



Churches Of God Outreach Ministries
People working together to proclaim the Gospel

"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"

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Living With Uncertainty

Our world is fraught with uncertainty. Whether health, family affairs, finances, work – none offer us the solid foundation of certainty. How can we thrive in an uncertain world?

by James McBride

Will I succumb to ill-health—or even die soon? Who will support me should I become incapacitated? Will I be safe at home and on the street? Can I stay married for a lifetime or will my partner be unfaithful and leave? Will I have healthy children? Do I face redundancy at work? Will I lose my home? Add on the uncertainty of a world in turmoil with its threats from both nature and human nature.

Prudence Needed...

In our Western world we needn't be destitute, even in face of State incompetence. Not even Government, however, is able to guarantee retirement comfort (except for themselves!).

But we must still live with uncertainty. The prudent look at their circumstances and take whatever steps are necessary to avoid catastrophe. They eat healthfully. They avoid noxious substances and destructive practices. They select carefully their life's partner ensuring shared values. There's no 'keeping up with the Joneses' or wild and frivolous overspending. Instead they work hard and personally provide for their future.

...but Anxiety Rules

Take a look at our world. It is dominated by a single all-powerful superpower, the United States of America perhaps the most altruistic of nations. Yet America is increasingly subject to abuse from lesser entities. The invasion of Iraq, accompanied by Great Britain, has precipitated a wall of hate from Islamic terrorists and timid 'friends'. It's not unlikely that the invasion was stirred up by the Creator—just as He has done throughout history. But that doesn't mean He is pleased with America or Britain! Both nations have for two hundred years experienced untold abundance. Now, however, they ignore Him—both Government and people. So He removes the protective hedge built around us.

What will now happen in Iraq, and indeed the Middle East in general? There's uncertainty.. Uncertainty that spills into personal lives, not only of the families involved but for all of us. How will oil-rich Mid Eastern nations respond? Will

Iran go nuclear? Will Asian nations pull their financial prop of the US economy? And how will that affect us personally? Uncertainty.

Uncertainty, too, in matters of health, for none of us is guaranteed a life free from illness or accident. Modern technological medicine is amazing, but it is by no means infallible. Who knows when the 'Grim Reaper' will call by. Or some incapacitating illness or accident. We can financially insure ourselves but that's no substitute. Again—*uncertainty*.

Then there is the family, for the ancient stability within a lifetime marriage is no longer. In the UK the average duration is but eleven years while one couple recently celebrated eighty years of marriage. The foundations have crumbled. A lifetime marriage is now merely one option in a sea of choice including sterile same-sex relationships and the single-parent option. Yet the facts clearly show mere co-habitation—living together without 'the piece of paper'—is usually prone to early collapse with children abandoned to single parenthood. Weird welfare provision, Government and societal undermining of the marriage institution and neglect of personal responsibility encourages feckless youth to procreate with dire social consequence for the nation.

The pinnacle of creation, mankind, is equated with amoral animals. Sexual promiscuity, also encouraged by Government in the UK, results in infertility, abortion and rampant STDs. More uncertainty.

What about 'church'? Surely here we can be sure—sure of personal satisfaction through faith here and now, and eternal security? No—not so. The universal assault by pseudo-science and so-called liberalism on the very idea of a Creator God has undermined faith, increased doubt and launched a wave of secular uncertainty.

How, in such a world, can we build stability and certainty into our short lifespan?

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Psychology teaches belief in self, and certainly confidence in our talents and skills is an important ingredient. We search out—or should do—our inherited abilities and skills and nourish them through education, practice and experience, enabling us to foresee problems and nip them in the bud. Wise parents instil in their offspring a desire to succeed. Such life skills enable a degree of certainty.

Faulty Solutions

Uncertainty, however, runs deeper. No era of human existence has been ‘perfect’, and mankind has always had to deal with the unexpected, for too much is beyond the control of any one of us. Sadly, many lack the essential foundation to deal with it. Some simply cave in and take their own life. Millions more live in a Prozac-induced stupor as they seek a chemical solution to depression and anxiety. Others seek solace through religious ritual or are sucked into a sect that offers certainty: protection from a coming ‘tribulation’, doctrines set in stone, a reclusive community, an unbending hierarchical structure.

Divine Remedy

But true religion can indeed provide that sought-after certainty. Not, however, assurance of a long and tranquil life or abundant health and material prosperity. Nor a guarantee of physical protection through all of life’s ups and downs. And certainly no promise that Christians won’t suffer persecution and martyrdom. Millions, perhaps, have down the centuries suffered and been mercilessly killed for their faith at the hand of individuals, of pseudo-Christians and other faiths, and of the State. So, the certainty of faith lies elsewhere.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than food and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take you thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the [unconverted] seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the [adversity] thereof

Matthew 6:25-34

Jesus, the Saviour of the world, experienced life in the raw, was widely despised and rejected in his generation—and today. He lived under the totalitarian Roman power. His expression of the true faith incurred the wrath of the religious authorities. He was tested by all those desires of the flesh to which any human is heir—yet without in any way succumbing to them. His message was: *despite life’s challenges ensure you have a sound foundation*. Build on rock, he says, not shifting sand. That ‘rock’ is the basic principles of living as embodied in his own life.

Don’t be anxious about the material in life. Just as with any wild creature, life will end, challenges will beset us—but in the meantime, says Jesus, ‘*trust me, for I will provide your needs*’. “*Take heed*” he said, “*that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows*” (Matthew 24:4-8). That describes our age!

But, says Jesus : ‘*See that you be not troubled*’

What to do

You can’t control every aspect of life, but you can introduce a degree of certainty:

- **Manage your health:** eat healthily, control your life-style, avoid noxious substances
- **Look after your finances:** live within your means, become debt-free as quickly as possible
- **Strive for betterment:** but be content with your circumstances
- **Avoid an information overload:** be aware of what’s going on in the world—but don’t be anxious about it
- **Align your life to God’s principles of living:** apply the Biblical Book of Proverbs
- **Nourish family life:** a stable family life within a binding marriage provides essential support; ensure shared material and spiritual values
- **Above all:** trust God; lay all your anxieties on a loving and caring heavenly Father.

Published by:

The Churches of God Outreach Ministries

PO Box 54621

Tulsa, OK 74155-0621

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