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Issue 12
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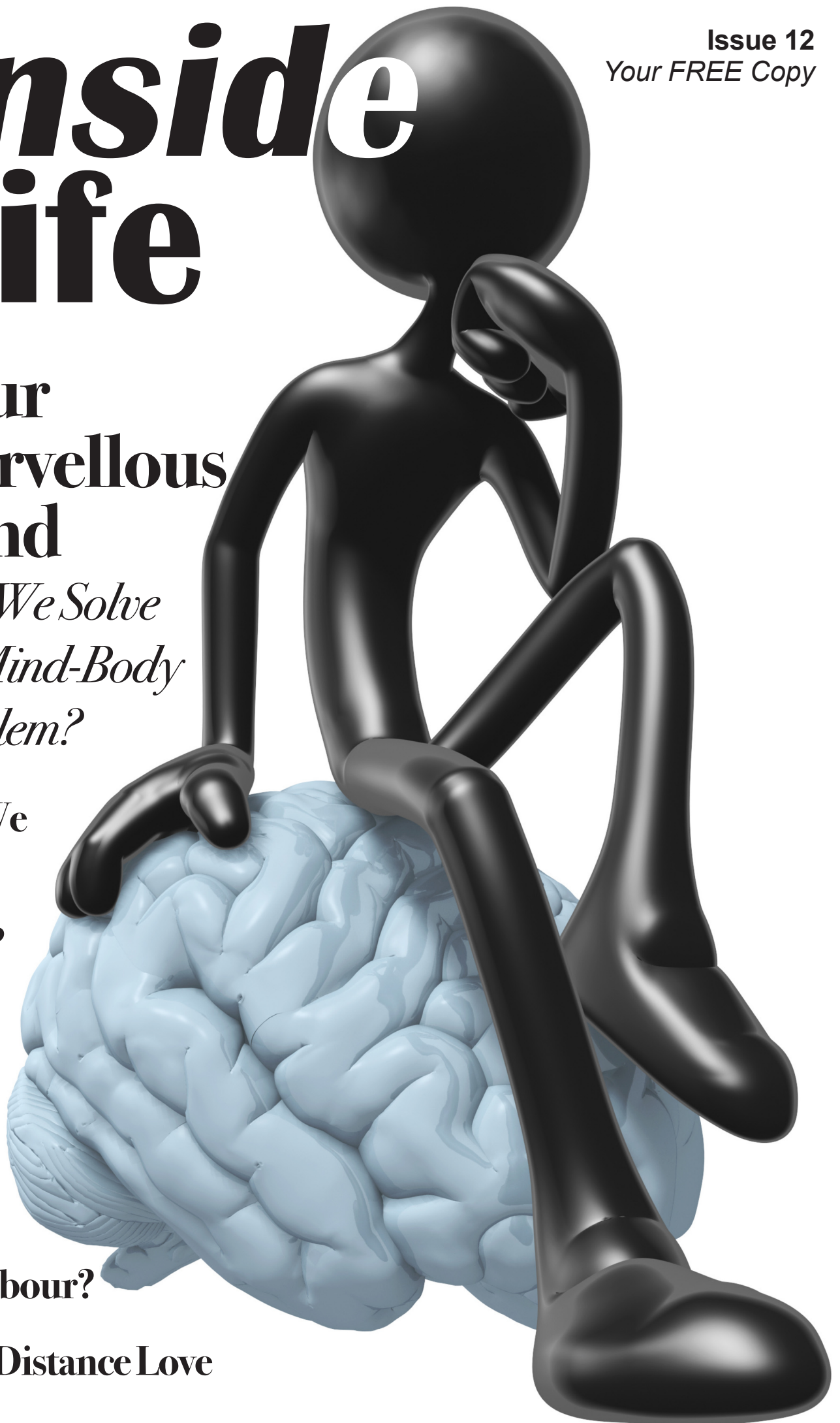
Your Marvellous Mind

*Can We Solve
the Mind-Body
Problem?*

**Can We
Trust
the
Bible?**

**Who
Is
Your
Neighbour?**

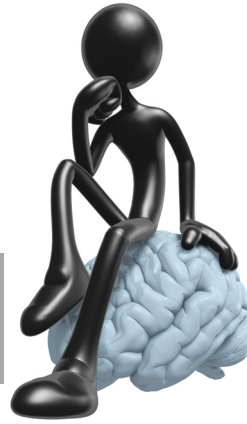
Long Distance Love



Inside Life

A Magazine of Understanding

Number 12, March 2010



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Inside Life

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Printed by Inkprint Ltd

***Inside Life** is a magazine of understanding. Rather than just reporting on life, **Inside Life** seeks to delve inside the marvellous mystery that is life, to discover what it is all about. What does life mean? Where did it come from? How can we make the most of it?*

***Inside Life** provides insight and answers to life's deep questions and challenges, and aims to provide articles of lasting hope, help, and encouragement for successful living in today's fast-moving world.*

***Inside Life** is published three times a year, free of charge, as a community service.*

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ISSN: 1177-3693

Our Cover: *We can observe and measure the human brain, but we cannot see the mind. How is it we have such a marvellous mind with which we can think about our brain?*

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By Rex Morgan

The human brain is the most complex object in the known universe. A grapefruit-sized spongy lump of wrinkled tissue weighing not much more than a kilogram, this amazing organ contains around 100 billion nerve cells, each highly specialised for sending and receiving electrochemical signals. The brain is the control centre for the body, keeping our heart beating, our lungs respiring, and giving us the ability to carry out all of the multifaceted functions of life.

But greater by far than the wonderful brain is the marvellous human mind. The mind is the seat of our thoughts, perceptions, emotions, will, and imagination. It is like a universe inside our heads. This inner universe is more extensive than the immense universe outside us, when you consider the heights and depths that can be plumbed by your thoughts. In an instant you can be, in your 'mind's eye', at the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The next split second you can be on a sandy Pacific beach, or five miles under the sea, or in a spacecraft orbiting Mars! The human mind can move through time and space in any direction and at any speed it chooses.

Our mind is truly our most valuable possession. It is the site of our identity, our awareness of life, our consciousness. We are not just alive, but we know we are alive, thanks to our mind. It is the essence

Your Marvellous Mind

of who we are—it has been well said that our body is just a vehicle for carrying around our mind. And it is a very personal realm, a private area to which no one but the owner has access. No one else can know exactly what is going on in our mind.

But what precisely is our mind, and where is it? The brain can be located, photographed, touched, and even dissected. But it isn't possible to see or measure the mind. The mind is intangible, invisible, and therefore very difficult to pin down and describe definitively. It has been a mystery to scientists and philosophers for centuries, as they have striven to get a handle on just exactly what the mind consists of, and how it works. Modern neurologists and cognitive scientists are continuing to probe how the brain and mind give rise to thoughts, actions, emotions, and ultimately, consciousness. This is known as the 'mind-body problem', and has long been one of the key issues of philosophy.

There are two major theories on the makeup of the mind. Materialism, or monism, holds that the mind is totally explained by the brain, and is nothing more than the result of brain activity. Dualism, on the other hand, holds that the mind is a non-physical essence that in some way works in conjunction with the brain.

Let's consider these approaches in more detail.

Materialism: Brain Is Mind

Most modern scientists are materialists, attributing the processes of mind to physical activities in the brain. They believe that consciousness is an emergent property of the brain, similar to the babbling noise of a river, which is a result of, or emerges from, the flow of the

water. Just as the kidneys produce urine, the brain produces mind. Our thoughts and emotions are the result of the complex electrochemical



interactions that occur within and between the nerve cells. This means in effect that the mind and the brain are the



same thing—mind is simply the way the brain works.

Scientists are able to measure brain activity using techniques like MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) or PET (positron-emission tomography), and can see different parts of the brain light up

when different areas of the body are used, memories recalled, or thoughts imagined. But they haven't been able to identify how thoughts and feelings are created.

Neurologist Brad Harrub concedes: 'As scientists, we are far from unlocking all the secrets that this incredible organ (the brain) holds. In fact, scientists are not always agreed as to how (or if!) we can unlock the remaining secrets. We now possess the ability to record the activity from a single neuron located deep within the brain, but we can only speculate about the role that particular activity plays in such things as thoughts, memories, or emotions.'

'The more we learn about this complex group of cells, the more we realise we do not know much about the "big picture".'¹

How and why do brain processes give rise to consciousness? How can mental activity emerge from a physical entity such as a brain? That's the big unsolved mystery.

Dualism: Physical Brain, Spiritual Mind

A pioneer proponent of dualism was the French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650), who declared that the mind, while it might live in the brain, is a non-material entity, totally separate from the physical tissues found inside the head. He was the originator of one of history's most memorable sound-bites, 'I think, therefore I am', emphasising the importance of the mind. It is only because we have a mind that we actually exist, or have identity.

Recent advocates of dualism include the eminent neurophysiologist Sir John Eccles (1903-1997) and the famous philosopher Sir Karl Popper (1902-1994), who believed that the mind is essentially non-physical, although it makes use of the brain in its operations. They contended that the brain must be open to non-physical influences if mental activity is to be effective.²

'It is a mistake to think that the brain does everything', said Sir John Eccles, 'and that our conscious experiences are simply a reflection of brain activities'. If brain accounts for everything, then we—our conscious selves—are nothing more than 'passive spectators of the performances' that our brain neurons actually carry out. In that case, every ability we hold dear as humans—creativity, decision-making, will, reasoning—are fakes. 'Our beliefs that we can really make decisions and that we have some control over our actions would be nothing but illusions.'³

Wilder Penfield (1891-1976), a brilliant Canadian neurosurgeon, wrote: 'Throughout my own scientific career, I, like other scientists, have struggled to prove that the brain accounts for the mind'. The longer he studied his patients, the more it seemed that mind was more than brain activity. 'To me, it seems more and more reasonable that the mind may be a distinct and different essence' from the brain.⁴

Penfield demonstrated this duality of mind and brain by testing some of the epilepsy patients on which he performed brain surgery. When he electrically stimulated their brains he was able to make them move their arms or legs, turn their heads or eyes, talk, or swallow. When asked the reason for these movements, the patients responded: 'I didn't do that. You did'.⁵ Penfield concluded, 'the patient thinks of himself as having an existence separate from his body'.⁶

Mind over Matter

A recent book reports instances of therapy for depression and phobias where patients' brain chemistry was directly affected by their minds.⁷ Successful treatment for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder occurs when

patients recognise their problems are caused by their brain misfiring, and try to starve the compulsive, repetitive urges of the brain. After this treatment, brain scans show the brain has started to fix itself. The patient is changing his physical brain with his mind.⁸

The placebo effect is another principle supporting the case of dualism. When a patient is given a sugar pill instead of a real medicine, the patient's belief in the placebo can cause observ-

able and measurable relief from symptoms. Many doctors say that a patient's attitude can often help or hinder real medicines or therapies from working.⁹

'Mind over matter' is a common saying highlighting the fact that our minds can have a very real effect on our physical bodies. Mental states such as anger, fear, and worry can cause changes in the brain and other parts of the body. Anger, for instance, causes the brain to activate a clenching of the fists, racing blood pressure, or reddening of the face. It is well known that mental stress can trigger all manner of physical effects in the body. Conditions of this type are labelled 'psychosomatic', as the mind (*psyche*) produces disturbances in the body (*soma*).

David J Chalmers begins his book *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*: 'Consciousness is the biggest mystery. It may be the largest outstanding obstacle in our quest for a scientific understanding of the universe'.

Prof. Chalmers is a philosopher who has devoted his career to thinking about consciousness. The conclusion reached in his book is that consciousness is beyond possible understanding by modern science.

To a neuroscientist, you are your brain; nothing causes your behaviour other than the operations of your brain.

—Joshua D Greene



These pictures show some of the remarkable achievements engineered by mankind. Compare them with the structures displaying the greatest inventiveness of the other animals and the difference is phenomenal. Yet the human brain closely resembles that of the orangutang and other creatures. Why do humans achieve transcendently more than other animals? The minimal difference in physical brain cannot explain the quantum difference in creativity and accomplishment. The accompanying article considers this paradox.



'We have good reason to believe that consciousness arises from physical systems such as brains, but we have little idea how it arises, or why it exists at all. How could a physical system such as a brain also be an experienter? Why should there be something it is like to be such a system? Present-day scientific theories hardly touch the really difficult questions about consciousness. We do not just lack a detailed theory; we are entirely in the dark about how consciousness fits into the natural order.'¹⁰

Do We Have Free Will?

Dualists point out that if the mind is simply a by-product of brain activity, there is no such thing as free will, or the ability to make a decision. All of our thoughts and decisions would simply be attributable to neurons firing in our brains. This would mean

none of our thoughts or beliefs can be trusted, because they might be caused by a misfiring neuron. It would mean that 'we' are not consciously thinking the thoughts, since they are generated by the brain.

One interesting consequence of the materialistic viewpoint is now playing a part in the criminal justice system. A recent article in the *New York Times* stated that 'lawyers now routinely order scans of convicted defendants' brains and argue that a neurological impairment prevented them from controlling themselves'.¹¹

The writer mused, 'But since all behaviour is caused by our brains,

wouldn't this mean all behaviour could potentially be excused?' A good question. If our physical brain is the source of all behaviour, can we be held responsible for our actions? Can free will really be reduced to the interplay of brain chemicals? The article continued: 'To a

If our physical brain is the source of all behaviour, can we be held responsible for our actions? Can free will really be reduced to the interplay of brain chemicals?

neuroscientist, you are your brain; nothing causes your behaviour other than the operations of your brain', says Joshua D Greene, an assistant professor of psychology at Harvard. 'If that's right, it radically changes the way we think about the law. The official line in the law is all that matters is whether you're rational,

but you can have someone who is totally rational but whose strings are being pulled by something beyond his control. In other words, even someone who has the illusion of making a free and rational choice between soup and salad may be deluding himself, since the choice of salad over soup is ultimately predestined by forces hard-wired in his brain.¹²

It is natural to feel that we can will to have our brain and body respond to us. When we decide to lift our arm, we understand that the brain issues the instructions to the arm to carry out the action.

But did the brain initiate the decision? If so, do we really have free will? The fact that we can have thoughts about consciousness itself is interesting. What causes these thoughts?

If it is true that just as the kidneys produce urine, the brain produces mind, this would mean that something non-physical arises from something physical, which would be unprecedented in all of creation. Urine is a physically measurable substance, but mind is not.

Thoughts are immaterial and can't be measured. We can have hundreds of thoughts in our minds at the same time, because they don't take up any space. Willpower, character, imagination, attitudes, appreciation of beauty, and other mental states are similar—they take up no space or time, and have no shape or size. It defies reason to believe that non-physical things like this could arise from something physical. Reactions between physical things are happening constantly, but they always result in other physical things. And then there is the question of the existence of values, conscience and morality—

how can these be explained by the physical brain?

Prominent geneticist and evolutionary biologist JBS Haldane stated: 'It seems to me immensely unlikely that mind is a mere by-product of matter. For if my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true...and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms'.¹³

Another corollary of materialistic thinking is that if the brain, which

is known to work just as a computer does, can give rise to mind, then it must follow that one day the computers made by man will develop consciousness,

start thinking, and become self aware. But that bizarre outcome simply defies logic and reason.

Humans versus Animals

Dualists also point out that when the brains of human beings are compared to those of animals, there isn't a lot of difference, but when the respective mind power is compared, that of humans is overwhelmingly superior. Man's brain is similar to animal brain, merely continuing the gradual increase in complexity evidenced by all mammals from shrew to chimpanzee. But there is an enormous, seemingly infinite, difference in mental power and quality of life between man and animal. Animals lack an understanding of beauty, an awareness of self, the knowledge of right and wrong, the ability to create, think, dream, imagine, develop character, and even to worry. They act largely on instinct, with their brain functioning like a programmed computer. In other words, they have a brain, but not a

mind, at least anywhere remotely comparable to that of a human.

An article in *Nature* magazine stated: 'Time and again, humans' sense of cognitive superiority over other primates has failed to find a solid foundation in structural variations of the brain. The brains of humans and chimpanzees are anatomically not so different, except in scale'.¹⁴

Brain researcher Robert Kuhn concludes: 'The human brain cannot account for the yawning chasm between the utterly unique characteristics of humans and the repetitive instincts of animals. Therefore, a non-physical addition must unite with the human brain, converting it into the human mind'.¹⁵

Science and philosophy continue to be mystified by the mind-body problem. Science is unable to prove that non-physical thoughts, emotions, character and values come from a physical brain and can be explained totally physically.

A recent article in *The NZ Herald* declared: 'The conundrum remains—how the electrical activity of billions of neurons in the brain "translates" into the range and quality of subjective experiences of our lives. We seem as far from understanding the brain as we were a century ago. Nobody understands how decisions are made or how imagination is set free'.¹⁶

Some scientists hoped the human genome project would deliver the keys to solving the mind-body problem, but around a decade since the completion of the project, we are in some ways even further from the answer. It was discovered 'that the human genome is virtually interchangeable with that of our fellow vertebrates, such as the mouse and our primate cousins.

'We cannot see in this why we are so different from chimpanzees', remarked the director of the chimp genome project. 'The obvious

'We seem as far from understanding the brain as we were a century ago. Nobody understands how decisions are made or how imagination is set free.'
—John Maddox

differences cannot be explained by genetics alone'.¹⁷

Noted science author Richard Morris commented: 'Scientific knowledge of the brain is woefully incomplete. Scientists do not know how the brain acquires and stores information, how it produces feelings of pleasure and pain, or how it creates consciousness. The functioning of the human brain is a profound mystery'.¹⁸

The Bible goes on to reveal that the reason we are able to have understanding is that 'there is a spirit in man'.

The study of the mind brings us to the outer edges of scientific enquiry, that grey area where science and philosophy intersect. Science has no way to prove or disprove whether non-physical mind essence or energy exists, since anything non-physical is by its very nature unable to be observed or measured scientifically.

David Chalmers states: 'Temperamentally, I am strongly inclined toward materialist reductive explanation, and I have no strong spiritual or religious inclinations. For a number of years I hoped for a materialist theory; when I gave up on this hope, it was quite reluctantly. It eventually seemed plain to me that these conclusions were simply forced on anyone who wants to take consciousness seriously. Materialism is a beautiful and compelling view of the world, but to account for consciousness we have to go beyond the resources it provides'.¹⁹

An Answer Proposed

When we venture beyond the resources of materialism and look at the area of religion, we find it has important insights to offer in this area.

Interestingly, the Holy Bible purports to answer the mind-body question. The Bible claims to be the revelation of the God who created the universe. If indeed there is such a creator, he

certainly would have the answers to questions like this one, since he put together the body and the mind. So it is instructive to consider what the Bible has to say.²⁰

The Bible records that after creating all of the lower animals, God formed mankind as the crowning achievement of the creation, giving us the dominion over all other creatures. It states that God made man 'in his image',²¹ having attributes such as thinking, reasoning, decision-making, appreciation of beauty, and creativity that God himself possessed.

The Bible goes on to reveal that the reason we are able to have understanding is that 'there is a spirit in man'.²²

That simple statement explains the difference between humans and animals, and provides the key to unlocking the mind-body enigma.

Richard Faull, director of the Centre for Brain Research at Auckland University says: 'When you realise the complexity of the human brain and that we are so limited by the fact we have to use our own brain to try to solve the brain—and that's probably impossible. I think we need a super-brain'.²³

Thankfully there is a 'super brain'—God the Creator, the one who devised the complex marvel that is our brain—who can reveal the answers that are beyond humanity's grasp. The handbook he gave mankind, the Bible, reveals that dualism is correct—each of us has a mind, or 'spirit in man', as well as a brain.

Some scientists and authors have come to this conclusion independently.

An article in *Time* magazine concluded: 'As physicist (Roger) Penrose has suggested, the notion that the human mind can ever fully comprehend the human mind could well be folly. It may be that scientists will eventually have to acknowledge the existence of something beyond their ken—something that might be described as the soul'.²⁴

Sir John Eccles stated, 'Since materialist solutions fail to account for our experienced uniqueness, I am constrained to attribute the uniqueness of the Self or Soul to a supernatural spiritual creation'.²⁵

Botanist Edmund Sinnott (1888–1968) wrote, 'These deep-seated inborn urgencies and desires, arising spontaneously in the mind...coming to flower as the highest expressions of what he is and what he might become, one may rightly call, I think, the human spirit'.²⁶

The Bible then takes this a step further, showing that in addition to the spirit in man which gives him the ability to think, there is a spirit of God expressing the thoughts or mind of God.

'For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God'.²⁷

'It may be that scientists will eventually have to acknowledge the existence of something beyond their ken—something that might be described as the soul.'
—*Time* magazine

Amazingly, the Bible goes on to disclose that this spirit of God is available to be imparted to humans, supernaturally joining with our spirit or mind.²⁸

Receiving this spirit enables us to receive and exercise some of the thoughts, attitudes and approaches

of God, as we take on aspects of the very mind of God! The Apostle Paul writes: 'God has poured out his love into our hearts (another word for minds) by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us'.²⁹

Through having the Holy Spirit in our mind, the love of God and other fruits of the spirit³⁰ become active in our lives, influencing our thoughts, feelings, emotions, desires and understanding.

Another passage describes this process: 'I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being'.³¹

Here our mind is referred to as our 'inner being', the deep part of us where our self awareness and personal identity reside, the source of our thoughts, desires and emotions. When the Holy Spirit comes into the mind, the Bible describes it as a 'renewal of the attitude of your mind',³² and as 'taking on the mind that was in Jesus Christ'.³³

The Bible contains much helpful instruction on how we should use our minds and direct our thoughts. One verse for instance states, 'Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things'.³⁴

The wise biblical King Solomon gave an important admonition about the mind: 'Above all else guard your heart (mind), for it is the wellspring of life'. This means that looking after our mind is the most important thing we can do in life, because it is the source of our self awareness, identity, thoughts and feelings, the most essential, central thing about each of us as individuals.

The mind-body problem, that age-old mystery of the origin of consciousness, was explained centuries ago in the Bible! The incomparable human mind is a spiritual component given to us by our Creator. No wonder it

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defies physical comprehension. Let's be thankful for and take good care of that most valuable possession, our marvellous human mind!

Notes

- ¹ B Harrub & B Thompson, *The Origin of the Brain and Mind, Reason & Revelation*, 2491, pp. 1-8.
- ² R L Gregory, *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 252.
- ³ J Eccles & K Popper, *The Self and Its Brain*, Springer, Berlin, 1977.
- ⁴ Wilder Penfield, *The Mystery of the Mind*, Princeton University Press, 1975, p. xiii.
- ⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 76-77.
- ⁶ Wilder Penfield, quoted in A Koestler, *Ghost in the Machine*, p. 203.
- ⁷ M Beauregard & D O'Leary, *The Spiritual Brain*, pp. 133-140.
- ⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 126-130.
- ⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 141-142.
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- ¹² *ibid.*
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- ¹⁴ C P Ponting & G Lunter, Human brain gene wins genome race, *Nature*, 14 Sept. 2006.
- ¹⁵ R L Kuhn, *The Human Mind—More than a Computer*, 1969, p. 53.
- ¹⁶ J Maddox, Greatest wonder of the world, *The Daily Telegraph*, reprinted in *The New Zealand Herald*, 14 February 2009.
- ¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ R Morris, *The Evolutionists: The Struggle for Darwin's Soul*, WH Freeman, New York, 2001, p. 200.

¹⁹ Chalmers, Introduction.

²⁰ For evidence about the veracity of the Bible, please feel free to write to us for a copy of our article on this subject.

²¹ Genesis 1:26 (*New International Version* quoted throughout).

²² Job 32:8.

²³ D Chisholm, R Faull—unravelling the brain's secrets, *North and South*, January 2010.

²⁴ 'Consciousness' may be an evanescent illusion, *Time*, 31 July 1995, p. 54.

²⁵ J Eccles, *Evolution of the Brain, Creation of the Self*, p. 241.

²⁶ E W Sinnott, *Matter, Mind and Man*, p. 124.

²⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:11.

²⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:10,16; Acts 2:38; Romans 8:16; Philippians 2:5.

²⁹ Romans 5:5.

³⁰ Galatians 5:22-23.

³¹ Ephesians 3:16.

³² Ephesians 4:23.

³³ Philippians 2:5.

³⁴ Philippians 4:8.



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It is said that the last man to know everything was the Dutch scholar Erasmus, who lived from 1466 to 1536. Of course, what that means is that Erasmus knew everything there was to know at the time, and compared to today that isn't much.

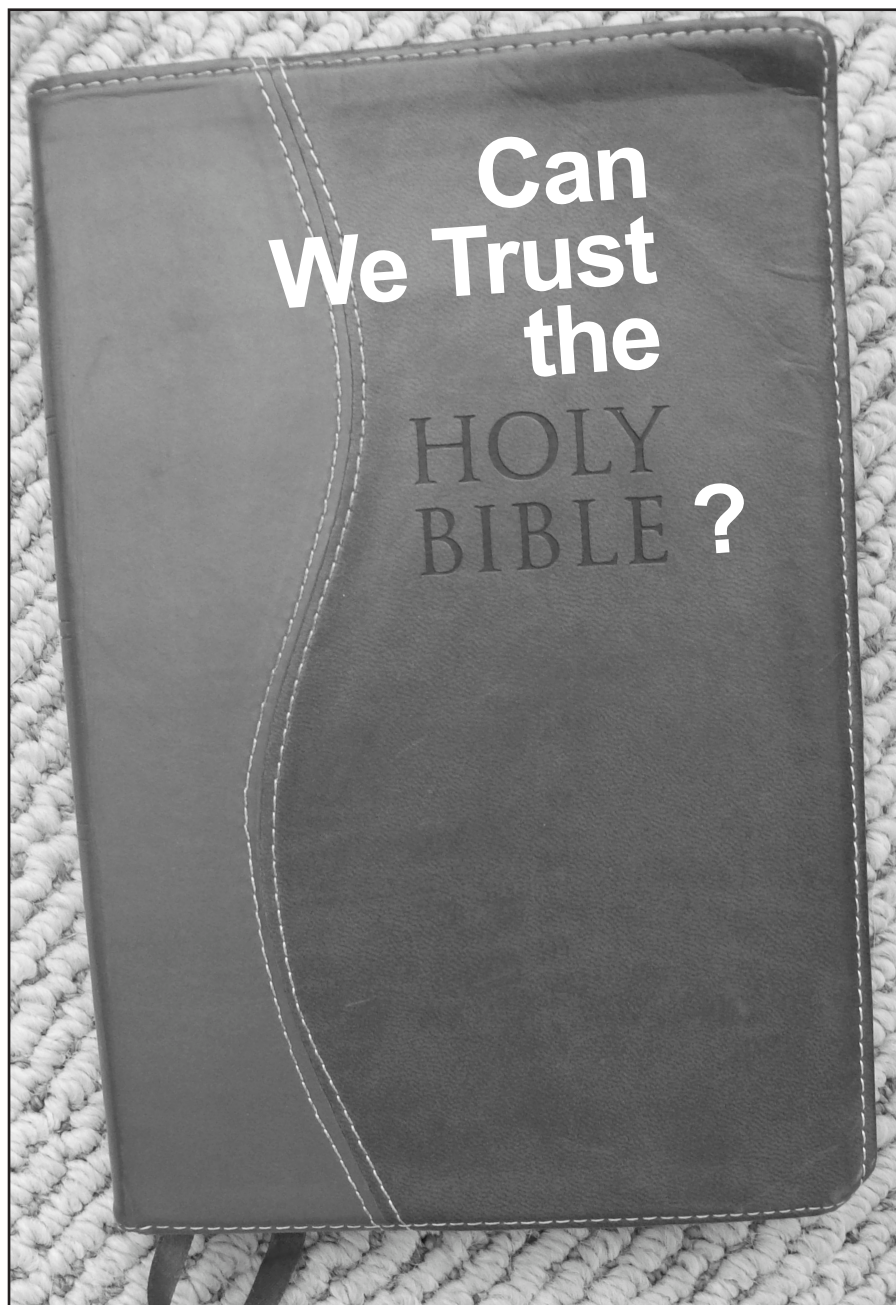
Back then it was possible for an educated man to have read all the important books and be acquainted with just about all that was significant in science, art, philosophy, medicine, and theology. Knowledge was advancing on all fronts, but slowly.

The average person living even 150 years or so ago—before the introduction of mass transportation, television, telephones, electricity, and all the other modern conveniences we take for granted—would have felt more at home in the time of Jesus than he would in our day.

Only an arrogant fool would claim to know everything today. The sum total of knowledge is doubling in most fields at least every five years. In some it is less than that—the computer industry reinvents itself about every 18 months. So you and I actually wake up each morning more ignorant than the day before!

This could become very depressing. Can no one claim to know everything about anything any more? One can't even expect to know everything about Erasmus. A quick Internet search for his name on Google takes 0.27 seconds, and offers 14 200 000 possible references (12 January 2010). See what I mean?

So you can't blame people for being suspicious about the accuracy of the information in any book that is more than a few years old. And when a very old book claims to be a timeless guide to truth and a reliable guide to life, written or at least edited by an author who is reputed to know everything, one can understand why people might say, 'Oh yeah?'



What Is the 'Good Book' Good For?

You've probably got a Bible. Most people have, even if it is left over from school or a wedding. And, most people still have a superstitious regard for it, and think twice after they have sworn by it to tell the truth, even if they are not sure why.

The Bible is still the world's best seller. It is the most widely distributed book on earth, translated into about

2 000 languages. Millions of people believe the Bible is the Word of God passed on through inspired human minds. They become very indignant if someone questions this. But for others, the Bible

is merely a collection of ancient writings that might have some historic, poetic, mythic, or inspirational value. So is this venerable book really the unquestionable, authoritative Word of God,

You can't blame people for being suspicious about the accuracy of the information in any book that is more than a few years old.

the guide to life from the mind of our Creator? That is a fair question, and all the blustering protests about 'heresy' won't make it go away.

Cause for Concern?

Why should anyone put such confidence in this book? Or to be strictly accurate, these books, because the Bible is actually a collection of many different books and writings. There are over 40 independent authors, writing in several languages, represented in the Bible. They wrote over a period of 1500 years; that's 60 generations. The Bible has a cast of some 2930 people, living in 1551 places and working in nearly 200 identifiable jobs. The majority are men, but there are 147 women mentioned by name. This is without question an impressive cross section of skills, geography, and time.

By any standard, the Bible is a literary treasure. But is it what it claims to be: a record of God working in people's lives and revealing his will to them? How can we be sure of that?

A letter published in the *Daily Mail* last year put it this way: 'The Rev. B. Shucksmith states that when we die we will be judged by the Word of God. That may or may not be true. Millions of people are concerned that certain passages in the Bible are being presented as the definitive Word of God. If we could see proof of the publishing deal God signed, we might start believing. Until then, why should the words of fishermen be seen as the Word of God?'

Why indeed? Even if the Bible is a record of God working in people's lives and revealing his will to them, how can we be sure it is an accurate record? The various books, letters, poems, and stories have been copied, recopied, translated, and retranslated many times. We have never found an original manuscript. So how do we know what we have is authentic?

The Heart of the Matter

All the great works of antiquity suffer from this problem. We don't have the originals, and often not even a version in the original language. All we have are translations, or translations of translations. Some were passed down orally for generations before they were written down.

For example, the earliest copies of Homer's *Iliad* date back to the 13th century, but scholars have no doubt that what we have is essentially what Homer wrote, perhaps 700–1100 BC. Or consider the *Gallic Wars*, written by Julius Caesar about the same time as the New Testament. The earliest copy of this work dates from one thousand years later. But again, historians don't doubt that it is an authentic version of the original. Sometimes archaeologists find a scrap of papyrus or a piece of a scroll that has a fragment of an early original. These are then compared with later copies to see if something had become lost in translation. Scholars accept that the earliest versions we have of ancient authors like

Josephus, Tacitus,
Seutonius,

Pliny, Plutarch, and Herodotus are reliable, even though hundreds or even thousands of years separate them from the writers' original manuscripts.

But the amount of original material for many great literary works is surprisingly small. And this isn't

just true of very old works: there are no known original manuscripts of any of Shakespeare's plays or sonnets. What happens if we

judge the Bible by the same standard?

Fragments of Truth

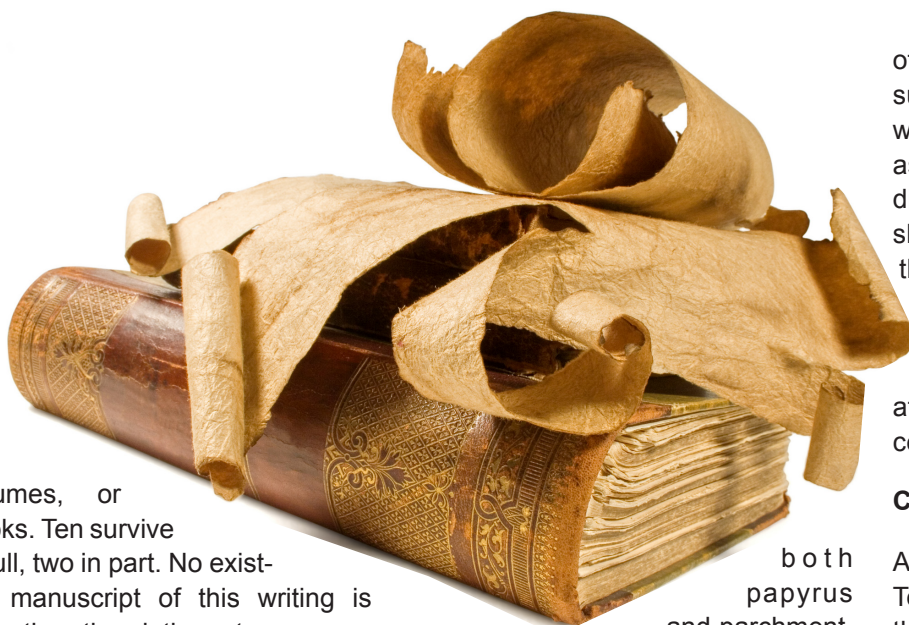
We have more manuscripts of New Testament writings than of any other ancient book. Compared with texts of other ancient writings, the collection of biblical texts is an embarrassment of riches.

- Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, written about 54 BC, survives in only nine or ten good manuscripts. The oldest one is from a time some 900 years later than Caesar's day.

- The historian Livy (49 BC – AD 17) chronicled Rome's history in 142 books. Only 35 survive in 20 copies. No known manuscript of Livy's *Roman History* is older than the fourth century.

- The *Histories of Tacitus* (c. AD 100) were comprised of 14 books. Only four and a half survive. His *Annals* consisted of 16

By any standard the Bible is a literary treasure. But is it what it claims to be—a record of God working in people's lives and revealing his will to them?



volumes, or books. Ten survive in full, two in part. No existing manuscript of this writing is older than the ninth century.

- The earliest manuscript of Plato's writings dates from a time some 1300 years after he lived. Demosthenes' writings are first found in manuscripts copied 1200 years or more after his lifetime.

- Homer's *Iliad* is considered by some to be the greatest of all Greek classical works. It is found in about 650 manuscripts, the most by far for any work of Greek literature.

In contrast to ancient secular writings, the Bible is the best preserved book from the ancient world. One scholarly estimate says we have more than 5330 complete or partial Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. In addition there are about 8000 Latin manuscripts and hundreds more in dozens of other ancient versions.

As well, there are thousands of biblical quotations in the writings of the church fathers from the early Christian era. We can compare the Greek manuscripts themselves to these quotations in the search for the original text.

'No other work of Greek literature can boast of such numbers', says New Testament scholar, Philip Comfort. Another scholar, Zane Hodges, says the manuscripts of the New Testament 'are far more numerous than for any other ancient book'. There are more than 28 000 different documents, written on

both papyrus and parchment,

which contain all or portions of the New Testament, that have survived to our time. These have been dated reliably, and they confirm that what we have today is an accurate record of the original texts.

But more than sheer numbers of manuscripts give witness to the Greek New Testament text. The time gap between original writing and extant copy for most classical Greek works is about 800 to 1000 years. But some New Testament fragments date back to the 2nd century, and some date back to only 30 years or so after the documents were written.

In his book *The Bible and Archaeology*, Sir Frederic G Kenyon, eminent textual critic and former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, said of the New Testament: 'The interval, then, between the dates of the original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be, in fact, negligible'.

Thus, New Testament scholars have abundant manuscript resources to reconstruct the original Greek text

of the New Testament. We can be sure that, in almost all particulars, we have the New Testament writings as they were originally penned. The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls showed that the same is true for the Old Testament manuscripts. In the words of Frederic Kenyon, the Bible has been 'handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries'.

Church Fathers

A further witness to the New Testament text is sourced in the thousands of quotations found throughout the writings of the early Christian clergy (AD 100–450) known as the 'church fathers'. Biblical scholars have estimated that if all the New Testament Jesus manuscripts and documents were to vanish overnight, it would still be possible to reconstruct the entire New Testament with quotations from the church fathers, with perhaps the exception of just 15–20 verses!

If we are to judge the Bible by the same standards as we judge the integrity of other ancient texts, it can be regarded as a matter of scientific fact that what we have today is an accurate record of what was originally written.

B F Westcott and F J A Hort, co-authors of *The New Testament in Original Greek*, said of the accuracy of the Bible: '...this is not to ignore comparative trivialities such as changes of order, or the insertion or omission of the article with proper names and so

on. They are indeed there but they do not change any major doctrine, and do not affect Christianity in the slightest'.

Summing up, if we are to judge the Bible by the same standards as we judge the integrity of other ancient texts, it can be regarded as a matter of scientific fact that what we have today is an accurate record of what was originally written.



The Earliest New Testament Writing in Existence

This small fragment of St John's Gospel, less than 9 cm high, contains parts of chapter 18, verses 31–33 (see *New International Version* excerpt below). It is one of the collection of Greek papyri in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, England. On the other side parts of verses 37–38 of the same chapter can be read.

It was originally discovered in Egypt, and may have come from the ruined city of Oxyrhynchus in Upper Egypt. This fragment is much more important than its size might suggest, as scholars are quite confident that it dates back to the first half of the second century AD, providing important evidence of the existence of the fourth gospel as one the books read by early Christians in Upper Egypt.

www.library.manchester.ac.uk/specialcollections/collections/stjohnfragment/

...did not have handed him over to you." they replied, "we
³¹Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by
 your own law."
 "But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews
 objected. ³²This happened so that the words Jesus had
 spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die
 would be fulfilled.
³³Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned
 Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the
 Jews?"
³⁴"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked him,
 "or have others said this to you about me?"
³⁵"Am I a Jew?" Jesus asked him.

Other Valid Questions

Now this does not, of course, prove that the Bible is the word of God. But it does establish beyond all reasonable doubt what we have today is an accurate record of what the original authors and editors believed to be the word of God.

That should make us sit up and take notice. The people who wrote the New Testament either knew

Jesus personally, or knew the people who did. They saw his miracles, watched as he was crucified, and were eyewitnesses of the fact of his

resurrection. They were not making it up. What we have today is indeed an accurate record of what they said happened. If what they have written is true, then it has to be the most momentous information that it is possible to receive.

There are other significant questions that perhaps you need to ask about the Bible before you can be convinced that it is the word of God. What you cannot do is casually dismiss the

Bible on the basis of superficial criticism, based on emotion and opinion rather than fact.

But remember—if the Bible is the word of God, there comes a time when you have to stop asking it questions, and start thinking about how you will answer the questions it asks you.

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Tony Goudie is a retired pastor who lives in the U.K. He and his wife Penny have two sons.



WHO Is Your Neighbour?

By Gael McInnes

Who is your neighbour?

The person who lives next door, of course! Yes and no. 'What do you mean?' I hear you ask. Let me share an experience I had.

It was midnight, a clear moonlit summer's night. The hood of my sports car was down, and I was only 10km from home. My friend and I were returning from an afternoon with family. Traffic was sparse and the car was purring along beautifully, or so I thought, when suddenly the engine gave a splutter and stopped. 'Oh no!' I exclaimed, looking at the petrol gauge. I instantly knew why. 'Now what?' my friend asked anxiously.

Knowing the area, I said I would walk to the nearest town. I knew where the taxi stand was and I could go and get petrol, but I'd be away for ages. I asked my friend if she wanted me to put the hood of the car up, as if a soft top was any protection. 'No', she said, 'just leave me the wheel brace!'

Taking the torch, I started out along the dark stretch of motorway. Shortly after, a car pulled up alongside and enquired if that was my car back there. 'Hop in', the driver said, 'I'll drop my family off first and then help you get petrol'. After taking his

family home, which was at the next town, he took a 2 L petrol can from his garage and away we went. This man was new to the district. The nearest after-hours petrol was 20 km away and you could only use 50c coins! The man filled the can and paid for it himself, refusing my contribution.

One and a half hours later we arrived back at my car, and to my surprise I saw a station wagon parked in front of my car and a man leaning up against it chatting to my friend. This man had a sleeping wife and children in his wagon, and had stopped to offer help just after I had left. He said he needed the break and offered to stay until my return.

Once my car was going again, my 'motorway hero' wouldn't take any money from me. When I thanked him, he simply said, 'Do a good deed for a motorist sometime', and he was gone.

Both these men were our heroes that night. They gave their time in such a generous way and I am forever grateful.

Who is your neighbour? Anyone, of any race, creed, or social background who is in need.

How many times have you stood back, or 'rubber-necked' at an incident or accident, discussing the situation, not offering to help, not wanting to get involved, or just curious about someone else's demise? How many times have you 'passed by on the other side' when you have seen someone in need?

The Christian's guide to life¹ tells us what to do. Someone asked Jesus, 'Who is my neighbour?' He told a story about a traveller who was attacked and beaten by robbers, and how some priests and other people saw him but walked on. In contrast, another individual, who was considered 'not a nice kind of person', demonstrated compassionate love and helped the traveller.² We are also told 'do to others as you would

have them do to you',³ and to 'love each other'.⁴ Jesus loved us enough to give his life for us.

News items often interview the heroes who have pulled people out of burning cars and houses or people who have acted bravely. Last year in Auckland, a man gave his life when he courageously stepped in to help a woman who was being attacked. Television news regularly profiles a 'good person', and local community newspapers also have awards for people like this. It is instructive for us to take note of why they have been nominated: for selfless service to others.

We might not have to die for someone, but there are other ways to practice loving your neighbour: being a good listener, giving a helping hand to the elderly person struggling with the groceries, encouraging someone who is in a despondent mood, visiting a sick neighbour or friend, taking a meal to a grieving family, or giving of your time, skills and money to a school, neighbourhood, or community project. Volunteers are needed for many of our community support groups. A good place to start is to help your own family and friends.

Who is your neighbour? Wherever you live, needy people are close by. You might be the next person in need of help.

Notes

¹ Jesus' teachings in the New Testament.

² Luke 10:25-37.

³ Luke 6:31.

⁴ John 15:9-17.



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Long Distance Love

By Philip Baldwin

Several years ago my partner and I lived about three hours apart in driving distance from each other. Some of my friends would regularly ask me, 'How is your marriage doing?' or 'Aren't you finding married life difficult?' or 'When do you get to spend time with your spouse?' (The answers I gave my friends are at the end of the article.) In different circumstances, I might have found questions like those to be nosy or prying, but at the time, they showed how much the people who were close to me cared about me.

I had moved to a city of about 100 000 because the best job offer I had was there, and my wife stayed at her teaching position at the university where we had met. You might never even consider living apart from your spouse, and wonder how we managed, especially since it encompassed the whole time that we were still officially newly-weds, and another year after that.

Such a long-distance living arrangement certainly wasn't ideal, since one of us had to make a 460 km round trip to visit with the other. But there were advantages: we definitely looked forward to our time together, and we

used it first and foremost to enjoy each other's company, regardless of any of the routine or unexpected intrusions that are always part of everyday life. We had our weekly time together and our separate work lives, which we shared with each other as much as we could.

This kind of marriage certainly isn't for everyone, and the concern that people expressed to me is partly a measure of how hard most couples find it to maintain such a relationship. When do you find time to 'just talk'? What about the chores that inevitably need doing? My partner and I are blessed with a number of similar interests and complementary abilities that make our lives work smoothly, together and apart.

We both like to cook and to garden (at the time she had a rural property just over an acre in size). I am happy washing dishes and doing laundry, while she is handy with a hammer or chain saw! Neither one of us is a stickler for neatness, and we both accepted the condition of the other's living space when we 'visited'. But none of this really explains the reasons why our relationship worked. To do that, I have to refer you to the box on the facing page.

I can't take the credit for these suggestions. They come from a worthwhile book entitled, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*.¹ The book is based on Gottman's research and observations of the habits of married couples. He has identified seven principles that guide couples on the path toward a harmonious and long-lasting relationship. But even more important (for my spouse and me) is what Gottman



calls 'The Magic Five Hours'. His follow-up studies of couples whose marriages continued to improve after visiting his Seattle clinic showed a clear pattern of small changes—rather than a dramatic overhaul—in their lives. These small changes are distilled in the activities that make up The Magic Five Hours, the amount

of time he suggests a couple will benefit from devoting to their marriage each week.

Gottman writes: 'As you can see, the amount of time involved in incorporating

these changes into your relationship is quite minimal. Yet these five hours (a week) will help enormously in keeping your marriage on track'.² He makes a most startling claim: that working briefly on your marriage every day will do more for your health and longevity than working out in a health club!

One of the things I like most about this book is the unswervingly positive approach the authors take toward improving marriage relationships. Based on their findings that happy marriages are founded on a deep friendship, which includes mutual respect and enjoyment of each other's company, they emphasise the 'you catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar' approach to a relationship. In practice, this means several things.

Based on their findings that happy marriages are founded on a deep friendship, which includes mutual respect and enjoyment of each other's company, they emphasise the 'you catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar' approach to a relationship.



The Magic Five Hours

Partings: Make sure before you say good-bye at the beginning of your day (or good-night at the end of it) that you have learned one thing that will happen in your partner's life that day—from lunch with the boss to a doctor's appointment to a scheduled phone call with an old friend.

Time: 2 minutes a day x 5 working days = 10 minutes

Reunions: Be sure to have a stress-reducing conversation at the end of the working day.

Time: 20 minutes a day x 5 working days = 100 minutes

Express Admiration and Appreciation: Find at least one way, every day, to communicate genuine affection and appreciation toward your spouse.

Time: 5 minutes a day x 7 days = 35 minutes

Affection: Kiss, hold, grab, touch each other during the time you are together. Make sure to kiss each other before going to sleep. Think of that kiss as a way to let go of any minor irritations or resentments that have built up over the day. In other words, lace your kiss with forgiveness and tenderness for your partner.

Time: 5 minutes a day x 7 days = 35 minutes

Weekly Date: This can be a relaxing, low-pressure way to stay connected. Ask each other questions that let you update your connection with each other, or work out a marital issue, or finish an argument you had that week. Think of questions to ask your spouse (like 'Are you still thinking about redecorating the bedroom?' or 'Where should we take our next vacation?' or 'How are you feeling about your boss these days?')

Time: once a week = 120 minutes

Grand Total = 300 minutes
5 hours per week

Emotionally intelligent couples:

- keep up-to-date with each other's thoughts and feelings, hopes and fears, goals and struggles;
- express their admiration, fondness, and respect for each other;
- speak and act in sympathetic, affectionate, and encouraging ways that let their partners know that they are valued;
- let their spouses influence their decision making by taking their opinions and feelings into account.

'But how did this apply to your own marriage?' you may ask. 'How were you able to accomplish these things when you spent six days of the week so far apart?' At the time we used the telephone as our life-line to each other. Our 30–45 minute conversations on the phone each evening covered several items that make up

The Magic Five Hours. We covered *Partings* by making sure that we learned something about the other's coming day, especially when would be the best time to call tomorrow! We included *Reunions* by asking (and being sympathetic listeners to) how the day went for each other. We also used this time to *Express Admiration and Appreciation*—and *Affection*—for each other. This sometimes got mushy and was especially fun, partly because it felt quite unusual for us to talk this way over the phone. It came to be another way of fanning the flames of romance so that we really looked forward to spending our day off together!

Perhaps you think that this approach might be hopelessly optimistic, unrealistic, even blindly misguided. For us, as Christians, the whole orientation of the book made a lot of sense. The New Testament is full

of admonitions to encourage one another, to love one another, to bear each other's burdens. These are among the main goals of a marriage. Gottman has given us a practical way to live this important facet of Christian faith in our marriage.

Answers: Fine. No. Every week.

Notes

¹ J M Gottman & N Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, Three Rivers Press, New York, 1999.

² *ibid.*, p. 261.



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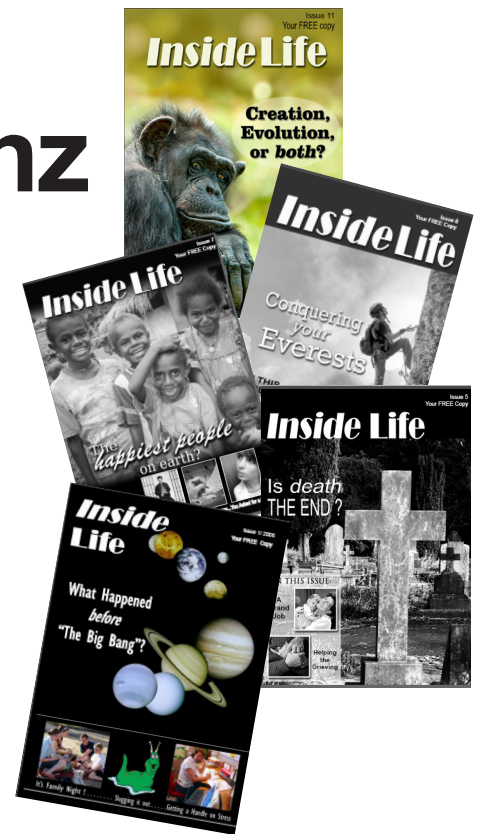
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