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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Do You View
the Future With
Fear or Hope?

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 fellow men 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.

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Do You Fear the Future?

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FEAR has many facets. For instance, some people are afraid of what lies ahead for the earth. "From heat waves to storms to floods to fires to massive glacial melts, the global climate seems to be crashing around us," says *Time* magazine of April 3, 2006.

In May 2002, the United Nations Environment Programme released a report entitled "Global Environment Outlook-3." It was prepared with the cooperation of over 1,000 people. According to a news report, it stated: "The planet is at a crucial cross-roads with the choices made today critical for the forests, oceans, rivers, mountains, wildlife and other life support systems upon which current and future generations depend."

The present state of the global environment is but

one cause of anxiety. People throughout the world now live in fear of terrorist attacks. The deputy director of operations for Canada's top spy agency said: "We stay up at night worrying about the threats that we don't know about." Why, just watching the evening news on television can produce anxiety!

Many hardworking adults are afraid of losing their jobs. Lay-offs, plant closures, competition in the workplace, and excessive demands by employers can create a climate of job insecurity. Teenagers face the fear of rejection by their peers. Young children may fear that their parents do not really love them. But what about conditions in the world around them? "For the young and the innocent, the world outside their home must seem like a big scary

place at times," says one worried mother. And many parents are anxious about the effect the world's moral decay is having on the ones they love, especially their children.

The elderly often fear falling on a staircase or being assaulted on the street. Yes, "they have become afraid merely at what is high, and there are terrors in the way." (Ecclesiastes 12:5) There is the fear of serious illness. Reports of deadly flu viruses, cancers, and infectious diseases can make us afraid of contracting some new and strange sickness that

could cripple or kill us and our family. For that matter, when we see healthy, vibrant people becoming sick and frail, it is hard not to worry that the same thing will happen to us or to our loved ones. And how sad it is to look into a sick person's eyes and see that they are devoid of hope!

Affected by the many facets of fear, do we have any sound reason to be optimistic about the future? Can anything help us to maintain a positive outlook? The following article will answer these questions.

Finding Hope in a World Full of Distress

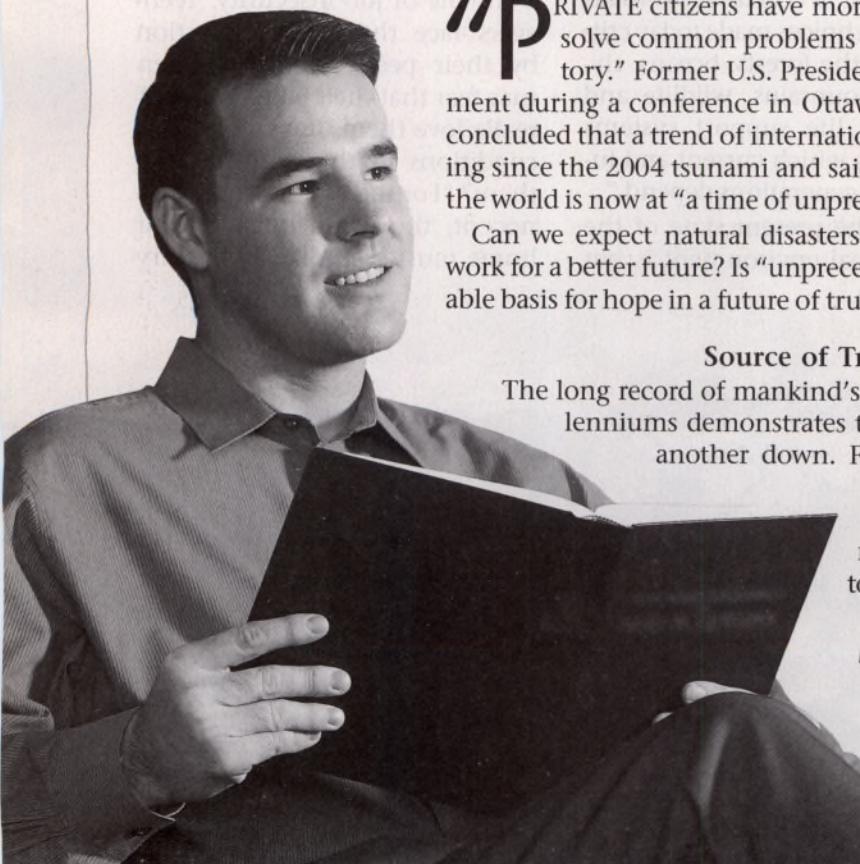
"PRIVATE citizens have more power to do public good and solve common problems than ever before in human history." Former U.S. President Bill Clinton made that statement during a conference in Ottawa, Canada, in March 2006. He concluded that a trend of international goodwill has been developing since the 2004 tsunami and said, with a hint of optimism, that the world is now at "a time of unprecedented interdependence."

Can we expect natural disasters to rally people everywhere to work for a better future? Is "unprecedented interdependence" a reliable basis for hope in a future of true peace and lasting security?

Source of True Hope

The long record of mankind's efforts over more than six millennia demonstrates that humans repeatedly let one another down. For good reason, then, the inspired Scriptures advise us: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs."

Bible reading and meditation can instill in us hope in Jehovah



(Psalm 146:3) Fixing our hope on this world's organizations, its material things, and its dreams leads only to disappointment. Why? Because "the world is passing away and so is its desire."—1 John 2:17.

Throughout the centuries, however, God has been the unfailing hope of righteous humans. The Bible calls him "the hope of [ancient] Israel" and "the hope of [Israel's] forefathers," and many are the expressions of hope, trust, and confidence in him. (Jeremiah 14:8; 17:13; 50:7) Indeed, the Scriptures encourage us to "hope in Jehovah."—Psalm 27:14.

Proverbs 3:5, 6 urges us: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." You have every reason to put full confidence in such a promise because Jehovah God is unchanging, dependable, and true to his word. (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17) He wants what is best for you, and if you always heed what is said in his Word, the Bible, it will guide you successfully through these fearful times.—Isaiah 48:17, 18.

A person who wholeheartedly follows God's guidance can rely on this promise: "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not gaze about, for I am your God. I will fortify you. I will really help you. I will really keep fast hold of you with my right hand of righteousness." (Isaiah 41:10) Fervent prayer along with meditation on this assurance is very comforting to all those who truly love Jehovah God, for it helps them to cope with difficult circumstances and anxieties.

Consider Andrea, one of Jehovah's Witnesses and the mother of two children. She says: "Only by prayer and meditation on the promises of Jehovah do I have the strength to rebound when periods of uncertainty arise in my life. If I keep Jehovah as the one con-

stant in my life, it is much easier to maintain stability."

Fortify Your Hope in Jehovah

Highlighting the importance of hoping in Jehovah, one psalmist said: "Abundant peace belongs to those loving your law, and for them there is no stumbling block." (Psalm 119:165) A sincere study of God's Word can do much to fill your mind and heart with spiritually wholesome and positive 'things that are true, of serious concern, righteous, chaste, lovable, well spoken of, virtuous, and praiseworthy.' If you make a conscientious effort to hear, learn, accept, and practice such things, "the God of peace will be with you."—Philippians 4:8, 9.

Speaking from decades of personal experience, John says: "For my feelings about the future to change, it was important to learn that a drastic change in my personality and thinking was required before I could hope to build a relationship with a perfect, invisible God. The only way I could forge that relationship was by becoming a spiritual person. That involved a change to being God-oriented, having God's mind on matters by reading his inspired Word and meditating on it."

If you drink in the refreshing, life-giving waters of truth contained in the inspired Scriptures, you will be applying a true and tested prescription to counteract the endless barrage of bad things daily presented through the media. Applying what is said in the Bible can also strengthen your family bonds and help to minimize anxiety. Moreover, God promises that he is ready to "show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him." (2 Chronicles 16:9) He will work out matters in such a way that you really have nothing to fear.

Phinehas, who has lived through war and mass killings, says: "I have learned to put my

life in Jehovah's caring hands. Adhering to Bible principles has spared me many problems." If you really trust in Jehovah God, he can help you to scale any wall of adversity. (Psalm 18:29) A young child who bonds with his parents comes to trust them fully and feels secure in their care even when he is sick or troubled in some way. A similar feeling can be yours if you reach out and accept the invitation to hope in Jehovah.—Psalm 37:34.

A Sure Foundation for Hope

Jesus Christ told his followers: "You must pray... this way: 'Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.'" (Matthew 6:9, 10) That heavenly Kingdom—a government in the hands of Jesus Christ—is God's means of expressing His rightful sovereignty over the earth.—Psalm 2:7-12; Daniel 7:13, 14.

The many facets of fear that affect every aspect of life today are a clear indication that divine intervention is needed. Happily, that intervention is near! Now enthroned by God as Messianic King, Jesus Christ is entrusted with authority to vindicate Jehovah's sovereignty and sanctify His name. (Matthew 28:18) Soon, Kingdom rule will be directed to the earth to do away with all causes of fear and anxiety. Isaiah 9:6 cites credentials that show Jesus to be a worthy Ruler who can relieve us of our fears. For instance, he is called "Eternal Father," "Wonderful Counselor," and "Prince of Peace."

Consider the endearing expression "Eternal Father." As such, Jesus has the power and authority—as well as the desire—to give obedient humans the prospect of eternal life on earth by the merit of his ransom sacrifice. This means that they will finally be released from sin and imperfection inherited from the sinful first man, Adam. (Matthew 20:28; Romans 5:12; 6:23) Christ will also apply his

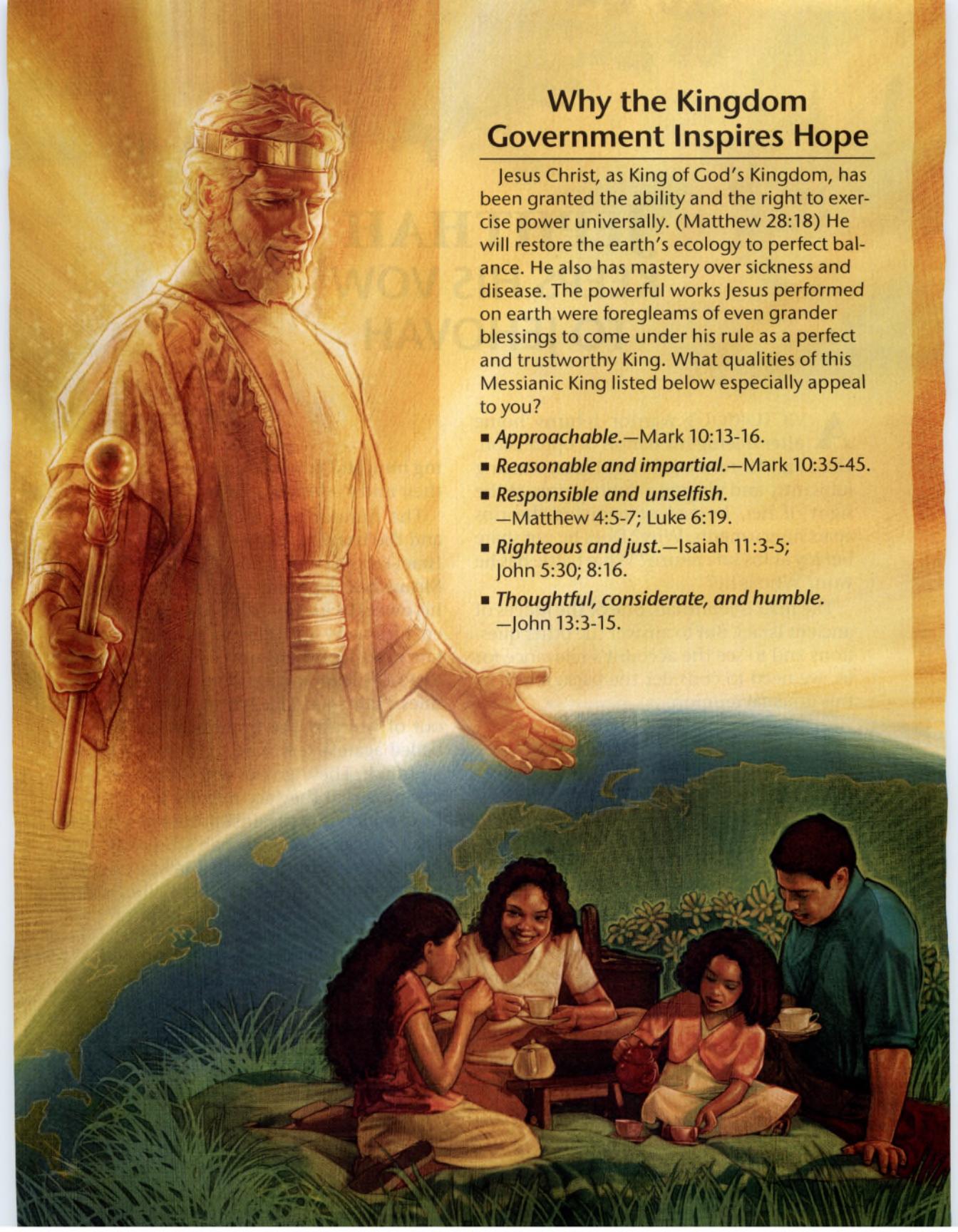
God-given authority to bring back to life many who have died.—John 11:25, 26.

When on earth, Jesus proved to be the "Wonderful Counselor." Because of his knowledge of God's Word and his extraordinary understanding of human nature, Jesus knew how to solve the problems of daily life. Since his enthronement in heaven, Christ continues to be the "Wonderful Counselor," serving as the principal figure in Jehovah's channel of communication to mankind. Jesus' counsel, recorded in the Bible, is always wise and flawless. Knowing and believing this can lead you to a life free of uncertainty and paralyzing fear.

Isaiah 9:6 also identifies Jesus as the "Prince of Peace." In that capacity, Christ will soon use his power to remove all inequality—political, social, and economic. How? By bringing mankind under the one peaceful rule of the Messianic Kingdom.—Daniel 2:44.

Under Kingdom rule, lasting peace will prevail earth wide. Why can you be sure of this? The reason is revealed at Isaiah 11:9, where we read: "They [the Kingdom's subjects] will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain; because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea." Eventually, every human on earth will have accurate knowledge of God and will be obedient to him. Does that prospect warm your heart? If it does, do not delay in taking in the precious "knowledge of Jehovah."

You can avail yourself of the faith-building and life-giving knowledge of God by examining what the Bible really teaches about events of our day and the bright future promised in the Bible. We therefore urge you to avail yourself of the free Bible study program that Jehovah's Witnesses offer in your community. This is a way to allay fear and find true hope in a world full of distress.



Why the Kingdom Government Inspires Hope

Jesus Christ, as King of God's Kingdom, has been granted the ability and the right to exercise power universally. (Matthew 28:18) He will restore the earth's ecology to perfect balance. He also has mastery over sickness and disease. The powerful works Jesus performed on earth were foregleams of even grander blessings to come under his rule as a perfect and trustworthy King. What qualities of this Messianic King listed below especially appeal to you?

- **Approachable.**—Mark 10:13-16.
- **Reasonable and impartial.**—Mark 10:35-45.
- **Responsible and unselfish.**
—Matthew 4:5-7; Luke 6:19.
- **Righteous and just.**—Isaiah 11:3-5;
John 5:30; 8:16.
- **Thoughtful, considerate, and humble.**
—John 13:3-15.



JEPHTHAH KEEPS HIS VOW TO JEHOVAH

A VICTORIOUS warrior returns home after freeing his nation of oppression. His daughter runs out to meet him, dancing jubilantly and playing a tambourine. At the sight of her, instead of rejoicing, he rips apart his garments. Why? Does he not share her joy at his safe return? What battle has he won? Who is he?

The man is Jephthah, one of the judges of ancient Israel. But to answer the other questions and to see the account's relevance for us, we need to consider the background of this unusual reunion.

A Crisis in Israel

Jephthah lives in a time of crisis. His fellow Israelites have forsaken pure worship and are serving the gods of Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia. Jehovah therefore abandons his people to the Ammonites and the Philistines, who oppress them for 18 years. The residents of Gilead, east of the Jordan River, are especially distressed.* Finally, the Israelites come to their senses, repentantly seek Jehovah's help, begin serv-

ing him, and remove the foreign gods from their midst.—Judges 10:6-16.

The Ammonites pitch camp in Gilead, and the Israelites gather to meet them. But Israel lacks a commander. (Judges 10:17, 18) Meanwhile, Jephthah is having problems of his own. His greedy half brothers have driven him away in order to steal his inheritance. So Jephthah moves to Tob, a region east of Gilead and exposed to Israel's enemies. "Idle men," likely those who were put out of work by the oppressors or who rebelled against servitude to them, gather to Jephthah. They "go out with him," perhaps meaning that they accompany Jephthah as he conducts raids against hostile neighbors. Likely because of Jephthah's prowess as a fighter, the Scriptures call him "a mighty, valiant man." (Judges 11:1-3) Who, then, will lead Israel against the Ammonites?

"Come and Serve as Our Commander"

The older men of Gilead urge Jephthah: "Do come and serve as our commander." If they expect him to jump at the chance to return to his own land, they are mistaken. "Was it not you that hated me so that you drove me out of my father's house?" he re-

* The Ammonites were capable of great cruelty. Not even 60 years later, they threatened to bore out the right eye of each of the inhabitants of a Gileadite city they terrorized. The prophet Amos spoke of a time when they slit open the pregnant women of Gilead.—1 Samuel 11:2; Amos 1:13.

sponds. "Why is it that you have come to me now just when you are in distress?" How unjust that they should first reject Jephthah and then come to him for help!—Judges 11:4-7.

On one condition alone will Jephthah take the lead in Gilead. 'If Jehovah abandons Ammon to me,' he declares, 'I shall become your head!' Victory would give evidence of God's backing, but Jephthah also aims to make sure that divine rule will not be forsaken as soon as the crisis has passed.—Judges 11:8-11.

Dealings With Ammon

Jephthah tries to negotiate with the Ammonites. He sends messengers to their king to discover the reason for Ammonite aggression. The reply contains a charge: When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they occupied Ammonite territory, and it should be returned.—Judges 11:12, 13.

With his thorough grasp of Israel's history, Jephthah ably refutes Ammonite claims. He tells them that the Israelites did not molest Ammon, Moab, or Edom when they left Egypt; nor did Ammon possess the disputed land at the time of Israel's Exodus. The Amorites then held it, but God gave their king, Sihon, into Israel's hand. Moreover, the Israelites had lived in that area for 300 years. Why are the Ammonites claiming it only now?—Judges 11:14-22, 26.

Jephthah also focuses on an issue central to Israel's woes: Who is the true God? Jehovah or the gods of the land that Israel has occupied? If Chemosh had any power at all, would he not wield it to retain his people's land? This is a contest between false religion, championed by the Ammonites, and true worship. So Jephthah logically concludes: "Let Jehovah the Judge judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon."—Judges 11:23-27.

The king of Ammon does not listen to Jephthah's uncompromising message. "Jehovah's spirit now [comes] upon Jephthah, and he [proceeds] to pass through Gilead and Manasseh," likely summoning able-bodied men for a fight.—Judges 11:28, 29.

Jephthah's Vow

Ardently desiring divine direction, Jephthah vows to God: "If you without fail give the sons of Ammon into my hand, it must also occur that the one coming out, who comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, must also become Jehovah's, and I must offer that one up as a burnt offering." In response, God blesses Jephthah by enabling him to strike 20 Ammonite cities with a "great slaughter," thus subduing Israel's foes.—Judges 11:30-33.

When Jephthah returns from battle, who meets him but his beloved daughter, his only child! "When he caught sight of her," says the account, "he began to rip his garments and to say: 'Alas, my daughter! You have indeed made me bend down, and you yourself have become the one I was ostracizing. And I—I have opened my mouth to Jehovah, and I am unable to turn back.'"—Judges 11:34, 35.

Is Jephthah really going to sacrifice his daughter? No. That cannot be what he has in mind. Jehovah detests literal human sacrifice, one of the wicked practices of the Canaanites. (Leviticus 18:21; Deuteronomy 12:31) Not only was God's spirit acting upon Jephthah when he made his vow but Jehovah also blessed his endeavors. The Scriptures speak well of Jephthah for his faith and for the role he played in connection with the divine purpose. (1 Samuel 12:11; Hebrews 11:32-34) So a human sacrifice—a murder—is completely out of the question.

What, then, was Jephthah thinking when he vowed to offer a person to Jehovah?

Jephthah evidently meant that he would devote the one whom he met to the exclusive service of God. The Mosaic Law provided for the vowing of souls to Jehovah. For instance, women served at the sanctuary, perhaps drawing water. (Exodus 38:8; 1 Samuel 2:22) Little is known about such service or even whether it was usually permanent. Jephthah apparently had such special devotion in mind when making his vow, and it seems that his promise implied permanent service.

Both Jephthah's daughter and later the boy Samuel cooperated so as to fulfill the vows of their godly parents. (1 Samuel 1:11) As a loyal worshipper of Jehovah, Jephthah's daughter herself was just as convinced as her father that his vow should be carried out. The sacrifice was great, for it meant that she would never get married. She wept over her virginity because every Israelite desired to have children in order to preserve the family name and inheritance. For Jephthah, fulfilling the vow meant losing the company of his beloved only child.—Judges 11:36-39.

This faithful maiden's life was not wasted. Full-time service at Jehovah's house was an excellent, satisfying, and commendable way for her to honor God. Thus, "from year to year the daughters of Israel would go to give commendation to the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite." (Judges 11:40) And surely he rejoiced in her service to Jehovah.

Many among God's people today choose a life of full-time service as pioneers, missionaries, traveling ministers, or members of Bethel families. This may mean not seeing family members as often as one might like. Yet, all involved can rejoice in such sacred service rendered to Jehovah.—Psalm 110:3; Hebrews 13:15, 16.

Rebellion Against Divine Guidance

Looking back on Jephthah's day, we see that many Israelites reject Jehovah's direction. Despite evidence of divine blessing on Jephthah, the Ephraimites quarrel with him. They want to know why he did not call them to the battle. They even intend to burn Jephthah's house 'over him'!—Judges 12:1.

Jephthah says that he did call the Ephraimites, but they did not respond. In any case, God won the battle. Are they now upset because the Gileadites did not consult them when selecting Jephthah as commander? Actually, Ephraim's objection denotes rebellion against Jehovah, and there is no alternative but to fight them. In the ensuing battle, the Ephraimites are routed. Being unable to say the test word "Shibboleth" correctly, fleeing men of Ephraim are easily identified. In all, 42,000 Ephraimites perish in the conflict.—Judges 12:2-6.

What a sad time in Israel's history! Battles won by Judges Othniel, Ehud, Barak, and Gideon brought peace. This time peace is not mentioned. The account merely concludes: "Jephthah continued to judge Israel for six years, after which [he] died and was buried in his city in Gilead."—Judges 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28; 12:7.

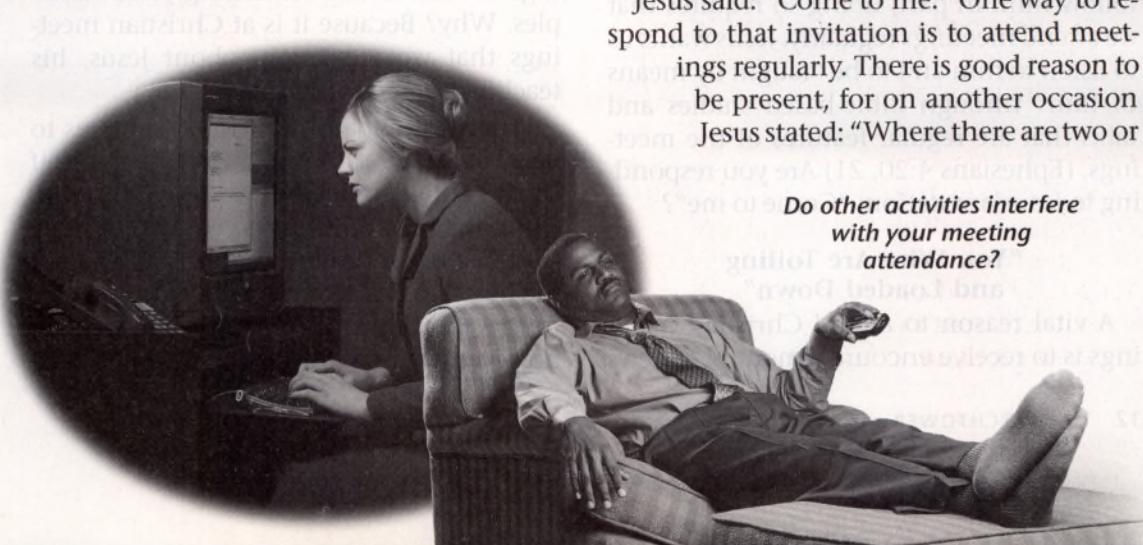
What can we learn from all of this? That although Jephthah's life was full of struggles, he was faithful to God. This valiant man mentioned Jehovah when he spoke to the older men of Gilead, to the Ammonites, to his daughter, and to the Ephraimites and, of course, when he made his vow. (Judges 11:9, 23, 27, 30, 31, 35; 12:3) God blessed Jephthah for his devotion, using him and his daughter to promote pure worship. In a time when others abandoned divine standards, Jephthah clung to them. Like Jephthah, will you always obey Jehovah?

WHY MEET TOGETHER?

SUDDENLY, Christine's husband abandoned her—after 20 years of marriage. Christine found herself left alone to raise seven sons and a daughter. They ranged in age from 7 to 18. "Now I had to make all the important decisions by myself," she says. "I felt weighed down by the responsibility and craved support and direction." Where did she find the needed help?

"Christian meetings were a lifeline for me and my family," Christine states. "At the meetings, we received support from our friends and guidance from God's Word. Regular attendance at the meetings helped us in every important aspect of our family life."

During these "critical times hard to deal with," all of us must cope with various trials. (2 Timothy 3:1) Like Christine, you may view meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses as a spiritual lifeline, a vital part of your worship of Jehovah. Very likely, the five congregation meetings scheduled each week stimulate your love for God, strengthen your hope for the future, and provide you with Bible-based guidance on how to deal with trials.



There are, however, those who find it difficult to attend meetings regularly. They are exhausted at the end of the day, and the thought of dressing in a suitable manner and traveling to a meeting may seem daunting. Some find that their work schedule regularly interferes with their meeting attendance. To attend all the meetings, they would have to do without some income or might risk losing their jobs. A few may miss meetings because they feel that some form of recreation would be more refreshing than association with the congregation.

So, what compelling reasons are there to attend Christian meetings? How can you make such occasions personally refreshing? To help answer these questions, let us examine Jesus' warm invitation recorded at Matthew 11:28-30. He stated: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light."

"Come to Me"

Jesus said: "Come to me." One way to respond to that invitation is to attend meetings regularly. There is good reason to be present, for on another occasion Jesus stated: "Where there are two or

*Do other activities interfere
with your meeting
attendance?*

three gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst.”—Matthew 18:20.

In the first century, Jesus personally invited various people to follow him. He thus gave them the opportunity to enjoy close association with him. Some accepted immediately. (Matthew 4:18-22) Others let such things as material interests stop them from accepting that invitation. (Mark 10:21, 22; Luke 9:57-62) To those who did follow him, Jesus made this reassuring statement: “You did not choose me, but I chose you.”—John 15:16.

After his death and resurrection, Christ was no longer physically present with his disciples. But he was still with them in the sense that he directed their activity and observed their response to his counsel. For example, some 70 years after his resurrection, Jesus gave counsel and encouragement to seven congregations in Asia Minor. His comments showed an intimate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals in those congregations.—Revelation 2:1-3:22.

Jesus is still keenly interested in each of his disciples. He promises: “Look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things.” (Matthew 28:20) We are now living in the time of the end, and we therefore need to act on Jesus’ invitation to follow him. In part, doing so requires that we attend meetings regularly. Jesus wants us to listen to him and to be “taught by means of him” through Bible-based studies and talks that are regular features of the meetings. (Ephesians 4:20, 21) Are you responding to Jesus’ invitation: “Come to me”?

“You Who Are Toiling and Loaded Down”

A vital reason to attend Christian meetings is to receive encouragement. (Hebrews

10:24, 25) Many of us are certainly “toiling and loaded down” in various ways. You may be loaded down with personal concerns, such as health problems. At Christian meetings, you can enjoy an interchange of encouragement. (Romans 1:11, 12) For instance, you will hear spiritually upbuilding comments, be reminded of your Bible-based hope, and observe the faith of others who are enduring trials. All of this can help you to cope and to keep your problems in proper perspective.

Consider the comments of one Christian woman who is hampered by a chronic disease. “My illness requires that I spend some time in the hospital,” she explains. “Going to the meetings after a hospital stay can be a little challenging, but that is where I belong. The warmth and love of the brothers and sisters replenishes my joy, and the teaching and direction given by Jehovah and Jesus give meaning to my life.”

“My Yoke Is Kindly and My Load Is Light”

Notice that in the passage we are analyzing, Jesus said: “Learn from me.” By learning from Jesus, we become his disciples, and we take his yoke when we make a dedication to God and get baptized. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Regular participation in meetings is vital to our remaining Jesus’ disciples. Why? Because it is at Christian meetings that we are taught about Jesus, his teachings, and his methods.

What is the load that Christ wants us to bear? It is the same load that he himself carries—the privilege of doing God’s will. (John 4:34; 15:8) Effort is required to obey God’s commandments, but this load is not too heavy to bear. It may seem to be heavy if we try to carry it in our own strength. If, however, we pray for God’s spirit and feed

on the spiritual food presented at the meetings, we will receive God-given “power beyond what is normal.” (2 Corinthians 4:7) By preparing for the meetings and participating in them, we grow ever stronger in our love for Jehovah. And when we are motivated by love, God’s commandments “are not burdensome.”—1 John 5:3.

People in general face such challenges as earning a living, dealing with health issues, and handling personal problems. To handle them, however, we do not rely on mere human wisdom. Congregation meetings help us to “stop being anxious,” for Jehovah supplies our needs and helps us to cope with problems. (Matthew 6:25-33) Indeed, Christian meetings are an expression of God’s love for us.

“I Am Mild-Tempered and Lowly in Heart”

It was Jesus’ custom to visit the synagogue, where God’s Word was discussed. On one such occasion, Jesus took the scroll of Isaiah and read: “Jehovah’s spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to declare good news to the poor, he sent me forth to preach a release to the captives and a recovery of sight to the blind, to send the crushed ones away with a release, to preach Jehovah’s acceptable year.” (Luke 4:16, 18, 19) What a thrill it would have been to hear Jesus apply those words by saying: “Today this scripture that you just heard is fulfilled”!—Luke 4:21.

Jesus, the mild-tempered “chief shepherd,” is still overseeing the spiritual care of his followers. (1 Peter 5:1-4) Under his direction, “the faithful and discreet slave” has appointed men as shepherds in the congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide. (Matthew 24:45-47; Titus 1:5-9) These men

“shepherd the congregation of God” with mildness and set a good example by regularly attending meetings. You can show appreciation for these “gifts in men” by being at the meetings, where you can encourage others by your presence and your participation.—Acts 15:30-33; 20:28; Ephesians 4:8, 11, 12.

“You Will Find Refreshment for Your Souls”

When attending Christian meetings, how can you ensure that these occasions are truly refreshing? One way is to apply Jesus’ counsel: “Pay attention to how you listen.” (Luke 8:18) People who keenly desired to learn paid close attention to Jesus. They asked him to explain his illustrations and, as a result, were rewarded with a deeper understanding.—Matthew 13:10-16.

You can imitate such spiritually hungry ones by actively listening to talks at our meetings. (Matthew 5:3, 6) To help keep your mind focused, seek to follow the speaker’s line of reasoning. Mentally ask yourself such questions as these: ‘How can I apply this information in my life? In what way can I use it to help others? How might I illustrate this point?’ Additionally, look up the scriptures used by the speaker to support his key points. The more you pay attention to how you listen, the more refreshing the meetings will become.

After the meeting, discuss the program with others. Focus on the material and on how it can be applied. Upbuilding conversations make the meetings very refreshing.

We unquestionably have good reasons for meeting together. After reviewing the benefits just discussed, why not ask yourself, ‘How am I responding to Jesus’ invitation: “Come to me”?’

How Can I Help My Children Become TRULY EDUCATED?

THE education of a child might be likened to an exciting and challenging journey. It is a journey that you and your children make together. You give them encouragement and lovingly provide guidance, helping them to progress along the path of life. There is so much for them to learn!

To be truly successful and happy in life, children must develop moral and spiritual values, learning to distinguish right from wrong. If they come to know and love Jehovah, their education will be truly rewarding and the instruction they receive will last forever. As a parent, you play a major role in what your children learn and how they value and interpret what they learn.

There are challenges to be met on this journey. Children are impressionable, and from sources outside the family, they can learn many things that are far from wholesome. We live in a world dominated by Satan the Devil. (1 John 5:19) He is interested in the education of your children, though for entirely different reasons. Satan is a skillful and very experienced educator—but a wicked one indeed. Though he pretends to be “an angel of light,” the enlightenment he offers is deceptive and contrary to Jehovah’s Word and will. (2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:14; Jeremiah 8:9) Both the Devil and his demons are masters of deceit, promoting selfishness, dishonesty, and moral degradation.—1 Timothy 4:1.

What can you do to protect your children from being misled? How can you teach them to embrace what is true and worth-

while? An important step is to take a close look at yourself. You need to set a good example. It is also vital that you accept your responsibility to train your children and take the time needed to do so. Before we consider these points, however, let us identify the foundation of a worthwhile education.

The Foundation of a True Education

We can learn from Israel’s King Solomon, one of the wisest men who ever lived. The Bible tells us: “God continued giving Solomon wisdom and understanding in very great measure and a broadness of heart, like the sand that is upon the seashore. And Solomon’s wisdom was vaster than the wisdom of all the Orientals and than all the wisdom of Egypt.” Solomon “could speak three thousand proverbs, and his songs came to be a thousand and five.” He had profound knowledge of botany and animal life. (1 Kings 4:29-34) King Solomon also supervised Israel’s building projects, including the construction of the magnificent temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem.

Solomon’s writings, such as those found in the book of Ecclesiastes, reveal that he had a deep understanding of human nature. He was divinely inspired to point to the foundation of true education. Solomon said: “The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge.” The wise king also stated: “The fear of Jehovah is the start of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Most Holy One is what understanding is.”—Proverbs 1:7; 9:10.

If we fear God, we have reverential regard for him and are careful not to displease him. We recognize that he is the Supreme One

Do you read the Bible to your children?

and that we are subject to him. Those who disregard the one on whom our lives depend may be considered wise by men, but such wisdom is “foolishness with God.” (1 Corinthians 3:19) Your children need an education that is based on “the wisdom that comes down from above.”—James 3:15, 17.

Fear of displeasing Jehovah is closely related to love for him. Jehovah desires that his servants both fear him and love him. Moses said: “O Israel, what is Jehovah your God asking of you but to fear Jehovah your God, so as to walk in all his ways and to love him and to serve Jehovah your God with all your heart and all your soul; to keep the commandments of Jehovah and his statutes that I am commanding you today, for your good?”—Deuteronomy 10:12, 13.

If we instill in our children reverential fear of Jehovah, we will be laying the foundation for an education that will make our offspring truly wise. As they build on that foundation, they will grow in their appreciation for their Creator, the Source of all true knowledge. This will help our children to put what they learn into proper perspective, not drawing wrong conclusions. They will develop the ability to “distinguish both right and wrong.” (Hebrews 5:14) Such a foundation will also help them to remain humble and to avoid doing what is bad.—Proverbs 8:13; 16:6.

Your Children Are Watching You!

How, though, may we help our children to love Jehovah and fear him? The answer to that question is found in the Law that Jehovah gave the people of Israel through the prophet Moses. Israelite parents were told: “You must love Jehovah your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your vital force. And these words that I am com-



manding you today must prove to be on your heart; and you must inculcate them in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up.”—Deuteronomy 6:5-7.

This passage teaches parents important lessons. One is this: *As a parent, you must set a good example.* To teach your children to love Jehovah, you yourself must love God, and his words must be on your heart. Why is this so important? Because you are the primary teacher of your children. What they learn from your example will have a profound effect on them. And nothing exerts more influence on a child’s life than parental example.

Your dreams, ideals, values, and interests manifest themselves not only in what you say but also in what you do. (Romans 2:21, 22) From infancy, children learn by carefully observing their parents. Children perceive what is important to their parents, and



Take time to teach your children about the Creator

these are the things that often become important to young ones. If you truly love Jehovah, your children will discern that. For instance, they will see that Bible reading and study are important to you. They will come to realize that you put Kingdom interests first in life. (Matthew 6:33) Your regular presence at Christian meetings and participation in the Kingdom-preaching work will show them that rendering sacred service to Jehovah is of utmost importance to you.
—Matthew 28:19, 20; Hebrews 10:24, 25.

Shoulder Your Responsibility

Another lesson parents can learn from Deuteronomy 6:5-7 is this: *You have the responsibility to train your children.* Among Jehovah's people of ancient times, parents cared for the education of their children. Among first-century Christians, parents continued to play a vital role in educating their children. (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14, 15) In writing to fellow Christians, the apostle Paul indicated that fathers in particular were to "go on bringing [their children] up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah."—Ephesians 6:4.

Pressured by present-day demands, work, and competing interests, parents may be tempted to leave the education of their children to others, such as schoolteachers and child-care professionals. Yet, no one can take the place of a loving, caring parent. Never underestimate your importance and influence. If you need help, choose it wisely, but never surrender your sacred duty.

Spend Time Training Your Children

Yet another lesson parents learn from Deuteronomy 6:5-7 is this: *Training children takes time and effort.* Israelite parents were to "inculcate" God's truth in their children. The original Hebrew rendered "inculcate" means "to repeat," "to say again and again." This was to be done throughout the day, yes, from dawn to dusk, "in your house" and "on the road." It takes time and effort to teach children and to shape their attitude and behavior so that they will be pleasing to God.

What, then, can you do to help your children become truly educated? A great deal. Teach them to love Jehovah and to fear him. Set a good example. Shoulder your responsibility to teach your children, and take the time needed to train them. You are not perfect, and you will make mistakes along the way. But if you sincerely endeavor to do God's will, your children will very likely appreciate your efforts and benefit from them. "Train up a boy according to the way for him," says Proverbs 22:6. "Even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it." The same principle applies to girls.

Education is a journey that lasts a lifetime. If you and your children love God, it is a journey that you will be able to enjoy throughout eternity. That is because there will always be more to learn about Jehovah and how we can serve his purpose.—Ecclesiastes 3:10, 11.

"YOUR PLANS WILL BE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED"

IN A melody that he composed, the psalmist David prayed: "Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one. Do restore to me the exultation of salvation by you, and may you support me even with a willing spirit." (Psalm 51:10, 12) After his sin with Bathsheba, a repentant David here pleaded with Jehovah God to cleanse his heart and put within him the spirit, or mental inclination, to do what is right.

Does Jehovah actually create in us a new heart, even putting within us a new and willing spirit? Or is a pure heart what we should strive to acquire and safeguard? "Jehovah is the examiner of hearts," but to what extent does he involve himself in what goes on inside us? (Proverbs 17:3; Jeremiah 17:10) How much does he influence our life, motives, and actions?

Using God's name eight times, the first nine verses of Proverbs chapter 16 show us how we can bring our life under God's control so that 'our plans will be firmly established.' (Proverbs 16:3) Verses 10 to 15 focus on the responsibility of a king or a ruler.

"The Arrangings of the Heart" —By Whom?

"To earthling man belong the arrangings of the heart," states Proverbs 16:1a. Clearly, "the arrangings of the heart" is our responsibility. Jehovah neither prepares our heart miraculously nor gives us a willing spirit. We need to put forth the effort to acquire accurate knowledge of his Word, the Bible, reflect

on what we learn, and bring our thoughts into harmony with his.—Proverbs 2:10, 11.

David's request for "a pure heart" and "a new spirit," however, shows that he recognized his sinful tendency and the need for divine help to cleanse his heart. Being imperfect, we may be tempted to engage in "the works of the flesh." (Galatians 5:19-21) To "deaden [our] body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness," we need Jehovah's help. (Colossians 3:5) How vital that we pray for his assistance in order to avoid yielding to temptations and to remove from our heart sinful traits!

Can we help others in "the arrangements" of their heart? "There exists the one speaking thoughtlessly as with the stabs of a sword," states the Bible, "but the tongue of the wise ones is a healing." (Proverbs 12:18) When does our tongue have a healing effect? Only when *"from Jehovah is the answer of the tongue,"* that is, when we speak spiritually correct words of truth.—Proverbs 16:1b.

"The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate," says the Bible. (Jeremiah 17:9) Our figurative heart is prone to self-justification and self-deception. Warning of this danger, King Solomon of ancient Israel says: *"All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but Jehovah is making an estimate of spirits."*—Proverbs 16:2.

Self-love may cause us to justify our errors, camouflage bad personality traits, and be blind to our own badness. Jehovah, though, cannot be deceived. He is making an estimate of spirits. A person's spirit is his or her dominant mental inclination and is connected to the heart. To a large extent, its development depends on the activity of the figurative heart, which involves such things as our thoughts, emotions, and motives. The spirit is what "the examiner of hearts" estimates, and his judgments are free from favoritism or partiality. We are wise to guard our spirit.

"Roll Your Works Upon Jehovah"

Making plans involves the thought process—an activity of our heart. Deeds usually follow plans. Will we succeed in our endeavors? Solomon says: "*Roll your works upon Jehovah himself and your plans will be firmly established.*" (Proverbs 16:3) To roll our works on Jehovah means to place our trust in him, to rely on him, to be committed to him—to roll the burden off our shoulders, as it were, onto his. The psalmist sang: "Roll upon Jehovah your way, and rely upon him, and he himself will act."—Psalm 37:5.

For our plans to be firmly established, however, they must be in harmony with God's Word, and they must stem from good motives. Moreover, we should pray to Jehovah for help and support and conscientious-

ly do our best to follow the Bible's advice. It is particularly important to 'throw our burden upon Jehovah' when we are faced with trials or difficulties, for 'he will sustain us.' Indeed, "never will he allow the righteous one to totter."—Psalm 55:22.

"Everything Jehovah Has Made for His Purpose"

What else will result from our rolling our works upon Jehovah? "*Everything Jehovah has made for his purpose,*" says the wise king. (Proverbs 16:4a) The Creator of the universe is a God of purpose. When we roll our works upon him, our life becomes filled with purposeful and meaningful activity, void of futility or vanity. And Jehovah's purpose for the earth and man upon it is eternal. (Ephesians 3:11) He formed the earth and created it "to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18) Moreover, what he originally purposed for mankind on earth is bound to become a reality. (Genesis 1:28) A life devoted to the true God will be unending and have meaning forever.

Jehovah has made "*even the wicked one for the evil day.*" (Proverbs 16:4b) He did not create the wicked, for "perfect is his activity." (Deuteronomy 32:4) However, he has allowed them to come into existence and continue living until he sees fit to execute his adverse judgment. For example, Jehovah said to Pharaoh of Egypt: "For this cause I have kept you in existence, for the sake of show-

In what sense has Jehovah made "the wicked one for the evil day"?



ing you my power and in order to have my name declared in all the earth." (Exodus 9:16) The Ten Plagues and the destruction of Pharaoh and his forces in the Red Sea were indeed memorable demonstrations of God's matchless power.

Jehovah can also make circumstances work out in such a way that the wicked unknowingly serve his purpose. The psalmist said: "The very rage of man will laud you; the remainder of raging you [Jehovah] will gird upon yourself." (Psalm 76:10) Jehovah may allow his enemies to express their rage toward his servants—but only to the extent necessary to discipline his people and thus train them. What is in excess of this, God takes upon himself.

While Jehovah supports his humble servants, what about the proud and arrogant? "*Everyone that is proud in heart is something detestable to Jehovah,*" says the king of Israel. "*Hand may join to hand, yet one will not be free from punishment.*" (Proverbs 16:5) Those "proud in heart" may band together in mutual support, but they will not escape punishment. We are wise, then, to cultivate the spirit of humility regardless of how knowledgeable we are or how capable we may be or whatever service privileges we may have.

In the Fear of Jehovah

Born in sin, we are prone to err. (Romans 3:23; 5:12) What will help us to avoid making plans that will lead to a bad course? Proverbs 16:6 states: "*By loving-kindness and trueness error is atoned for, and in the fear of Jehovah one turns away from bad.*" While by his loving-kindness and trueness Jehovah atones for our sins, it is the fear of Jehovah that serves as a deterrent to committing sins. How vital it is that along with love for God and appreciation for his loving-kindness, we cultivate fear of displeasing him!

The fear of God enters into our heart when we develop reverence and respect for God's awesome power. Just think of his power reflected in the creation! Being reminded of the manifestation of power in God's creative works helped the patriarch Job to readjust his thinking. (Job 42:1-6) Are we not likewise affected when we read and reflect on the accounts of Jehovah's dealings with his people as recorded in the Bible? The psalmist sang: "Come, you people, and see the activities of God. His dealing with the sons of men is fear-inspiring." (Psalm 66:5) Jehovah's loving-kindness is not to be taken for granted. When the Israelites 'rebelled and made God's holy spirit feel hurt, Jehovah was changed into an enemy of theirs; he himself warred against them.' (Isaiah 63:10) On the other hand, "*when Jehovah takes pleasure in the ways of a man he causes even his enemies themselves to be at peace with him.*" (Proverbs 16:7) What a protection the fear of Jehovah is!

"Better is a little with righteousness than an abundance of products without justice," says the wise king. (Proverbs 16:8) Proverbs 15:16 states: "Better is a little in the fear of Jehovah than an abundant supply and confusion along with it." A reverential awe of God is certainly essential for staying on a righteous course.

"The Heart of Earthling Man May Think Out His Way"

Man was created a free moral agent, able to choose between right and wrong. (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20) Our figurative heart has the ability to consider different options and fix its aim on one or more of them. Indicating that making choices is our responsibility, Solomon says: "*The heart of earthling man may think out his way.*" Once this is done, "*Jehovah himself does the directing of his steps.*" (Proverbs 16:9) Since Jehovah can

guide our steps, we are acting wisely if we seek his help in ‘making our plans firmly established.’

As we have already noted, the heart is treacherous and is capable of carrying out false reasoning. For example, a person may commit a sin, and his heart may resort to self-justification. Instead of abandoning his sinful course, the individual may reason that God is loving, kind, merciful, and forgiving. Such a man has said in his heart: “God has forgotten. He has concealed his face. He will certainly never see it.” (Psalm 10:11) However, it is improper and dangerous to presume upon God’s mercy.

“The Just Indicator and Scales Belong to Jehovah”

Shifting his focus from the heart and the actions of earthling man to those of a king, Solomon says: *“Inspired decision should be upon the lips of a king; in judgment his mouth should not prove unfaithful.”* (Proverbs 16:10) This will certainly be true of the enthroned King Jesus Christ. His rule over the earth will be in accordance with the divine will.

Identifying the source of justice and righteousness, the wise king says: *“The just indicator and scales belong to Jehovah; all the stone weights of the bag are his work.”* (Proverbs 16:11) Just indicators and scales are provided by Jehovah. Such standards are not for a king to come up with according to his preference. When on earth, Jesus said: “I cannot do a single thing of my own initiative; just as I hear, I judge; and the judgment that I render is righteous, because I seek, not my own will, but the will of him that sent me.” We can expect perfect justice from the Son, to whom the Father “has committed all the judging.”—John 5:22, 30.

What else can be expected of a king who represents Jehovah? *“The doing of wickedness is something detestable to kings,”* says the king

of Israel, *“for by righteousness is the throne firmly established.”* (Proverbs 16:12) The Messianic Kingdom is governed by God’s righteous principles. It has no alliance with “the throne causing adversities.”—Psalm 94:20; John 18:36; 1 John 5:19.

Gaining the Goodwill of a King

How should the subjects of a majestic king respond? Solomon says: *“The lips of righteousness are a pleasure to a grand king; and the speaker of upright things he loves. The rage of a king means messengers of death, but the wise man is one that averts it.”* (Proverbs 16:13, 14) Jehovah’s worshippers today take to heart these words and busy themselves in the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) They know that using their lips in this way brings pleasure to the Messianic King, Jesus Christ. Averting the displeasure of a powerful human king and seeking his favor was certainly wise. How much wiser it is to seek the approval of the Messianic King!

“In the light of the king’s face there is life,” Solomon continues, *“and his goodwill is like the cloud of spring rain.”* (Proverbs 16:15) “The light of the king’s face” means his favor, even as ‘the light of Jehovah’s face’ denotes divine favor. (Psalm 44:3; 89:15) Just as rain clouds are an assurance of water that will help to ripen crops, the goodwill of a king is an evidence of good things to come. Life under the reign of the Messianic King will be full of blessings and prosperity, just as the reign of King Solomon was on a small scale.—Psalm 72:1-17.

As we wait for God’s Kingdom to take control of every affair under the sun, may we seek his help in cleansing our heart. May we also place our trust in Jehovah and cultivate godly fear. Then we can be fully confident that ‘our plans will be firmly established.’—Proverbs 16:3.

WHY ALL SUFFERING IS SOON TO END

"The Rock, perfect is his activity."—DEUTERONOMY 32:4.

DO YOU love to imagine life in Paradise? Maybe you see yourself exploring this marvelous planet and learning about its almost endless variety of living things. Or perhaps you ponder the satisfaction you will feel as you work with others to tend to the earth and help transform it into a global park. Or you may contemplate the talents you could develop in art, architecture, music, or other pursuits for which you can find no time in today's hectic life. In any case, you cherish the

1, 2. (a) Why do you cherish the hope of living forever? (b) What prevents many from believing in the God who makes wonderful promises for the future?

**Seek to help those who are troubled
by the suffering in the world**



hope of living what the Bible calls "the real life"—life as Jehovah meant us to live it, with eternity in view.—1 Timothy 6:19.

² It is a pleasure and a precious privilege to share that Bible-based hope with others, is it not? Many, however, turn away from such a hope. They dismiss it as an illusion, an unrealistic dream for gullible people. They may even find it hard to believe in the God who promises everlasting life in Paradise. Why? For some, the obstacle involves what is often called the problem of evil. They feel that if God exists and is almighty and loving, the evil and suffering in the world cannot be explained. No God who tolerates evil could exist, they reason—or if he exists, either he is not almighty or he does not care about us. To some, this kind of reasoning sounds convincing. Satan has surely proved adept at blinding human minds.—2 Corinthians 4:4.

³ As Jehovah's Witnesses, we are in a unique position to help people who are being deceived by Satan and the wisdom of this world. (1 Corinthians 1:20; 3:19)

We see why many do not believe in the Bible's promises. They simply do not know Jehovah. They may not know his name or its significance, and they likely know little or nothing of his qualities or of his record in keeping his promises. We are blessed to have such knowledge. From time

3. What difficult question can we help people to answer, and why are we in a unique position to do so?

to time, it is good for us to review how we can help people who are "in darkness mentally" to find the answer to one of the hardest questions humans ask, "Why does God allow evil and suffering?" (Ephesians 4:18) First we will consider how to approach the answer effectively. Then we will discuss how Jehovah's qualities are evident in the way he has handled the matter of evil.

Finding the Right Approach

⁴ When someone asks why God allows suffering, how do we respond? We may be inclined to launch right into a detailed explanation, starting with what happened in the garden of Eden. In some cases, that may be fine. A word of caution is in order, though. Some groundwork may be needed. (Proverbs 25:11; Colossians 4:6) Let us consider three Scriptural points that we may want to establish briefly before delving into the answer to the question.

⁵ First, if the person is particularly disturbed about the prevalence of evil in the world, it is likely that evil has touched him or his loved ones personally. It may be wise, then, to start by showing genuine empathy. The apostle Paul counseled Christians: "Weep with people who weep." (Romans 12:15) Showing empathy, or "fellow feeling," may touch the person. (1 Peter 3:8) If he understands that we care about him, he is more likely to listen to what we have to say.

⁶ Second, we may commend the sincere person for raising this question. Some people conclude that because they struggle with such questions, they are faithless or disrespectful toward God. They may even have been told as much by a clergyman. However,

4, 5. What may we need to do first when someone raises the question of why God permits suffering? Explain.

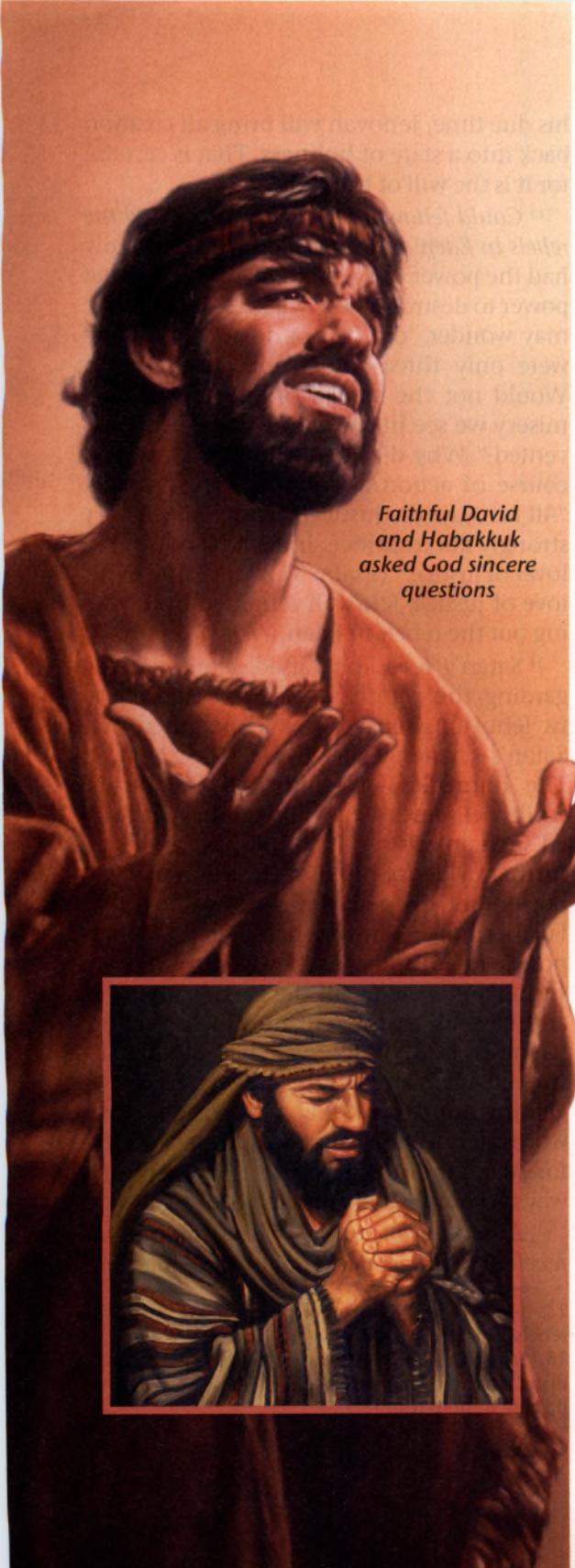
6, 7. Why might we rightly commend a sincere person who raises a troubling spiritual question?

that is not necessarily the case. After all, faithful people in Bible times asked similar questions. For example, the psalmist David asked: "Why, O Jehovah, do you keep standing afar off? Why do you keep yourself hid in times of distress?" (Psalm 10:1) Similarly, the prophet Habakkuk asked: "How long, O Jehovah, must I cry for help, and you do not hear? How long shall I call to you for aid from violence, and you do not save? Why is it that you make me see what is hurtful, and you keep looking upon mere trouble? And why are despoiling and violence in front of me, and why does quarreling occur, and why is strife carried?"—Habakkuk 1:2, 3.

⁷ These were faithful men who had a great deal of respect for God. Were they rebuked for raising such troubling questions? On the contrary, Jehovah saw fit to have their sincere questions recorded in his Word. Today, a person who struggles with the prevalence of evil may actually be hungering spiritually—longing for answers that only the Bible can provide. Remember, Jesus spoke well of those who are spiritually hungry, or who are "conscious of their spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) What a privilege it is to help such ones find the happiness that Jesus promised!

⁸ Third, we may need to help the person to see that God is not responsible for the wickedness so prevalent in the world. Many people are taught that God is ruling this world that we live in, that God long ago determined everything that happens to us, and that he has mysterious, inscrutable reasons for inflicting misery on mankind. These teachings are false. They dishonor God and make him out to be responsible for the wickedness and suffering in the world. So we may have to use God's Word to set such matters straight. (2 Timothy 3:16) Jehovah is not the

8. What confusing teachings have led people to believe that God is responsible for suffering, and how can we help them?



Faithful David
and Habakkuk
asked God sincere
questions

ruler of this corrupt system of things; Satan the Devil is. (1 John 5:19) Jehovah does not predestine his intelligent creatures; he gives each one freedom and opportunities to choose between good and bad, right and wrong. (Deuteronomy 30:19) And Jehovah is *never* the source of wickedness; he hates wickedness and cares for those who suffer unjustly.—Job 34:10; Proverbs 6:16-19; 1 Peter 5:7.

⁹ Once you have laid such groundwork, you may find that your listener is ready to learn why God allows suffering to continue. To help you, “the faithful and discreet slave” has provided a number of tools. (Matthew 24:45-47) For instance, at the “Godly Obedience” District Convention of 2005/06, a tract entitled *All Suffering Soon to End!* was released. If this tract is available in your language, why not familiarize yourself with its contents? Similarly, the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, now available in 157 languages, devotes a chapter to this important question. Make full use of such tools. They clearly explain the

Scriptural background of the issue of universal sovereignty that was raised in Eden and why Jehovah handled that challenge as he did. Keep in mind, too, that as you discuss this subject, you are opening up to your listener the most important field of knowledge there is. It is the knowledge of Jehovah and his wonderful qualities.

Focus on Jehovah's Qualities

¹⁰ As you help people to understand why Jehovah has allowed humans to rule

9. What are some tools that “the faithful and discreet slave” has provided in order to help people understand why Jehovah God permits suffering?
10. What do many find it hard to understand about God’s permission of suffering, and what knowledge may help them?

themselves under Satan's influence, try to draw attention to Jehovah's wonderful qualities. Many people know that God is powerful; they are used to hearing him called God Almighty. However, they may find it hard to grasp why he does not use his great power to end injustice and suffering right away. They probably lack an understanding of Jehovah's other qualities, such as his holiness, justice, wisdom, and love. Jehovah displays these traits in a perfect, balanced way. The Bible thus says: "Perfect is his activity." (Deuteronomy 32:4) How can you bring these qualities to the fore as you answer questions that are often raised on this issue? Let us consider a few examples.

¹¹ Could Jehovah simply have forgiven Adam and Eve? Forgiveness was never an option in this case. As perfect humans, Adam and Eve made a deliberate choice to reject Jehovah's sovereignty and to accept the guidance of Satan instead. Not surprisingly, there was no sign of repentance on the part of the rebels. However, when people ask about forgiveness in the matter, they may actually be wondering why Jehovah did not simply lower his standard and tolerate the existence of sin and rebellion. The answer involves a quality that is essential to Jehovah's very nature—his holiness.—Exodus 28:36; 39:30.

¹² The Bible emphasizes Jehovah's holiness hundreds of times. Sadly, though, few people in this corrupt world understand that quality. Jehovah is clean, pure, and separate from all sinfulness. (Isaiah 6:3; 59:2) When it comes to sin, he has arranged for a means of atoning for it, wiping it away, but he will not tolerate it forever. If Jehovah were willing to tolerate sin eternally, we would have no hope for the future. (Proverbs 14:12) In

11, 12. (a) Why was forgiveness not an option when Adam and Eve sinned? (b) Why will Jehovah not tolerate sin forever?

his due time, Jehovah will bring all creation back into a state of holiness. That is certain, for it is the will of the Holy One.

¹³ Could Jehovah merely have destroyed the rebels in Eden and started over? He certainly had the power to do so; soon he will use that power to destroy all the wicked. 'Why,' some may wonder, 'did he not do so when there were only three sinners in the universe? Would not the spread of sin—and all the misery we see in the world—have been prevented?' Why did Jehovah not choose that course of action? Deuteronomy 32:4 says: "All his ways are justice." Jehovah feels very strongly about justice. In fact, "Jehovah is a lover of justice." (Psalm 37:28) Because of his love of justice, Jehovah refrained from wiping out the rebels in Eden. Why?

¹⁴ Satan's rebellion raised a question regarding the rightness of God's sovereignty. Jehovah's sense of justice required that Satan's challenge be given a just answer. The immediate execution of the rebels, while well-deserved, would not have provided such an answer. It would have provided further evidence of Jehovah's supremacy in power, but his power was not in question. Furthermore, Jehovah had stated his purpose to Adam and Eve. They were to have offspring and were to fill the earth, subdue it, and have all earthly creation in subjection. (Genesis 1:28) If Jehovah had simply destroyed Adam and Eve, his stated purpose regarding humans would have become empty words. Jehovah's justice would never allow for such an outcome, for his purpose is always accomplished.—Isaiah 55:10, 11.

¹⁵ Could anyone in the universe address the rebellion with greater wisdom than Jehovah?

13, 14. Why did Jehovah choose not to destroy the rebels in Eden?

15, 16. When people propose alternative "solutions" to the challenge raised in Eden, how may we be able to help them?

Some people might propose their own “solutions” to the rebellion in Eden. In doing so, however, would they not be suggesting that they could think of better ways to handle the issue? They might not do so out of a wicked motive, but they do not have an understanding of Jehovah and his awe-inspiring wisdom. In writing to Christians in Rome, the apostle Paul delved deeply into God’s wisdom, including the “sacred secret” regarding Jehovah’s purpose to use the Messianic Kingdom to bring about the redemption of faithful mankind and to sanctify His holy name. How did Paul feel about the wisdom of the God who devised this purpose? The apostle concluded his letter with these words: “To God, wise alone, be the glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.”—Romans 11:25; 16:25-27.

¹⁶ Paul understood that Jehovah is “wise alone”—the very pinnacle of wisdom in the universe. What imperfect human could possibly think of a better way to handle *anything*—let alone the most difficult challenge to divine wisdom ever made? We need, then, to help people share the awe that we feel for the God who is “wise in heart.” (Job 9:4) The better we comprehend Jehovah’s wisdom, the more fully we will trust that his way of handling matters is the best.—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Appreciating Jehovah’s Dominant Quality

¹⁷ “God is love.” (1 John 4:8) With those striking words, the Bible identifies Jehovah’s dominant quality, the quality that is the most appealing of them all and the most comforting for those troubled by the prevalence of wickedness. Jehovah has shown love in every aspect of the way he has handled

17. How can a greater understanding of Jehovah’s love help those who are troubled by God’s permission of suffering?

sin’s terrible blight upon his creation. Love moved Jehovah to give hope to the sinful offspring of Adam and Eve, providing them with a means to approach Him and come into an approved relationship with Him. Love moved God to provide a ransom that would open the way for full forgiveness of sins and restoration to perfect, everlasting life. (John 3:16) And love has moved him to be patient with mankind, giving as many as possible the opportunity to reject Satan and choose Jehovah as their Sovereign.—2 Peter 3:9.

¹⁸ When one pastor addressed an audience gathered to mark the anniversary of a devastating terrorist attack, he said: “We don’t know the reason that God allows evil and suffering to continue.” How sad! Are we not blessed to have insight into this subject? (Deuteronomy 29:29) And since Jehovah is wise, just, and loving, we know that he will soon end all suffering. In fact, he has promised to do so. (Revelation 21:3, 4) What, though, of all those who have died throughout the centuries? Has Jehovah’s way of handling the challenge in Eden left them without hope? No. Love has moved him to provide for them as well, by means of the resurrection. That will be the subject of the following article.

18. We are blessed to have what insight, and what will we consider in the following article?

How Would You Answer?

- What can we say to a person who asks why God allows suffering?
- How are Jehovah’s holiness and his justice manifest in the way he handled the rebels in Eden?
- Why should we help people to come to a greater understanding of Jehovah’s love?

THE RESURRECTION —IS IT REAL TO YOU?

"There is going to be a resurrection."
—ACTS 24:15.

IN THIS world nothing is certain but death and taxes." That comment, penned in 1789 by American statesman Benjamin Franklin, has struck some as clever. However, many dishonest people cheat on their taxes. Death seems far more certain. On our own, none of us can avoid it in the long run. It pursues us all. With an insatiable hunger, Sheol—the common grave of mankind—devours people dear to us. (Proverbs 27:20) But consider a comforting thought.

² Jehovah's Word gives the sure hope of the resurrection, of being raised to life once again. This is no mere dream, and no force in the universe can prevent Jehovah from making this hope a reality. For some, though, death is less certain than many today realize. Why? Because an unnumbered "great crowd" will survive "the great tribulation," soon to come. (Revelation 7:9, 10, 14) They will live on afterward, with eternity in view. Thus, death is no certainty for them. Moreover, "death is to be brought to nothing." —1 Corinthians 15:26.

³ We need to feel as certain of the resurrection as did the apostle Paul, who said: "There

1. Why does death seem certain?
- 2, 3. (a) Why is death less certain than many realize? (b) What will we consider in this article?



is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) Let us consider three questions regarding the resurrection. First, what makes this hope so certain? Second, how can you personally take comfort in the resurrection hope? Third, how may this hope affect the way you live right now?

The Resurrection—A Certainty

⁴ There are a number of factors that make the resurrection a certainty. Above all, *it is central to Jehovah's purpose*. Remember, Satan led mankind into sin, with its inevitable consequence, death. Thus, Jesus said of Satan: "That one was a manslayer when he began." (John 8:44) But Jehovah promised that his "woman," or wifelike organization in

4. How is the resurrection central to Jehovah's purpose?

heaven, would produce a “seed” who would bruise that “original serpent” in the head, crushing Satan out of existence. (Genesis 3: 1-6, 15; Revelation 12:9, 10; 20:10) As Jehovah gradually revealed his purpose involving that Messianic Seed, it became apparent that the Seed would do more than destroy Satan. God’s Word says: “For this purpose the Son of God was made manifest, namely, to break up the works of the Devil.” (1 John 3:8) Death caused by the sin we inherited from Adam is chief among Satan’s works that Jehovah purposes to see undone, or broken up, through Jesus Christ. In this regard, Jesus’ ransom sacrifice and the resurrection are vitally important.—Acts 2:22-24; Romans 6:23.

⁵ Jehovah is determined to glorify his sacred name. Satan has maligned God’s name and has promoted lies. He lyingly said that Adam and Eve ‘positively would not die’ if they partook of the fruit forbidden by God. (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:4) Ever since, Satan has fostered similar lies, such as the false teaching that a soul survives the death of the body. However, by means of the resurrection, Jehovah will expose all such lies for what they are. He will establish for all time that he alone is the Preserver and Restorer of life.

⁶ Jehovah yearns to carry out the resurrection. The Bible makes clear Jehovah’s feelings in this regard. For instance, consider these inspired words of the faithful man Job: “If an able-bodied man dies can he live again? All the days of my compulsory service I shall wait, until my relief comes. You will call, and I myself shall answer you. For the work of your hands you will have a yearning.” (Job 14:14, 15) What do those words mean?

5. Why will the resurrection glorify Jehovah’s name?

6, 7. How does Jehovah feel about resurrecting people, and how do we know of his feelings?

⁷ Job knew that after he died, a time of waiting in the sleep of death lay ahead of him. He viewed that time as “compulsory service,” an enforced period of waiting for release. To him, that release was a certainty. Job realized that his relief would come. Why? Because he knew of Jehovah’s feelings. Jehovah would “have a yearning” to see his faithful servant again. Yes, God longs to bring back to life all righteous individuals. Jehovah will also give others an opportunity to live forever in Paradise on earth. (Luke 23:43; John 5:28, 29) Since it is God’s will to carry out that purpose, who can stop him?

⁸ Our hope for the future is guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus. When Paul gave a speech in Athens, he declared: “[God] has set a day in which he purposes to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and he has furnished a guarantee to all men in that he has resurrected him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31) Some in Paul’s audience mocked when they heard of a resurrection. A few, however, became believers. Perhaps the thought that this hope is guaranteed caught their attention. When Jehovah resurrected Jesus, He performed the greatest of miracles. He brought his Son forth from death to life as a mighty spirit. (1 Peter 3:18) The resurrected Jesus was even greater than he had been during his prehuman existence. Immortal and second only to Jehovah in power, Jesus is now in a position to take on wonderful assignments from his Father. Jesus is the means by which Jehovah performs all other resurrections—to life in heaven or to life on earth. Jesus himself said: “I am the resurrection and the life.” (John 5:25; 11:25) By resurrecting his Son, Jehovah guaranteed such hopes for all faithful ones.

8. How has Jehovah “furnished a guarantee” of our hope for the future?

⁹ The resurrection has been demonstrated before eyewitnesses and recorded in God's Word. The Bible record contains detailed descriptions of eight resurrections of people brought back to life as humans on earth. These miracles were performed not in secret but openly, often in front of eyewitnesses. Jesus resurrected Lazarus, who had been dead for four days, in front of a crowd of mourners—no doubt including the man's family, friends, and neighbors. This evidence that Jesus was sent by God was so forceful that Jesus' religious enemies never denied that it had happened. Instead, they plotted to kill not only Jesus but also Lazarus! (John 11:17-44, 53; 12:9-11) Yes, we can have confidence that the resurrection is a certainty. God has given us a record of past resurrections in order to comfort us and to build up our faith.

Finding Comfort in the Resurrection Hope

¹⁰ Do you long for comfort in the face of death? One sure source of comfort

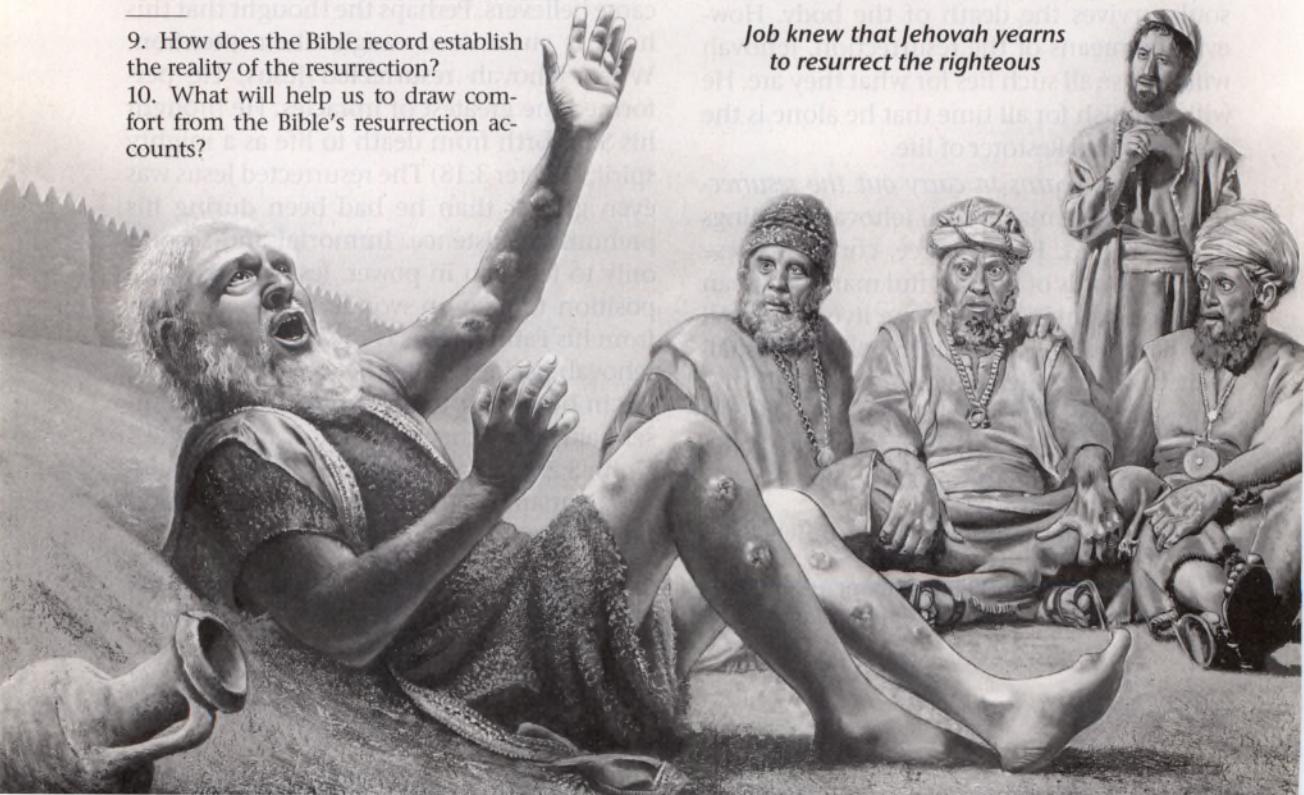
9. How does the Bible record establish the reality of the resurrection?
10. What will help us to draw comfort from the Bible's resurrection accounts?

can be found in the Bible's resurrection accounts. Reading such accounts, meditating on them, and visualizing the events can make the resurrection hope more real to you. (Romans 15:4) These are not just stories. They actually happened to real people like us, living at a real time and in a real place. Let us focus briefly on one example—the first resurrection in the Bible record.

¹¹ Picture the scene. For some weeks, the prophet Elijah has been a guest of the widow of Zarephath, living in a chamber on her roof. It is a dark era. The region is stricken by drought and famine. Many are dying. Jehovah has already used Elijah to perform a prolonged miracle to reward the faith of this humble widow. She and her young son were on the brink of starvation, down to their last meal, when God empowered Elijah to perform a miracle so that her supply of flour

11, 12. (a) What tragedy befell the widow of Zarephath, and how did she respond at first? (b) Describe what Jehovah empowered his prophet Elijah to do for the widow.

*Job knew that Jehovah yearns
to resurrect the righteous*





and oil was miraculously sustained. Now, though, tragedy befalls her. Illness suddenly strikes the child, and soon he stops breathing. How devastated the widow is! It is bad enough to live without the strength and support of a husband, but now she has lost her only child. In her grief, she even blames Elijah and his God, Jehovah! What will the prophet do?

¹² Elijah does not reprove the widow for her false accusation. Instead, he says: "Give me your son." After carrying the dead child to the roof chamber, Elijah prays repeatedly for the child's life to be returned. Finally, Jehovah acts! Imagine the joy spreading over Elijah's face as he sees the boy's chest heave with the intake of air. The child's eyelids open, and his eyes glisten with life. Elijah brings the boy down to his mother and says: "See, your son is alive." Her joy is beyond description. She says: "Now, indeed, I do know that you are a man of God and that Jehovah's word in your mouth is true." (1 Kings 17:8-24) Her faith in Jehovah and in his representative is stronger than ever.

¹³ Meditating on such an account surely brings you great comfort. How clear it is that Jehovah is able to defeat our enemy death! Just imagine the day when that widow's joy is multiplied thousands of times over in the general resurrection of the dead! The joy in heaven will also be great as Jehovah delights in directing his Son to carry out resurrections on a global scale. (John 5:28, 29) Has death taken someone dear to you? How wonderful it is to know that Jehovah can and will restore the dead to life!

Your Hope and Your Life Now

¹⁴ How can the resurrection hope affect the way you live right now? You can draw strength from this hope when facing hardships, challenges, persecution, or danger. Satan wants you to be so terrified of death that you would willingly barter your integrity for some hollow promise of safety. Remember that Satan said to Jehovah: "Everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul." (Job 2:4) In making such a statement, Satan maligned all of us, including you. Is it true that you will quit serving God if you face danger? By contemplating the hope of the resurrection, you can make firm your determination to keep on doing the will of your heavenly Father.

13. Why does the account about Elijah resurrecting a widow's son bring comfort to us today?

14. How can the resurrection hope affect your life?

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

The Source of Evil Exposed!

From Scroll to Codex—How the Bible Became a Book

Elderly Ones—A Blessing to the Young

¹⁵ Jesus said: “Do not become fearful of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather be in fear of him that can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.” (Matthew 10:28) We need not be in dread of Satan or his human agents. True, some may have the power to cause harm, even death. However, the worst they can do is still only temporary. Jehovah can and will undo any damage done to his faithful servants, even resurrecting them. It is Jehovah alone who is worthy of our fear, our profound awe and respect. He alone has the power to take away life and all prospects for future life, destroying both body and soul in Gehenna. Happily, Jehovah does not want that to happen to you. (2 Peter 3:9) Because of the resurrection hope, we as God’s servants can always be sure that we are safe. Everlasting life lies ahead of us as long as we are faithful, and there is nothing that Satan or his minions can do about that.—Psalm 118:6; Hebrews 13:6.

¹⁶ If the resurrection hope is real to us, it can shape our attitude about life. We realize that ‘whether we live or we die, we belong to Jehovah.’ (Romans 14:7, 8) In setting priorities, we therefore apply Paul’s counsel:

15. How might Jesus’ words recorded at Matthew 10:28 bring us comfort in the face of danger?
16. How does our viewpoint affect the priorities that we set?

How Would You Answer?

- How should we feel about the resurrection?
- What factors make the resurrection hope a certainty?
- How may you draw comfort from the resurrection hope?
- What effect might the resurrection hope have on the way you live?

“Quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:2) Many people are in a frantic rush to gratify every desire, every ambition, every impulse. Because they view life as being short, they seem almost desperate in their pursuit of pleasure, and if they have a form of worship, it certainly does not harmonize with the “perfect will of God.”

¹⁷ True, life is short. “It must quickly pass by, and away we fly,” perhaps in some 70 or 80 years. (Psalm 90:10) Humans come and go like green grass, like a passing shadow, like an exhalation. (Psalm 103:15; 144:3, 4) But God did not purpose that we spend a few decades growing up and gaining some wisdom and experience, only to spend the next few decades breaking down and descending into illness and death. Jehovah created humans with the desire to live forever. “Time indefinite he has put in their heart,” the Bible tells us. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) Is God cruel, giving us such a desire and then making it impossible to fulfill it? No, indeed, for “God is love.” (1 John 4:8) He will use the resurrection to make everlasting life possible for people who have died.

¹⁸ Thanks to the resurrection hope, we can have a secure future. We need not be frantic, driven to reach our full potential right now. We need not make use of this dying world “to the full.” (1 Corinthians 7:29-31; 1 John 2:17) Unlike those with no real hope, we have the wonderful gift of knowing that if we remain faithful to Jehovah God, we will have all eternity to laud him and enjoy life. By all means, then, let us daily praise Jehovah, who makes the resurrection hope a certainty!

17, 18. (a) How does Jehovah’s Word acknowledge the shortness of human life, but what does God want for us? (b) Why are we moved to praise Jehovah daily?

VICTORY AT THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

ON JANUARY 11, 2007, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, handed down a unanimous decision in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia in their case against the Russian Federation. The decision upheld freedom of religion for Jehovah's Witnesses and their right to a fair hearing. Let us consider what led up to the case.

A congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in the city of Chelyabinsk, Russia, consists mostly of deaf individuals. Their meeting place was a facility that they rented from a vocational training college. On Sunday, April 16, 2000, their meeting was interrupted by the chairwoman, or Commissioner, of the regional Human Rights Commission as well as two senior police officers and a plainclothesman. Because of bias, particularly on the part of the Commissioner, the assembly was halted on the trumped-up charges of conducting meetings without a lawful basis. As of May 1, 2000, the lease for the auditorium was terminated.

Jehovah's Witnesses filed a complaint with the Chelyabinsk prosecutor, but it brought no results. The Russian Constitution and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms guarantee freedom of religion and freedom of association. So a civil complaint was filed with a district court followed by an appeal to a regional court. Earlier, on July 30, 1999, the supreme court ruled in another case that "according to the Russian Law on freedom of conscience and religious associations, the phrase 'without obstruction' means that no permission from, or clearing of the matter with, the secular authorities is required for performing religious ceremonies on premises provided [for that purpose]." (Brackets theirs.) Despite this precedent, the complaints to district and regional courts were dismissed.

On December 17, 2001, the case was brought before the European Court of Human Rights. A hearing took place on September 9, 2004. The following are excerpts from the final judgment rendered by the Court:

"The Court finds that there has been interference with the applicants' right to freedom of religion in that, on 16 April 2000, the State officials caused their religious assembly to be terminated ahead of time."

"The legal basis for breaking up a religious event conducted on the premises lawfully rented for that purpose was conspicuously lacking."

"[The Court] notes the consistent case-law of the Russian Supreme Court to the effect that religious assemblies do not require any prior authorisation from, or notification to, the authorities."

"There has therefore been a violation of Article 9 [freedom of religion] of the Convention on account of the disruption of the applicants' religious meeting on 16 April 2000 by the Commissioner and her aides."

"The Court finds that the domestic courts failed in their duty . . . to demonstrate that the parties had been heard in a fair and equitable manner. There has . . . been a violation of Article 6 [right to a fair hearing] of the Convention."

Jehovah's Witnesses are grateful to God for granting them a victory at the European Court of Human Rights. (Psalm 98:1) How widespread an effect will the decision of the Court have? Joseph K. Griboski, president of the Institute on Religion and Public Policy, states: "This is yet another significantly important decision affecting freedom of religion across Europe, as the decision will impact religious rights in all states subject to the European Court of Human Rights."

"Why, Lord, Did You Remain Silent?"

Oświęcim Museum

THESE were the words of Pope Benedict XVI, who visited the former concentration camp at Auschwitz, Poland, on May 28, 2006. At the site where the Nazis killed hundreds of thousands of Jews and others, he added: "How many questions arise in this place! Constantly the question comes up: Where was God in those days? Why was he silent? How could he permit this endless slaughter, this triumph of evil? . . . We must continue to cry out humbly yet insistently to God: Rouse yourself! Do not forget mankind, your creature!"

The pope's speech gave rise to animated reactions. Some detected revealing omissions, such as his failure to mention the anti-Semitism that was associated with atrocities at Auschwitz. Others read into his words an attempt to play down the request of Pope John Paul II for forgiveness of sins that the church committed. A Catholic journalist, Filippo Gentiloni, observed: "It was, however, logical that many commentators when confronted with

the difficult question regarding where God was—a question without an answer—instead requested an answer to the easier question: Where was Pius XII?" The commentators were referring to Pope Pius XII's silence during the Holocaust.

The Holocaust and all the other acts of genocide committed throughout human history prove that "man has dominated man to his injury." (Ecclesiastes 8:9) Furthermore, man's Creator has not been silent in the face of so much horror. Through the pages of the Bible, he has revealed his reasons for allowing wickedness. God has also assured us that he has not forgotten mankind. In fact, the time period during which God has permitted man to rule himself will soon come to an end. (Jeremiah 10:23) Would you like to know more about God's purpose for us? Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to help you to see the Bible's answer to the questions that perplexed Pope Benedict XVI.