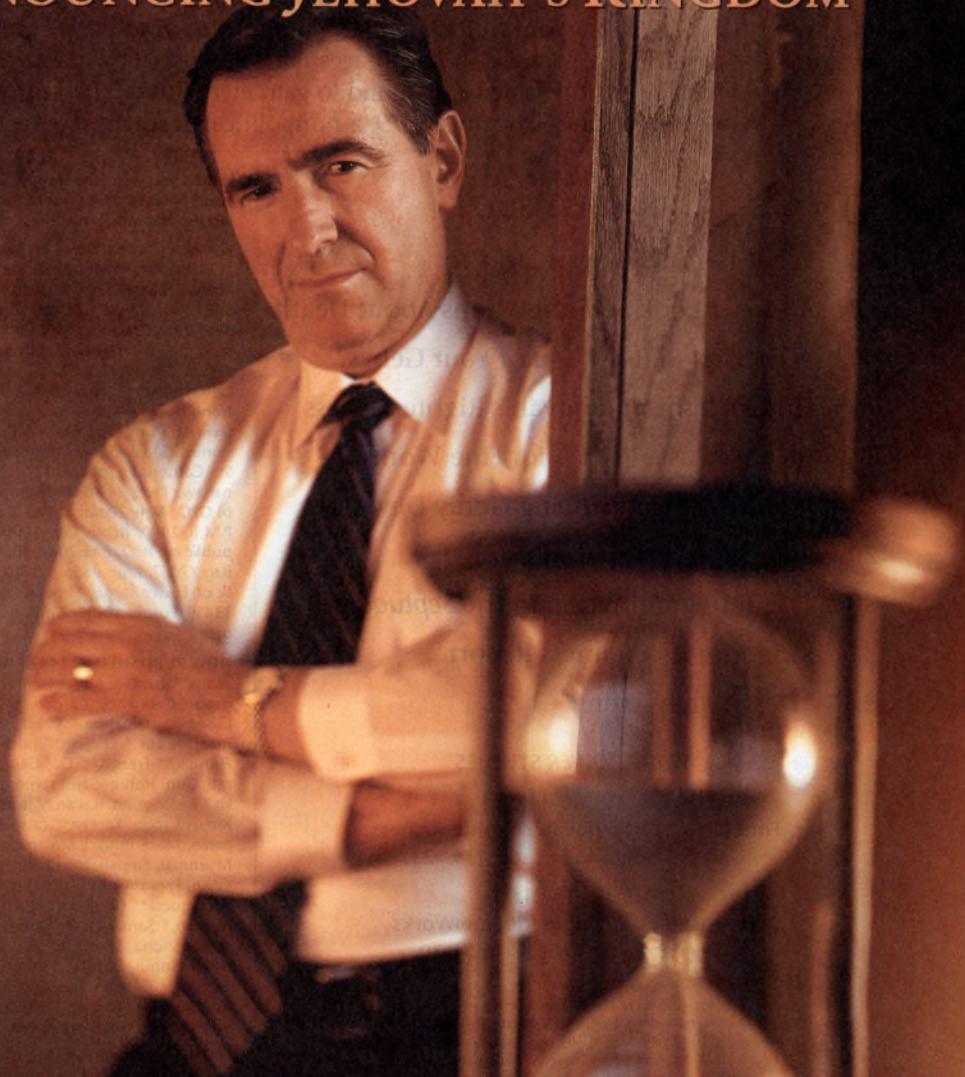


JUNE 1, 2002

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**Should You Be
Afraid of Death?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 What Is Your View of Death?
- 5 A Closer Look at Some Myths About Death
- 9 Who Is to Blame—You or Your Genes?
- 13 Find Delight in Jehovah's Righteousness
- 18 Cleansed as a People for Fine Works
- 24 Rewarded by Practicing Godly Devotion
- 29 Questions From Readers
- 30 The Tetragrammaton in the *Septuagint*
- 31 Kingdom Proclaimers Report
- 32 "Down They Went"

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

JULY 8-14:

Find Delight in Jehovah's Righteousness.

Page 13. Songs to be used: 136, 123.

JULY 15-21:

Cleansed as a People for Fine Works.

Page 18. Songs to be used: 54, 30.

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What Is Your View of Death?

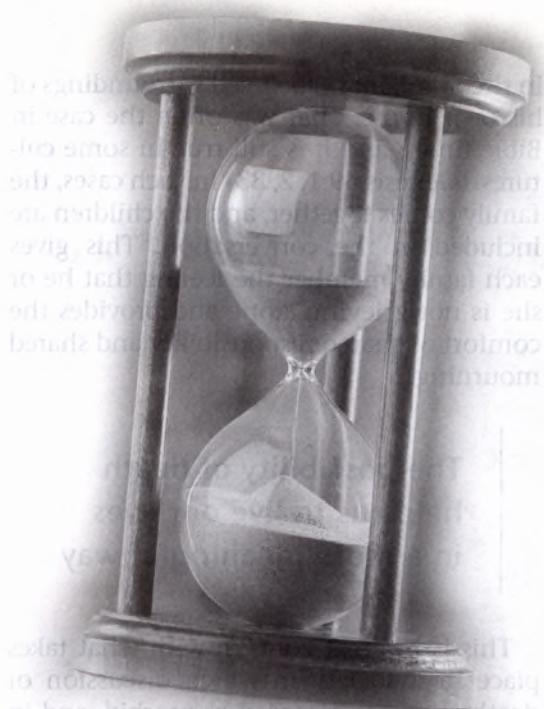
DEATH casts a shadow over us as we go about our daily life, no matter how physically fit or rich we may be. It can strike the next time we cross a street or lie in bed. Such disasters as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in New York City and Washington, D.C., bring us face-to-face with the fact that "the last enemy," death, gathers its victims from all walks of life and from all age groups, sometimes taking thousands in a matter of minutes.—1 Corinthians 15:26.

Even so, death seems to fascinate people. Nothing would appear to sell more newspapers or draw more people to the television screen than reports of death, particularly death of large numbers of people in horrifying circumstances. People cannot seem to get enough of it, whether it is death by war, natural disaster, crime, or disease. This fixation with death finds its most puzzling expression in the raw emotions that greet the death of public figures and celebrities.

All of this is undeniable. People remain fascinated by death—the death of others. When faced with their own death, however, they flinch. Our own demise is the one subject that most of us cannot bear to contemplate.

Baffled by Death?

The thought of our own death is always distasteful and it always will be. Why is that?



It is because God has infused us with the keen desire to live forever. "He has also put eternity in their hearts," says Ecclesiastes 3: 11, according to the *Anchor Bible*. The inevitability of death, therefore, has created an internal conflict in humans, a persisting dis-harmony. To reconcile this internal conflict and to satisfy the natural yearning to live on, humans have fabricated all sorts of beliefs, from the doctrine of the immortality of the soul to the belief in reincarnation.

At any rate, death is a troubling, frightening event, and the fear of death is universal. We should not, therefore, be surprised that human society in general finds death a challenging prospect. For one thing, death exposes the ultimate futility of a life devoted to the pursuit of wealth and power.

Alienated by Death?
In times past, a terminally ill or fatally wounded person was usually allowed to die

in the familiar and beloved surroundings of his own home. That was often the case in Bible times, and it is still true in some cultures. (Genesis 49:1, 2, 33) In such cases, the family comes together, and the children are included in the conversation. This gives each family member the feeling that he or she is not grieving alone and provides the comfort of shared responsibility and shared mourning.

The possibility of death helps us to live our lives in a more meaningful way

This is in great contrast with what takes place in a society in which discussion of death is taboo, regarded as morbid, and in which children are excluded on the assumption that it would be "too much" for them. Dying nowadays is different in many ways, and it often is more lonely. Although most would like to die at home, peacefully and lovingly tended by family, for many the hard reality is that they die in a hospital, usually isolated and in pain, tethered to a frightening array of high-tech equipment. On the other hand, millions just die anonymously—the faceless victims of genocide, famine, AIDS, civil war, or just abject poverty.

A Subject to Ponder

The Bible does not discourage the contemplation of death. In fact, Ecclesiastes 7:2 tells us: "Better is it to go to the house of mourning than to go to the banquet house, because that is the end of all mankind." When faced with the reality of death, we may turn from our routine concerns or activities and focus on the brevity of life. This can help us to live our life in a more meaningful way rather than simply to muddle through or waste it.

What is your view of death? Have you examined your feelings, beliefs, hopes, and fears about the end of your life?

As is the nature of life, the nature of death is outside the realm of man's ability to explain and comprehend. The only one who can speak on the matter with reliable authority is our Creator. With him is "the source of life," and to him "belong the ways out from death." (Psalm 36:9; 68:20) Surprising as it may seem, an examination of some popular beliefs about death in the light of God's Word will prove both comforting and refreshing. It will reveal that death is not necessarily the end of everything.



A Closer Look at Some Myths About Death

THROUGHOUT history, man has stood perplexed and apprehensive before the dark prospect of death. What is more, fear of death has been fueled by a mix of false religious ideas, popular customs, and ingrained personal beliefs. The problem with fear of death is that it can paralyze one's ability to enjoy life and erode one's confidence that there is meaning to life.

Popular religion is especially reprehensible for promoting a number of popular myths regarding death. By examining a few of these under the light of Bible truth, see if your personal perceptions about death can be clarified.

Myth 1: Death is the natural end of life.

"Death . . . is an integral part of our lives," says the book *Death—The Final Stage of Growth*. Comments like this reflect the belief that death is normal, the natural ending of all living organisms. In turn, such a belief has fostered a nihilistic philosophy and opportunistic behavior in many.

But is death really the natural end of life? Not all researchers believe so. For instance, Calvin Harley, a biologist who studies human aging, said in an interview that he does not believe that humans "have a program to die." Immunologist William Clark observed: "Death is not inextricably intertwined with



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the definition of life." And Seymour Benzer, of the California Institute of Technology, muses that "aging can be better described not as a clock but as a scenario, which we can hope to edit."

When scientists study the design of humans, they are baffled. They find that we have been endowed with resources and capabilities that far exceed the needs of our 70- to 80-year life span. For example, scientists have found that the human brain has immense memory capacity. One researcher estimated that our brain can hold information that "would fill some twenty million volumes, as many as in the world's largest libraries." Some neuroscientists figure that during an average lifetime, a person uses only 1/100 of 1 percent (.0001) of his potential brain capacity. It is appropriate to ask, 'Why do we have a brain with such a large capacity when we utilize only a tiny fraction of it in an average lifetime?'

Consider also how unnaturally humans react to death! For the majority, the death of a wife, a husband, or a child can be the most upsetting experience of a lifetime. People's entire emotional makeup is often jarred for a long time after the death of a person dearly loved. Even those who claim that death is

natural to humans find it hard to accept the idea that their own death will mean the end of everything. The *British Medical Journal* spoke of "a common expert presumption that everybody wants to live as long as possible."

The problem with fear of death is that it can paralyze one's ability to enjoy life

In view of man's general reaction to death, his amazing potential for remembering and learning, and his inward longing for eternity, is it not clear that he was made to live? Indeed, God created humans, not with death as the natural outcome, but with the prospect of living on indefinitely. Note what God set before the first human pair as their future: "Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and every living creature that is moving upon the earth." (Genesis 1:28) What a wonderful, lasting future that is!

Myth 2: God takes people in death to be with him.

A 27-year-old mother who was dying and leaving three children behind told a Catholic nun: "Don't come in and tell me this is God's will for me. . . . I hate it when somebody else tells me this." Yet, this is what many religions teach about death—that God takes people to be near him.

Is the Creator really so cruel that he would callously inflict death on us, knowing that this breaks our hearts? No, not the God of the Bible. According to 1 John 4:8, "God is love." Note that it does not say that God *has* love or that God is *loving*, but it says that God *is* love. So intense, so pure, so perfect is God's love, so thoroughly does it permeate his personali-

ty and actions that he may rightly be spoken of as the very personification of love. This is not a God who takes people in death to be near him.

False religion has left many confused as to the whereabouts and condition of the dead. Heaven, hell, purgatory, Limbo—these and various other destinations range from being incomprehensible to being downright terrifying. The Bible, on the other hand, tells us that the dead are unconscious; they are in a condition best compared to sleep. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; John 11:11-14) Thus, we need not worry about what happens to us after death, any more than we worry when we see someone sleeping soundly. Jesus spoke of a time when "all those in the memorial tombs" would "come out" to renewed life on a paradise earth.—John 5:28, 29; Luke 23:43.

Myth 3: God takes little children to become angels.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, who studied terminally ill individuals, referred to another common perception among religious people. Describing a real incident, she stated that it is "unwise to tell a little child who lost her brother that God loved little boys so much that he took little Johnny to heaven." Such a statement casts God in a bad light and does not reflect his personality and behavior. Dr. Kübler-Ross continued: "When this little girl grew up to be a woman she never solved her anger at God, which resulted in a psychotic depression when she lost her own little son three decades later."

Why would God snatch a child to get another angel—as if God needed a child more than the child's parents did? If it were true that God takes children, would that not make him an unloving, selfish Creator? Contrary to such a perception, the Bible says: "Love is from God." (1 John 4:7) Would a God of love cause a loss that even humans with any measure of decency would not tolerate?

SOME COMMON MYTHS ABOUT DEATH

- Death is the natural end of life Genesis 1:28; 2:17; Romans 5:12
- God takes people in death to be with him Job 34:15; Psalm 37:11, 29; 115:16
- God takes little children to become angels Psalm 51:5; 104:1, 4; Hebrews 1:7, 14
- Some people are tormented after death Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Romans 6:23
- Death means the permanent end of our existence Job 14:14, 15; John 3:16; 17:3; Acts 24:15

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?

So why do children die? Part of the Bible's answer is recorded at Ecclesiastes 9:11: "Time and unforeseen occurrence befall them all." And Psalm 51:5 tells us that all of us are imperfect, sinful, from the time of our conception, and the eventuality for all men now is death from any number of causes. Sometimes death strikes before birth, resulting in a stillbirth. In other cases, children succumb to their dire circumstances or have accidents and die. God is not responsible for such eventualities.

Myth 4: Some people are tormented after death.

Many religions teach that the wicked will go to a fiery hell and be tormented forever. Is this teaching logical and Scriptural? The human life span is limited to 70 or 80 years. Even if someone was guilty of extreme wickedness all his life, would *everlasting* torment be a just punishment? No. It would be grossly unjust to torment a man *forever* for the sins that he committed in a short lifetime.

Only God can reveal what happens after people die, and he has done so in his written Word, the Bible. This is what the Bible says:

"As the [beast] dies, so the [man] dies; and they all have but one spirit . . . All are going to one place. They have all come to be from the dust, and they are all returning to the dust." (Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20) There is no mention here of a fiery hell. Humans return to dust—to nonexistence—when they die.

In order to be tormented, a person has to be conscious. Are the dead conscious? Once again, the Bible gives the answer: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all, neither do they anymore have wages, because the remembrance of them has been forgotten." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) It is impossible for the dead, who are "conscious of nothing at all," to experience agony anywhere.

Myth 5: Death means the permanent end of our existence.

We cease to exist when we die, but this does not mean that everything is necessarily finished. The faithful man Job knew that he would go to the grave, Sheol, when he died. But listen to his prayer to God: "O that in Sheol you would conceal me, that you would

keep me secret until your anger turns back, that you would set a time limit for me and remember me! If an able-bodied man dies can he live again? . . . You will call, and I myself shall answer you."—Job 14:13-15.

Job believed that if he was faithful until death, he would be remembered by God and in time be resurrected. This was the belief of all of God's servants in ancient times. Jesus himself confirmed this hope and showed that God would use him to raise the dead. Christ's own words give us this assurance: "The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear [Jesus'] voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment."—John 5:28, 29.

Very shortly God will remove all wickedness and establish a new world under heavenly rulership. (Psalm 37:10, 11; Daniel 2:44; Revelation 16:14, 16) The result will be a paradise over the whole earth, inhabited by people who serve God. In the Bi-

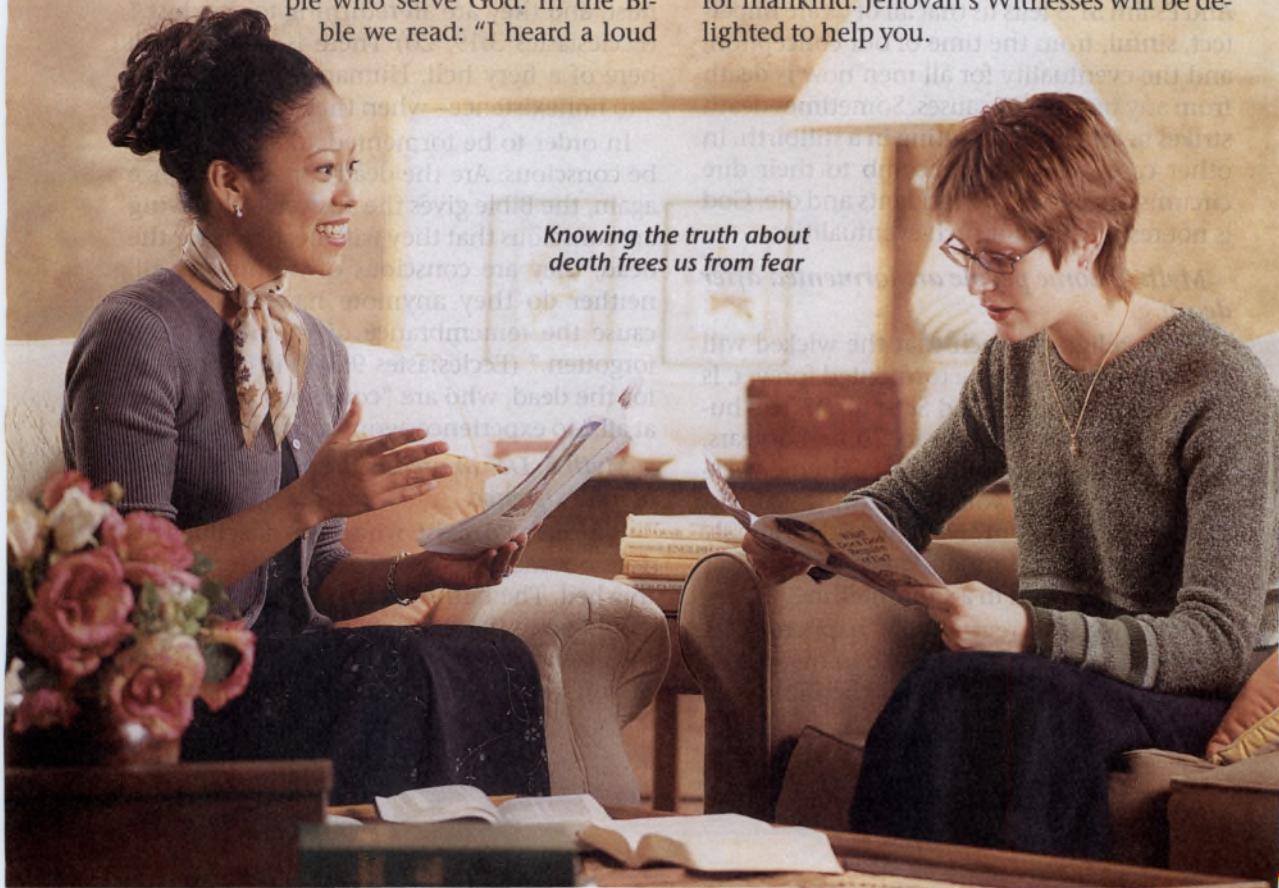
ble we read: "I heard a loud

voice from the throne say: 'Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.'"—Revelation 21:3, 4.

Free From Fear

Knowledge of the resurrection hope coupled with knowledge of the One who is the source of that provision can comfort you. Jesus promised: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32) That includes emancipating us from the fear of death. Jehovah is the only one who can actually change the process of aging and death and grant us eternal life. Can you believe in God's promises? Yes, you can because God's Word always comes true. (Isaiah 55:11) We urge you to learn more about God's purposes for mankind. Jehovah's Witnesses will be delighted to help you.

*Knowing the truth about
death frees us from fear*



WHO IS TO BLAME YOU OR YOUR GENES?

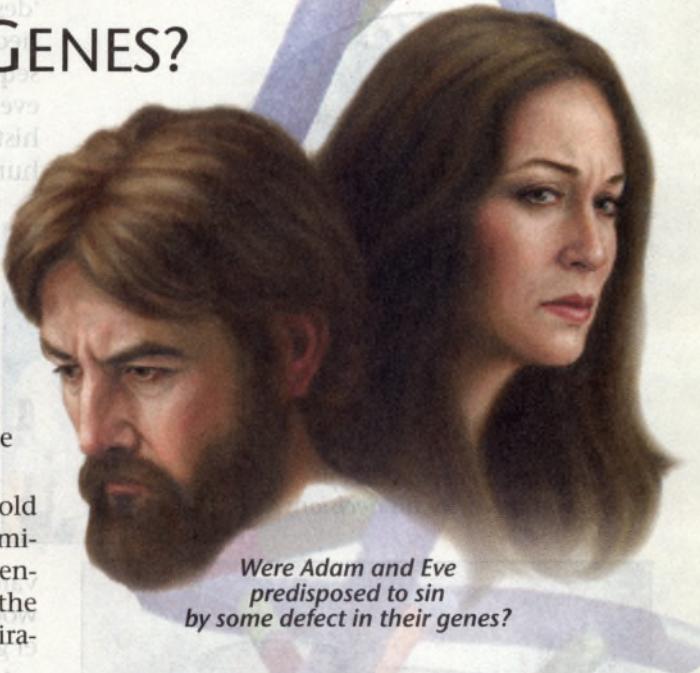
SCIENTISTS are hard at work to try to find genetic causes for alcoholism, homosexuality, promiscuity, violence, other aberrant behavior, and even for death itself. Would it not be a relief to find that we are not responsible for our actions but are merely victims of biology? It is human nature to blame someone or something else for our errors.

If the genes are to blame, scientists hold out the possibility of changing them, eliminating undesirable traits through genetic engineering. The recent success in mapping the entire human genome has given such aspirations new impetus.

This scenario, however, is based on the premise that our genetic endowment is, indeed, the villain responsible for all our sins and errors. Have the scientific detectives found enough evidence to make a case against our genes? Obviously, the answer will profoundly affect how we see ourselves and our future. Before examining the evidence, though, a look at mankind's origin will prove enlightening.

How It All Started

Most people are familiar with, or at least have heard of, the account about the fall of the first human pair, Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden. Were they made with some intrinsic defect in the genes right from the start, a sort of design flaw that predisposed them to sin and disobedience?



Were Adam and Eve predisposed to sin by some defect in their genes?

Their Creator, Jehovah God, whose works are all perfect, proclaimed that his crowning earthly creation was "very good." (Genesis 1:31; Deuteronomy 32:4) As further evidence of his satisfaction with his work, he gave the first couple his blessing and instructed them to be fruitful, to fill the earth with human creatures, and to take charge of his earthly creation—hardly the actions of someone uncertain of his handiwork.—Genesis 1:28.

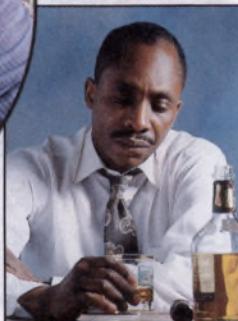
Regarding the creation of the first human pair, the Bible tells us: "God proceeded to create the man in his image, in God's image he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27) This does not mean that humans were made to resemble God in physical appearance, for "God is a Spirit." (John 4:24) Rather, it means that human creatures were endowed with godly qualities

and a sense of morality, a conscience. (Romans 2:14, 15) They were also free moral agents, capable of weighing a matter and deciding on the action to take.

Drug user: Gado-Foto



Should each person accept responsibility for his decisions?



However, our first parents were not left without guidelines. Rather, they were warned of the consequences of wrongdoing. (Genesis 2:17) So the evidence indicates that when Adam was faced with a moral decision, he chose to do what to him seemed expedient or advantageous at the time. He followed his wife in her wrongdoing instead of considering his relationship with his Creator or the long-term effects of his action. He also tried later to shift the blame to Jehovah, saying

that the wife He had provided misled him. —Genesis 3:6, 12; 1 Timothy 2:14.

God's response to the sin of Adam and Eve is revealing. He did not try to correct some 'design flaw' in their genes. Rather, he carried out what he told them would be the consequences of their actions, which led to their eventual death. (Genesis 3:17-19) This early history sheds much light on the nature of human behavior.*

The Evidence Against Biology

For a long time, scientists have been tackling the monumental task of finding genetic causes and cures for human pathology and behavior. After ten years of work by six teams of researchers, the gene linked to Huntington's disease was isolated, although the researchers have no idea how the gene causes the disease. However, reporting on this research, *Scientific American* quoted Harvard biologist Evan Balaban, who said that it would be "almost infinitely harder to discover genes for behavioral disorders."

In fact, research attempting to link specific genes to human behavior has been unsuccessful. For instance, in *Psychology Today*, a report on efforts to find genetic causes for depression states: "Epidemiologic data on the major mental illnesses make it clear that they can't be reduced to purely genetic causes." The report gives an example: "Americans born before 1905 had a 1 percent rate of depression by age 75. Among Americans born a half century later, 6 percent become depressed by age 24!" It thus concludes that only external or social factors can bring about such dramatic changes in such a short time.

What do these and numerous other studies tell us? While genes may play a role in shaping our personalities, there clearly

* See *Awake!* of September 22, 1996, pages 3-8.

are other influences. A major factor is our environment, which has undergone radical changes in modern times. Concerning what today's youth are exposed to in popular entertainment, the book *Boys Will Be Boys* observes that it is unlikely that children will develop sound moral principles when they "grow up watching tens of thousands of hours of TV shows and films in which people are assaulted, shot, stabbed, disemboweled, chopped up, skinned, or dismembered, when children grow up listening to music which glorifies rape, suicide, drugs, alcohol, and bigotry."

Clearly, Satan, "the ruler of this world," has shaped an environment that caters to man's baser desires. And who can deny the powerful influence that such an environment exerts on all of us?—John 12:31; Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 12:9, 12.

The Root of Mankind's Trouble

As we have already seen, mankind's problems started when the first human pair sinned. The result? While generations of Adam's offspring are not responsible for Adam's sin, they nonetheless are all born with sin, imperfection, and death as their inherited lot in life. The Bible explains: "That is why, just as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned."—Romans 5:12.

Man's imperfection puts him at a decided disadvantage. But that does not absolve him of all moral responsibility. The Bible shows that those who put faith in Jehovah's provision for life and conform their lives to God's standards will have his approval. Out of his loving-kindness, Jehovah made a merciful provision to redeem mankind, to buy back, as it were, what Adam had lost. That provision is the ransom sacrifice of his perfect Son, Je-

Efforts to find genetic causes for human behavior have been unsuccessful

sus Christ, who said: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22.

The apostle Paul expressed his deep appreciation for this provision. He exclaimed: "Miserable man that I am! Who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death?

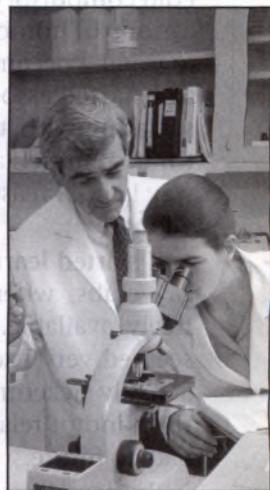
Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24, 25) Paul knew that if he succumbed to sin out of weakness, he could ask God's forgiveness on the basis of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ.*

As in the first century, today many who formerly led very bad lives or whose situation seemed hopeless have come to an accurate knowledge of Bible truth, made the necessary changes, and come in line for God's blessing. The changes they had to make were not easy, and many still have to contend with harmful tendencies. But with God's help, they are able to maintain integrity and find joy in serving him. (Philippians 4:13) Consider just one example of someone who made drastic changes in order to please God.

An Encouraging Experience

"When I was a young boy in boarding school, I got involved in homosexual practices, although I never thought of myself as being a homosexual. My parents were

* See the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, pages 62-9, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



divorced, and I craved the parental affection that I never received. After finishing school, I did compulsory military service. There was a group of homosexuals in the barracks next to mine. I became envious of their life-style, so I started associating with them. After associating with them for a year, I began to think of myself as a homosexual. 'This is the way I am,' I reasoned, 'and I can do nothing about it.'

"I started learning the lingo and going to gay clubs, where drugs and alcohol were freely available. Although outwardly it all seemed very exciting and appealing, it was actually sickening. Deep down I sensed that this kind of relationship was unnatural and had no future.

"In a small town, I came across a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses while the meeting was on. I went in and listened to the talk, which dealt with future Paradise conditions. Afterward I met some of the Witnesses and was invited to an assembly. I went, and that was a revelation to me—seeing happy families worshiping together. I started to study the Bible with the Witnesses.

"Although it was a struggle for me, I started to apply what I was learning from the Bible. I was able to break free from all my unclean practices. After studying for 14 months, I dedicated my life to Jehovah and was baptized. For the first time in my life, I had real friends. I have been able to help others learn the truth from the Bible, and I now serve as a ministerial servant in the Christian congregation. Jehovah has truly blessed me."

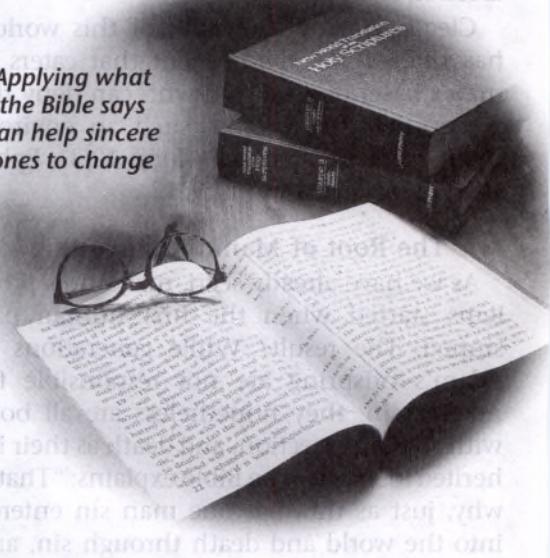
We Are Responsible

Trying to pin the entire blame for our misconduct on our genes simply does not work. Rather than helping us to solve or overcome our problems, notes *Psychology Today*, doing so "may be teaching us a helplessness that is at the root of many of our problems. Instead

of reducing the incidence of these problems, this seems to have fueled their growth."

It is true that we must contend with major adverse forces, including our own sinful tendencies and Satan's efforts to distract us from obeying God. (1 Peter 5:8) It is also true that our genes may influence us in one way or another. But we are surely not helpless. True Christians have powerful allies—Jehovah, Jesus Christ, God's holy spirit, his Word the Bible, and the Christian congregation.—1 Timothy 6:11, 12; 1 John 2:1.

*Applying what
the Bible says
can help sincere
ones to change*



Before the nation of Israel entered the Promised Land, Moses reminded the people of their responsibility before God, saying: "I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and *you must choose* life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring, by loving Jehovah your God, by listening to his voice and by sticking to him." (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20) Likewise today, each responsible individual is obliged to make a personal decision about serving God and meeting his requirements. The choice is yours.—Galatians 6:7, 8.



FIND DELIGHT IN JEHOVAH'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

"He that is pursuing righteousness and loving-kindness will find life, righteousness and glory."—PROVERBS 21:21.

THREE exists a way that is upright before a man, but the ways of death are the end of it afterward.” (Proverbs 16:25) How accurately this Bible proverb describes the ways of most people today! By and large, people are concerned only with doing what is right in their own eyes, ignoring even the most basic needs of others. (Proverbs 21:2) They pay lip service to the laws and standards of the land but seek to circumvent them at every opportunity. The result is a society fragmented, confused, and perplexed.—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

² For our own good—and for the peace and security of the entire human family—we urgently need a law or standard that is just and right, one that all people are willing to accept

and obey. Obviously, no law or standard proposed by any human, no matter how intelligent or sincere, can meet that need. (Jeremiah 10:23; Romans 3:10, 23) If such a standard exists, where could it be found and what would it be like? Perhaps the more important question is, If such a standard exists, would you delight in and abide by it?

Finding the Righteous Standard

³ To find a standard that is acceptable and beneficial to everyone, we will have to go to someone who transcends all racial, cultural, and political boundaries and who is unhindered by human shortsightedness and frailties. Without a doubt, the one uniquely qualified is the almighty Creator, Jehovah God, who declares: “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher

1. What ways of people today have led to disastrous results?
2. What is urgently needed for mankind's own good?

than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:9) Furthermore, the Bible describes Jehovah as "a God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4) Throughout the Bible, we find the expression "Jehovah is righteous." (Exodus 9:27; 2 Chronicles 12:6; Psalm 11:7; 129:4; Lamentations 1:18; Revelation 19:2, footnote) Yes, we can look to Jehovah for the ultimate standard because he is faithful, just, and righteous.

⁴ Of course, the word "righteous" is not very popular today. In fact, most people take a negative, even derogatory, view of it, equating it with being sanctimonious, or hypocritically pious and devout. However, according to one dictionary, "righteous" means "just, upright, virtuous; guiltless, sinless; conforming to the precepts of divine law or accepted standards of morality; acting rightly or justly." Would you not delight in a law or standard that embraces such fine characteristics?

⁵ Regarding the quality of righteousness, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* observes: "Righteousness is not an abstract notion but rather consists in doing what is just and right in all relationships." God's righteousness, for example, is not simply an inward or personal quality that he possesses, such as his holiness and purity. Rather, it is an expression of his nature in ways that are right and just. It might be said that because Jehovah is holy and pure, everything he does and everything emanating from him is righteous. As the Bible says, "Jehovah is righteous in all his ways and loyal in all his works."—Psalm 145:17.

⁶ The apostle Paul emphasized this point in his letter to the Christians in Rome. About certain unbelieving Jews, he wrote: "Because

4. What does the word "righteous" mean?
5. Describe the quality of righteousness as expressed in the Bible.
6. What did Paul say about certain unbelieving Jews in his day, and why?

of not knowing the righteousness of God but seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." (Romans 10:3) Why did Paul refer to such ones as "not knowing the righteousness of God"? Were they not instructed in the Law, the righteous standards of God? Indeed they were. However, the majority of them viewed righteousness solely as a personal virtue, to be achieved by scrupulous, painstaking observance of religious rules, rather than as a standard to guide them in their dealings with fellow humans. Like the religious leaders of Jesus' day, they missed the whole point about justice and righteousness.—Matthew 23:23-28.

⁷ In sharp contrast, Jehovah's righteousness is expressed and clearly seen in all his dealings. Although his righteousness requires that he does not simply ignore the sins of willful transgressors, that does not make him a cold and exacting God, to be feared and kept at a distance. On the contrary, his righteous acts have provided a basis on which mankind can approach him and be saved from the dire consequences of sin. It is entirely fitting, therefore, that Jehovah is described as "a righteous God and a Savior."—Isaiah 45:21.

Righteousness and Salvation

⁸ To appreciate the relationship between God's righteousness and his loving act of salvation, consider the Law that he gave the nation of Israel through Moses. There is no question that the Law was righteous. In his parting words, Moses reminded the Israelites: "What great nation is there that has righteous regulations and judicial decisions like all this law that I am putting before you today?" (Deuteronomy 4:8) Centuries later, King David of Israel declared: "The judicial

7. How is Jehovah's righteousness expressed?
8. 9. In what ways did the Law express God's righteousness?

decisions of Jehovah are true; they have proved altogether righteous.”—Psalm 19:9.

⁹ By means of the Law, Jehovah made clear his perfect standards of right and wrong. The Law spelled out in minute detail how the Israelites were to conduct themselves not only in religious matters but also in business dealings, marital relations, dietary and sanitary practices and, of course, judicial decisions. The Law also carried strict sanctions against



*King David
expressed
heartfelt
fondness
for God's
laws*

violators, even imposing the death penalty in some cases.* But were God's righteous requirements, as expressed in the Law, a harsh and tiresome burden to the people, robbing them of their freedom and joy, as many people today claim?

¹⁰ Those who loved Jehovah found great delight in his righteous laws and decrees. King David, for example, not only acknowledged Jehovah's judicial decisions as true and

* For details regarding the extensiveness of the Mosaic Law, see the article “Some Features of the Law Covenant,” on pages 214-20 in volume 2 of *Insight on the Scriptures*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

10. How did those who loved Jehovah feel about his laws?

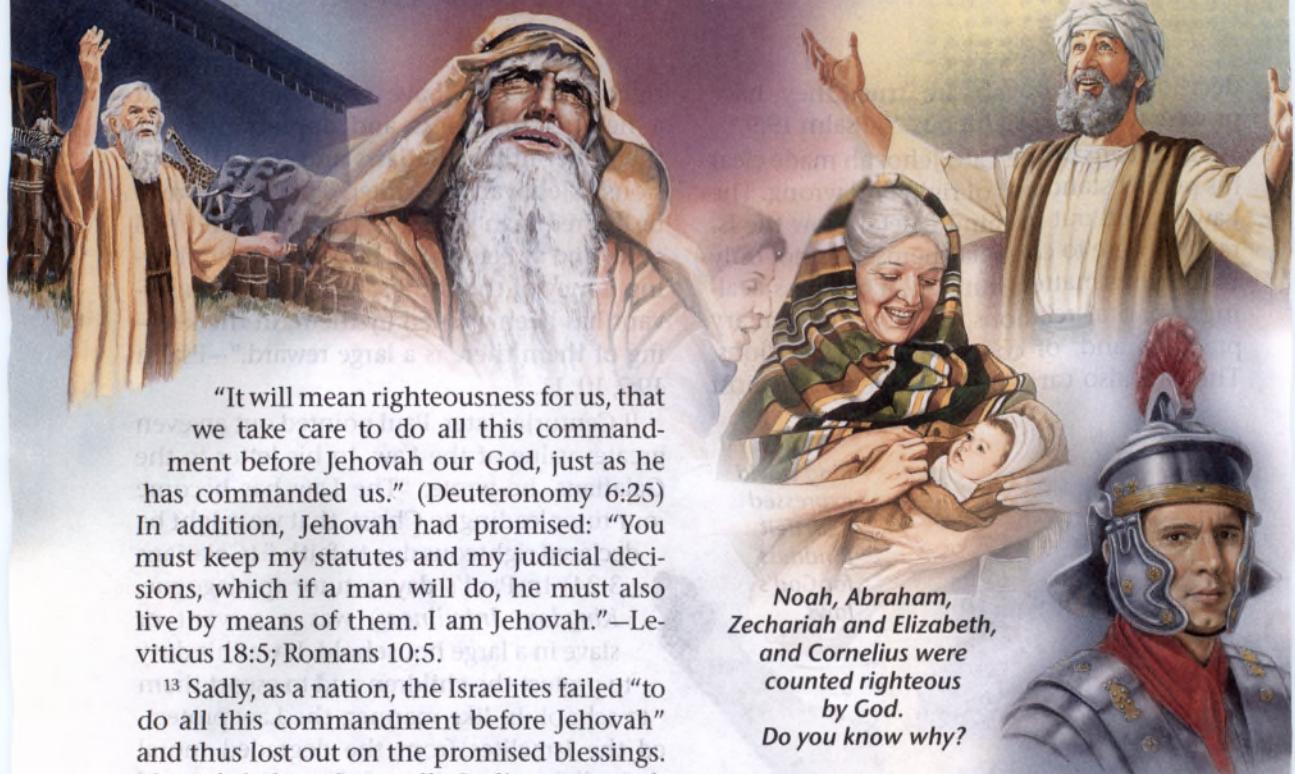
righteous, as we have seen, but also had a heartfelt fondness and appreciation for them. Regarding the laws and judicial decisions of Jehovah, he wrote: “They are more to be desired than gold, yes, than much refined gold; and sweeter than honey and the flowing honey of the combs. Also, your own servant has been warned by them; in the keeping of them there is a large reward.”—Psalm 19:7, 10, 11.

¹¹ Centuries later, Paul pointed out an even greater value of the Law. In his letter to the Galatians, he wrote: “The Law has become our tutor leading to Christ, that we might be declared righteous due to faith.” (Galatians 3:24) In Paul’s day, a tutor (pedagogue, *Kingdom Interlinear*) was a servant or slave in a large household. It was his duty to protect the children and to escort them to school. In like manner, the Law protected the Israelites from the degraded moral and religious practices of the nations round about. (Deuteronomy 18:9-13; Galatians 3:23) Additionally, the Law made the Israelites aware of their sinful state and of their need for forgiveness and salvation. (Galatians 3:19) The sacrificial arrangements pointed to the need for a ransom sacrifice and provided a prophetic pattern by which the true Messiah could be identified. (Hebrews 10:1, 11, 12) Thus, while Jehovah expressed his righteousness through the Law, he did so with the people’s welfare and eternal salvation in mind.

Those Counted Righteous by God

¹² Since the Law given by Jehovah was righteous in every way, by obeying it the Israelites could have gained a righteous standing before God. Moses reminded the Israelites as they were about to enter the Promised Land:

11. How did the Law prove to be a “tutor leading to Christ”?
12. What could the Israelites have gained by carefully observing the Law?



"It will mean righteousness for us, that we take care to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, just as he has commanded us." (Deuteronomy 6:25) In addition, Jehovah had promised: "You must keep my statutes and my judicial decisions, which if a man will do, he must also live by means of them. I am Jehovah."—Leviticus 18:5; Romans 10:5.

¹³ Sadly, as a nation, the Israelites failed "to do all this commandment before Jehovah" and thus lost out on the promised blessings. They failed to keep all God's commandments because God's Law was perfect but they were not. Does this mean that God is unjust or unrighteous? Surely not. Paul wrote: "What shall we say, then? Is there injustice with God? Never may that become so!" (Romans 9:14) The fact is that individuals, both before and after the Law was given, have been counted as righteous by God even though they were imperfect and sinful. The list of such God-fearing people includes Noah, Abraham, Job, Rahab, and Daniel. (Genesis 7:1; 15:6; Job 1:1; Ezekiel 14:14; James 2:25) The question, then, is: On what basis were these individuals counted righteous by God?

¹⁴ When the Bible speaks of a human as being "righteous," it does not imply sinlessness or perfection. Rather, it means measuring up

13. Was Jehovah unjust in requiring his people to keep the righteous Law? Explain.

14. What does the Bible mean when it speaks of a human as being "righteous"?

Noah, Abraham,
Zechariah and Elizabeth,
and Cornelius were
counted righteous
by God.
Do you know why?

to one's obligations before God and men. For example, Noah was called "a righteous man" and "faultless among his contemporaries" because he "proceeded to do according to all that God had commanded him. He did just so." (Genesis 6:9, 22; Malachi 3:18) Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptizer, "were righteous before God because of walking blamelessly in accord with all the commandments and legal requirements of Jehovah." (Luke 1:6) And a non-Israelite, an Italian army officer by the name of Cornelius, was described as "a man righteous and fearing God."—Acts 10:22.

¹⁵ Furthermore, righteousness in humans is very much related to what is in one's heart—one's faith in and appreciation and love for Jehovah and his promises—and not just to one's doing what God requires. The Scriptures say that Abraham "put faith in Jehovah; and he proceeded to count it to him as righ-

15. To what is righteousness closely related?

teousness." (Genesis 15:6) Abraham had faith not only in God's existence but also in his promise regarding the "seed." (Genesis 3:15; 12:2; 15:5; 22:18) On the basis of such faith and works in harmony with faith, Jehovah could deal with and bless Abraham and other faithful ones even though they were imperfect.—Psalm 36:10; Romans 4:20-22.

¹⁶ Ultimately, righteousness in humans is contingent on faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Of the Christians in the first century, Paul wrote: "It is as a free gift that they are being declared righteous by [God's] undeserved kindness through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:24) Paul was there talking about those who were chosen to be joint heirs with Christ in the heavenly Kingdom. But Jesus' ransom sacrifice also opened up for millions of others the opportunity of gaining a righteous standing before God. The apostle John saw in a vision "a great crowd, which no man was able to number, . . . standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes." The white robes symbolize their being clean and righteous before God because "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."—Revelation 7:9, 14.

Delight in Jehovah's Righteousness

¹⁷ While Jehovah has lovingly provided his Son, Jesus Christ, as the means for humans to attain a righteous standing before him, the result is by no means automatic. One must exercise faith in the ransom, bring one's life into harmony with God's will, make a dedication to Jehovah, and symbolize it by water baptism. Then, one must continue to pursue righteousness, as well as other spiritual qualities. Timothy, a baptized Christian with the heavenly calling, was admonished by

16. In what has faith in the ransom resulted?
17. What steps must be taken in the pursuit of righteousness?

Paul: "Pursue righteousness, godly devotion, faith, love, endurance, mildness of temper." (1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22) Jesus also emphasized the need for continued effort when he said: "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness." We may work very hard to seek the blessings of God's Kingdom, but do we work equally hard to pursue the righteous ways of Jehovah?—Matthew 6:33.

¹⁸ It is, of course, not easy to pursue righteousness. This is because all of us are imperfect and our natural tendency is toward unrighteousness. (Isaiah 64:6) Moreover, we are surrounded by people who care little about Jehovah's righteous ways. Our circumstances are very much like those of Lot, who lived in the notoriously wicked city of Sodom. The apostle Peter explained why Jehovah saw fit to deliver Lot from the impending destruction. Peter said: "That righteous man by what he saw and heard while dwelling among them from day to day was tormenting his righteous soul by reason of their lawless deeds." (2 Peter 2:7, 8) Thus, each of us does well to ask: 'Do I give silent consent in my heart to the immoral practices we see around us? Do I find the popular but violent entertainment or sports merely tasteless? Or do I feel tormented as Lot did by such unrighteous deeds?'

18. (a) Why is it not easy to pursue righteousness?
(b) What can we learn from Lot's example?

Can You Explain?

- What is righteousness?
- How is salvation related to God's righteousness?
- On what basis are humans counted righteous by God?
- How can we find delight in Jehovah's righteousness?

¹⁹ In these perilous and uncertain days, taking delight in Jehovah's righteousness is a source of security and protection. To the question: "O Jehovah, who will be a guest in your tent? Who will reside in your holy mountain?" King David answered: "He who is walking faultlessly and practicing righteousness." (Psalm 15:1, 2) By pursuing God's righteousness and finding delight in it, we can maintain a good relationship with him and continue.

19. What blessings can be ours if we find delight in God's righteousness?

ue to enjoy his favor and blessing. Thus, ours is a life of contentment, self-respect, and peace of mind. "He that is pursuing righteousness and loving-kindness will find life, righteousness and glory," says God's Word. (Proverbs 21:21) Furthermore, trying our best to do what is just and right in all our endeavors means happy personal relationships and an improved quality of life—morally and spiritually. The psalmist declared: "Happy are those observing justice, doing righteousness all the time."—Psalm 106:3.

CLEANSED AS A PEOPLE FOR FINE WORKS

"Let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear."—2 CORINTHIANS 7:1.

WHO may ascend into the mountain of Jehovah, and who may rise up in his holy place?" King David of ancient Israel raised that thought-provoking question regarding worship that is acceptable to Jehovah. He then provided the answer: "Any-one innocent in his hands and clean in heart, who has not carried My soul to sheer worthlessness, nor taken an oath deceitfully." (Psalm 24:3, 4) To be acceptable to Jehovah, who is the very embodiment of holiness, one must be clean and holy. Earlier, Jehovah reminded the congregation of Israel: "You must sanctify yourselves and you must

1. What does Jehovah require of those who worship him?

prove yourselves holy, because I am holy."—Leviticus 11:44, 45; 19:2.

² Centuries later, the apostle Paul wrote to fellow Christians in the decadent city of Corinth: "Since we have these promises, beloved ones, let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear." (2 Corinthians 7:1) This once again makes the point that to have a relationship with God and to receive his promised blessings, one must be clean and free from physical and spiritual defilement and corruption. Likewise, in writing about worship that is acceptable to God, the dis-

2. How did Paul and James emphasize the importance of cleanliness in true worship?



ple James stated: "The form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world." —James 1:27.

³ Since being clean, holy, and undefiled are such important factors in true worship, anyone desiring to gain God's approval should be seriously concerned with measuring up in this area. Because people today have widely differing standards and concepts regarding cleanliness, however, we need to understand and abide by what Jehovah considers clean and acceptable. We need to find out what God requires of his worshipers in this regard and what he has done to help them to become and remain clean and acceptable to him.—Psalm 119:9; Daniel 12:10.

Clean for True Worship

⁴ To most people, being clean simply means to be free from dirt or contamination. In the Bible, however, the idea of being clean is denoted by a number of Hebrew and Greek words that describe cleanliness not just in the physical sense but more often in the moral and spiritual sense. Thus, one Bible encyclopedia states: "'Clean' and 'unclean' are terms seldom related to mere questions of hygiene, but are mainly religious concepts. As such the principle of 'cleanliness' affects almost every aspect of life."

⁵ Indeed, the Mosaic Law included rules and regulations on practically every aspect of the Israelites' life, outlining what was clean and acceptable and what was not. For example, in Leviticus chapters 11 to 15, we find detailed instructions relative to cleanliness and uncleanness. Certain animals were unclean,

3. For our worship to be acceptable to God, with what must we be seriously concerned?
4. Explain the Biblical concept of cleanliness.
5. To what extent did the Mosaic Law regulate cleanliness in the Israelites' life?

and the Israelites were not to eat them. Childbirth would cause a woman to be unclean for a specified period of time. Certain skin diseases, particularly leprosy, and discharges of the male and female organs would likewise cause a person to be unclean. The Law also specified what should be done in situations involving uncleanness. For example, at Numbers 5:2, we read: "Command the sons of Israel that they send out of the camp every leprous person and everyone having a running discharge and everyone unclean by a deceased soul."

⁶ Undoubtedly, these and other laws from Jehovah reflected medical and physiological concepts far ahead of their time, and the people benefited when they followed them. Yet, these laws were not given merely as a health code or to serve solely as medical guidelines. They were a part of true worship. The fact that they touched on people's daily life—eating, giving birth, marital relations, and so forth—simply emphasized the point that as their God, Jehovah had the right to determine for them what was proper and what was not proper in all aspects of their life, which had been exclusively dedicated to Jehovah.—Deuteronomy 7:6; Psalm 135:4.

⁷ The Law covenant also protected the Israelites from the defiling practices of the nations around them. By faithfully keeping the Law, including all the requirements for remaining clean in Jehovah's eyes, the Israelites would be fit to serve their God and to receive his blessing. In this regard, Jehovah told the nation: "If you will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant, then you will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples, because the whole earth belongs to me. And you yourselves will become to me a kingdom of priests."

6. For what purpose were the laws on cleanliness given?
7. By keeping the Law, what blessing would the nation of Israel receive?

priests and a holy nation.”—Exodus 19:5, 6; Deuteronomy 26:19.

⁸ Since Jehovah set out such details in the Law to instruct the Israelites on how to become clean, holy, and acceptable to him, does it not behoove Christians today to consider carefully how they measure up in this regard? Even though Christians are not bound by the Law, they must bear in mind that, as Paul explained, all the things set down in the Law “are a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to the Christ.” (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1) If Jehovah God, who says “I have not changed,” viewed being clean and undefiled as such an important factor in true worship back then, we today must take seriously the matter of being clean physically, morally, and spiritually if we want his approval and blessing.—Malachi 3:6; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11, 31.

Physical Cleanliness Recommends Us

⁹ Is physical cleanliness still an important element of true worship? While physical cleanliness alone does not make one a true worshiper of God, it is certainly fitting that a true worshiper be physically clean as far as his circumstances permit. Especially today, when many people pay little attention to keeping themselves, their attire, or their surroundings clean, those who do are often noticed by people around them. This can lead to positive results, just as Paul told the Corinthian Christians: “In no way are we giving any cause for stumbling, that our ministry might not be found fault with; but in every way we recommend ourselves as God’s ministers.”—2 Corinthians 6:3, 4.

¹⁰ Time and again, Jehovah’s Witnesses have been commended by public officials for their clean and orderly conduct. Why should Christians today pay attention to what is said in the Law about cleanliness? ⁸ 9, 10. (a) Why is physical cleanliness important to a Christian? (b) What comments are often made about the conventions of Jehovah’s Witnesses?

their clean, orderly, and respectful conduct and habits, seen particularly at their large conventions. For example, about a convention held in the province of Savona, Italy, the newspaper *La Stampa* commented: “What immediately stands out when one walks through the facilities is the cleanliness and orderliness of the people who use them.” After a Witness convention at a stadium in São Paulo, Brazil, a stadium official told his cleaning crew supervisor: “From now on we want the stadium cleaned the way Jehovah’s Witnesses did.” Another official at the same stadium said: “When Jehovah’s Witnesses want to rent the stadium, we are concerned only about the dates. Nothing else worries us.”

¹¹ If cleanliness and orderliness in our place of worship can be a source of praise to the God we worship, certainly manifesting these qualities in our personal life is equally important. However, in the privacy of our home, we may feel that we have the right to let go and to act as we wish. And as far as dress and grooming are concerned, surely we have the freedom to choose what we feel is comfortable and appealing! Yet, to a large degree, all of this is only relative. Recall that in discussing one’s choice to eat certain foods, Paul cautioned his fellow Christians: “Keep watching that this authority of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to those who are weak.” Then he stated a valuable principle: “All things are lawful; but not all things are advantageous. All things are lawful; but not all things build up.” (1 Corinthians 8:9; 10:23) How does Paul’s counsel apply to us in the matter of cleanliness?

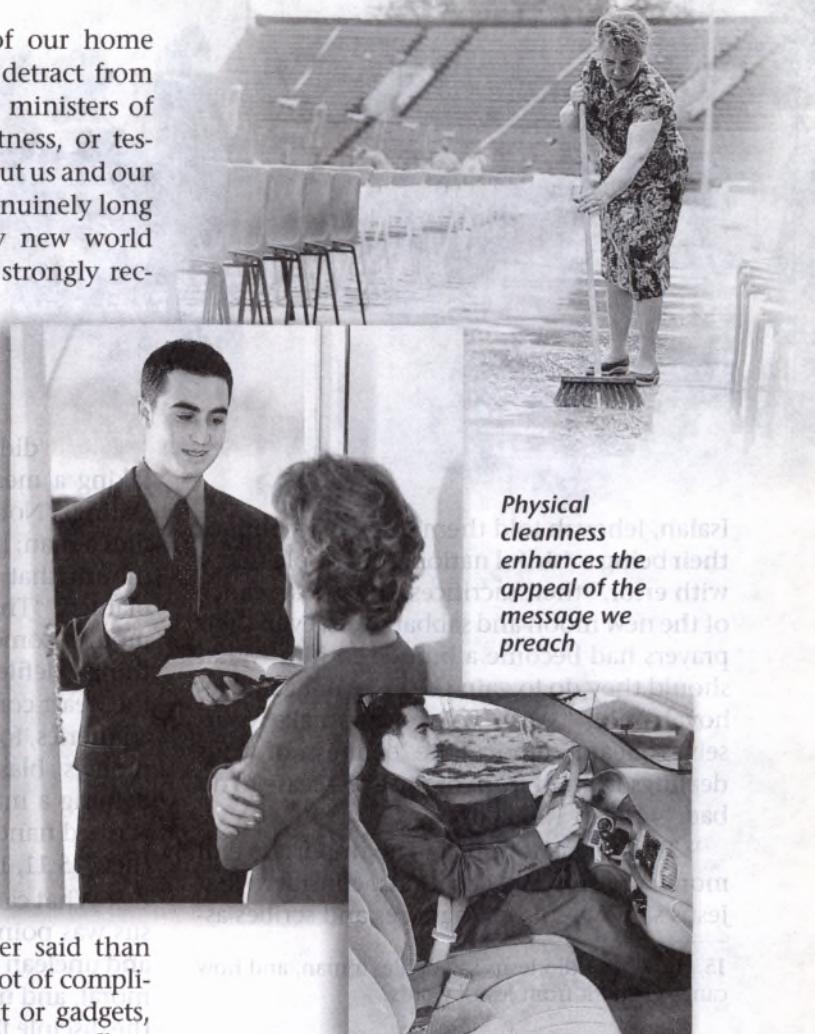
¹² It is reasonable that people should expect a minister of God to be clean and orderly in his way of life. We should, therefore, be

11, 12. (a) What Bible principle should we bear in mind when it comes to personal cleanliness? (b) What questions can be asked about our personal habits and way of life?

certain that the appearance of our home and its surroundings does not detract from what we profess to be, namely, ministers of God's Word. What kind of witness, or testimony, does our home give about us and our beliefs? Does it show that we genuinely long to live in a clean and orderly new world of righteousness, which we so strongly recommend to others? (2 Peter 3:13) Likewise, our personal appearance—whether during leisure time or in the ministry—can either enhance or diminish the appeal of the message we preach. For example, note this comment by a newspaper reporter in Mexico: "Truly, young people are a large part of the members of Jehovah's Witnesses, and what stand out are their haircuts, cleanliness, and proper dress." What a joy to have such young people in our midst!

¹³ Of course, making sure that our person, our belongings, and our home are always clean and orderly is easier said than done. What is needed is, not a lot of complicated and expensive equipment or gadgets, but good planning and consistent effort. Time must be set aside for cleaning our body, our clothes, our home, our car, and so forth. Being busy with the ministry, meeting attendance, and personal study—in addition to caring for other obligations in daily life—does not excuse us from the need to remain clean and acceptable in the eyes of God and men. The familiar principle that "for everything there is an appointed time" applies equally well to this part of our life.—Ecclesiastes 3:1.

13. What can we do to make sure that all aspects of our daily life are clean and orderly?

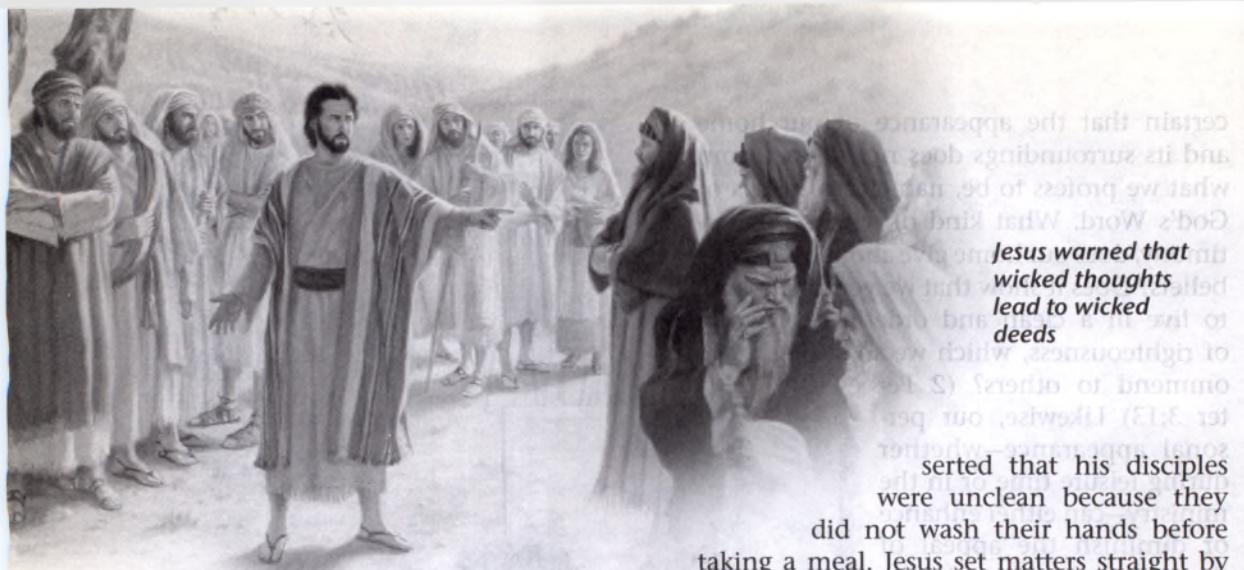


Physical cleanliness enhances the appeal of the message we preach

A Heart That Is Undefined

¹⁴ As important as it is to give attention to physical cleanliness, it is even more important to be concerned with moral and spiritual cleanliness. We come to this conclusion by recalling that the nation of Israel was rejected by Jehovah, not because they were physically unclean, but because they became morally and spiritually corrupt. Through the prophet

14. Why can it be said that moral and spiritual cleanliness are even more important than physical cleanliness?



Jesus warned that wicked thoughts lead to wicked deeds

Isaiah, Jehovah told them that on account of their being a "sinful nation, the people heavy with error," their sacrifices, their observance of the new moon and sabbath, yes, even their prayers had become a burden to him. What should they do to gain God's favor again? Jehovah said: "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the badness of your dealings from in front of my eyes; cease to do bad."—Isaiah 1:4, 11-16.

¹⁵ To appreciate further the importance of moral and spiritual cleanliness, consider what Jesus said when the Pharisees and scribes as-

15, 16. What did Jesus say defiles a man, and how can we benefit from Jesus' words?

Do You Recall?

- Why were the Israelites given the many laws on cleanliness?
- How does physical cleanliness enhance the appeal of the message we preach?
- Why are moral and spiritual cleanliness even more important than physical cleanliness?
- How can we show that we are a people "zealous for fine works"?

serted that his disciples were unclean because they did not wash their hands before taking a meal. Jesus set matters straight by stating: "Not what enters into his mouth defiles a man; but it is what proceeds out of his mouth that defiles a man." Jesus then explained: "The things proceeding out of the mouth come out of the heart, and those things defile a man. For example, out of the heart come wicked reasonings, murders, adulteries, fornications, thieveries, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things defiling a man; but to take a meal with unwashed hands does not defile a man."—Matthew 15:11, 18-20.

¹⁶ What can we learn from Jesus' words? Jesus was pointing out that wicked, immoral, and unclean acts are preceded by wicked, immoral, and unclean leanings in the heart. As the disciple James put it, "each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire." (James 1:14, 15) Thus, if we do not want to fall into the grievous sins that Jesus described, we must root out and keep out of our heart any tendencies toward such things. That means we must be careful about what we read, watch, and listen to. Today, in the name of free speech and artistic license, the entertainment and advertising industries are turning out an endless barrage of sounds and images that cater to the cravings of the fallen flesh. We should be determined not to allow any such ideas to take root in our heart. The

key point is that to be pleasing and acceptable to God, we must constantly be on guard so as to maintain a clean and undefiled heart.

—Proverbs 4:23.

Cleansed for Fine Works

¹⁷ It is certainly a blessing and a protection that, with Jehovah's help, we can enjoy a clean standing before him. (2 Corinthians 6:



As a cleansed people, Jehovah's Witnesses are zealous for fine works

14-18) Yet, we also appreciate that Jehovah has brought his people into a clean state for a specific purpose. Paul told Titus that Christ Jesus "gave himself for us that he might deliver us from every sort of lawlessness and

17. Why has Jehovah brought his people into a clean state?

cleanse for himself a people peculiarly his own, zealous for fine works." (Titus 2:14) As a cleansed people, for what works should we be zealous?

¹⁸ First and foremost, we should exert ourselves in declaring publicly the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) By so doing, we hold out to people everywhere the hope of living forever on an earth that will be free from pollution of any kind. (2 Peter 3:13) Our fine works also include manifesting the fruitage of God's spirit in our everyday life, thus glorifying our heavenly Father. (Galatians 5:22, 23; 1 Peter 2:12) And we do not forget those not in the truth who may be ravaged by natural disasters or human tragedies. We keep in mind Paul's admonition: "Really, then, as long as we have time favorable for it, let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Galatians 6:10) All such services, rendered from a clean heart and with a pure motive, are well-pleasing to God.—1 Timothy 1:5.

¹⁹ As servants of the Most High, we take to heart Paul's words: "I entreat you by the compassions of God, brothers, to present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason." (Romans 12:1) May we continue to appreciate the privilege of being cleansed by Jehovah and do our utmost to maintain a high standard of physical, moral, and spiritual cleanliness. Doing so will bring us not only self-respect and satisfaction now but also the prospect of seeing "the former things"—the present wicked and defiled system—pass away when God 'makes all things new.'—Revelation 21:4, 5.

18. How can we show that we are zealous for fine works?

19. What blessings await us if we continue to maintain a high standard of cleanliness—physically, morally, and spiritually?



REWARDED BY PRACTICING GODLY DEVOTION

AS TOLD BY
WILLIAM AIHINORIA

I awoke in the middle of the night to Father's familiar moaning. He was rolling on the floor holding his stomach. Mother, my older sister, and I huddled around him. When the pain seemed to subside, he sat upright, sighed, and said: "Only Jehovah's Witnesses have peace on this earth." The remark was puzzling, but it made a deep impression on me because I had never heard of Jehovah's Witnesses before. I wondered what he meant.

THAT incident occurred in 1953 when I was six years old. I was part of a polygamous household in Ewossa, an agricultural village in midwestern Nigeria. I was the second child, but the first son in a family that eventually grew to include Father's 3 wives and 13 children. We shared Grandfather's thatched-roof, four-room mud house. The household also included Grandmother and Father's three brothers, as well as their families.

My early life was miserable. What contributed to this in particular was Father's poor health. He had chronic stomach pain that lasted until his death many years later. His unknown ailment defied all medical treatment affordable to an African peasant family—both herbal and orthodox. Many nights we spent weeping beside Father as he rolled in agony on the floor until the cock crowed the following morning. In search of a cure for his illness, he often traveled with Mother, leav-

ing me and my siblings in the care of Grandmother.

Our family subsisted by cultivating and selling yam, cassava, and kola nuts. We also did a little rubber tapping to supplement our meager income. Our staple food was yam. We ate yam in the morning, pounded yam in the afternoon, and had yam again at night. Occasionally, we had a little variety when we ate roasted plantain.

An important part of our life was ancestor worship. The family offered food to sticks with cowrie shells tied onto them. Father also worshiped an idol to ward off evil spirits and witches.

When I was five years old, we moved temporarily from our village to a farming camp about seven miles away. There Father contracted guinea worm disease, which was an added affliction to his abdominal sickness. He could not work during the day, and his abdominal pains tormented him at night. I contracted jigger, or sandflea, disease, a form of typhus. As a result, we lived on handouts from our extended family. Rather than die in squalor, we moved back to our village of Ewossa. Father wanted me, his first son, to become more than a subsistence farmer. He felt that a good education would enable me to raise the family's standard of living and help me bring up my siblings.

Exposure to Different Religions

Back in our village, I was able to begin my schooling. This led to an exposure to the religions of Christendom. In the 1950's, one could hardly separate a Western education from the religion of the colonial masters. Since I attended a Catholic primary school, that meant I had to be a Roman Catholic.

In 1966, the year I turned 19, I was admitted to the Pilgrim Baptist Secondary School in the town of Ewohinmi, about 5 miles

from Ewossa. There my religious education changed. Because I was now attending a Protestant school, the Catholic priests prevented me from partaking of the Sunday Mass.

It was during my time at this Baptist school that I was first exposed to the Bible. Although I continued going to the Catholic church, I read the Bible on my own every Sunday after the Catholic church service. The teachings of Jesus Christ fascinated me, stirring in me the desire to live a meaningful life of godly devotion. The more I read the Bible, the more I was disgusted with the hypocrisy of some of the religious leaders and the immoral life-style of many of the laity. What I saw among those professing to be Christian was so different from what Jesus and his disciples taught and did.

Certain incidents in particular shocked me. On one occasion when I went to the catechist's provision store to purchase a rosary, I saw a juju amulet hanging on the store's doorpost. Another time, the principal of the Baptist school attempted to abuse me sexually. I learned afterward that he was a homosexual and had abused others. I pondered these things, wondering to myself, 'Does God approve of religions whose members and even whose leaders are not held accountable for gross sins?'

With my wife and children in 1990



A Change of Religion

Still, I loved what I read in the Bible and resolved to continue reading it. It was then that I began to reflect on Father's comment some 15 years earlier: "*Only Jehovah's Witnesses have peace on this earth.*" But I was apprehensive because Witness youths in my school were ridiculed and sometimes punished for not joining our morning worship. And some of their beliefs seemed strange. For example, I found it hard to believe that only 144,000 were going to heaven. (Revelation 14:3) Since it was my desire to go to heaven, I wondered whether this number had been completed before my birth.

It was obvious that the Witnesses were different in their conduct and attitude. They were not involved in the immoral and violent activities of other youths in school. To me, they were really separate from the world, as I had read in the Bible that those who practice true religion should be.—John 17:14-16; James 1:27.

I decided to investigate further. In September 1969, I was able to obtain the book "*The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life.*" The following month, a pioneer, as a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses is called, began to study with me. Inspired by my first study, I started to read the *Truth* book on a Saturday night and finished it by the next afternoon. Immediately, I began telling my fellow students the marvelous things I had read. The students and teachers thought my newfound faith was driving me mad. But I knew I was not going mad.—Acts 26:24.

The news of my preaching a new religion was relayed to my parents. They asked me to return home immediately so that they could ascertain what my problem was. There was no one to whom I could turn for advice, as all the Witnesses had gone to one of their district conventions at Ilesha. On my return home, I was bombarded with questions and criticism from my mother and other relatives. I tried my best to defend what I was learning from the Bible.—1 Peter 3:15.

With my wife and children and two sons-in-law



After trying unsuccessfully to prove that Jehovah's Witnesses were false teachers, my uncle attempted a different approach. He appealed to me: "Remember that you went to school to get an education. If you leave your studies and go preaching, you will never complete your education. So why don't you wait until you finish school before joining this new religion." At the time that seemed reasonable, so I stopped studying with the Witnesses.

In December 1970, immediately after my graduation, I went straight to the Kingdom Hall, and I have been going to the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses ever since. On August 30, 1971, I was baptized in symbol of my dedication to God. That shook not only my parents but the entire community as well. They said I had disappointed them since I was the first in or around Ewossa to have received a government scholarship. Many had high expectations for me. They hoped that I would use my education to improve the community.

Consequences of My Change

My family and the older men of the community sent a delegation to try to persuade me to renounce my faith. Their efforts were mingled with curses. "If you do not leave this religion," they said, "your future is doomed. You will not get a job. You will not build a house of your own. You will not be able to marry and raise a family."

Contrary to their dire predictions, ten months after finishing school, I got a job as a teacher. In October 1972, I married my beloved wife, Veronica. Later, the government trained me as an agricultural extension agent. I bought my first car, and I started to build our house. On November 5, 1973, our first daughter, Victory, was born, and in the years that followed we also had Lydia, Wilfred, and Joan. In 1986 our last child, Micah, was born. They have all proved to be pre-

cious children, an inheritance from Jehovah.
—Psalm 127:3.

Looking back, I can say that the evil wishes of the community all turned to blessings. That is why I named my first daughter Victory. Recently, the community wrote to me and said: "Please, we want you to come home and share in the development of our community now that God is *blessing* you."

Rearing Children in Godly Ways

My wife and I knew that we could not combine our godly responsibility of rearing children with the pursuit of material riches. Hence, we have learned to be content with a simple life. We prefer to live this way rather than face the possible consequences of choosing a different life-style.

It is common in our part of the world to share a building with other families, using the same bathroom, kitchen facilities, and so on. We were happy to be able to rent only self-contained living quarters in any town to which I was transferred as a government worker. True, such accommodations were more expensive, but having them reduced our children's exposure to unwholesome influences. I thank Jehovah that over the years, we were able to bring up our children in a spiritually healthy environment.

In addition, my wife has remained at home in order to be with and take care of our children. When I finish work, we endeavor to do things together as a family. Anything we do, we do as a team. This includes family Bible study, preparation for and attending of congregation meetings, sharing in the Christian ministry, as well as engaging in social activities.

We have tried to follow the counsel of Deuteronomy 6:6, 7, which urges parents to teach their children not only at home but at every opportunity. This has caused the children to look inward for companionship



instead of outward. They have learned by our example to monitor their associations because Veronica and I do not spend an undue amount of time in the company of those who do not share our beliefs.—Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33.

Of course, our guidance and teaching have not been the only positive influence in our children's life. Our home has been and still is open to zealous Christians, many of whom are traveling ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses. The time that these mature Christians have spent with our family has given our children the opportunity to observe and learn from their self-sacrificing way of life. This has reinforced our teaching, and the children have made Bible truth their own.

Rewarded for Godly Devotion

Today my wife and I, together with four of our children, are in the full-time ministry. I first started to pioneer in 1973. Over the years, I have had to interrupt my full-time ministry from time to time because of economic circumstances. On occasion, it has also been my privilege to share in teaching the Kingdom Ministry School, which provides training for Christian overseers of Jehovah's Witnesses. I currently enjoy the privilege of serving on a Hospital Liaison Committee, as well as being the city overseer of Uhonmora.

My first two daughters, Victory and Lydia, are happily married to fine Christian elders. They and their husbands are serving as members of the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses at Igieduma, Nigeria. Our oldest son, Wilfred, serves as a ministerial servant, and our youngest, Micah, serves periodically as an auxiliary pioneer. In 1997, Joan finished her secondary schooling and took up the regular pioneer service.

Among the most rewarding experiences in my life is helping others to serve Jehovah God. Such ones include some of my extended family members. My father made efforts to serve Jehovah, but the practice of polygamy held him back. From my youth on, I have loved people. When I see others suffer, I feel as though my problems are of less importance. I suppose they observe that I am sincere in my desire to help them, and this makes it easier for them to talk with me.

One of those I helped to a knowledge of God's purposes is a bedridden young man. He was a power-company worker who got a terrible electrical shock on the job that paralyzed him from the chest down. He accepted a Bible study and gradually responded to what he learned. His baptism on October 14, 1995, in a stream near our home, was the first time in 15 years that he had moved from his bed. He said it was the happiest day of his life. He is now a ministerial servant in the congregation.

I must say that I have no regrets for having chosen some 30 years ago to serve Jehovah with his united, dedicated people. I have seen real love in action among them. Even if the hope of everlasting life were not included in Jehovah's reward to his faithful servants, I would still desire a life of godly devotion. (1 Timothy 6:6; Hebrews 11:6) It is the way that has shaped and anchored my life, bringing joy, satisfaction, and happiness to me and my family.

Questions From Readers

Is complete immersion in water required if a person wants to be baptized but has a severe handicap or is in very poor health, which would make immersion difficult?



The word "baptizing" is derived from the Greek verb *ba'pto*, meaning "to dip in." (John 13:26) In the Bible, "to baptize" is the same as "to immerse." Concerning the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch performed by Philip, *The Emphasised Bible*, by Rotherham, states: "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch,—and he immersed him." (Acts 8:38) Thus, the person being baptized is actually dipped under water.—Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10.

Jesus directed his disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them." (Matthew 28:19, 20) Accordingly, Jehovah's Witnesses arrange for baptisms in pools, lakes, rivers, or other places where there is enough water for complete immersion. Since baptism by complete immersion is a Scriptural requirement, humans have no authority to exempt someone from baptism. Thus, a person should be baptized even

when unusual steps are necessary because of his condition. For example, baptisms in large bathtubs have been helpful to those of advanced age or those with especially frail health. The tub water could be warmed, the baptism candidate could calmly and gradually be placed in the water and, once acclimatized to it, the actual baptism could occur.

Even people with severe handicaps have been baptized. For instance, individuals who have had a tracheotomy and, as a result, have a permanent hole in the throat, or those who need to use a mechanical respirator have been immersed. Of course, for all such baptisms thorough preparations would need to be made. It would be wise to have a trained nurse on hand or a doctor if available. However, when special care or precautions are taken, in almost all cases, baptisms can be performed. Therefore, every reasonable effort should be made to baptize a person in water if this is the individual's sincere desire and if he wishes to accept the risks involved.

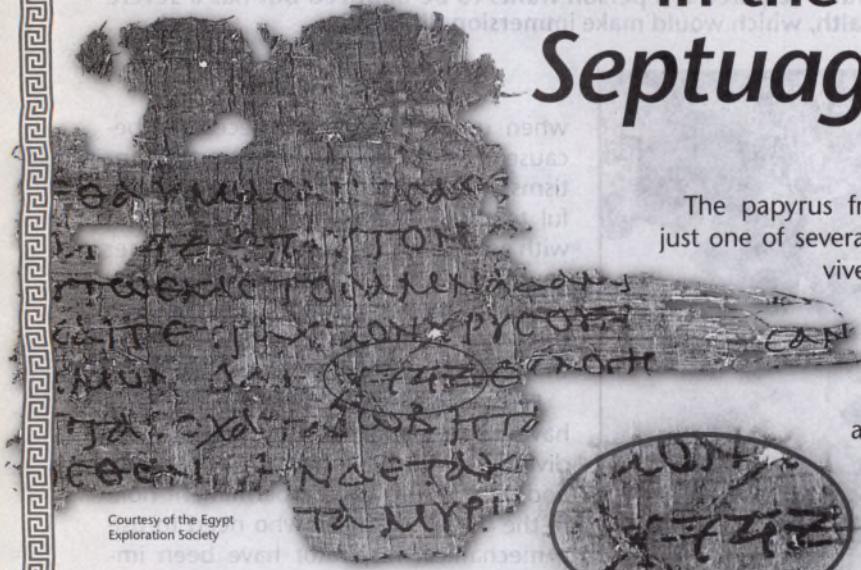
IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Something Greater Than
the Treasures of Egypt

Follow the Royal Pattern

A Lesson From Roman History

The Tetragrammaton in the *Septuagint*



Courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society

THE divine name, Jehovah, is represented by the Tetragrammaton, that is, the four Hebrew letters יהוה (YHWH). It was long believed that the Tetragrammaton did not appear in copies of the *Septuagint*. Thus, it was argued that when the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures quoted from the Hebrew Scriptures, they would not have used the divine name in their writing.

A series of discoveries made over the last hundred years or so revealed that God's name did appear in the *Septuagint*. Says one source: "So great was the desire to preserve intact the sacred name of God that Hellenistic Jews, when translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek, copied the actual letters of the Tetragrammaton in the midst of the Greek text."

The papyrus fragment shown at left is just one of several examples that have survived. Found in Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, and assigned the number 3522, this scrap dates back to the first century C.E.* It measures about 2.5 by 4 inches and contains a passage from Job 42:11, 12. The Tetragrammaton, circled, appears in ancient Hebrew characters.*

So, then, did the divine name appear in early copies of the Christian Greek Scriptures? Says scholar George Howard: "Since the Tetragram was still written in the copies of the Greek Bible [the *Septuagint*] which made up the Scriptures of the early church, it is reasonable to believe that the N[ew] T[estament] writers, when quoting from Scripture, preserved the Tetragram within the biblical text." It appears that shortly thereafter copyists replaced the divine name with surrogates, such as *Ky'ri-os* (Lord) and *The-os'* (God).

* For more information on the papyri found at Oxyrhynchus, see *The Watchtower*, February 15, 1992, pages 26-8.

* For other examples of the divine name in ancient Greek versions, see the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*, appendix 1C.

Finding the Truth in an Unlikely Place

IT IS God's will that "all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:3, 4) To that end, Jehovah's Witnesses have printed and distributed millions of copies of the Bible and Bible study aids. At times, these publications have helped honest-hearted ones learn the truth in most unexpected ways. In this regard, the Kingdom proclaimers in Freetown, Sierra Leone, report the following experience.

Osman was the second son in a family of nine children. Growing up in a religious household, he regularly went to worship with his father. Osman, however, was deeply troubled by what his religion taught about hell. He could not understand how a merciful God would torture wicked people by burning them in fire. All the explanations offered to help Osman understand the hellfire doctrine failed to put him at ease.

One day, when Osman was 20 years old, he noticed a blue book partially buried in the rubbish in a trash can. Being fond of

books, he picked it up, cleaned it, and noticed the title—*The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*.*

'What truth is this?' wondered Osman. His curiosity piqued, Osman took the book home and read it in one sitting. How excited he was to learn that God has a personal name—Jehovah! (Psalm 83:18) Osman also learned that God's dominant quality is love and that even the idea of tormenting people in a fiery place is something detestable to Him. (Jeremiah 32:35; 1 John 4:8) Finally, Osman read that Jehovah will soon bring about an earthly paradise in which people will be able to live forever. (Psalm 37:29; Revelation 21:3, 4) What marvelous truth from a merciful, loving God! With heartfelt gratitude, Osman thanked Jehovah for letting him find the truth in a most unlikely place.

A few days later, with the help of some friends, Osman located the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses and attended a meeting for the first time. While there, he asked a Witness to study the Bible with him. Despite strong family opposition, Osman continued to make spiritual progress and was baptized. (Matthew 10:36) Today, he serves as an elder in the congregation. How wonderful that all of this resulted from finding a Bible publication in a trash can!

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses in 1968.



"Down They Went"

"The surging waters proceeded to cover them; down they went into the depths like a stone."

WITH those words, Moses and the Israelites celebrated in song their deliverance through the Red Sea and the annihilation of their pursuing Egyptian enemy—Pharaoh and his military forces.—Exodus 15:4, 5.

For anyone witnessing that spectacular event, the lesson was unmistakable. No one can successfully challenge or resist Jehovah's authority and live. Just a few months later, however, prominent Israelites—Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and 250 supporters—openly challenged the God-given authority of Moses and Aaron.—Numbers 16:1-3.

At Jehovah's direction, Moses warned the Israelites to pull back from the tents of the rebels. Dathan and Abiram, flanked by members of their households,

defiantly held their ground. Moses then announced that in His own way, Jehovah would make clear to the people that these men had "treated Jehovah disrespectfully." At that point, Jehovah split open the ground beneath their feet. "So down they went, and all who belonged to them, alive into Sheol, and the earth went covering them over." What about Korah and the other rebels? "A fire came out from Jehovah and proceeded to consume the two hundred and fifty men offering the incense."—Numbers 16:23-35; 26:10.

Pharaoh and his forces, as well as those rebels in the wilderness, all perished because they failed to recognize Jehovah's authority and his interest in the affairs of his people. It is urgent, therefore, that all who would see Jehovah's protection in these critical days learn about and obey Jehovah as "the Most High" and "the Almighty One." Doing so, they can take to heart Jehovah's reassuring words: "A thousand will fall at your very side and ten thousand at your right hand; to you it will not come near. Only with your eyes will you look on and see the retribution itself of the wicked ones. Because you said: 'Jehovah is my refuge,' you have made the Most High himself your dwelling."—Psalm 91:1, 7-9.