

Making right decisions gives life order, direction and purpose

BY REV. HARRY SNYDER
Retired Minister

In the coming year each of us will be confronted with alternative choices, the making of resolutions — how and where we will prioritize our time and efforts. If we refuse to make clear-cut decisions, we will live aimlessly and we will be filled with anxiety. On the other hand, by making right decisions our lives can have order, direction and purpose. What we need is an overarching criteria, a yardstick of values, by which we can judge with the right

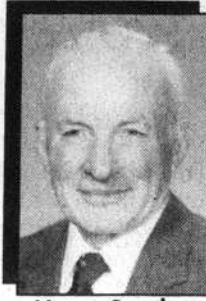
perspective.

After God liberated the Israelites out of slavery to Egypt and led them into the promised land, the Israelites lived among people who worshipped and served other gods. Some of God's people adopted these lesser gods to worship and serve. Consequently, God's servant, Joshua, assembled the leaders, the judges and the heads of families.

At this assembly, Joshua spoke the word of the Lord God to the Israelites and to you and me. Joshua gives us the key, the right criteria for making correct decisions.

Compare the historical qualifications and the track record of the false gods whom people serve. Through Joshua, God recalled for them how He had called Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to serve Him by taking an assignment. In every case God promised to accompany them and to empower them to do His will.

Then, God called Moses to serve with Him to liberate His



Harry Snyder

people out of slavery to Egypt and to lead them to the promised land. There, God called Joshua to lead His people across the Jordan River into the promised land and to give them this land. Time after time, God was faithful to fulfill His promises.

Today, we live among people who believe that man's inventions of modern technology make men and women sufficient unto themselves and capable of managing their own destinies. There is the powerful god of materialism, which, if we serve, can provide us with better, bigger and more things.

However, can secularism and materialism change lives from

being self-centered to being concerned for the well-being of others and for the common good? Can these gods provide, for a price, loving hearts and hope for life after death? No! We must choose the Lord God above lesser gods.

Furthermore, we must put aside the competitive gods which are among you and me. Jesus says to us, "No one can serve two masters; for he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other (Matthew 6:24). God must be foremost in our lives by "serving him in sincerity and in faithfulness." (Joshua 24:14)

In the Lord's prayer Jesus

taught us to pray for guidance, "Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," and to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well." (Matthew 6:10, 33)

When we incline our hearts toward the Lord God, He will bless us with the right perspective and the right mind to help us make the right decisions in the coming year. United with God's will of love and goodness, we can help build a better world.

The Lord Jesus comes not just during this Christmas season, but on every day of every year. He is here today.



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Poll finds most Americans are preparing for Y2K

Religious views affected people's opinions, plans

BY DAVID WILLIAMSON
UNC-CH News Service

More than 90 percent of Americans think the dawn of the new year will bring either no problems or only minor ones, according to a new national telephone poll conducted at the University of North

Carolina at Chapel Hill. Four in 10 people asked said, however, that they were preparing for the event anyway.

"The few who do believe that the new millennium will bring disaster are also attaching religious significance to it," said Robert Faris, a doctoral student at UNC-CH. "Seventy-seven percent of those who anticipate a disaster also believe that the Bible predicts major changes for the year 2000."

Y2K fears also have deeper roots among conservatives, Faris said. At least half of "strong" conservatives are preparing for Y2K insome

way versus 33 percent of liberals. More than 43 percent of gun owners, and 46 percent of Republicans are preparing, compared to 35 percent of people who don't own guns, and 38 percent of Democrats, he said.

Non-mainline Protestants are significantly more likely than others to find religious significance in the millennium and are also more likely to prepare for it. Of those, 38 percent make a biblical connection to Y2K, and 41 percent are getting ready.


"While Y2K seems to have taken on greater significance for religious conservatives, the non-religious also take it seriously," said Faris. "Nearly 60 percent of atheists are preparing for the Y2K bug, compared to roughly 35 percent of other Americans."

"In some ways, we are seeing an interesting convergence: both religious fundamentalists, who tend

to attach religious significance to the millennium, and atheists are preparing for Y2K in great numbers, although the nature of the preparations may differ accordingly," Faris said.

The UNC-CH Odum Institute for Research in Social Science conducted the Fall 1999 Southern Focus Poll between Sept. 22 and Nov. 17. A random sample of 842 Southerners and 402 non-Southerners were interviewed by telephone. Samples were combined and weighted to produce national estimates for the report.

The sampling error was plus or minus 3.5 percent for the Southern sample, plus or minus 5 percent for the non-Southern sample and larger for comparisons between groups. Forty-four percent of people asked agreed to share their opinions with UNC-CH students, who called them.



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apes through the nose; that's why the nose runs when we cry. Some people don't have enough tears; this "dry eye" condition is very uncomfortable, but may be compensated to some extent by "artificial tears" drops. Contact lens wearers, too, may need drops to supplement natural tears and use a sterile solution when inserting lenses to avoid discomfort.

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'Diversity' is focus of video, new manual

Help is now available for North Carolinians who would like to take an active role in improving race relations in their own community. Thanks to the efforts of the NC Human Relations Commission, a video and accompanying training manual provide tools that citizens can use to improve race and ethnic relations where they live.

The video and manual, called "Responding to the New Diversity," were funded by a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation as part of its three-year support of the commission's efforts to create a new generation of human relations programs. The foundation has awarded nearly \$150,000 to the commission for this initiative, according to Eddie Lawrence, commission director.

"In this time of growing diversity and worldwide economic participation, cooperative relations among different groups is essential to the state's future," Lawrence said. "We need to create a new generation of respect and appreciation for differences."

Training by commission staff is required for individuals who would like to use the material. To request more information about the material and the training, contact Lawrence at (919) 733-7996 (telephone), (919) 733-7940 (fax), or send e-mail inquiries to the following: (Eddie.Lawrence@ncmail.net).

The commission launched a statewide initiative to improve race relations in 1997. The video and training material are an outgrowth of recommendations from that continuing endeavor, according to Dr. Jerry Drayton, commission chair.

"Improving race relations should be the No. 1 priority of the state," Drayton said. "I encourage all of our citizens to make it a personal priority."

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