

AUGUST 1, 2006

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Dignity
for All **soon!**

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 Human Dignity—A Right Often Violated
- 4 Human Dignity—Possible for All
- 8 You Cannot Save It, so Use It Well
- 11 Our Family United at Last!
- 16 The Fear of God—"A Discipline Toward Wisdom"
- 21 Be Wise—Fear God!
- 26 Fear Jehovah—Be Happy!
- 31 Questions From Readers
- 32 The Hair Shirt and Spirituality

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

SEPTEMBER 4-10:

Be Wise—Fear God!

Page 21. Songs to be used: 41, 6.

SEPTEMBER 11-17:

Fear Jehovah—Be Happy!

Page 26. Songs to be used: 77, 107.

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Human Dignity

A RIGHT OFTEN VIOLATED



"Every detail of camp life was another step down the stairway to humiliation and indignity."

—MAGDALENA KUSSEROW REUTER,
NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMP SURVIVOR.

AS HORRIBLE as they were, the atrocities of the Nazi concentration camps during World War II were neither the beginning nor the end of the assault on human dignity. Whether we examine the past or the present, the verdict is clear: "The stairway to humiliation and indignity" is long and well traveled.

Violations of human dignity, however, are not limited to the barbaric acts that have stained man's history. They often make their ugly appearance in more subtle ways. Think of the child who is taunted because of some physical characteristic. Or the immigrant who is ridiculed for certain "foreign" customs. Or the individual who suffers discrimination on account of his skin color or nationality. The perpetrators may view the matter as a joke, but the pain and humiliation felt by those being thus vilified are no laughing matter.—Proverbs 26:18, 19.

What Is Human Dignity?

One dictionary defines dignity as 'the quality or state of being worthy, honored, or esteemed.' Human dignity, therefore, involves both the way we view ourselves and the way others deal with us. While there are a variety of factors that can affect our feelings about

ourselves, the way others view or treat us plays a large role in our sense of personal value in day-to-day life.

Every society has its share of the poor, the defenseless, and the vulnerable. However, being in such circumstances does not necessarily diminish a person's sense of dignity. It is the attitude and reaction of others that can constitute an affront to one's dignity. The sad reality is that people in unfortunate situations are usually the ones whose rights

to human dignity are slighted or trampled on. How often we hear words like "worthless," "undeserving," and "undignified" in cases of abusive treatment of the aged, the poor, or the mentally or physically disabled!

Why do people humiliate one another? Will the basic right to human dignity ever be realized? The following article will provide the satisfying answer from God's Word, the Bible.

Human Dignity

POSSIBLE FOR ALL

"We must build a new world—a far better world—one in which the eternal dignity of man is respected."

—U.S. PRESIDENT HARRY TRUMAN,
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A., APRIL 25, 1945.

LIKE many in the years following World War II, President Truman believed that man could learn from his past and realize "a new world" with dignity for all. Sad to say, modern history presents a different reality. "The eternal dignity of man" continues to be trampled on because the root of the problem lies, not with man, but with man's greatest enemy.

The Root of the Problem

The Bible identifies this enemy as Satan the Devil, a wicked spirit creature

who from the beginning of man's history has challenged God's right to rule. From Satan's contact with Eve in the garden of Eden, his goal has been to draw humans away from serving their Creator. (Genesis 3:1-5) Think of the disastrous effects on Adam and Eve when they gave in to the Devil's urgings! The immediate consequence of their disobeying God's law regarding the forbidden fruit was that the two of them "went into hiding from the face of Jehovah God." Why? Adam confessed: "I was afraid because I was naked and so I hid myself." (Genesis 3:8-10)

Adam's relationship with his heavenly Father and his view of himself had changed. He was ashamed and no longer felt comfortable in Jehovah's presence.

Why would the Devil want to see Adam's self-respect diminish? Because man is made in God's image, and Satan delights to see him act in a way that mars his reflection of God's glory. (Genesis 1:27; Romans 3:23) This helps to explain why acts of humiliation pervade man's history. As "the god of this system of things," Satan has promoted this spirit "during the time that man has dominated man to his injury." (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ecclesiastes 8:9; 1 John 5:19) Does this mean that proper human dignity has been lost forever?

Jehovah Dignifies His Creation

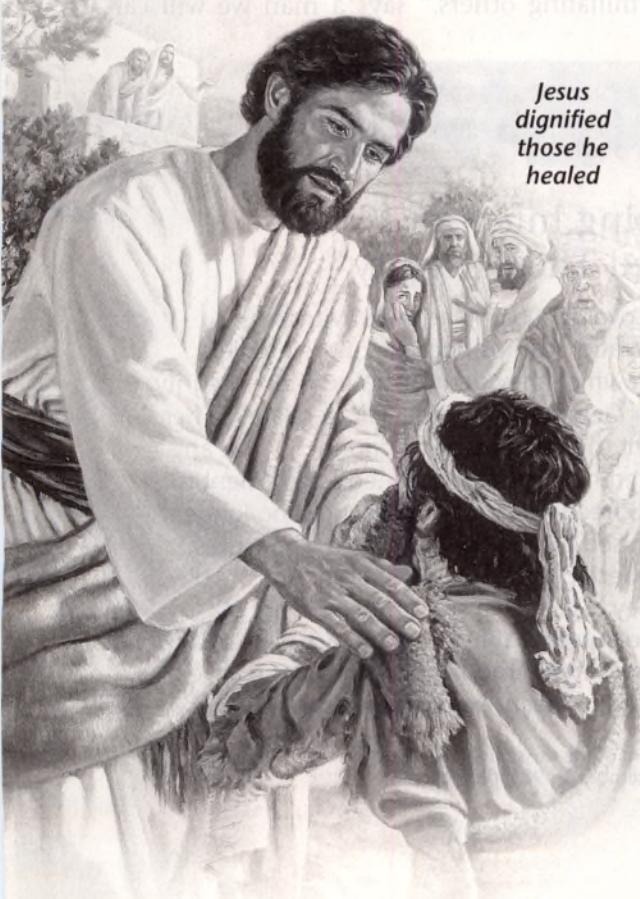
Think again of the conditions in the garden of Eden before Adam and Eve sinned. They had plentiful food, rewarding work, and the prospect of healthy, unending life for themselves and their offspring. (Genesis 1:28) Every aspect of their existence underscored God's loving, dignified purpose for mankind.

Did Jehovah's view of human dignity change when Adam and Eve fell from perfection? No. He showed consideration for the shame they now felt at being naked. Lovingly, God provided "long garments of skin" to replace the loin coverings of fig leaves that they had sewn together for themselves. (Genesis 3:7, 21) Rather than leave them in their shame, God treated them with dignity.

Later, when dealing with the nation of Israel, Jehovah showed compassion for orphans, widows, and alien residents—members of society who are most often subject to abuse. (Psalm 72:13) For example, when harvesting their grain crops, olive trees, and vineyards, the Israelites were told not to return for the gleanings. Rather, God commanded that those gleanings "should stay for the alien resident, for the fatherless boy and for the widow." (Deuteronomy 24:19-21) When applied, these laws removed the need for begging and provided dignified work for even the poorest individuals.

Jesus Dignified Others

While on earth, God's Son, Jesus Christ, demonstrated interest in the dignity of others. For example, when in Galilee, he was approached by a man in an advanced stage of leprosy. According to the Mosaic Law, to avoid infecting others, the leper was required to call out: "Unclean, unclean!" (Leviticus 13:45) However, this man neglected to shout a warning as he approached Jesus. Instead, he fell upon his face and begged



Jesus: "Lord, if you just want to, you can make me clean." (Luke 5:12) How did Jesus respond? Jesus did not chastise the man for breaking the Law, nor did He ignore or avoid the man. Rather, he dignified the leper by touching him and saying: "I want to. Be made clean."—Luke 5:13.

On other occasions, Jesus demonstrated his ability to heal without any physical contact—at times from a distance. In this case, however, he chose to touch the man. (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 10:51, 52; Luke 7:1-10) Because the man was "full of leprosy," it had no doubt been years since he had had any physical contact with another human. How comforting it must have been once again to feel someone's touch! Having his leprosy cured was surely all that the man had hoped for. Yet, Jesus' *manner* of curing him no

doubt helped restore something more—the man's dignity. Is it realistic to believe that such concern for the dignity of others could exist in today's society? If so, how would it be manifested?

The Rule That Dignifies

Jesus stated what many consider to be the most famous instruction ever given regarding human relations: "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them." (Matthew 7:12) This Golden Rule, as it is often called, moves one to respect one's fellowman, hoping for the same in return.

As history shows, applying this rule does not come naturally—quite often just the opposite is true. "I actually used to enjoy humiliating others," says a man we will call

Keeping Integrity Preserved Their Dignity

During World War II, over 2,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses were sent to Nazi concentration camps because of their beliefs. Noting the remarkable way in which they demonstrated their integrity, former Ravensbrück prisoner Gemma La Guardia Gluck relates in her book *My Story*: "At one point the Gestapo had announced that any Bible Student who renounced his beliefs and signed a statement to that effect would be given his freedom and be persecuted no longer." Concerning those who refused to sign the statement, she writes: "They preferred to go on suffering and patiently waiting for the day of liberation." Why did they take such a stand? Now in her 80's, Magdalena, mentioned at the outset of the preceding article, explains: "Staying faithful to Jehovah was more important than staying alive at any cost. Keeping our dignity meant keeping our integrity."*

* For a detailed account of the Kusserow family, see *The Watchtower* of September 1, 1985, pages 10-15.

Harold. "With just a few words, I could leave them flustered, embarrassed, and sometimes in tears." But something happened that caused Harold to change the way he treated others. "Several of Jehovah's Witnesses started to call on me. Looking back, I'm ashamed to think of some of the things I said and the way I sometimes treated them. But they never gave up, and little by little, the Bible's truths touched my heart and moved me to change." Today, Harold serves as an elder in the Christian congregation.

Harold is living proof that "the word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and their marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12) God's Word has the power to touch a person's heart and change his thinking and behavior. This is the key to dignifying others—a heartfelt desire to help rather than to hurt, to honor rather than to humiliate.—Acts 20:35; Romans 12:10.

Proper Dignity Restored

It is this same desire that compels Jehovah's Witnesses to speak with others about the Bible's wonderful hope. (Acts 5:42) There is no finer way to show respect for and to dignify one's fellowman than by sharing with him "good news of something better." (Isaiah 52:7) "Something better" includes putting on "the new personality," which will deaden the "hurtful desire" to humiliate others. (Colossians 3:5-10) It also includes Jehovah's purpose soon to remove the conditions and attitudes that rob man of his dignity, along with the instigator, Satan the Devil. (Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:9, 10; Revelation 20:1, 2, 10) Only then, when the earth is "filled with the knowledge of Jehovah," will dignity for all finally be realized.—Isaiah 11:9.

We invite you to learn about this wonderful hope. By associating with Jehovah's Witnesses, you will find out for yourself that applying Bible principles dignifies others. And you will be able to learn how God's Kingdom will soon bring about 'a new and far better world,' a world in which "the eternal dignity of man" will be a reality, never to be trampled on again.

Jehovah's Witnesses dignify others by sharing with them "good news of something better"



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You Cannot Save It

So Use It Well



TIME is money. So goes a well-worn slogan. In reality, time is very different from money or other material things. You cannot set aside time for future use as you can money, food, fuel, or a number of other things. Any attempt to save time by not using it is futile. What happens if you sleep eight hours and try to save the rest of the day by doing nothing? At the end of the day, the unused hours are gone forever.

Time might be compared to a large, swift river. It is ever flowing forward. You cannot stop it, nor can you use every drop that flows by. Centuries ago, people began building waterwheels on riverbanks. With them, they harnessed energy from the flowing water to operate their grindstones, sawmills, pumps, and hammers. Similarly, you can harness time, not to save it, but to use it to accomplish good work. To do so, however, you must contend with two principal time stealers—procrastination and its close relative, clutter. Let us first consider the matter of procrastination.

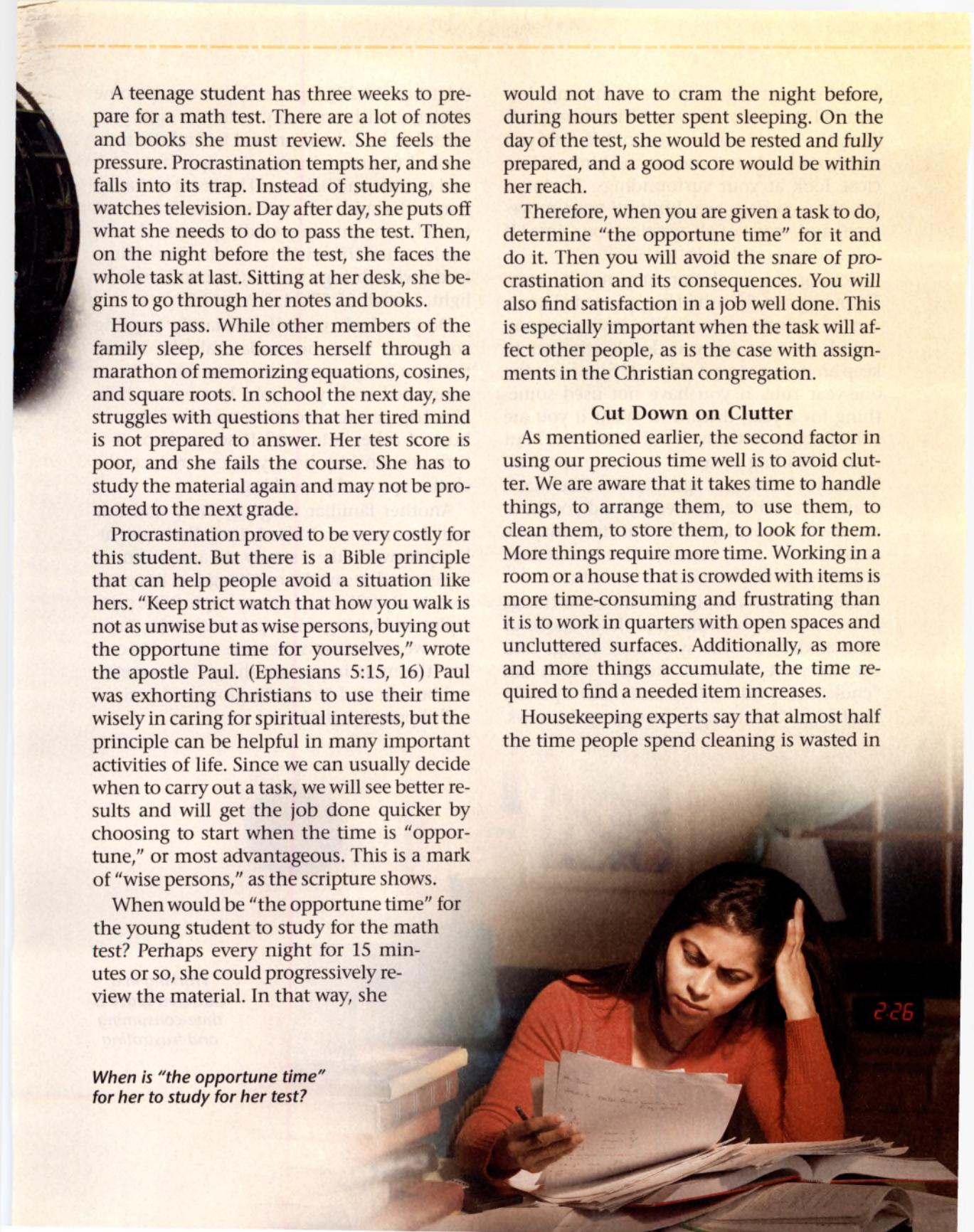
Avoid Procrastination

A familiar maxim says, Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today. Some peo-

*Time, like a swift stream,
can be harnessed for good work*

ple, though, like to recast it and say, Never put off till tomorrow what you can put off till next week. When confronted with a demanding task, they find an easy way out in procrastination. According to one dictionary, “procrastinate” means “to put off intentionally and habitually; to put off intentionally the doing of something that should be done.” For the procrastinator, putting things off has become a habit. As stress and pressure mount, he finds relief by pushing the task into the background and relishes his newly found “free time”—until the pressure builds up again.

At times, our physical and emotional state may require that we postpone some or even all of our work. Then, too, everyone needs an occasional break from the day-to-day routine. Even the Son of God was no exception. Jesus stayed very busy in his ministry, but he also allowed free time for himself and for his disciples. (Mark 6:31, 32) This type of respite is beneficial. Procrastination, however, is a different matter; usually it is harmful. Consider an example.



A teenage student has three weeks to prepare for a math test. There are a lot of notes and books she must review. She feels the pressure. Procrastination tempts her, and she falls into its trap. Instead of studying, she watches television. Day after day, she puts off what she needs to do to pass the test. Then, on the night before the test, she faces the whole task at last. Sitting at her desk, she begins to go through her notes and books.

Hours pass. While other members of the family sleep, she forces herself through a marathon of memorizing equations, cosines, and square roots. In school the next day, she struggles with questions that her tired mind is not prepared to answer. Her test score is poor, and she fails the course. She has to study the material again and may not be promoted to the next grade.

Procrastination proved to be very costly for this student. But there is a Bible principle that can help people avoid a situation like hers. "Keep strict watch that how you walk is not as unwise but as wise persons, buying out the opportune time for yourselves," wrote the apostle Paul. (Ephesians 5:15, 16) Paul was exhorting Christians to use their time wisely in caring for spiritual interests, but the principle can be helpful in many important activities of life. Since we can usually decide when to carry out a task, we will see better results and will get the job done quicker by choosing to start when the time is "opportune," or most advantageous. This is a mark of "wise persons," as the scripture shows.

When would be "the opportune time" for the young student to study for the math test? Perhaps every night for 15 minutes or so, she could progressively review the material. In that way, she

would not have to cram the night before, during hours better spent sleeping. On the day of the test, she would be rested and fully prepared, and a good score would be within her reach.

Therefore, when you are given a task to do, determine "the opportune time" for it and do it. Then you will avoid the snare of procrastination and its consequences. You will also find satisfaction in a job well done. This is especially important when the task will affect other people, as is the case with assignments in the Christian congregation.

Cut Down on Clutter

As mentioned earlier, the second factor in using our precious time well is to avoid clutter. We are aware that it takes time to handle things, to arrange them, to use them, to clean them, to store them, to look for them. More things require more time. Working in a room or a house that is crowded with items is more time-consuming and frustrating than it is to work in quarters with open spaces and uncluttered surfaces. Additionally, as more and more things accumulate, the time required to find a needed item increases.

Housekeeping experts say that almost half the time people spend cleaning is wasted in

When is "the opportune time" for her to study for her test?

"handling, getting around, and moving clutter and litter out of the way." The situation is likely the same in other areas of life. So if you wish to make better use of your time, take a close look at your surroundings. Is clutter taking up your space, limiting your movement and, worst of all, wasting your time? If so, cut down on the clutter.

Getting rid of clutter may not be easy. Throwing out cherished but unneeded items can be painful—almost like losing a good friend. So how can you decide whether to keep an item or to get rid of it? Some use the one-year rule. If you have not used something for a year, discard it. What if you are still reluctant to throw it out after a year? Put it in a holding area for six more months. When you look at it again and realize that a year and a half has passed by and you have not used it, parting with that item may be easier. In any case, the objective is to reduce clutter—to make better use of your time.

Clutter, of course, is not limited to things in one's home or workplace. Jesus spoke of "the anxiety of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches," which can "choke the word" of God and make a person "unfruitful" with respect to the good news.

(Matthew 13:22) A person's life can become cluttered with so many activities and pursuits that he is hard-pressed to find the time needed to maintain the all-important spiritual routine and balance. The result is that he may suffer spiritually and eventually lose out entirely on entering God's promised new world, when there will be an eternity of time to do what brings true satisfaction and delight.—Isaiah 65:17-24; 2 Peter 3:13.

Do you find yourself constantly juggling your time to accommodate all the things that you feel you must do—whether they are connected with your job, home, car, hobbies, trips, exercise routine, social events, or a host of other interests? If so, perhaps it is time to consider how you can reduce the clutter, spiritually speaking.

Another familiar adage is, Time and tide wait for no man. Indeed, time flows relentlessly forward like a steady stream. It cannot be reversed or saved; once it is gone, it is gone forever. By following some simple Bible principles and taking a few practical steps, however, we can harness the time we need to care for "the more important things" to our eternal benefit and "to God's glory and praise." —Philippians 1:10, 11.



Working in a cluttered space is time-consuming and frustrating



OUR FAMILY UNITED AT LAST!

AS TOLD BY
SUMIKO HIRANO

I had found the best way of life, and I wanted my husband to share it with me. Forty-two years would pass before that happened.

MY HUSBAND and I were married in 1951, when I was 21 years old. Within four years, we had two sons, and my life seemed blessed in every way.

One day in 1957, my older sister told me that a missionary of Jehovah's Witnesses had been visiting her. Although a Buddhist, my sister began studying the Bible with the missionary and encouraged me to study the Bible too. I agreed. I was attending a Protestant church, and I would be able to point out the errors of Jehovah's Witnesses—or so I thought.

I soon found out how little I knew about the Bible. I had to ask the missionary,

"Who is Jehovah?" I had never heard that name used in my church. The missionary, Daphne Cooke (later Pettitt), directed me to Isaiah 42:8, which plainly states that Jehovah is the name of Almighty God. Daphne answered all my questions by using the Bible.

I asked my minister those same questions. He told me: "Asking questions is a sin. Just believe what you are told." Although I did not feel that asking questions was wrong, for six months I went to church every Sunday in the morning and attended the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses in the afternoon.

The Effect on My Marriage

What I was learning from the Bible thrilled me, and I shared it with my husband, Kazuhiko. After every study and meeting, I told him what I had learned. The result was that a "cold wind" began to blow between us. He did not want me to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Yet, studying the Bible was so satisfying that I continued my studies and association with the Witnesses.



With my family in 1958, the year I was baptized

Before leaving the house on meeting nights, I prepared Kazuhiko's favorite meals for him, but he began going out to eat. When I returned home after the meetings, he was in a bad mood and refused to talk. After two or three days, his mood improved, but then it was time for the next meeting.

About this time, I became ill with tuberculosis, a disease that had already caused several deaths in my husband's family. Kazuhiko became very worried and told me that when I got better, I could do anything I liked.

My only request was that he be gracious about my attending the weekly meetings. He agreed.

My recovery took six months, and during that time I made an intensive study of the Bible. I looked for discrepancies in the teachings of the Witnesses, figuring that I would stop my study if I found just one. I could find none. Instead, the errors of the Protestant Church became obvious. I came to know Jehovah's love and justice and saw the benefit of living in harmony with his laws.

After I recovered, my husband kept his promise and did not oppose my going to the meetings. I kept growing spiritually, and in May 1958, I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I longed to have my family join me in worshipping the true God.

Helping My Children Spiritually

My sons were always with me at the meetings and in the preaching work, but some things that happened made me see that they were growing in Bible knowledge. One day Masahiko, my six-year-old son, was playing outside the house. I heard a loud noise and someone shrieking. A neighbor burst into my house, screaming that my son had been hit by a car. Was he dead? I forced myself to be calm as I rushed outside. The sight of his mangled bicycle made me tremble, but then I saw him walking toward me, just slightly hurt. As he clung to me, he said, "Mummy, Jehovah helped me, didn't he?" Seeing him alive and hearing those beautiful words made me cry.

Another day, in the ministry we met an old man who shouted: "What do you think you are doing dragging a young child around like that? I pity him." Before I could reply, eight-year-old Tomoyoshi said: "Grandpa, my mother does not force me to preach. I preach because I want to serve Je-

hovah." The old man just stared and could not say a thing.

Spiritually, my sons were fatherless boys. It was up to me to teach them Bible truths, though I had much to learn myself. I cultivated my own love, faith, and zeal and tried to set a good example. Daily I gave thanks to Jehovah in front of the children. I told them of my experiences in the preaching work. This encouraged them. When later asked why they had become pioneers, or full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses, they answered, "We saw that our mother was happy serving as a pioneer, and we wanted to be happy too."

I took great care not to speak disparagingly of their father or of anyone in the congregation. I realized that negative talk could have a damaging effect on my children. They might lose respect not only for the one spoken against but also for the one speaking.

Overcoming Obstacles to Progress

In 1963 my husband's work took our family to Taiwan. He told me that if I preached to the Japanese community there, I would cause bad feelings. We would be sent back to Japan, and that would create problems for his company. He wanted to distance us from the Witnesses.

In Taiwan, where all the meetings were held in Chinese, the Witnesses gave us a warm welcome. I decided to learn Chinese so that I could witness to the local people instead of to the Japanese. In that way, I could avoid the problems that my husband mentioned.

Our friendship with the Witnesses in Taiwan strengthened us. One missionary couple, Harvey and Kathy Logan, helped us immensely. Brother Logan became a spiritual



We were spiritually strengthened by friends like Harvey and Kathy Logan when we moved from Tokyo to Taipei

father to my boys. He showed them that serving Jehovah is not a joyless, rigid life. I believe that it was while in Taiwan that my sons made their decision to serve Jehovah.

Tomoyoshi and Masahiko went to an American school, where they learned English as well as Chinese. That education equipped them for future service as ministers of the true God, Jehovah. I am deeply grateful to Jehovah for changing what could have been a difficult period for us to a time of lasting blessings. After three and a half memorable years in Taiwan, our family returned to Japan.

The boys were now teenagers and began pushing for independence. I spent many

hours reasoning with them on Scriptural principles, and Jehovah helped them through that difficult time. On leaving high school, Tomoyoshi began to pioneer. He was able to help four people to dedication and baptism during his first few years of pioneering. Masahiko followed his brother's example and started to pioneer right after secondary school. He helped four young people to become Witnesses in his first four years of pioneering.

Then Jehovah blessed the children even more. Tomoyoshi studied with the husband of a woman whom I had helped to learn Bible truths. Their two daughters also became Witnesses. Later, Tomoyoshi married the older girl, Nobuko, and Masahiko married the younger one, Masako. Tomoyoshi and Nobuko now serve at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. And Masahiko and Masako are missionaries in Paraguay.

Gradual Changes in My Husband

My husband seemed indifferent to our faith in those years, but we saw indications that he was changing. When others opposed me, he defended my beliefs and actually supported Bible truths without realizing it. He provided material help to Witnesses in need. In a short speech at the wedding of one of our sons, he said: "Teaching people the right way to live is the finest work there is, and it is the most difficult. My sons and their wives have chosen this most difficult path as their career. Please help them." All of this made me think that surely he would join us in serving Jehovah.

I arranged for association with fellow Witnesses in our home. I invited Kazuhiko to Christian meetings and assemblies as well as to the Memorial of Christ's death. When his work allowed, he attended these, though begrudgingly. Many times, I felt that he might

accept a Bible study, so I invited Christian elders to the house. But he refused to study. I wondered what was wrong.

The apostle Peter's words came to my mind: "You wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, in order that, if any are not obedient to the word, they may be won without a word through the conduct of their wives, because of having been eyewitnesses of your chaste conduct together with deep respect." (1 Peter 3:1, 2) I realized that I had not always followed that counsel. To comply fully with it, I needed to improve my spirituality.

In 1970, I began to pioneer with the goal of becoming a more spiritual person. Ten years passed, then 20. Still, I saw no spiritual change in my husband. A Bible student once remarked: "It must be hard helping other people when you can't even help your own husband." That was discouraging, but I did not give up.

By the late 1980's, our parents were reaching the end of their lives. Taking care of them and fulfilling my other duties was exhausting and stressful. For years, they had all opposed my faith in Jehovah, but I tried to show them as much love as I could. Just before her death, my 96-year-old mother said to me, "Sumiko, if I am resurrected, I will join your religion." I realized that my efforts had not been in vain.

My husband took notice of all that I had done in behalf of our parents. To show his appreciation, he began attending meetings regularly. For years he did so but made no real spiritual progress. I continued trying to please him. I invited his friends and even his foreign business colleagues to our home for meals. I joined him in recreation. When the hour requirement for pioneer service was reduced to 70 hours a month, I spent more time with him.

Retirement Brings a Change

My husband retired in 1993. Now, I thought, at last he will have time to study the Bible. But he said that worshipping God just because he had time would be blasphemy. Rather, he said that he would worship God when his heart moved him to do so and that I was not to push him.

One day Kazuhiko asked me if I would now spend the rest of my life living for him. This hurt me, for I had been doing all I could for him ever since I married him. I had tried so hard to make him happy, but he felt that I had been living more for Jehovah than for him. After thinking about it for a while, I told him that I could do no more for him. But if he would join me in what I was doing, we could start a wonderful new life together that would last, not for a few more years, but for an eternity. For days, my husband had no reply. Finally he asked, "So will you study the Bible with me?" Every time I think of those words, my heart pounds.

At first, I arranged for a Christian elder to study with my husband, but he told me, "I will study with no one but you." So we began a daily Bible study. Since I am in a Chinese congregation and my husband is fluent in that language, we studied in Chinese. We also read the entire Bible together in less than a year.

During this time, an elder in the Chinese congregation, along with his wife, took an interest in us as a couple. Although younger than our children, they became our true friends. Many other Witnesses also took a special interest in my husband. They showed us hospitality and conversed with Kazuhiko as if he were their father. That made him very happy.



Today my family is united in true worship

One day an invitation to a wedding in the congregation arrived at the house, addressed to my husband. That recognition as head of the family deeply touched him, and he decided to attend. He soon opened up to the Witnesses and began to study the Bible with a Christian elder. His Bible study, meeting attendance, and the love of the congregation helped him make good spiritual progress.

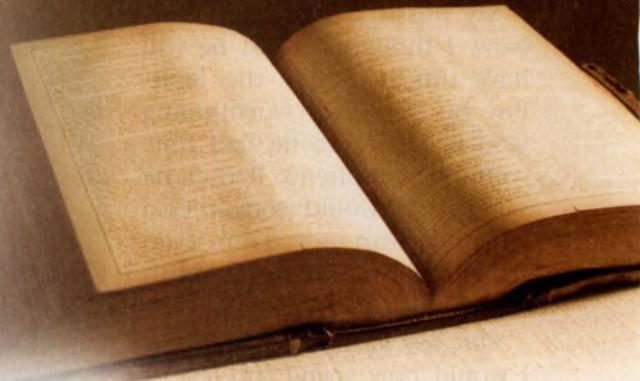
A United Family at Last

In December 2000, my husband was baptized in symbol of his dedication to Jehovah. My sons and their wives came from far away to see this modern-day "miracle." It took 42 years, but at last we are a united family.

Now each morning, the two of us discuss a scripture for the day and read the Bible together. Every day, we enjoy spiritual conversations and share in spiritual activities. My husband is now a ministerial servant in the congregation, and he recently gave a public Bible discourse in Chinese. I thank Jehovah for bringing us together. Along with all of those near and dear to me, I look forward to upholding his name and sovereignty for eternity.

THE FEAR OF GOD

"A Discipline Toward Wisdom"



TRUE wisdom has organized a great feast. It has "sent forth its lady attendants, that it may call out on top of the heights of the town: 'Whoever is inexperienced, let him turn aside here.' Whoever is in want of heart—she has said to him: 'Come, feed yourselves with my bread and share in drinking the wine that I have mixed. Leave the inexperienced ones and keep living, and walk straight in the way of understanding.'" —Proverbs 9:1-6.

Feasting at wisdom's table never leads to anything bad or hurtful. Listening to the godly wisdom contained in the inspired proverbs and accepting its discipline result only in good. The wise sayings recorded at Proverbs 15:16-33 are no exception.* Heeding the advice of these concise sayings can help us to be content with less, to be progressive, and to experience joy in living. Doing so can also help us to make good decisions and can enable us to stay on the path to life.

When Less Is Better

"Better is a little in the fear of Jehovah than an abundant supply and confusion along with it," says King Solomon of ancient Israel.

* For a detailed discussion of Proverbs 15:1-15, see *The Watchtower* of July 1, 2006, pages 13-16.

(Proverbs 15:16) To ignore the Creator and to make the pursuit of material possessions one's chief goal in life is foolish. Such a life is full of tiresome striving and a great deal of anxiety. What a shame it would be to realize in old age that one's whole life course has been empty and meaningless! Accumulating many possessions along with "confusion" is certainly not wise. How much better it is to learn the secret of contentment and live by it! Genuine contentment is found in the fear of Jehovah—in our relationship with him—not in material possessions.—1 Timothy 6:6-8.

Emphasizing that a good relationship with others is of greater value than material plenty, Solomon says: "*Better is a dish of vegetables where there is love than a manger-fed bull and hatred along with it.*" (Proverbs 15:17) Yes, a loving atmosphere in a household is more desirable than an abundance of rich foods. In a single-parent home, resources may be very limited. In some lands simple food may be all that can be provided. However, the family thrives where there is love and affection.

Even in families where the atmosphere is generally loving, difficult situations may arise. One member of the family may say or do something that offends another. How

should the offended one respond? Proverbs 15:18 states: "*An enraged man stirs up contention, but one that is slow to anger quiets down quarreling.*" A mild response, not an angry one, promotes peace and quiet. The advice of this proverb applies with equal force in other areas of life, including congregational activities and the public ministry.

When 'a Way Is Cast Up'

The next proverb highlights the contrast between someone who has paid no heed to wisdom and those who have. "*The way of the lazy one is like a brier hedge,*" says the wise king, "*but the path of the upright ones is a way cast up.*"—Proverbs 15:19.

A brier hedge is a thorny, prickly barrier. A lazy person imagines all sorts of obstacles and uses them as an excuse to justify his failure to start an undertaking. On the other hand, the upright ones do not fret about barriers that might hinder them. They are diligent in their work and give attention to the task at hand. Thus they avoid many

thorny problems that they might encounter if they were negligent. Their way is "cast up," that is, progressive. They move ahead in their work and rejoice in its progress.

Take, for example, the matter of gaining accurate knowledge of God's Word and progressing to maturity. Effort is required. A person can easily use a limited education, a lack of good reading ability, or a poor memory as an excuse for not applying himself to diligent personal study of the Bible. How much better it is not to imagine such things as roadblocks in the way of knowledge! Even with limited abilities, we can put forth the effort to improve our reading skills and our comprehension of what we read, perhaps making use of a dictionary when necessary. A positive attitude helps us to gain knowledge and make spiritual progress.

When 'a Father Rejoices'

"*A wise son is the one that makes a father rejoice,*" says the king of Israel, "*but a stupid man is despising his mother.*" (Proverbs

A loving atmosphere in a household is more desirable than an abundance of rich foods



15:20) Do not parents rejoice when their children act wisely? Granted, it takes parental training and discipline to obtain such good results. (Proverbs 22:6) But what a source of joy a wise son is to his parents! The foolish one, however, causes them endless grief.

Using the term "rejoicing" in another setting, the wise king says: "*Foolishness is a rejoicing to one who is in want of heart, but the man of discernment is one who goes straight ahead.*" (Proverbs 15:21) Those in want of heart rejoice in foolish laughter and merriment that give no genuine satisfaction or happiness. However, the man of discernment sees the folly of becoming a 'lover of pleasures rather than a lover of God.' (2 Timothy 3:1, 4) Adhering to godly principles helps him remain upright and keep his path straight.

When "There Is Accomplishment"

Living by divine principles brings benefits in other aspects of our life. Proverbs 15:22 states: "*There is a frustrating of plans where there is no confidential talk, but in the multitude of counselors there is accomplishment.*"

Confidential talk means private but frank communication between individuals. The Hebrew word translated "confidential talk" is rendered "intimate group" at Psalm 89:7. This indicates intimacy in communication. More than mere superficial conversation, confidential talk is an exchange of genuine thoughts and feelings. When husbands and wives as well as parents and children freely communicate with one another in this way, there is peace and unity among them. But a lack of confidential talk leads to frustrations and problems in the family.

Even if we have limitations, a positive attitude helps us to gain knowledge

When we make important decisions, it is prudent to heed the advice: "In the multitude of counselors there is accomplishment." For example, when we are choosing medical treatment, is it not wise to get a second or third opinion, particularly if serious issues are involved?

The value of having many counselors cannot be overemphasized in caring for spiritual matters. When elders consult with one another and utilize their collective wisdom, "there is accomplishment." Moreover, newly appointed overseers should not hesitate to seek advice from older and more experienced elders, especially if the matter to be cared for is a difficult one.

When There Is "Rejoicing in the Answer"

What good can result from speech that is uttered with insight? "*A man has rejoicing in the answer of his mouth,*" says the king of Israel, "*and a word at its right time is O how good!*" (Proverbs 15:23) Do we not rejoice



when our answer or advice is followed and good results ensue? For our counsel to be effective, however, it must meet two requirements.

First, the advice should be solidly based on God's Word, the Bible. (Psalm 119: 105; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Then, it must be spoken at the right time. Even truthful words spoken at the wrong time can be damaging. For example, offering advice to someone before hearing him out is neither wise nor helpful. How vital that we "be swift about hearing, slow about speaking"!—James 1:19.

"The Path of Life Is Upward"

Proverbs 15:24 states: "*The path of life is upward to one acting with insight, in order to turn away from Sheol down below.*" A person who acts with insight is on the path that leads away from Sheol, the common grave of mankind. He shuns such damaging practices as promiscuous sex, drug abuse, and drunkenness—and thus avoids premature death. His path leads to life.

Note, in contrast, the way of those lacking insight: "*The house of the self-exalted ones Jehovah will tear down, but he will fix the boundary of the widow. The schemes of the bad one are something detestable to Jehovah, but pleasant sayings are clean. The one making unjust profit is bringing ostracism upon his own house, but the hater of gifts [bribes] is the one that will keep living.*"—Proverbs 15:25-27.

Showing us how to avoid a common pitfall, the king of Israel says: "*The heart of the righteous one meditates so as to answer, but the mouth of the wicked ones bubbles forth with bad things.*" (Proverbs 15:28) How valuable the advice of this proverb! Senseless and foolish answers that just bubble forth from the mouth seldom lead to anything



Confidential talk is an exchange of genuine thoughts and feelings

good. When we consider various factors that may have a bearing on a matter, including the circumstances and feelings of others, we are unlikely to say something that we may later regret.

What, then, is the benefit of fearing God and accepting his discipline? The wise man answers: "*Jehovah is far away from the wicked ones, but the prayer of the righteous ones he hears.*" (Proverbs 15:29) The true God is not near the wicked. "He that is turning his ear away from hearing the law," states the

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth

"Let Us Compare Scripture With Scripture"

Job—A Man of Endurance and Integrity

Bible, "even his prayer is something detestable." (Proverbs 28:9) Those who fear God and strive to do what is right in his eyes can freely approach him, fully confident that he will hear them.

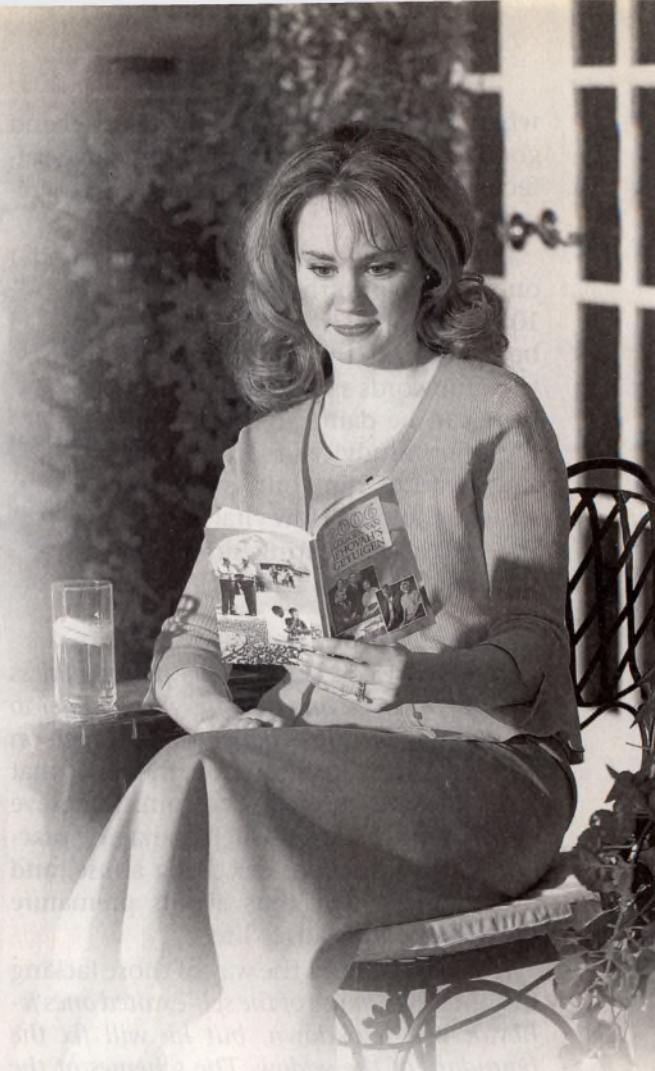
What "Makes the Heart Rejoice"

Using a thought-provoking comparison, Solomon says: "*The brightness of the eyes makes the heart rejoice; a report that is good makes the bones fat.*" (Proverbs 15:30) The bones are made "fat" when they are filled with marrow. This invigorates the whole body and makes the heart rejoice. And the joy of heart is reflected in the brightness of the eyes. Such is the effect of a good report!

Are not reports of the worldwide expansion of Jehovah's worship a source of genuine encouragement to us? Learning about all that is being accomplished in the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work indeed invigorates us to have a greater share in the ministry. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) The experiences of those who make Jehovah their God and take up true worship fill our hearts with joy. Since "a good report from a distant land" has such a powerful effect, how important it is that we be accurate and conscientious in reporting what we do in the ministry!—Proverbs 25:25.

"Before Glory There Is Humility"

Stressing the value of accepting discipline in its various forms, the wise king says: "*The ear that is listening to the reproof of life lodges right in among wise people. Anyone shunning discipline is rejecting his own soul, but the one listening to reproof is acquiring heart.*" (Proverbs 15:31, 32) Reproof, or discipline, reaches a person's heart and adjusts it, giving him good sense. No wonder it is "the rod of discipline" that removes the 'foolishness tied up with the heart of a boy'! (Proverbs 22:15)



Do you know how "a report that is good makes the bones fat"?

The one listening to discipline also acquires heart, that is, good motive. On the other hand, to shun discipline is to reject life.

Indeed, welcoming wisdom's discipline and accepting it in humility is beneficial. Doing so leads not only to contentment, advancement, rejoicing, and accomplishment but also to glory and life. Proverbs 15:33 concludes: "*The fear of Jehovah is a discipline toward wisdom, and before glory there is humility.*"

BE WISE—FEAR GOD!

"The fear of Jehovah is the start of wisdom."—PROVERBS 9:10.

THREE was a time when it was considered a compliment to describe someone as God-fearing. Today, many find the concept of fearing God quaint but hard to understand. ‘If God is love,’ they may ask, ‘why should I fear him?’ To them, fear is a negative, even paralyzing, emotion. True fear of God, however, has a much broader meaning and, as we shall see, is not just a feeling or an emotion.

² In Biblical usage the fear of God is a positive concept. (Isaiah 11:3) It is a profound reverence and deep respect for God, a strong desire not to displease him. (Psalm 115:11) It includes acceptance of and strict adherence to God’s moral standards and a desire to live by what God says is right or wrong. One reference work points out that such a wholesome fear expresses “a fundamental attitude toward God that leads to wise behavior and the avoidance of every form of evil.” Appropriately, God’s Word tells us: “The fear of Jehovah is the start of wisdom.”—Proverbs 9:10.

³ Indeed, the fear of God encompasses a wide range of human experience. It is associated not only with wisdom but also with joy, peace, prosperity, longevity, hope, trust, and confidence. (Psalm 2:11; Proverbs 1:7; 10:27; 14:26; 22:4; 23:17, 18; Acts 9:31) It is closely related to faith and love. In fact, it involves our entire relationship with God and with fellow humans. (Deuteronomy 10:12; Job 6:14; Hebrews 11:7) Fear of God includes the deep conviction that our heavenly Father

1. Why do many find the concept of fearing God hard to understand?

2, 3. What does genuine fear of God include?

personally cares for us and is ready to forgive our transgressions. (Psalm 130:4) Only the unrepentant wicked have reason to be terrified of God.*—Hebrews 10:26-31.

Learning to Fear Jehovah

⁴ Since the fear of God is fundamental to making wise decisions and receiving God’s blessings, how can we “learn to fear Jehovah” properly? (Deuteronomy 17:19) Many examples of God-fearing men and women are recorded in the Scriptures “for our instruction.” (Romans 15:4) To help us understand what it really means to fear God, let us reflect on the life of one of those examples, King David of ancient Israel.

⁵ Jehovah rejected Israel’s first king, Saul, for his fear of the people and his lack of godly fear. (1 Samuel 15:24-26) On the other hand, David’s life course and his intimate relationship with Jehovah identify him as a truly God-fearing man. From his early years, David was often out pasturing his father’s sheep. (1 Samuel 16:11) Nights spent shepherding under the stars must have helped David to understand the fear of Jehovah. Though David could discern only a small part of the immensity of the universe, he drew the right conclusion—God merits our respect and adoration. “When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have prepared,” he later wrote, “what is mortal man that you keep him in mind, and

* See the article “The Bible’s Viewpoint: How Can You Fear a God of Love?” in the January 8, 1998, issue of *Awake!* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

4. What can help us to “learn to fear Jehovah”?

5. How did shepherding help to teach David about fearing Jehovah?

the son of earthling man that you take care of him?"—Psalm 8:3, 4.

⁶ Rightly, David was impressed when he compared his smallness with the vast starry heavens. Rather than frightening him, this knowledge moved him to praise Jehovah and say: "The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling." (Psalm 19:1) This reverence for God drew David closer to Jehovah and made David want to learn and follow His perfect ways. Imagine how David felt when he sang to Jehovah: "You are great and are doing wondrous things; you are God, you alone. Instruct me, O Jehovah, about your way. I shall walk in your truth. Unify my heart to fear your name."—Psalm 86:10, 11.

⁷ When the Philistines invaded the land of Israel, their nine-and-a-half-foot-tall champion, Goliath, taunted the Israelites, saying in effect: 'Put up a man to fight me one-on-one! If he wins, we will serve you.' (1 Samuel 17:4-10) Saul and his entire army were terrified—but not David. He knew that Jehovah was the one to be feared, not any man, no matter how powerful. "I am coming to you with the name of Jehovah of armies," David told Goliath, "and all this congregation will know that neither with sword nor with spear does Jehovah save, because to Jehovah belongs the battle." With his sling and a single stone—and with Jehovah's help—David struck down the giant.—1 Samuel 17:45-47.

⁸ We may be facing obstacles or enemies no less daunting than those confronted by David. What can we do? We can deal with them in the same way that David and other faithful ones of old did—with godly fear. The fear of God can overpower the fear of man.

6. How did perceiving Jehovah's greatness make David feel?

7. How did fearing God help David fight Goliath?

8. What do Bible examples of God-fearing ones teach us?

God's faithful servant Nehemiah urged his fellow Israelites, who were under pressure from opposers: "Do not be afraid on their account. Jehovah the great and the fear-inspiring One keep in your mind." (Nehemiah 4:14) With Jehovah's backing, David, Nehemiah, and other faithful servants of God succeeded in carrying out their God-given assignments. With godly fear, so can we.

Facing Problems With Godly Fear

⁹ After David slew Goliath, Jehovah gave him more victories. Jealous Saul, however, attempted—first impulsively, then cunningly, and finally with an army—to kill David. Although Jehovah had assured David that he would be king, for years David had to flee, to fight, and to wait for Jehovah's time to make him king. Through all of this, David showed that he feared the true God.—1 Samuel 18:9, 11, 17; 24:2.

¹⁰ On one occasion, David sought refuge with Achish, king of the Philistine city of Gath, the home of Goliath. (1 Samuel 21:10-15) The king's servants denounced David as an enemy of their nation. How did David react in that dangerous situation? He poured out his heart in prayer to Jehovah. (Psalm 56:1-4, 11-13) Although he had to feign insanity to get away, David knew that it was really Jehovah who had delivered him by blessing his efforts. David's wholehearted reliance on Jehovah and confidence in him showed that David was truly God-fearing.—Psalm 34:4-6, 9-11.

¹¹ Like David, we can show fear of God by trusting in his promise to help us cope with our problems. "Roll upon Jehovah your way, and rely upon him, and he himself will act."

9. Under what circumstances did David display fear of God?

10. How did David show fear of God in the face of danger?

11. How can we show godly fear under trial, as David did?

David learned the fear of God when observing Jehovah's handiwork

said David. (Psalm 37:5) This does not mean that we simply hand our problems over to Jehovah without doing what we can about them and expect him to act in our behalf. David did not pray to God for help and then leave matters at that. He used the physical and intellectual abilities that Jehovah granted him and tackled the problem at hand. Yet, David knew that human efforts alone could not be counted on for success. So it should be with us. Having done everything within our power, we must leave the rest to Jehovah. In fact, often there is nothing we can do but rely on Jehovah. This is where the fear of God comes into the picture in a very personal way. We can take comfort in David's heartfelt expression: "The intimacy with Jehovah belongs to those fearful of him."—Psalm 25:14.

¹² We, therefore, should take our prayers and our relationship with God seriously. When we approach Jehovah, we must "believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Hebrews 11:6; James 1:5-8) And when he helps us, we should 'show ourselves thankful,' as the apostle Paul counseled us. (Colossians 3:15, 17) We must never be like those described by an experienced anointed Christian: "They think of God as a sort of celestial waiter," he said. "When they need something, they want to snap their fingers and have him come. And when they've got what they want, they would like him to go away." Such an attitude betrays a lack of godly fear.

When Fear of God Lapsed

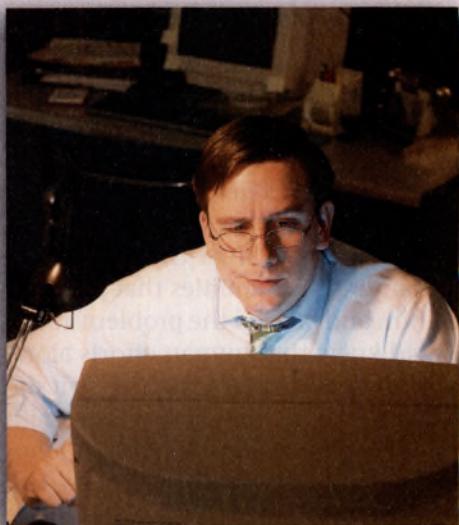
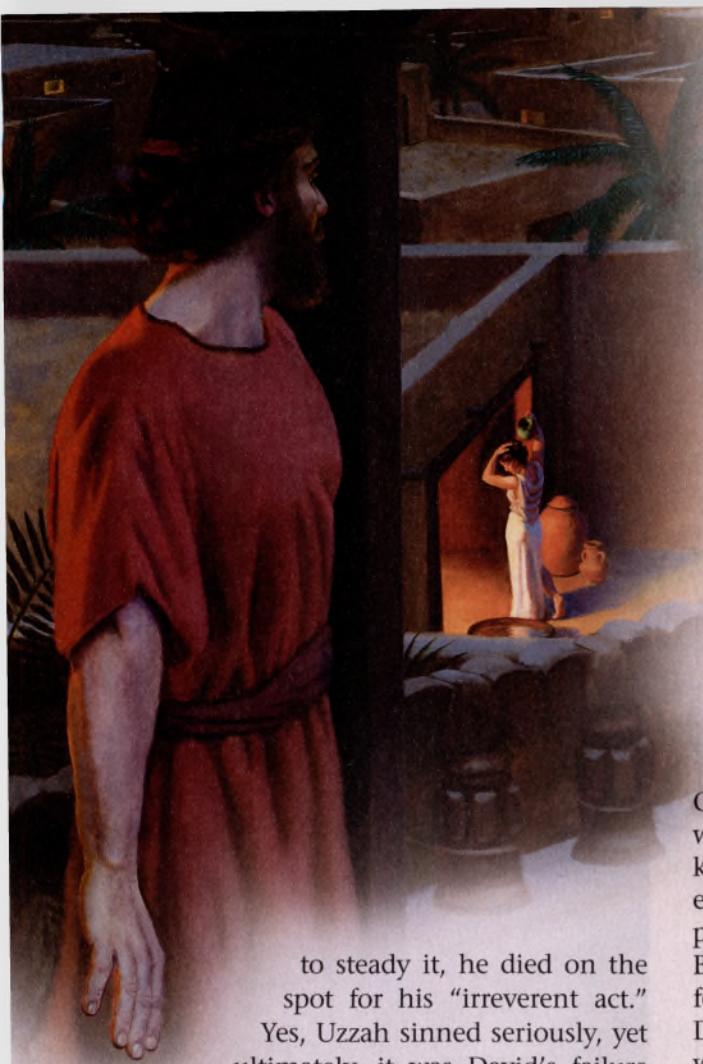
¹³ Experiencing Jehovah's help during distress deepened David's fear of God and

12. Why do we need to take our prayers seriously, and what attitude should we never have?

13. When did David fail to show respect for God's Law?



strengthened his confidence in him. (Psalm 31:22-24) On three notable occasions, however, David's fear of God lapsed, which led to serious consequences. The first involved his arranging for the ark of Jehovah's covenant to be transported to Jerusalem on a wagon rather than on the shoulders of the Levites, as God's Law directed. When Uzzah, who was leading the wagon, grabbed hold of the Ark



How will you react when you unexpectedly encounter a tempting situation?

to steady it, he died on the spot for his “irreverent act.” Yes, Uzzah sinned seriously, yet ultimately, it was David’s failure to maintain proper respect for God’s Law that brought about that tragic outcome. Fearing God means doing things according to his arrangement.—2 Samuel 6:2-9; Numbers 4:15; 7:9.

¹⁴ Later, incited by Satan, David took a count of Israel’s fighting men. (1 Chronicles 21:1) In so doing, David showed a lapse in the fear of God, resulting in the death of 70,000 Israelites. Although David repented before Jehovah, he and those around him suffered greatly.—2 Samuel 24:1-16.

14. What resulted from David’s counting of Israel?

¹⁵ Another temporary lapse in the fear of God led David into an immoral relationship with Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah. David knew that adultery or even desiring another’s mate was wrong. (Exodus 20:14, 17) The problem began when David caught sight of Bath-sheba while she was bathing. Proper fear of God should immediately have moved David to turn his eyes and his thoughts elsewhere. Instead, David evidently ‘kept on looking’ at her until passion overpowered his fear of God. (Matthew 5:28; 2 Samuel 11:1-4) David lost sight of Jehovah’s intimate involvement in his life.—Psalm 139:1-7.

¹⁶ David’s liaison with Bath-sheba produced a son. Shortly afterward, Jehovah sent his prophet Nathan to expose David’s sin. Brought to his senses, David recovered his fear of God and repented. He begged Jehovah not to cast him off or to remove His holy spirit from him. (Psalm 51:7, 11) Jehovah forgave

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15. What caused David to fall into sexual sin?
 16. What consequences did David suffer for his wrongdoing?

David and lightened the punishment, but He did not shield David from all the bad consequences of his actions. David's son died, and heartache and tragedy beset his family from then on. What a price to pay for a lapse in the fear of God!—2 Samuel 12:10-14; 13:10-14; 15:14.

¹⁷ Today, failing to fear God in moral matters may likewise have serious and long-lasting repercussions. Imagine the pain of one young wife when she learned that her Christian husband had been unfaithful to her while working overseas. Doubled over in shock and grief, she buried her face in her hands and burst into tears. How long will it take for her husband to regain her trust and respect? Such tragic consequences can be avoided by truly fearing God.—1 Corinthians 6:18.

Fear of God Restraints Us From Sin

¹⁸ Satan is very rapidly driving down the world's moral values, and he especially wants to corrupt true Christians. To do so, he exploits the most direct route into our hearts and minds—through our senses, particularly our eyes and ears. (Ephesians 4:17-19) How will you react when you unexpectedly encounter immoral images, words, or people?

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17. Illustrate the heartache that sinful acts produce.
 18. What is Satan's objective and method of operation?

Can You Explain?

- What Christian qualities does the fear of God include?
- How does fear of God counteract fear of man?
- How can we show that we have the proper view of prayer?
- How can fear of God restrain us from sinning?

¹⁹ Consider the case of André,* a Christian elder, father, and medical doctor in Europe. When André was on all-night duty in the hospital, female colleagues repeatedly pinned notes—decorated with hearts—to his pillow, inviting him to have sexual relations with them. André steadfastly refused to entertain their advances. Moreover, to remove himself from the bad environment, he found work elsewhere. Fearing God proved to be very wise and led to blessings, for today André serves part-time at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in his country.

²⁰ Dwelling on wrong thoughts can lead to a state of mind in which a person is willing to throw away his precious relationship with Jehovah in exchange for something to which he has no right. (James 1:14, 15) On the other hand, if we fear Jehovah, we will stay away—even walk away—from people, places, activities, and entertainment that could cause us to lower our moral guard. (Proverbs 22:3) Whatever embarrassment or sacrifice may be involved, it is minor compared to losing God's favor. (Matthew 5: 29, 30) Fearing God certainly includes never deliberately exposing ourselves to anything immoral, including pornography in any form, but instead making our eyes "pass on from seeing what is worthless." If we do so, we can trust in Jehovah to 'preserve us alive' and provide everything we really need.—Psalm 84:11; 119:37.

²¹ Indeed, acting with genuine fear of God is always the course of wisdom. It is also the source of true happiness. (Psalm 34:9) This will be made clear in the following article.

* The name has been changed.

19. How did godly fear help one Christian to overcome temptation?
- 20, 21. (a) How can fear of God help us to avoid sinning? (b) What will be considered in the following article?

FEAR JEHOVAH —BE HAPPY!

"Happy is the man in fear of Jehovah."—PSALM 112:1.

HAPPINESS does not come easily. Real happiness is contingent on making the right choices, doing what is right, and turning away from what is wrong. Our Maker, Jehovah, has given us his Word, the Bible, to teach us how to enjoy the very best way of life. By seeking and following Jehovah's direction, thus displaying the fear of God, we can be truly satisfied and happy.—Psalm 23:1; Proverbs 14:26.

² In this article, we will consider Biblical and modern-day examples that show how genuine fear of God gives one strength to resist pressure to do what is wrong and courage to do what is right. We will see that godly fear can bring us happiness by moving us to correct a wrong course, as King David had to do. We will also see that the fear of Jehovah is a truly precious heritage that parents can pass on to their children. Indeed, God's Word assures us: "Happy is the man in fear of Jehovah."—Psalm 112:1.

Regaining Lost Happiness

³ As considered in the preceding article, David on three notable occasions failed to show proper godly fear and sinned. However, his response to Jehovah's discipline showed that he was essentially a God-fearing person. His reverence and respect for God moved

him to admit his guilt, correct his course, and reestablish a good relationship with Jehovah. Although his errors brought suffering on him and others, his genuine repentance won Jehovah's continued support and blessing. David's example can surely instill courage in Christians today who may fall into serious sin.



- 1, 2. What can the fear of Jehovah bring?
3. What helped David to recover from his sins?

Fear of Jehovah kept David from striking King Saul

⁴ Take Sonja's case.* Though serving as a full-time evangelizer, Sonja got into bad company, became involved in unchristian conduct, and had to be disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation. Coming to her senses, Sonja did everything necessary to repair her relationship with Jehovah. In time, she was reinstated in the congregation. Through all of this, Sonja never gave up her desire to serve Jehovah. Eventually, she again entered the full-time pioneer ministry. Later, she married a fine Christian elder, and now she happily serves with him in the congregation. Though Sonja regrets having temporarily strayed from the Christian path, she is happy that her fear of God helped her to come back.

To Suffer Rather Than Sin

⁵ It is much better, of course, when the fear of God helps one to avoid sinning in the first place. This proved true of David. Once, pursuing David with three thousand troops, Saul entered a cave—the very cave where David and his men were hiding. David's men urged him to strike Saul. Was not Jehovah giving David's mortal enemy into his hand? Silently, David crept up to Saul and cut off the skirt of his garment. Because David feared God, even that relatively harmless act tormented his conscience. David dispersed his agitated men, saying: "It is unthinkable, on my part, from Jehovah's standpoint, that I should do this thing to my lord, the anointed of Jehovah."[#]—1 Samuel 24:1-7.

⁶ On a later occasion, Saul was encamped for the night, and he and all his men fell into

* The names have been changed.

[#] This may have been one of the experiences that moved David to compose Psalms 57 and 142.

4. How can the fear of God help a person regain happiness?

5, 6. Explain how and why David twice spared Saul's life.

"a deep sleep from Jehovah." David and his bold nephew Abishai slipped into the very middle of the camp and stood right over the sleeping Saul. Abishai wanted to do away with him once and for all. David restrained Abishai, asking: "Who is it that has thrust his hand out against the anointed of Jehovah and has remained innocent?"—1 Samuel 26:9, 12.

⁷ Why did David not strike Saul down when he twice had the opportunity? Because he feared Jehovah more than he feared Saul. Out of proper fear of God, David was prepared to suffer, if necessary, rather than sin. (Hebrews 11:25) He had complete confidence in Jehovah's care for His people and for him personally. David knew that obeying and trusting in God would bring happiness and many blessings, while ignoring God would earn him God's disfavor. (Psalm 65:4) He also knew that God would fulfill His promise to make David king and would remove Saul in His own time and way.—1 Samuel 26:10.

Fearing God Brings Happiness

⁸ As Christians, we can expect ridicule, persecution, and other trials. (Matthew 24:9; 2 Peter 3:3) At times, we may even experience difficulties involving fellow worshippers. However, we know that Jehovah sees all things, hears our prayers and, at the right time, will straighten out matters according to his will. (Romans 12:17-21; Hebrews 4:16) Therefore, rather than fear our opposers, we fear God and look to him to deliver us. Like David, we do not avenge ourselves, nor do we compromise righteous principles to avoid suffering. In the end, this brings happiness. But how?

7. What held David back from sinning?

8. How does David's conduct under pressure serve as an example?

⁹ "I think about a certain mother and her teenage daughter who because of their Christian neutrality refused to buy political party cards," relates a longtime missionary in Africa. "They were brutally assaulted by a crowd of men and then were told to go home. As they walked along, the mother tried to comfort her weeping daughter, who struggled to understand why this had happened. They were not joyful then, but they had a clean conscience. Later, they were very happy that they had obeyed God. Had they bought the party cards, the crowd would have been ecstatic. The men would have given them bottles of soft drinks and danced around them all the way home. But the girl and her mother, knowing they had compromised, would have been the most unhappy people in the world." Their fear of God spared them all of that.

¹⁰ Showing godly fear also results in happiness when facing trials involving respect for the sanctity of life. When Mary was pregnant with her third child, the doctor urged her to have an abortion. "Your condition is dangerous," he said. "You could have a crisis at any time and die within 24 hours. Then the baby would die too. In any case, there is no guarantee that the baby will be normal." Mary had been studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses but was not yet baptized. "Still," Mary says, "I had decided to serve Jehovah, and I was determined to remain obedient to him, no matter what."—Exodus 21:22, 23.

¹¹ During her pregnancy, Mary kept busy studying the Bible and caring for her family. Finally the baby came. "The birth was a little harder than the first two, but there were no major complications," relates Mary. Fearing God helped Mary to keep a good conscience,

9. Give an example of how fearing God can result in happiness despite persecution.

10, 11. What good results came from one woman's fear of God?

and she was soon baptized. As that baby grew up, he too learned to fear Jehovah, and he is presently serving at one of the branch offices of Jehovah's Witnesses.

'Strengthen Yourself by Jehovah'

¹² David's fear of Jehovah did more than just restrain him from doing wrong. It strengthened him to act decisively and wisely under difficult circumstances. For a year and four months, David and his men took refuge from Saul at Ziklag in the Philistine countryside. (1 Samuel 27:5-7) Once while the men were away, marauding Amalekites burned the city and carried off all the men's wives, children, and flocks. Upon returning and seeing what had happened, David and his men wept. Grief quickly turned to bitterness, and David's men spoke of stoning him. Though distressed, David did not despair. (Proverbs 24:10) His fear of God moved him to turn to Jehovah, and he "took to strengthening himself by Jehovah." With God's help, David and his men overtook the Amalekites and recovered everything.—1 Samuel 30:1-20.

¹³ God's servants today also face situations that require trust in Jehovah and courage to act decisively. Take Kristina as an example. As a youth, Kristina studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. But she wanted to become a concert pianist, and she made considerable advancement to that end. Moreover, she felt self-conscious about preaching and was therefore afraid to accept the responsibilities that would come with baptism. As Kristina continued to study God's Word, she began to sense its power. She was learning the fear of Jehovah, and she realized that Jehovah expects his servants to love him with their whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. (Mark 12:30) This moved her to dedicate herself to Jehovah and get baptized.

12. How did the fear of God strengthen David?

13, 14. How did fear of God help one Christian to make good decisions?

¹⁴ Kristina asked Jehovah for help to make spiritual advancement. "I knew that the life of a concert pianist involves constant travel and contracts to play as many as 400 concerts a year," Kristina explains. "So I decided instead to become a teacher so as to support myself financially and serve as a full-time evangelizer." At that time, Kristina was already slated to give her debut performance in her country's best-known concert hall. "My debut concert turned out to be my retirement concert," she relates. Kristina has since married a Christian elder. Together, they now serve at one of the branch offices of Jehovah's Witnesses. She is happy that Jehovah gave her the strength to make right decisions and that she can now use her time and energy in his service.



A Precious Heritage

¹⁵ "Come, you sons, listen to me," wrote David. "The fear of Jehovah is what I shall teach you." (Psalm 34:11) As a father, David was intent on passing on to his children a precious heritage—the genuine, balanced, wholesome fear of Jehovah. By words and by deeds, David portrayed Jehovah, not as a demanding and fearsome God, ready to pounce on any infraction of His laws, but as a loving, caring, and forgiving Father of His earthly children. "Missteps who can keep track of?" asked David. Then, indicating his confidence that Jehovah is not constantly scrutinizing our errors, he added: "Hold me clear of unnoticed things!" David was sure that if he put forth his best effort, his words and thoughts could be acceptable to Jehovah.—Psalm 19:12, 14, *Byington*.

15. What did David want to pass on to his children, and how did he do so?

Fear of God is a precious heritage that parents can pass on to their children

¹⁶ David stands as an example for parents today. "Our parents raised us in a way that made being in the truth enjoyable," says Ralph, who along with his brother serves at a branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses. "When we were young, they included us in their conversations about congregation activities, and we became as enthusiastic about the truth as they were. They brought us up to believe that we could do good things in Jehovah's service. In fact, for several years our family lived in a country where there is a great need for Kingdom publishers and helped to establish new congregations.

¹⁷ "What kept us on the right path was not a collection of rigid rules but the fact that to our parents, Jehovah was real and very, very kind and good. They sought to get to know Jehovah better and to please him, and we learned from their genuine fear of God and love for him. Even when we did something wrong, our parents did not make us feel that Jehovah no longer loved us; nor did they angrily slap arbitrary restrictions on us. Most of the time, they sat us down and just talked to us, Mom sometimes with tears in her eyes, trying to reach our heart. And it worked. We learned through our parents' words and deeds that the fear of Jehovah is a beautiful thing and that to be one of his Witnesses is a

16, 17. How can parents teach children the fear of Jehovah?

Can You Explain?

How can the fear of God

- help one to recover from serious sin?
- bring happiness under trials and persecution?
- strengthen us to do God's will?
- be a precious heritage for our children?

joy and a pleasure, not a burden."—1 John 5:3.

¹⁸ Among "the last words of David," we read: "When one ruling over mankind is righteous, ruling in the fear of God, then it is as the light of morning, when the sun shines forth." (2 Samuel 23:1, 3, 4) Solomon, David's son and successor, apparently got the point, for he requested that Jehovah grant him "an obedient heart" and the ability "to discern between good and bad." (1 Kings 3:9) Solomon recognized that to fear Jehovah is the course of wisdom and happiness. Later, he summarized the book of Ecclesiastes with the words: "The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man. For the true God himself will bring every sort of work into the judgment in relation to every hidden thing, as to whether it is good or bad." (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14) If we heed that counsel, we will indeed find that "the result of humility and the fear of Jehovah" is not only wisdom and happiness but also "riches and glory and life."—Proverbs 22:4.

¹⁹ From Biblical examples and modern-day experiences, we see that the proper fear of God plays a positive role in the life of true servants of Jehovah. Not only can such fear prevent us from doing what is displeasing to our heavenly Father but it can also give us the courage to face our adversaries and the strength to endure the trials and hardships that come our way. Therefore, let us, young and old, apply ourselves diligently in studying God's Word, meditating on what we learn, and drawing close to Jehovah in regular and heartfelt prayers. By doing so, we will not only find "the very knowledge of God" but also understand "the fear of Jehovah."—Proverbs 2:1-5.

18. What will we gain by fearing the true God?

19. What will enable us to understand "the fear of Jehovah"?

Questions From Readers

How do we know that the description of wisdom at Proverbs 8:22-31 applies to Jesus Christ in his prehuman existence?

The inspired description of wisdom found in the book of Proverbs reads: "Jehovah himself produced me as the beginning of his way, the earliest of his achievements of long ago. . . . Before the mountains themselves had been settled down, ahead of the hills, I was brought forth as with labor pains . . . When he prepared the heavens I was there; . . . then I came to be beside him as a master worker, and I came to be the one he was specially fond of day by day, I being glad before him all the time, . . . and the things I was fond of were with the sons of men."

This passage cannot be speaking merely about divine wisdom or wisdom in the abstract. Why not? Because the wisdom that is here described was "produced," or created, as the beginning of Jehovah's way. Jehovah God has always existed and has always been wise. (Psalm 90:1, 2) His wisdom had no beginning; it was neither created nor pro-

duced. It was not "brought forth as with labor pains." Furthermore, this wisdom is said to speak and act, representing a person.—Proverbs 8:1.

The book of Proverbs says that long ago wisdom was beside Jehovah, the Creator, as "a master worker." That certainly applies to Jesus. Long before he came to earth, Jesus worked so closely with Jehovah that God's Word says: "He is before all other things and by means of him all other things were made to exist."—Colossians 1:17; Revelation 3:14.

Depicting the Son of God as wisdom is appropriate, since he was the One who revealed Jehovah's wise purposes and decrees. During his prehuman existence, Jesus was God's Word, or Spokesman. (John 1:1) He is described as being "the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30) What a beautiful description of the Son of God, whose fondness for mankind moved him to give his life as a ransom in their behalf!—John 3:16.

*"Before the mountains . . .
I was brought forth"*

THE HAIR SHIRT AND SPIRITUALITY

KING LOUIS IX of France wore one. When studying the law in his youth, Sir Thomas More kept awake for 19 or 20 hours a day for several months with the help of his. Indeed, More is known to have worn one for most of his life. And when Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral, one was unexpectedly discovered beneath his clothing. What did these historical figures have in common? They pursued the mortification of their flesh by means of the hair shirt.

The hair shirt was a coarse garment made from goat's hair that was worn next to the skin so that it would irritate the flesh and chafe the skin, causing great discomfort. It also easily became a repository for lice. Thomas Becket is said to have worn his hair shirt, along with breeches of the same material, until "it swarmed with vermin." After the 16th century, the goat's hair was sometimes replaced by fine wire with sharp points turned toward the body. Fashioning the shirt in this way caused even greater discomfort to the wearer.

According to one reference work, the purpose of the hair shirt, as with other forms of mortification, was to "subdue the unruly flesh and so encourage the develop-



ment of a more spiritually oriented disposition and manner of life." Not only ascetics wore the garment; ordinary lay persons, including those in positions of high power, were known to use it too. Even today certain religious orders adhere to the practice.

Does wearing a hair shirt or enduring forms of self-imposed physical privations make one a spiritual person? No, spirituality does not hinge on such practices. In fact, the apostle Paul spoke against "a severe treatment of the body." (Colossians 2:23)* Rather, true spirituality comes from seeking the knowledge of God through a diligent study of his Word and applying that knowledge in one's life.

* For further consideration of this subject, see Awake! October 8, 1997, "The Bible's Viewpoint: Is Asceticism the Key to Wisdom?"

King Louis IX, top: From the book *Great Men and Famous Women*; Thomas Becket, center: From the book *Ridpath's History of the World* (Vol. IV); Thomas More, bottom: From the book *Heroes of the Reformation*, 1904