can to avoid disaster. We should work for peace and be men and women of peace. We should not be careless with our lives and our health. But beyond all that, the theme of our thoughts should not be a compulsive search for security. It should be trust in our Father. Nothing that touches us can break the bond we have with Him. In Christ, He has joined Himself to us forever. We are in Him, and He is in us.

Paul, a leader in the early Christian community, understood this truth. As God's Spirit guided him, he expressed it this way: "I am certain that nothing can separate us from Christ's love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below—there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord." Look at that list. It couldn't be more complete, could it?

Defeat the Fear of Rejection

The fear of rejection is the belief that others won't accept us. This fear may have roots deep in our past. Our parents may not have given us the love that we needed, or we may have been abused or mistreated. Things may have happened later on in life to discourage us from showing affection to others. When we fear rejection, we can't form lasting friendships. We are sure that people will dislike us or misunderstand us.

Both the fear of rejection and rejection itself can create negative patterns that become extremely hard to break. Some people respond to these experiences by turning the rejection toward themselves. If nothing happens to stop them, they become suicidal. Others withdraw from society. Still others stay year after year in situations where they are continually abused. They have convinced themselves that no one could ever love

them, and they are apparently trapped completely by their negative lifestyle.

If you are troubled by fears, experiences, or patterns of rejection in your life, what truth is the antidote to them? It is this: Rejection is not the fundamental reality of your life; acceptance is. Why? *Because when you believe in Jesus Christ, you are accepted by God — fully, completely, and totally.* The Father loves you in the same way that He loves His Son.

No acceptance could be greater than that! It has no conditions, restrictions, or limitations. It includes God's forgiveness whenever you need it. The Bible says, "God has poured out His love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us." This means you can actually experience God's love because of what the Holy Spirit is able to do.



*...fear of rejection and rejection
itself can create negative patterns...*

If you have been rejected or fear rejection, remember that God loves you. He made you in the first place. And He literally gave everything that He had and suffered indescribable grief and

tearing in order to rescue you. That is the value He places upon your life. His estimate of you is the true one. You can turn to God at any time with honesty and confidence. He will never reject you! His love can heal you and give you courage to reach out to others.

Conquer the Fear of Deprivation

A third kind of fear is the fear of deprivation. We can be afraid that we will lose something we value or treasure — our reputation, our job, our material possessions, or the love of those who are important to us. This fear can turn us into overprotective parents and jealous spouses. It can make us force our family and friends to hover around us and pay attention to us until they feel trapped and resentful. It can make us spend unreasonable, exorbitant sums to protect ourselves and our belongings. It can keep us awake at night as we imagine all the horrible things that might happen.

Certainly no one would argue that we should ignore reality. There are thieves, rapists, terrorists, child-molesters, and kidnappers on our streets. Many modern currencies are unstable and the business climate is often uncertain. Our responsibilities obviously mean that we need to take care of the things we have. But there is a point at which reasonable precautions become obsessions.

What truth can free us from the fear of losing what is dear to us? The Bible says, “Every good and perfect gift comes from heaven; it comes down from God.” This tells us that God is *our source*. It means that all the good things we have are from Him. This truth can help you take positive, assertive action against your fears. What should you do?

Make a habit of thanking God for the things He has given to you. This will set you free to truly enjoy them. Giving to others will become part of your life. Instead of manipulating your friends and your family, you will be able to trust them and love them freely. Instead of hoarding and grasping, you will become open-handed and generous. And you will make a wonderful discovery. All that you give will be returned to you in a form that no one can take away. An attitude of thanks to God for what you have will help you in the future as well. You will build up a

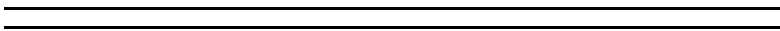
pattern of trusting God that will give you stability in times of change and loss.

At all times, remember that God is your source. You belong to Him. He has inexhaustible resources to heal, restore, and supply. You can trust Him to meet your needs as a child trusts his father. He said, "I will never leave you; I will never abandon you." He knows what your needs are perfectly, and His power to meet them is unlimited. He has your highest and most complete fulfilment in mind. You are secure in His love, and you can rely on His care.



1 PRESCRIPTION FOR OVERCOMING FEAR
 What are *your* fears? Mark or write them in after the specific truth about God that can liberate you from them. Let these truths change your thoughts and actions.

- God who is my King is in control of my life and of the future, so I do not need to fear:
 - War ◦ Disease ◦ Disaster
 - Or?
- God who is my Friend has accepted me completely, so I do not need to fear:
 - Misunderstanding ◦ Rejection
 - Or?
- God who is my Father is the supplier of everything I have that is good, so I do not need to fear:
 - Poverty ◦ Loss ◦ Abandonment
 - Or?



God is greater than your fears, no matter what they are. The more you know Him and His character, the less anxiety you will have. But fears and anxieties are not the only things we must deal with in life. What about the times when there is actual failure, pain, and suffering? Can these negative experiences work for us? If so, how?

TURN OBSTACLES INTO ASSETS

Focal Point 2. *Discover how to make difficulties and setbacks work in your favour.*

Life certainly seems confusing at times. There are criminals who are never punished, and law-abiding citizens who are victimized and mistreated. Accidents, diseases, and natural disasters overtake people who sincerely believe in God and try to do what is right. In our own lives, bad things happen to us through no fault of our own. Why? It doesn't seem fair.



2 WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL OBSTACLE COURSE LIKE?

List some of the problems or limitations in your life that you find hard to deal with. This will give you points of focus as you read the suggestions that are given in the following discussion.

- o Physical handicap
- o Family situation
- o Financial problems
- o Racial prejudice

Other?

At first glance, difficulties simply do not fit into our plans. In fact, they can frustrate us and make us bitter and angry. They can tempt us to look at God with suspicion, even after He has proved His love to us. But if we have a relationship with Him, we can see them in a different light. They don't need to become obstacles. On the contrary, they can actually help us to reach our goals.

Problems are Part of a Larger Picture

The problems we have do not mean that our Father is against us or has lost control of the situation. He is not some kind of monster who wants us to be miserable.

On one occasion, Jesus met a man who had been blind from birth. His followers reacted the way many of us would: “Who sinned — this man or his parents?” The response of Jesus is very illuminating. *He refused to assign guilt.* He said, “This happened so that God’s power might be seen at work in him,” and He healed the man.

The healing demonstrated several important facts: a) Jesus Christ was sent by God to restore, not to judge; b) God does not avoid men and women in their misery, and c) God’s power can solve human problems, no matter what has caused them. In times of need, turn to God, your Father, not away from Him. Expect Him to help you.

So when we meet with times of suffering and pain, what are we to think? When we examine His plan, we discover that our suffering is linked in a rather mysterious but intimate way with something called “glory.” This is the quality that surrounds God and His work. What exactly is it?

Glory has to do with the two sides of God’s design for us: 1) that we know Him, and 2) that we become like Him. In other words, He wants us to both *see* His glory and *share* His glory. The fact that suffering should be tied to these purposes is a strange and puzzling arrangement. Yet the Bible says there is an unmistakable connection. How does it work?

Problems Can Move Us Toward Our Goals

If we respond to problems correctly, they can actually help us reach our full potential. They can force us to flex our spiritual muscles and build strength of character.

The secret is to keep the right attitude. Learn to fix your attention on Jesus Christ as your model and example. His road to victory and glory went through the valley of rejection,

sorrow, and grief. If you want to share His success don't be surprised if your path goes in the same direction. Important things will take place in your life when you have trials. They will forge a bond with Jesus that nothing else can, and they will shape you so that you grow more like Him. The Bible says, "We are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory."

The Bible tells us that our God is the Father of compassion. It says that He "helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received." If you keep the right attitude when you have problems, you will discover the comfort God can give you. And you'll see other people differently. Instead of criticizing and blaming them for their mistakes, you will know how to treat them with true compassion. The strength you will be able to give will be much greater than your own. It will come from God Himself. Peter, a close follower of Jesus, went through an experience that helped him learn how to do this.

During the arrest and trial of Jesus Christ, the pressure on Peter grew more and more intense as each development unfolded. Jesus knew that Peter was going to fail and warned him ahead of time. But Peter was confident that he wouldn't. Yet when the test came, he did exactly what Jesus said he would. Three different times, people recognized him as a follower of Jesus. Each time, Peter strongly denied that he knew Him, even to the point of swearing that he did not. Later, he wept bitterly when he realized what had happened. It was a wrenching, terrible defeat.

But Peter's failure was not the end of the story. The rest of his life shows that he learned how to have faith in God instead of confidence in himself. He gained a new ability to help other people in their struggles and was a tower of strength to the Christian community. But even that isn't all. After his experience, he wrote two letters full of hope and faith which became part of the Bible. Through them he is still offering encouragement to people today, hundreds of years after he died.

Do not think that God is against you when you have problems. The Bible says that “in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” This statement does *not* mean that negative experiences are good in themselves. No, they are not. God is not the source of pain, injustice, loss, or betrayal. But the fact is that sometimes He allows these things to come into our lives, and sometimes we ourselves fail. When this happens, we should not be upset. *He is still in control.* His power is so great that He can bring good out of it. He is with us at all times. He will make us like Jesus Christ, and we will share His glory.



3 Review the problems you have listed in 2. Can you see them in a different light? Ask God to help you see a way forward. Is it at all possible to use them to develop maturity and strength of character?

Our relationship with God helps us know how to turn our obstacles into assets. But there is still more. Because we belong to Him, even death itself has been robbed of its sting.

EXPERIENCE LASTING HOPE

Focal Point 3. Find reasons why you can look ahead *with genuine optimism.*

You can look beyond death with hope because you share the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Nothing can destroy this hope. What exactly is it, and can you be sure that it is yours?

The Vital Connection

When you are joined to Jesus Christ, He is in you, and you are in Him. What happened to Him will happen to you. The Bible says that “if we have been united with Jesus Christ in His

death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection.” By believing that Jesus died for you, you share in His death. And because you have shared His death, you will also share in His resurrection. What does this mean?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ shows that we will experience complete fulfillment. Our relationship with God will go on forever. As it continues to unfold, our highest aspirations and deepest longings will be satisfied. Our personal destiny is secure.

After Jesus was raised, His body was no longer subject to the physical laws of the material world. Yet His friends recognized Him. The same will be true of us. We will be changed, but that change will not rob us of our humanity. We will not merge with the universe or be reincarnated, as some people think. Quite the opposite. We will remain who we are. At the same time — and this is the reason why we will be totally fulfilled — we will reach our complete potential.

In other words, though we are “ourselves” now, we will be even more truly “ourselves” then. Why? Because our authentic identity, what we are really meant to become, is wrapped up in Jesus Christ. The limitations we must cope with now will be removed. When they are, the change in us will be as profound as the transformation of an insignificant seed into a huge tree. The Bible describes what happens this way: “When the body is buried, it is mortal; when raised, it will be immortal. When buried, it is ugly and weak; when raised, it will be beautiful and strong. When buried, it is a physical body; when raised, it will be a spiritual body.” How does this take place?

The Dramatic Encounter

God has said that He plans to bring an end to the world system as we see it now. At the time He has set, Jesus Christ Himself will return, and the impact of His momentous, sudden appearance will affect everything. Everyone who belongs to Him will be transformed. We do not have to stumble through life,

wondering what our fate will be. Whether we live or whether we die, ahead of us lies resurrection, transformation, and fulfilment.

Two different sequences can occur. First, we may be alive when Jesus comes. This is a distinct possibility. A ripening is taking place in the world. Life will *not* merely continue as it is. There will be an abrupt halt, as sudden and as irrevocable as the coming of a gigantic flood that sweeps everything aside. The Author of history has already written the last pages, and we may be much nearer to the final moment than we realize.

Or second, we may die before Jesus returns. If this happens, we have nothing to fear. Death is not an accident but an appointment. It is simply the doorway into His presence. We belong to Him, and we will be with Him immediately. Deformity, illness, and imperfection will not trouble us any more. Even years of suffering will vanish. Time as we experience it now will no longer exist, for we will have entered Eternity. We will be secure knowing that everything will take place just as God has planned.

But no matter what happens first, the knowledge that we will meet Jesus Christ has a dramatic impact on our lives right now. *We must be prepared.* Jesus simply says “be ready.” What does He mean?

The Ongoing Challenge

Suppose you were an artist. Imagine that you were to receive this message from the director of the most important art gallery in the nation.

I would like to invite you to prepare several paintings for display in our gallery. The exhibition will take place one year from now. At that time, your paintings will be viewed by the public and examined by an international panel of judges. If the judges are pleased with the works you have submitted, they will select a number of them to be included in an exhibition that will travel to the major cities of Europe and America. If you agree, the paintings they choose will be purchased from you to become part of our permanent collection.

If you were to accept such an invitation, your whole life would change. You would put everything else aside for the next year and focus all of your energy in one direction. You would do the best work you possibly could.

In some ways, your position now is similar, though you don't know exactly how much time you have. You have accepted an invitation from God, your Creator. By doing that, you have committed yourself to an ambitious project that will require devotion, discipline, and even sacrifice. That project is learning how to live as Jesus Christ did in this world. You will pursue excellence in its highest form. In the process, you will discover how to make each relationship and task in your life a thing of beauty.

Yet you have accepted an invitation that goes far beyond your personal success. God's design is much greater than that! It includes everyone who loves Him. How does this work? As you reach for your destiny in Jesus Christ, God brings you together with others who love Him. Isolation and loneliness fall away. Envy, jealousy, and self-interest all disappear.

As you pursue the goal of being like Jesus Christ, you can have a true, deep sense of accomplishment day by day. What you do has meaning, not just for now and not just for yourself. It touches others and links you to the future because it places you at the centre of what God is doing. The Bible says that when the time is right, God will "bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."



4 DARE TO WRITE YOUR OWN EPITAPH
Project your imagination ahead and visualize the end of your life on this earth. Think of the challenge you have accepted. Then ask yourself this question: *What do I want people to say was the overall impact of my life?* Try to state an answer in one sentence.

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Dare to write your own epitaph.

You can begin your work right now with confidence because you haven't been left on your own. You are part of God's community. God is *for* you! He wants you to be successful. And if you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Spirit of God actually lives in you. He will motivate you and lead you toward the fulfilment He intends you to experience. But that's not all.

You have another important resource too. God has given you the Bible. Through its pages, He will speak to you personally so that you can know Him better and understand the kind of success He wants you to have. Your life doesn't have to be chaotic and frustrating. Your relationship with God through Jesus Christ can make the difference. No matter what is happening in your society, you can put all the pieces together and stay in control. In practical terms, what does the whole picture look like now?

STAY ON COURSE

Focal Point 4. *Know how to stay in control of all areas of your life.*

We've covered many subjects since the beginning of this book. In a way, we've come full circle. What we've been talking about through all of it is a way of living and dealing with our problems that leads to real success. In these last two chapters, we've examined the resources we need. Let's take a backward look now from our present vantage point. How do these resources keep us on course day by day?

Chapter 1. We began with a survey of today's society, identifying major points of stress in the economy, law and government, the family, education, and religion. We pointed out the dislocation caused by rapid social change. We discussed the shift away from the traditional values that used to provide a stable foundation for most Western nations. Then we saw that both of these factors together have caused deep cracks and fissures in the whole structure of society. We concluded by examining our own reactions to what is taking place around us.

Chapter 2. In these pages, we identified three basic kinds of economic problems that people are facing today: unemployment,

financial manipulation, and materialism. Then we outlined specific strategies for dealing with these problems. These strategies are given in the Bible. Underneath them is this one important fact: *God knows your needs and has promised to supply them.* Your true worth comes from your relationship with Him, not from your position — or lack of it — in society. Your trust in Him is what sets you free from an obsessive concern with financial security. As a result, you can face any situation with confidence and invest your life in a way that brings genuine, long-term profits.

Chapter 3. Our next topic was the family. We examined reasons why people in today's society often find it difficult to relate to each other successfully as husbands, wives, parents, and children. Then we explored some effective ways of improving these relationships. These principles are based on values taught in the Bible. Central to them is this foundational truth: *families are God's idea.* He designed marriage and parenthood for your benefit, and He is the author of love. You can count on His help when dealing with family problems. Personal qualities that will make all of your relationships meaningful and satisfying — honesty, commitment, respect, and unselfishness — become part of your character as you allow Him to work in your life.

Chapter 4. We moved on then to education — both formal and informal. We saw how people can become victims of deception, and we considered conflicts that can arise between students, parents, and teachers. Then we looked at constructive ways of responding to those who try to influence us and our families. The strategies in this chapter also come from the Bible. They stem from this premise: *God is the source of all truth.* The more you align yourself with His plan for you, the less susceptible you will be to manipulation by others. This plan includes your children. God gives parents the primary responsibility for the moral and spiritual education of their sons and daughters. As you accept this important task, He will help you guide them into maturity.

Chapter 5. In this chapter, we explored the ways people try to find meaning in life. We discovered that the answer to this missing dimension is not a religion but a relationship — a personal

relationship with a personal God. We identified the barrier that separates us from this God. Then we showed how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, removed it. We told what the Bible says about why Jesus came to earth and what He did to bring us back to God. As you became aware of all these things, you were faced with the need to respond. You were invited to admit your true condition and accept God's solution. If you did, a miracle happened to you! You passed from death to life. By believing in Jesus Christ, you were united with Him and brought into God's family. Your relationship with God now makes the difference. His power for you, in you, and through you is beyond anything you can imagine. Because He loves you, your life has meaning and purpose.

Chapter 6. In this last chapter, we have explored some of the benefits that we receive because we belong to God. These benefits touch every area of our lives both now and in the future. Because of them, we have resources to solve all our problems. We have seen that accepting Jesus Christ ties us both to God as His children and to each other as brothers and sisters. *This is true Christianity.* Do you remember interaction 3 in Chapter 5? That survey listed seven things that many religions promise to do. Authentic Christianity, lived and practised as the Bible explains it, actually delivers on all these promises. It is God's total answer to your needs, your longings, and your ambitions.



5 COMPOSE YOUR PERSONAL DICTIONARY

Has your thinking changed by reading this book? The following sentences mention the major topics we have discussed. Compare your ideas by answering both questions—what you would have said then, and what you would say now.

- 1) Understanding the problems in society—what are the basic causes?

My answer then:

My answer now:

- 2) Facing economic difficulties—what overall strategy to follow?

My answer then:

My answer now:

- 3) Handling family and personal relationships—what approach to take?

My answer then:

My answer now:

- 4) Dealing with the world of ideas—how to evaluate and respond?

My answer then:

My answer now:

- 5) Searching for meaning and purpose—where to look?

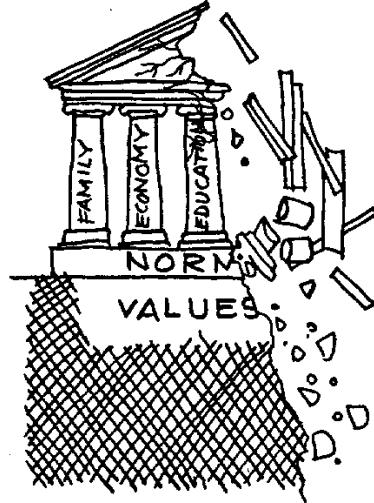
My answer then:

My answer now:

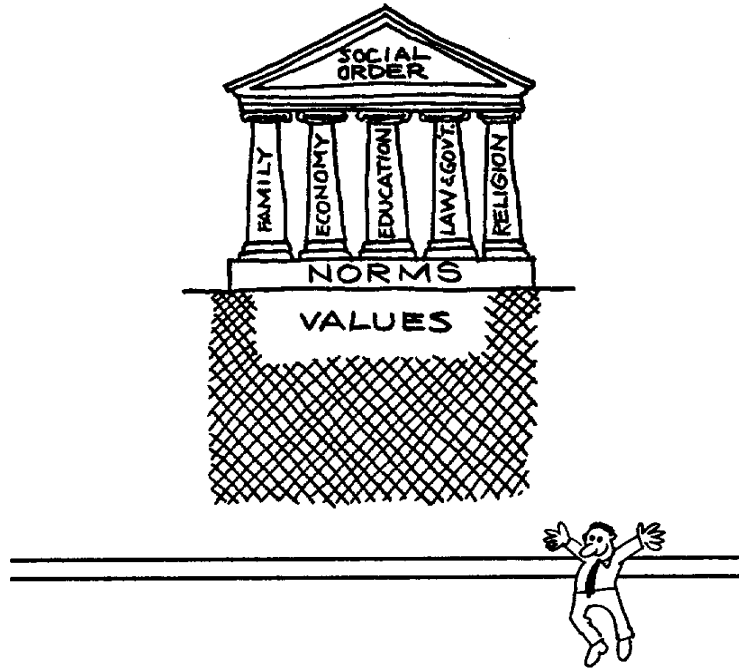
- 6) Coping with fear, failure, and uncertainty—what resources to use?

My answer then.....
My answer now:.....

What this book has intended to show is that the problems of life don't need to overwhelm you. Remember our diagram of Western society in Chapter 1? We said that it looks like this because of rapid change and lack of an adequate value system:



But if your life is based on the right foundation and you have the right kind of resources, it can look like this for you and your family. *You can be in control no matter how much chaos there may be around you.* By following the strategies that have been explained in this book, you can actually achieve true success in every area of living.



SOME FEEDBACK TO THE INTERACTIONS . . .

- 1 Your statements. Remember, you now have answers that deal with anxieties.
- 2 Have you listed the things that really trouble you? Don't hesitate to name them. Being very honest with yourself about this is the first major step in turning obstacles into stepping stones.
- 3 Your statements. You may have a severe problem right now—one so heavy that you can't see what value it could possibly have. If so, be patient. Don't allow the pressure to drive you away. At the right time, you will be given an answer that meets your need.
- 4 Did you make a real effort to do this? You might have had difficulty expressing yourself. Do not be afraid to state what

you really want to achieve, however impossible it may sound.

- 5 Have there been some definite shifts in your thinking? Have some of your strategies changed? In the course of your reading, you may have come across some ideas you would like to explore in more depth. If so, write to the local address in your area on the second page. They'll send you information about materials that are available for further study.



*... you can actually achieve true
success in every area of living.*

**SEND US THE NAMES AND ADDRESSES
OF YOUR FRIENDS**

We will send them lesson 1 of "The Great Questions of Life."

Print Clearly.

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