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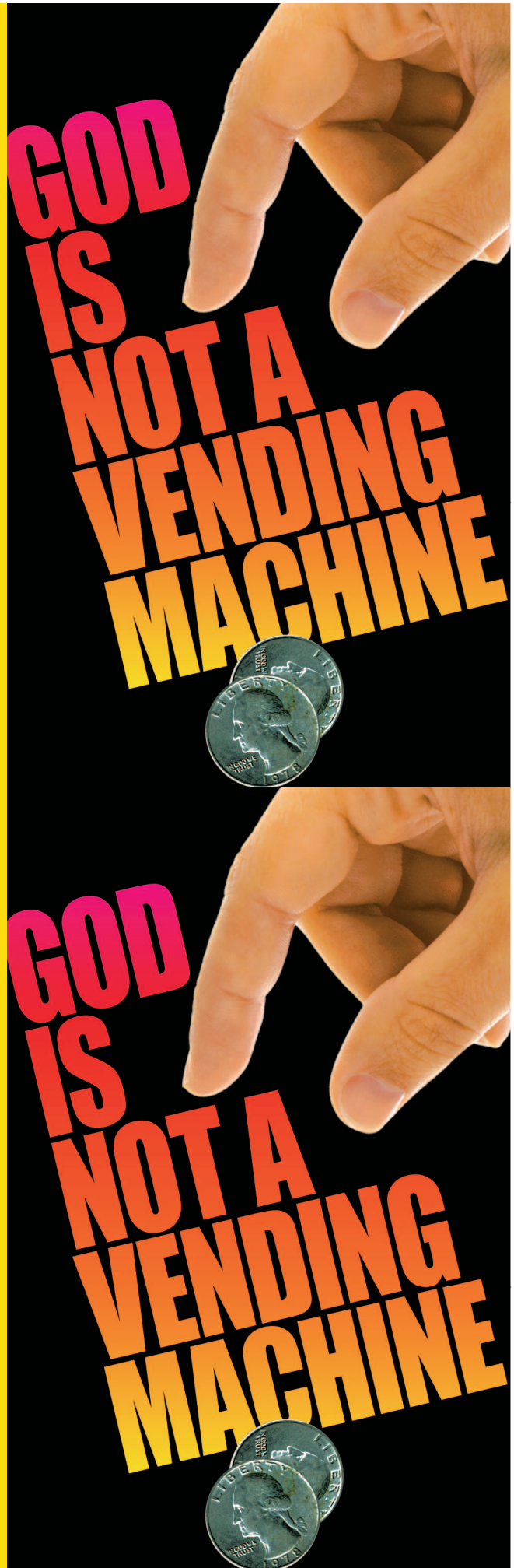
God's Goodness Exceeds Our Thoughts

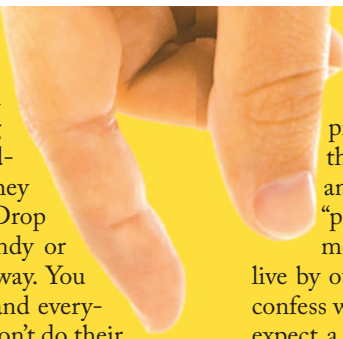
When we come in repentance, we discover that God's goodness greatly exceeds our expectations. **"Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness"** (Nehemiah 9:17). We find a God of love and goodness. **"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16). Acknowledge your sin and reach out by faith to receive His undeserved and unearned love and goodness.

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Before explaining what I mean by “God is not a vending machine,” let’s think about vending machines for a moment. They are pretty simpleminded, really. Drop in a few coins, get your pop, candy or treat, turn your back and walk away. You do your part, they do their part, and everybody’s happy. Except when they don’t do their part. The vending machine “eats” your coin and you find yourself tapping, pounding, kicking or otherwise inducing it to respond the way you expected. Sometimes it coughs up the product, and sometimes you walk away with neither your coins or treats and brimming with frustration. We won’t waste our time on that machine that doesn’t act the way it should.

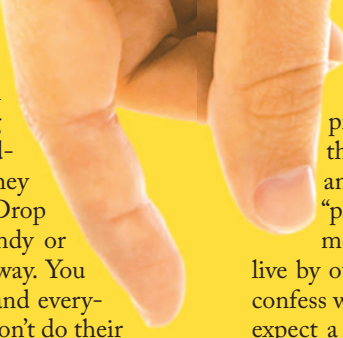
Imagine for a moment treating your loved one that way. Give them gifts in exchange for what we want. They do their part and we do our part. We do ours and then we turn our back and walk away. Walk away, that is, until we want another treat. Then we come back to drop in another kind word or a gift and take out another reward. Many people act that way, but such selfishness hardly makes for happy homes. Eventually the “machine” they live with malfunctions once too often and they walk away for good.



It’s strange how many people approach God on their own terms as though they wanted to cut a deal with an Almighty God in exchange for a little “pleasure.” As long as we feel “spiritual,” meditate, show up at religious events, live by our own sense of right and wrong, and confess when we feel we’ve “messed up,” we can expect a decent return on our “investment.” If we are “very spiritual” and put a lot into our good works, then we expect a big payback. Just a little bit of effort, and we get a small, little corner in heaven.

God Is Not at Our Beck and Call

But God is not an impersonal vending machine at our beck and call. He is the Almighty and eternal Creator God who wants a relationship with us according to His own perfect view of it. He’s presented His love and warnings in His book to us, the Bible. We are spiritually bankrupt without anything of value to bring Him. **“All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”** (Isaiah 64:6). We have offended a holy God with our sin. **“Your iniquities have separated between you and your God”** (Isaiah 59:2). God wants us to come to Him, not with good works and great words, but with humil-



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