

MAY 1, 2010

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

A somber photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark coat, sitting amidst the rubble of a destroyed city. She is holding a baby wrapped in a green blanket. In the background, other people are seen walking through the debris, and a white car is partially buried in the rubble. The scene conveys a sense of despair and destruction.

HAS GOD LEFT US?

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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WHERE IS GOD?

September 11, 2001: At 8:46 a.m., a commercial jet slams into the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City—the beginning of a multitarget terrorist attack. Over the next 102 minutes, approximately 3,000 perish.



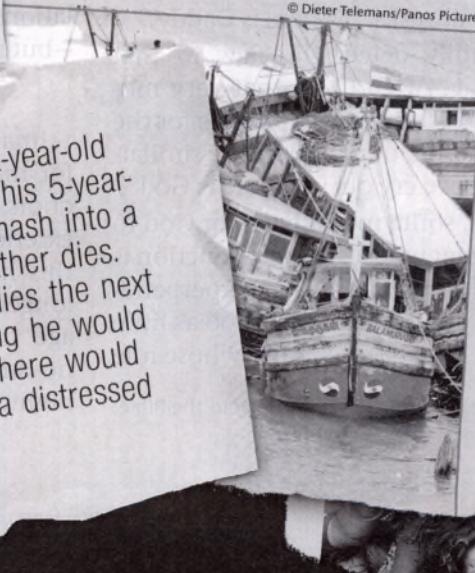
August 1, 2009: A 42-year-old man is jet-skiing with his 5-year-old son when they smash into a wooden dock. The father dies. His son lingers but dies the next day. "We were hoping he would come through and there would be a miracle," said a distressed relative.



December 26, 2004

A 9.0-magnitude earthquake in the Indian Ocean unleashes a series of killer waves that hit 11 countries, including Africa—some 3,000 miles away. Within a day, 150,000 people are dead or missing, and more than a million are left homeless.

PRAKASH SINGH/AFP/Getty Images ▾



When you read of terrorist attacks or natural disasters or when you experience a personal tragedy, do you wonder if God sees what is happening? Do you wonder if he has left us? The Bible provides a comforting answer, as we will see.

What Is God Doing?

"Why, O Jehovah, do you keep standing afar off? Why do you keep yourself hid in times of distress?"*—PSALM 10:1.

A MERE glance at news headlines confirms that we live in "times of distress." And when tragedy hits home—when we personally are affected by crime, a serious accident, or the death of a loved one—we might well ask, Does God see? Does he care? Is he even there?

However, have you considered the possibility that our expectations of God could be based on a faulty premise? To illustrate: Imagine a small child who is upset because his father has gone to work. The child misses his father and wishes he would come home. The child feels abandoned. Throughout the day, he repeatedly asks, "Where is Daddy?"

We can readily detect the flaw in that child's thinking. After all, at that very moment, his father is working to provide for the entire family. Could our thinking be similarly flawed when we cry out, "Where is God?"

For example, some might wish for God to be an executioner whose primary function is to bring swift punishment on the perpetrator of some wrong. Others view God as little more than a celestial Santa Claus, whose role

* Jehovah is the name of God as revealed in the Bible.



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ENGLISH

Now consider the damage that occurred to mankind some 6,000 years ago when an unseen spirit, Satan, induced Adam and Eve to rebel against God. Prior to that event, the first human couple enjoyed perfect health with the prospect of living forever along with future generations of their offspring. (Genesis 1:28) When they sinned, however, it was as if Adam and Eve vandalized the human family yet to be born.

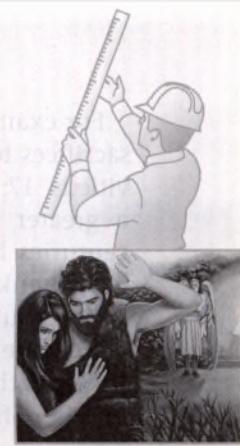
Do not underestimate the damaging effects of that rebellion. The Bible says: "Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world and death through sin." (Romans 5:12) Besides bringing death, sin has impaired our relationship with our Creator and has affected us physically, mentally, and emotionally. As a result, our condition is similar to that of a run-down house. The righteous man Job realistically summed up our situation when he described man as being "short of days and full of trouble."—Job 14:1, *Holman Christian Standard Bible*.

But did God abandon the human race after the downfall of Adam and Eve? Not at all! In fact, from then until now, our heavenly Father has been working in behalf of the human family. To appreciate better just what he is doing for us, consider three steps that are necessary for restoring a house and how each of these relates to what God has done to restore mankind.

1 After inspecting a damaged house, the owner must decide whether to restore it or to demolish it.

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Immediately after the rebellion in Eden, Jehovah God announced his purpose to restore mankind. He said to the unseen spirit who was behind the rebellion: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel."—Genesis 3:15.



With those words, Jehovah promised to destroy the instigator of the rebellion in Eden. (Romans 16:20; Revelation 12:9) Furthermore, Jehovah foretold that a future "seed" would redeem mankind from sin.* (1 John 3:8) Those promises put on record a vital truth: God was going to repair, not demolish, his creation. But the restoration of mankind would require time.

2 An architect prepares blueprints that clearly set forth what the restoration work will accomplish.

Jehovah God gave the Israelites a code of laws and designed a temple at which they were to worship him. The Bible says: "Those things are a shadow of the things to come." (Colossians 2:17) Like blueprints, they represented something greater.

* For a detailed explanation of Genesis 3:15, see chapter 19 of the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



ghiz, Kirundi, Kongo, Korean,⁺ Kosraean, Kwangali, Kwanyama, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luganda, Lunda, Luo, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Marshallese, Mauritian Creole, Maya, Mizo, Moore, Myanmar, Ndonga, Nepali, Niuean, Norwegian,⁺ Nyaneka, Oromo, Ossetian, Otetela, Palauan, Pangasinan, Papíamento (Curaçao), Persian, Polish,⁺ Ponapean, Portuguese,⁺ Punjabi, Quechua (Ancash), Quechua (Ayacucho), Quechua (Bolivia), Quechua (Cuzco), Quichua, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian,⁺ Samar-Leyte, Samoan, Sango, Sepedi, Serbian, Serbian (Roman), Sesotho, Seychelles Creole, Shona, Silozi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,⁺ Sranan-

tongo, Swahili, Swati, Swedish,⁺ Tagalog, Tahitian, Tamil, Tatar, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Tiv, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Tumbuka, Turkish, Tuvan, Twi, Tzotzil, Ukrainian, Umbundu, Urdu, Urund, Uzbek, Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Wolaita, Xhosa, Yapese, Yoruba, Zande, Zapotec (Isthmus), Zulu

⁺ CD also available.

⁺ MP3 CD-ROM also available.

⁺ Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.



For example, the Israelites offered animal sacrifices to obtain forgiveness of sins. (Leviticus 17:11) That practice foreshadowed a greater sacrifice that would be offered centuries later—a sacrifice that would provide mankind with true redemption.* The very layout of the tabernacle and temple at which the Israelites worshipped prefigured the steps that the future Messiah would take, from his sacrificial death to his ascension to heaven.—See the chart on page 7.

3 A builder is chosen who will follow the blueprints and perform the restoration.



Jesus was the promised Messiah who would follow the pattern that was set by the Israelites' sacrifices and would give his own life to redeem mankind. Indeed, John the Baptizer called Jesus “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) Jesus willingly accepted the assignment. He stated: “I have come down from heaven to do, not my will, but the will of him that sent me.”—John 6:38.

God's will for Jesus included that he not only would “give his soul a ransom in exchange for many” but also would make a covenant with his followers for a Kingdom. (Matthew 20:28; Luke 22:29, 30) That Kingdom is the means by which God will accomplish his purpose for mankind. The message about God's Kingdom is called “good news” because it explains that God has set up a government in heaven to take control of earth's affairs!—Matthew 24:14; Daniel 2:44.[#]

* For more information, see chapter 5 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

[#] For more information about God's Kingdom, see chapter 8 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

Restoration Work Continues

Before his ascension to heaven, Jesus commanded his followers: “Make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit . . . And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things.”—Matthew 28:19, 20.

So the restoration of mankind would not end with Jesus' death. It would continue all the way to “the conclusion of the system of things”—the time when God's Kingdom would begin to take control of our earth. That time is now here. We know this because the sign that Jesus foretold regarding “the conclusion of the system of things” is now being fulfilled.*—Matthew 24:3-14; Luke 21:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Today, in 236 lands, Jehovah's Witnesses obey Jesus' command to preach the good news of God's Kingdom. In fact, the magazine you are reading is designed to help you learn more about that Kingdom and what it will accomplish. On page 2 of each issue of *The Watchtower*, you will find this comment: “This magazine . . . comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom.”

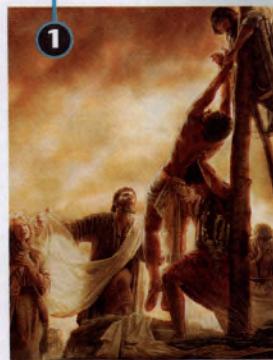
Granted, right now you might still hear of terrorist attacks or natural disasters, or you may experience a personal tragedy. But a study of the Bible will convince you that God has not left mankind. On the contrary, “he is not far off from each one of us.” (Acts 17:27) And his promise to restore what our original parents lost *will* succeed.—Isaiah 55:11.

* For more information, see chapter 9 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

THE ALTAR
God's willingness to accept Jesus' sacrifice.
—HEBREWS 13:10-12.

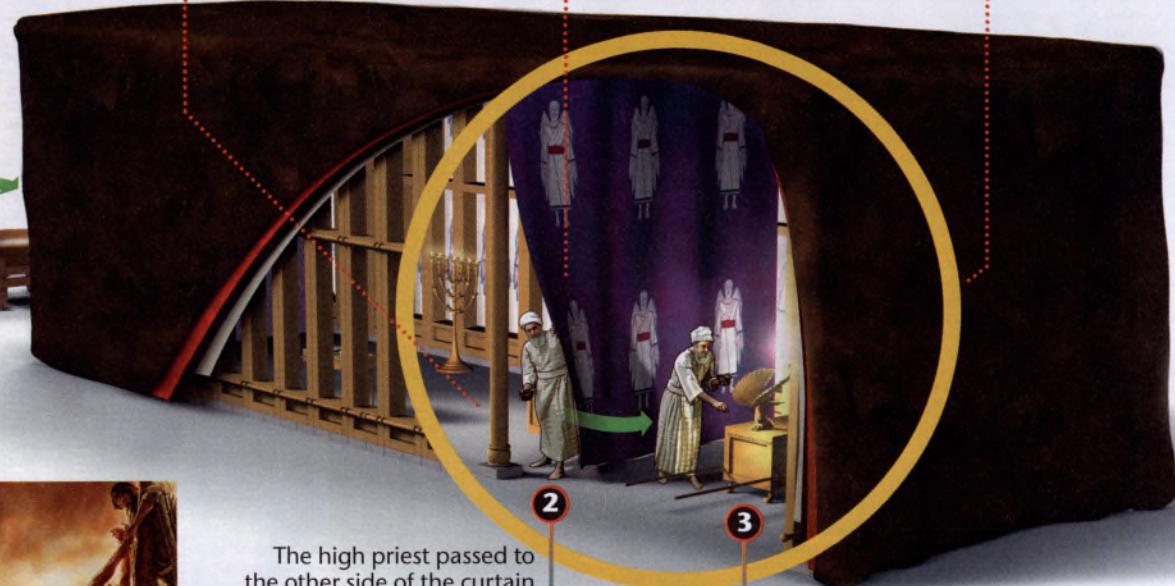


On Atonement Day, the high priest offered a sacrifice for the sins of the people.—LEVITICUS 16:15, 29-31.



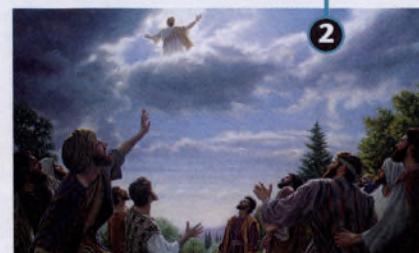
On Nisan 14, 33 C.E., Jesus sacrificed his life in our behalf.—HEBREWS 10:5-10; 1 JOHN 2:1, 2.

THE HIGH PRIEST
Jesus.—HEBREWS 9:11.



THE HOLY
Jesus' spirit-begotten condition.—MATTHEW 3:16, 17; ROMANS 8:14-17; HEBREWS 5:4-6.

The high priest passed to the other side of the curtain separating the Holy from the Most Holy.



After his resurrection, Jesus 'passed to the other side of the curtain' by ascending to heaven "to appear before the person of God for us."—HEBREWS 9:24-28.

THE CURTAIN
Jesus' fleshly body, the barrier that separated earthly life from heavenly life.—1 CORINTHIANS 15:44, 50; HEBREWS 6:19, 20; 10:19, 20.



THE MOST HOLY
Heaven.—HEBREWS 9:24.

"A COPY OF THE REALITY"
What the Tabernacle Pictured

By presenting the value of his shed blood, Jesus provided genuine atonement for our sins.—HEBREWS 9:12, 24; 1 PETER 3:21, 22.



In the dimly lit kitchen of her tiny apartment, Jeanne mechanically sets the table. After all, she must eat something. Suddenly, her eyes fix on the two plates in front of her . . . and she bursts into tears. Out of habit, she has set the table for two! It has been two years since her dear husband passed away.

WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS

WHAT DO THEY NEED? HOW CAN YOU HELP?

FOR those who have not had the experience, it is impossible to understand the depth of the pain caused by the loss of a mate. In fact, the human mind only gradually accepts the terrible reality. Beryl, 72, could not accept the sudden death of her husband. "It felt unreal," she says. "I could not believe that he was not going to walk through the door again."

Following an amputation, individuals sometimes "feel" their lost limb. In a similar way, grief-stricken mates sometimes "see" their beloved one in a crowd or catch themselves making a casual comment to someone who is not there anymore!

Friends and family often do not know how to react in the face of such suffering. Do you know someone who has experienced the death of a mate? How, then, can you provide support? What should you know in order to help widows and widowers work through their grief? How can you help the bereaved gradually to regain a taste for life?

Things to Avoid

Friends and family might be distressed by the suffering of their loved one and with good intentions try to limit the duration of the grieving process. However, one researcher who



*Are there specific dates
when your help would be
especially appreciated?*

conducted a survey of 700 widows and widowers wrote: "There is no 'right' length of time to grieve." Therefore, instead of trying to stem the flow of tears, allow time for the surviving spouse to express his or her grief.
—Genesis 37:34, 35; Job 10:1.

While it might be appropriate for you to help with formalities related to the funeral arrangements, do not assume that you must take complete control of all matters that have to do with the funeral. Paul, a 49-year-old widower, says: "I think it was nice that those who offered help in a real and practical way still allowed me to retain control of the arrangements. It meant a lot to me to have everything go well at my wife's memorial service. I felt that it was the last thing I could do to honor her."

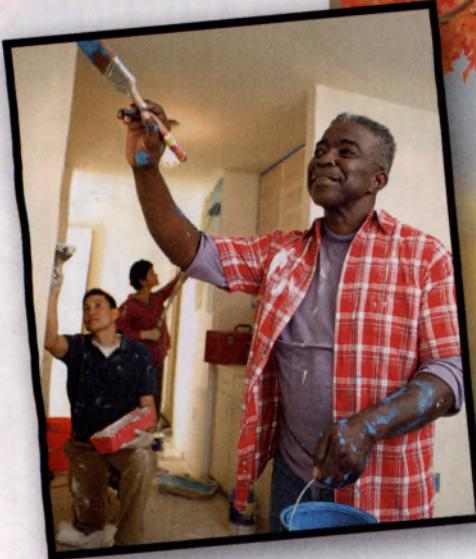
Of course, some help is no doubt appreciated. Eileen, a 68-year-old widow, says: "Arranging the funeral and sorting out the paperwork was hard, since I could not think

Remember to invite them out

straight. Fortunately, my son and daughter-in-law really helped me."

Also, do not be afraid to talk about the dead loved one. Beryl, mentioned earlier, says: "My friends were extremely supportive. However, I did find that many avoided speaking about my husband, John. It was as if he had never existed, and I found that a bit hurtful." In time, widows and widowers may wish to speak openly about their mate. Do you remember a kind gesture or an amusing story involving the deceased one? Then, offer to tell it to the surviving mate; do not allow fear to hold you back. If you sense that your comment would be welcome, say what you appreciated about him or what you miss about her. This may help grieving mates to appreciate that their grief is shared.—Romans 12:15.

When offering your support, avoid overwhelming the grieving one with advice. Refrain from pressuring the bereaved mate to



Include widows and widowers in your daily activities or recreation

make decisions too quickly.* Instead, use discernment and ask yourself, 'What positive steps can I take to help a friend or a relative through one of the most difficult transitions in life?'

What You Can Do

In the days following the immediate bereavement, a surviving spouse will likely welcome practical help. Could you prepare meals, accommodate visiting relatives, or keep the grieving one company?

You also need to recognize that men and women may deal with grief and loneliness differently. For example, in some parts of the world, more than half of widowers remarry within 18 months following the death of a spouse—something that is rarely the case among widows. What accounts for the difference?

Contrary to popular belief, men do not always remarry simply to satisfy their physical or sexual needs. It is, in fact, the male tendency to confide solely in a mate that may plunge a man into profound solitude following her death. Widows, on the other hand,

are often more capable of finding emotional support, even though they sometimes are forgotten by the husband's friends. That tendency on the part of widowers partly explains why many see remarriage as the only way out of their loneliness—despite the risk of becoming involved in a new relationship too quickly. Widows may thus be better equipped to handle the pangs of loneliness.

Whether your friend or relative is a man or a woman, what can you do to lighten the burden of loneliness? Helen, a 49-year-old widow, says: "Many have good intentions, but they don't take the initiative. They will often say, 'If there is anything I can do, let me know.' But I appreciated it when some just said, 'I'm going shopping. How about coming along?'" Paul, whose wife died of cancer, explains why he appreciated being invited out. "At times," he says, "you do not feel like interacting with people or talking about your situation. But after an evening of fellowship, you feel much better; you do not feel so alone. You know that people truly care, and that makes things easier."*

* See the box "Precious Keepsakes or Impediments to Recovery?" on page 12.

* For further suggestions on providing practical help to the bereaved, see the brochure *When Someone You Love Dies*, pages 20-25, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

When Empathy Is Especially Appreciated

Helen found that it was when the majority of her relatives had returned to their daily routines that she most needed emotional support. "Friends and family are there for you in the beginning," she says, "but then their lives go back to normal. Your life, however, doesn't." Being conscious of that reality, true friends will make themselves available and provide ongoing support.

True friends will make themselves available and provide ongoing support

Perhaps a widow or a widower may particularly need company on anniversaries, such as a wedding anniversary or the date of a mate's death. Eileen, mentioned earlier, says that her adult son makes up for the emptiness she experiences on her wedding anniversary. "Every year," she says, "my son Kevin takes me out for the day. I have lunch with him, and it has just been something between mum and son." Why not take note of these most difficult periods for a family member or a friend who is a widow or a widower? You could then arrange for yourself or others to be with that person during such a difficult day.—Proverbs 17:17.

Some have found that those who have lost a mate themselves can be of comfort. Annie, who has been a widow for eight years, says of her association with another widow, "Her determination made a strong impression on me and encouraged me to keep moving forward."

Yes, after overcoming the initial stages of grief, widows and widowers can become a source of inspiration and hope for others. Two widows mentioned in the Bible, the young woman Ruth and her mother-in-law

Naomi, benefited from the support they gave to each other. That touching account describes how the mutual care these women displayed helped them overcome grief and cope with the challenging situation they faced.—Ruth 1:15-17; 3:1; 4:14, 15.

A Time to Heal

In order to start living a fuller life again, widowed individuals need to find the right balance between preserving the memory of their loved one and caring for their own present needs. Wise King Solomon acknowledged that there is "a time to weep." But he also said that there needs to be "a time to heal."—Ecclesiastes 3:3, 4.

Paul, mentioned above, illustrates how difficult it is to avoid living in the past. "My wife and I," he says, "were like two young trees that grew up intertwined. But then one tree died and was removed, leaving the other appearing deformed. It felt strange just to be on my own." Out of loyalty to a deceased mate, some refuse to let go of the past. Others worry that enjoying themselves might amount to a betrayal, so they refuse to go out or to meet other people. How is it possible to help widows and widowers gently to heal—to move on with their lives?

A first step could be to help the person express his feelings. Herbert, who has been a widower for six years, says: "Especially do I treasure the times when visitors sat quietly and listened while I reminisced or verbalized something that was occupying my mind at the moment. I am sure that I was not always the best of company, but I appreciated the empathy." Paul was particularly touched by the actions of a mature friend who regularly took the initiative to ask him how he was coping emotionally. Paul says, "I appreciated his sincere and mild approach and often told him how I was feeling at the time."—Proverbs 18:24.

By expressing conflicting feelings, such as regrets, guilt, or anger, the bereaved person takes a crucial step toward acceptance of his or her new circumstances. In King David's case, it was the pouring out of his heart before the best of confidants, Jehovah God, that allowed him to find the strength to 'get up' and accept the sad reality of the death of his young son.—2 Samuel 12:19-23.

Even though it is difficult at first, in time a widowed person needs to get back into a daily routine. Can you include him or her in some of your daily activities, such as shopping or

an evening stroll? Can you ask your friend for help with some task? That is another way to draw individuals out of their isolation. For example, could she look after the children or share the secrets of a food recipe? Could he help with some repairs around the house? In addition to providing stimulating activity, such requests reassure the person that he has a purpose in life.

By opening up to others once more, the bereaved person may progressively recover a taste for life and may even be able to set new goals. This was the case with Yonette, a 44-year-old widow and mother. She recalls: "Getting back to a regular routine was so difficult! Performing daily chores, managing my finances, and caring for three kids was really hard." However, with time, Yonette learned to organize herself and to communicate better with her children. She also learned to accept the support of close friends.

Precious Keepsakes or Impediments to Recovery?

"I kept a lot of my husband's personal things," says Helen, whose husband died only a few years ago. "I'm finding that those items bring me more happy memories as time goes by. I didn't want to get rid of anything right away because feelings can change so much with time."

By contrast, Claude, who lost his wife over five years ago, says: "As far as I'm concerned, I don't need to be surrounded by her personal effects for her memory to live on. I think that disposing of her personal items has helped me to accept reality and make the grieving process easier."

The above statements show how varied the choice of what to do with the possessions of the deceased one can be. Therefore, wise friends and relatives will refrain from trying to impose their own viewpoint on this matter.—Galatians 6:2, 5.

"Life Remains a Precious Gift"

To be effective helpers, friends and family need to be realistic. For months, even years, the progress and hope of the widowed person may seesaw between periods of relative serenity and bouts of depression. Certainly, 'the plague of his or her own heart' can be severe.—1 Kings 8:38, 39.

It is during such low periods that the surviving mate may need a gentle nudge in the right direction to avoid being cut off from reality and withdrawing into isolation. Such support has enabled many widows and widowers to give their life new direction. Claude, a 60-year-old widower and now a full-time evangelizer in Africa, says: "Life remains a precious gift, even after the heartache of being separated from one's mate."

After the death of a mate, life is not the same. Nevertheless, those who live on after the death of a loved one still have much to contribute to others.—Ecclesiastes 11:7, 8.



DID YOU KNOW?



What privileges and responsibilities came with the birthright of a firstborn son?

■ From as far back as patriarchal times, God's servants accorded special rights to a man's firstborn son. Upon the death of the father, his eldest son assumed the responsibilities of family head. He would care for the family and exercise authority over those members of his household who continued to dwell there. The firstborn also represented the family before God. While all sons received an inheritance, the firstborn received the principal inheritance. Compared to the amount of property the other sons might inherit, the firstborn received a double portion.

In the days of the patriarchs, the el-

dest son could forfeit his right as firstborn. Esau, for example, sold the birthright to his younger brother. (Genesis 25:30-34) Jacob transferred the birthright from his firstborn son, Reuben, to Joseph. Reuben lost the privilege because of his immoral conduct. (1 Chronicles 5:1) However, under the Mosaic Law, a man with more than one wife could not transfer the benefits of the birthright from the first son of one wife to the first son of another wife just because the latter was particularly beloved. The father was to respect the right that naturally belonged to his firstborn.—Deuteronomy 21:15-17.



Why did the scribes and Pharisees wear "scripture-containing cases"?

■ Jesus criticized his religious opponents, the scribes and Pharisees, because they broadened "the scripture-containing cases that they [wore] as safeguards." (Matthew 23:2, 5) Adherents of those religious groups bound small, black, square- or rectangular-shaped leather boxes to their forehead. They also bound them to the inner side of the upper arm, close to their heart. Inside the boxes were passages of Scripture. The practice of wearing such scripture-containing cases, known as phylacteries, had its origin in a literal interpretation of God's direction to the Israelites, which says: "These words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart . . . And you must tie them as a sign upon your

hand" and "as a frontlet band between your eyes." (Deuteronomy 6:6-8) Exactly when the custom of wearing phylacteries was introduced is unknown, but most scholars date it to the third or the second century B.C.E.

Jesus criticized this practice for two reasons. First, the scribes and Pharisees enlarged their phylacteries in order to impress upon others how pious they were. Second, these groups wrongly considered their scripture-containing cases to be charms, or amulets, that would protect them. The Greek word for these cases, *phylakterion*, as used in non-Biblical literature is rendered "outpost," "fortification," or "means of protection."

Stand Up for Your Convictions!

Instructions: Do this exercise in quiet surroundings. As you read the scriptures, imagine that you are part of the event. Visualize the scene. Hear the voices. Feel the emotions of the characters. Let the account come to life.

Main characters: Jeremiah, Ebed-melech, King Zedekiah

Summary: Jeremiah faces severe opposition when he proclaims God's message that the people of Judah should surrender to the Chaldeans.

① ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ JEREMIAH 38:1-5.

How do you think Jeremiah felt as he spoke to the people of Judah? _____

What emotion do you sense in Jeremiah's voice as he proclaimed Jehovah's warning? _____

DIG DEEPER.

What convictions must Jeremiah have had that enabled him to make such a bold proclamation? _____

② ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ JEREMIAH 38:6-13.

Using your imagination, describe the cistern—its width, depth, and odor. _____

What thoughts might Jeremiah have had when he "began to sink down into the mire"? (Reread verse 6.) _____

DIG DEEPER.

Using research materials at your disposal, find out something you did not previously know about the cisterns used in Bible times. _____

What conviction must Ebed-melech have had to initiate the rescue of Jeremiah? (Reread verses 7-9.)

Why was Zedekiah so easily influenced, first by the princes and later by Ebed-melech? (Reread verses 5 and 10.) What does this say about his strength of character? his lack of conviction?

Which individuals in this story displayed strong conviction, and which one did not? Why do you so answer?

③ APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT . . .

Courage.

Conviction.

Jehovah's protection for those who fearlessly obey him.

When under pressure, how can having conviction affect your ability to do what is right?

④ WHAT ASPECT OF THIS ACCOUNT IS MOST MEANINGFUL TO YOU, AND WHY?



IF YOU
DON'T HAVE
A BIBLE,
ASK JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
FOR ONE, OR
READ IT ONLINE AT
www.watchtower.org



WHAT WE LEARN FROM JESUS

How to Follow Christ

When people put faith in Jesus, he would often say: "Be my follower." (Matthew 9:9; 19:21) What is involved in being Jesus' follower, that is, in being a Christian? Consider the answers to three key questions.

How should you treat others?

■ A disciple of Jesus should follow the instructions on how to treat others. For example, Jesus said: "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them." What if someone offends you? Jesus said: "Be about settling matters quickly with the one complaining against you." He also told his followers: "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."—Matthew 5:25; 6:15; 7:12.

To married individuals, Jesus gave this counsel: "You heard that it was said, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed

adultery with her in his heart." A true Christian allows Jesus' teachings to affect both his mind and his heart.—Matthew 5:27, 28.

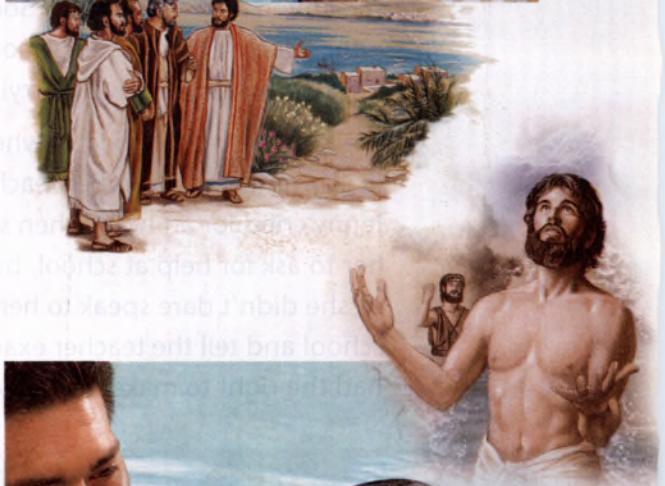
True Christians sacrifice their own comfort to help others. Jesus was self-sacrificing. For example, during an exhausting preaching trip, Jesus and his apostles had no free time even to eat a meal. So Jesus took them by boat to a lonely place to rest. But people heard where he was going and ran ahead of him. The Bible account says: "On getting out, he saw a great crowd, but he was moved with pity for them, because they were as sheep without a shepherd. And he started to teach them many things." (Mark 6:30-34) You can imitate Jesus by doing what God asks of you, even though you may encounter difficulties.



Why should you share the good news?

■ Jesus taught his followers to share the good news. He told the apostles: "As you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" (Matthew 10:7) Jesus' followers have a message of great value. Jesus prayed: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God."—John 17:3.

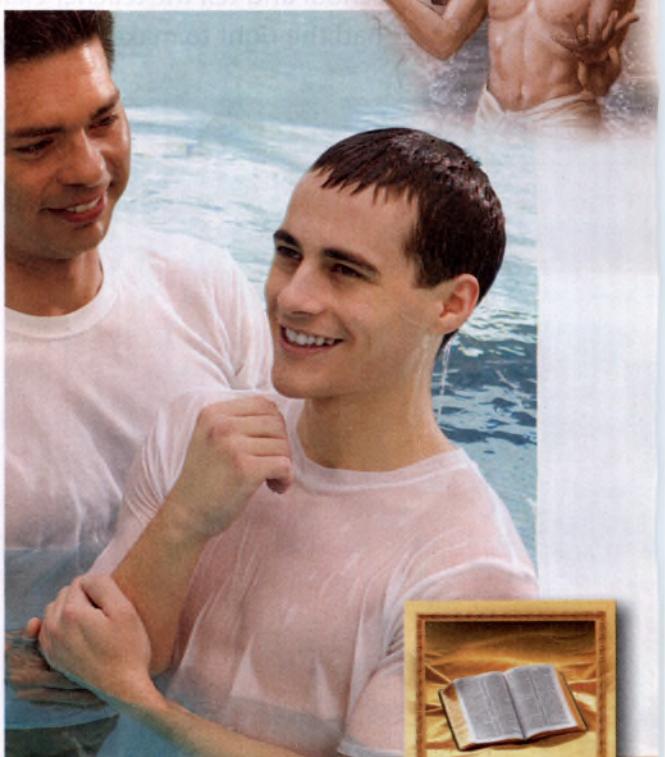
Jesus foretold a work in which millions of his followers would share. He said: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) If you have learned about God's Kingdom and believe what the Bible says, you will doubtless enjoy sharing what you know. Many followers of Jesus start by speaking about God's Kingdom to their relatives.—John 1:40, 41.



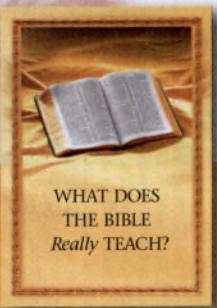
Why should you be baptized?

■ When Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan, he evidently said in prayer: 'I am come to do your will, O God.' (Hebrews 10:7) If you want to do God's will, you too should be baptized. Jesus commanded: "Make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them."—Matthew 28:19.

What responsibilities and benefits come with being baptized? Baptized followers of Jesus serve God with their whole soul. Jesus quoted God's Law, which says: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul." (Matthew 22:37) He also said: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself." (Matthew 16:24) Baptism symbolizes a person's decision to disown himself or herself and to be owned instead by God. Those in this special relationship can ask God to give them a clean conscience.—1 Peter 3:21.



For more information,
see chapter 18 of
this book, published by
Jehovah's Witnesses.



WHAT DOES
THE BIBLE
Really Teach?



KEYS TO FAMILY HAPPINESS

Raising Responsible Children

George:* "Every evening followed the same routine. Michael, my four-year-old son, left his toys scattered all around the house. I tried to make him clean up before putting him to bed. But Michael would become hysterical, screaming and carrying on. Sometimes I got so frustrated that I yelled at him, but that only made us both feel terrible. I wanted bedtime to be a happy time. So I gave up trying and just cleaned up the mess myself."

Emily: "The trouble began when my 13-year-old daughter, Jenny, had difficulty understanding her teacher's requirements for a school assignment. Jenny cried for an hour when she came home from school. I encouraged her to ask for help at school, but Jenny insisted that her teacher was mean, so she didn't dare speak to her. I was tempted to march right down to the school and tell the teacher exactly what I thought of her. I felt that no one had the right to make my baby so unhappy!"



CAN you relate to George and Emily? Like those parents, many find it difficult to watch a child struggle with a problem or be unhappy. It is only natural that parents try to protect their children. However, the situations described above actually presented an opportunity for those parents to teach their child a valuable lesson in responsibility. Of course, the lessons a 4-year-old and a 13-year-old can learn will be different.

The truth is, though, you will not always be there to shield your child from life's challenges. Eventually, a child will leave his father and mother and "carry his own load" of responsibility. (Galatians 6:5; Genesis 2:24) To enable children to fend for themselves, parents must stay focused on the goal of teaching them to become unselfish, caring, responsible adults. That is no easy task!

* Names have been changed.

Fortunately, parents have a wonderful role model in Jesus and the way he dealt with his disciples. Jesus was not a literal parent. But his goal in choosing and training his disciples was to empower them to carry on the work, even after he was gone. (Matthew 28:19, 20) What Jesus accomplished is similar to the goal each parent hopes to reach in raising responsible children. Consider just three aspects of the example Jesus set for parents.

"Set the Pattern" for Your Child Close to the end of his life, Jesus said to his disciples: "I set the pattern for you, that, just as I did to you, you should do also." (John 13:15) Likewise, parents need to explain and show by example exactly what it means to be responsible.

Ask yourself: 'Do I frequently speak about taking care of my own responsibilities in a positive way? Do I talk about the satisfaction that I receive from working hard for others? Or do I often complain and compare myself to those who seem to have an easier life?'

Granted, nobody is perfect. All of us feel overburdened at times. But your example is probably the most powerful way to help your children to see the importance and value of responsible behavior.

TRY THIS: If possible, occasionally take your child with you to work and show him or her what you do to support the family financially. Engage in volunteer work where your child can accompany you. Afterward, discuss the pleasure you received from caring for that responsibility.—Acts 20:35.

Have Reasonable Expectations Jesus recognized that it would take time before his disciples would be ready to assume the roles and responsibilities he was expecting of them. He once said to them: "I have many things yet to say to you, but you are not able to bear them at present." (John 16:12) Jesus did not imme-

diate ask his disciples to do anything independent of him. Rather, he spent much time teaching them many things. Only when he thought they were ready did Jesus send his disciples out on their own.

Similarly, it is unreasonable for parents to ask children to assume adult responsibilities before they are ready. Even so, as children grow, parents should determine what assignments and tasks are appropriate for them. For example, parents need to teach their children to be responsible for their own personal cleanliness, to clean their room, to be punctual, and to manage money wisely. When a child begins school, parents should expect the child to view his or her schoolwork as an important responsibility that the child must care for.

Parents need to do more than just assign responsibilities to their child. They must also support the child's efforts to succeed. George, the father mentioned earlier, realized that part of the reason Michael became so upset about putting away his toys was that the task seemed overwhelming. "Instead of just yelling at Michael to pick up his toys," says George, "I tried teaching him a system for getting the work done."

What specifically did he do? "First," says George, "I established a set time to pick up the toys each night. Then, I worked along with Michael, doing one section of the room at a time. I made a game of the task, even turning it into a contest to see who could work the fastest. Soon, the process became part of the bedtime routine. I promised Michael that if he did the job quickly, I would read an extra bedtime story to him. But if he dawdled, then story-time would be cut short."

TRY THIS: Analyze what each of your children could reasonably be expected to do that would contribute to the smooth

running of your household. Ask yourself, 'Are there things that I am still doing for my children that they could do for themselves?' If so, work with your children until you are sure that they can handle the assignment on their own. Make it clear that there will be consequences, either good or bad, depending on how well the children care for their assigned task. Then, either enforce the consequences or grant the rewards.

Provide Specific Instruction Jesus, like every good teacher, knew that the best way to learn is by doing. For example, when Jesus felt that the time was right, he sent his disciples out "by twos in advance of him into every city and place to which he himself was going to come." (Luke 10:1) However, he did not simply leave them to their own devices. Before sending them out, he gave them very specific instructions. (Luke 10:2-12) When the disciples returned and reported on their success, Jesus commended and encouraged them. (Luke 10:17-24) He expressed both his confidence in their abilities and his approval.

When your children face challenging responsibilities, how do you react? Do you seek to shield your children from the things they fear, to protect them from disappointment and failure? Your first instinct may be to "rescue" your child or to take the burden upon yourself.

But consider: Every time you rush in and "save" your children in some manner, what

kind of message are you sending? Are you indicating that you have confidence in them and believe in their abilities? Or are you telling them that you still think of them as helpless infants who must rely upon you for everything?

For example, how did Emily, mentioned earlier, deal with her daughter's dilemma? Instead of interfering, she decided to let Jenny deal directly with the teacher. Together, Emily and Jenny wrote out a list of questions for Jenny to take to school. Then they discussed when to approach the teacher. They even rehearsed the way the conversation might go. "Jenny mustered up courage to approach her teacher," says Emily, "and her teacher commended her for her initiative. Jenny was so proud of herself—and I was proud of her too."

TRY THIS: Write down a current challenge your child faces. Next to the challenge, write down what you could do to help your child meet the challenge without "rescuing" him or her. Rehearse with your child the steps necessary to overcome the challenge. Express your confidence in the child's ability.

If you forever shield your children from difficulty, you may, in fact, stunt their ability to take on life's challenges. Instead, strengthen your children by raising them to accept responsibility. Doing so will be one of the most valuable gifts you can give them.

ASK YOURSELF . . .

- Do I have realistic expectations of my children?
- Do I both tell them and show them what they need to do to succeed?
- When was the last time that I encouraged or commended my child?





REPLICA OF THE
TEMPLE COLUMN



Why is Jehovah,
the name of the
God of the Bible,
engraved in a
pagan Egyptian
temple?

God's Name, Jehovah, IN AN Egyptian Temple



Background: Asian and Middle Eastern Division/The New York Public Library/Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

HOW early in history does the divine name, Jehovah, or Yahweh, appear in sources outside the Bible? Some scholars confidently answer: As early as the 14th century B.C.E. Why do they say that?

By about the year 1370 B.C.E., the Egyptians had conquered many lands. The Egyptian ruler of the time, Pharaoh Amenhotep (Amenophis) III, built a magnificent temple at Soleb, in Nubia, now known as Sudan. When archaeologists discovered that temple, they found an Egyptian hieroglyphic that appears to show the Hebrew Tetragrammaton—YHWH, or Jehovah. That engraving is older by 500 years than the famous Moabite Stone—previously the oldest known occurrence of God's name. Why does the name of the God of the Bible seem to be engraved in an Egyptian temple?

"The Shasu Land of Jahu"

Pharaoh Amenhotep III dedicated the temple he built to the god Amun-Ra. The temple was about 400 feet long and stood on the west bank of the Nile River. Hieroglyphics decorating the bases of columns in one of its halls list the names of territories that Amenhotep claimed to have subjugated. Each territory is represented by a prisoner, his hands tied behind his back and bearing a shield upon which the name of his land or people is inscribed. The lands of a number of the so-called Shasu, or Shosou, people figure among those hieroglyphics. Who were the Shasu people?

Shasu was the generic name that the Egyptians gave to the Bedouin, despised tribes who lived beyond the eastern border of Egypt. The lands of the Shasu covered southern Palestine, southern Transjordan, and Sinai. Some researchers say

that the lands described as belonging to the Shasu extended as far north as Lebanon and Syria. The list of subjugated lands displayed at Soleb includes one that has variously been read "Yahwe in the Shosou land," "The Shasu land of Jahu," or "Land of the Shasu-yhw." Egyptologist Jean Leclant says that the name that appears inscribed in the shield at Soleb "corresponds to the 'tetragram' of the god of the Bible, YHWH."

Most scholars believe that the name Jahu, Yahu, or Yahwe in this and similar contexts must refer to a place or a district. Scholar Shmuel Ahituv says that the inscription identifies "the wandering area of the clan of the worshippers of Yāhū, the God of Israel."^{*} If his conclusion is correct, the place name would be just one of several ancient Semitic examples that identify both a locality and its god. Another example is Assur, which identifies the land of Assyria and its supreme deity.

Regarding the inscription in the temple at Nubia, Biblical scholar and archaeologist Roland de Vaux says: "In a region with which the forefathers of Israel had so many con-

* Some scholars question whether this hieroglyph implies that the Shasu "were followers of the god Yahweh." They believe that the otherwise unknown name of this land might bear only a coincidental, but curious, similarity to the name of the God of Israel.

nnections, there was, as early as the middle of the second millennium BC, a geographical or ethnic name very similar, if not identical, with the name of the God of Israel."

A Name Still Revered

Soleb is not the only place in Nubia where the name Yahwe appears in Egyptian hieroglyphics. What appear to be copies of the Soleb list are found also in temples of Ramses II at Amarah West and at Aksha. In the Amarah listing, the hieroglyphic for "Yahwe in the Shosou land" appears close to those for other Shosou territories, thought to be Seir and Laban. The Bible associates those areas with southern Palestine, Edom, and Sinai. (Genesis 36:8; Deuteronomy 1:1) They were areas frequented by people who knew and worshipped Jehovah both before and after Israel's sojourn in Egypt.—Genesis 36:17, 18; Numbers 13:26.

Unlike the names of other gods that appear in ancient inscriptions, the name of the God of the Bible, Jehovah, is still widely used and revered. For example, in over 230 lands, more than seven million of Jehovah's Witnesses devote their lives to helping others not only learn that name but also draw close to the God who bears the unique name Jehovah.—Psalm 83:18; James 4:8.

The site of the Amun-Ra temple ruins, Soleb, Sudan





"GOOD NEWS" PREACHED IN AUSTRALIA'S FAR-NORTHERN ISLANDS

THIS good news of the kingdom," Jesus said, "will be preached in all the inhabited earth." (Matthew 24:14) Jehovah's Witnesses obey Jesus' command and try to reach people with the Bible's message, no matter where they live. (Matthew 28:19, 20) This work is done voluntarily, sometimes despite considerable discomfort and personal expense.

Nathan and Carly, for example, reorganized their lives so that they could preach to people living on the remote Torres Strait Islands. In 2003, a representative of the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia invited them to move to Thursday Island to work along with the local congregation. That island is just one link in the chain of green jewels dotting the blue Pacific between Australia and New Guinea.

In 2007, the family bought an old wooden pearl fishing boat called the *Teisan-Y*. At their own expense, they refurbished the boat and began making trips to preach to the inhabitants of ten of the most distant islands, using Thursday Island as a base. What follows is a "Captain's Log" of some of their journeys.



January 2008: Today, I took a dinghy to Bamaga—a 50 mile round-trip—to pick up six local Witnesses. We are now on the *Teisan-Y*, traveling toward Warraber and Poruma islands. The tanks are full—1,450 gallons of fuel at \$8.00 a gallon. The boat is very slow, averaging only six miles an hour. But the weather is glorious—no more than a ripple on the ocean.

On arrival, we anchor offshore, load the dinghy with a few of our crew who have relatives on Warraber, and meet with the island's councillor to gain permission to preach. He is a pastor in the local church but allows us to talk to the residents. We follow the same routine at Poruma and are allowed to preach. The people are very friendly and eager to read our literature. We start many Bible studies.

April 2008: We plot a course for Dauan, Saibai, and Boigu—the three most distant islands—near the border with Papua New Guinea (PNG). The weather turns very bad, and we head to Mabuiag Island instead. Mabuiag is only 43 miles from our home port, but we will travel 86 miles by the time we zigzag our way through the dozens of reefs.

The dinghy was wrenched from the *Teisan-Y* by a huge wave. We turned the boat around amid towering walls of water to retrieve it. Most on board are seasick.

At Mabuiag, we receive permission to preach on the island, and the locals give us such a warm greeting that our discomfort is soon forgotten. One lady is so happy to hear our message that she accepts extra literature so that she can display it at the local library, where she works.

May to October 2008: Because of weather conditions, we are unable to reach the islands. We use the time to preach locally, to work, and to perform maintenance on the boat.

The boat needs extensive work, so we travel to the mainland port of Weipa and pull the boat out of the water on a huge trailer. Easily said, not so easily done! Witnesses from the local congregation volunteer their time to help with the work, such as plumbing, painting, and carpentry. Others bring meals. Still others provide some supplies for our next preaching trip. Their hospitality and help are invaluable.

December 2008: Again we plot a course for Dauan, Saibai, and Boigu. We dodge tropical storms, using our radar, and maneuver through the reefs with the aid of our chart plotter. It takes 12 hours' sailing time to reach Dauan, but it is the most beautiful island we have ever seen. The towering rocky hills are covered in clouds. The people on Dauan eagerly listen to us, and we arrange to continue our Bible discussions by phone after we return home.

One resident, a woman named Lettie, had somehow received our magazines and sent in the coupons to request more literature. The branch office in Australia sent her the items and also sent our congregation a letter asking that if possible, we contact her. We



Landing on Thursday Island

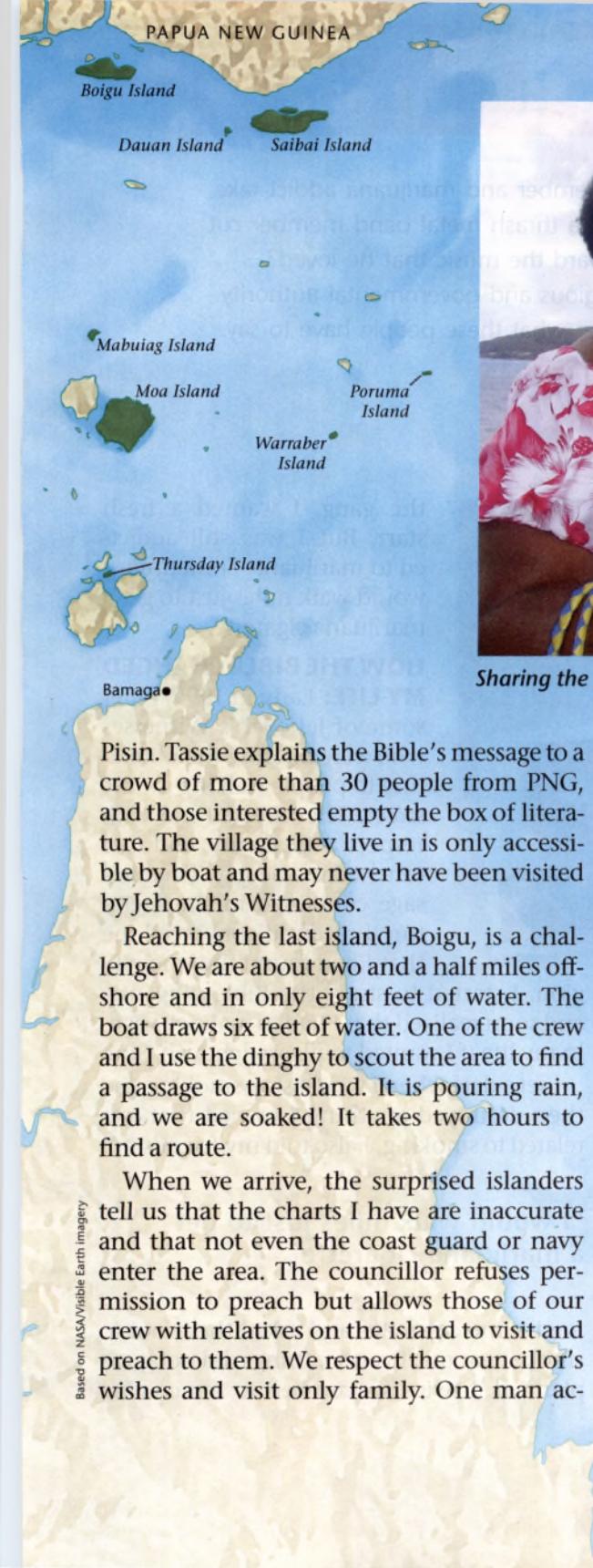


Walking to visit people on Saibai Island

eventually find Lettie and are happy to play a small part in satisfying her spiritual needs.

At the island of Saibai, the councillor refuses to allow us to preach to the islanders. But he does allow those of our crew who have relatives on the island to visit and talk to them. I have a contract with the government to do some secular work painting houses on Saibai, and this helps to cover some of our expenses.

One of our sisters named Tassie is from a village in PNG, which is only about two and a half miles from Saibai. Under a treaty with the Australian government, residents of PNG can come to Saibai and trade. Tassie meets many from her village and does not have enough literature for all of them. This is the first time that Tassie has seen people from her village since she became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. We return to the boat and bring her a box of literature, most of it in PNG Pidgin, a language known as Tok



Sharing the good news in the Tok Pisin language

Pisin. Tassie explains the Bible's message to a crowd of more than 30 people from PNG, and those interested empty the box of literature. The village they live in is only accessible by boat and may never have been visited by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Reaching the last island, Boigu, is a challenge. We are about two and a half miles offshore and in only eight feet of water. The boat draws six feet of water. One of the crew and I use the dinghy to scout the area to find a passage to the island. It is pouring rain, and we are soaked! It takes two hours to find a route.

When we arrive, the surprised islanders tell us that the charts I have are inaccurate and that not even the coast guard or navy enter the area. The councillor refuses permission to preach but allows those of our crew with relatives on the island to visit and preach to them. We respect the councillor's wishes and visit only family. One man ac-

cepts the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*,* reads it immediately, and begins writing down questions in the back of his Bible. This same man is later contacted again when he visits Thursday Island.

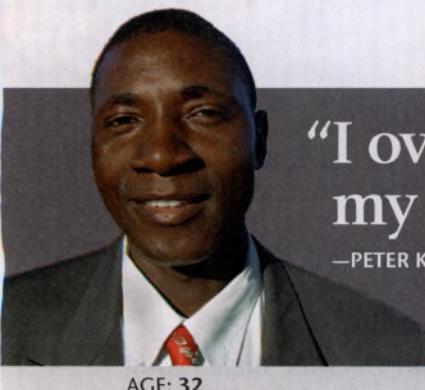
January 2009: We return to the islands of Moa and Mabuiag to talk again with those who had shown interest in the Bible's message. On both islands, we receive a very warm reception. Many in the village of St. Paul on Moa Island tell us not to wait so long until our next visit. The councillor says that we are welcome to preach in the village whenever we wish.

There are 17 inhabited islands in the Torres Strait. We don't know to what extent we will be able to contact everyone who lives on them. But all of us in the congregation here in Australia's far-northern islands are happy to do what we can to bring praise to our Grand Creator, Jehovah.

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

THE BIBLE CHANGES LIVES

WHAT specific steps did a former gang member and marijuana addict take to overcome his harmful habits? Why did a thrash metal band member cut his long hair and change his attitude toward the music that he loved? What motivated a man who rejected religious and governmental authority to become a minister of religion? Consider what these people have to say.



"I overcame my addiction."

—PETER KAUSANGA

AGE: 32

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: NAMIBIA
HISTORY: GANG MEMBER AND MARIJUANA ADDICT



MY PAST: I grew up in the Keemu, one of the four large settlements of the town of Rundu. People there made a living by selling millet, wood, and charcoal.

When I was only two years old, my mother died, so I was raised by my grandmother. We led simple lives. I was not rebellious by nature, but because of peer pressure, I landed in trouble. In school I became a member of a gang. That led to street fighting, bullying, stealing, smuggling of diamonds, and alcohol and drug abuse. Twice I was caught and jailed for burglary and for fraud.

I quit school in tenth grade and eventually moved away from my hometown and from

the gang. I wanted a fresh start. But I was still addicted to marijuana. Sometimes I would walk miles just to get a marijuana cigarette.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED

MY LIFE: Early in 1999, I met some of Jehovah's Witnesses who were offering their literature to people walking on the street. They treated me with respect and dignity, and that touched me deeply. The message contained in the literature I received convinced me that I had found the true religion.

I started to study the Bible diligently and soon realized that I had to make changes in my life if I wanted to please Jehovah God.

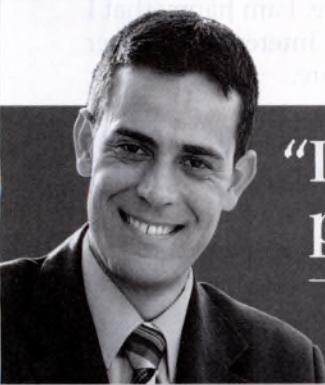
I set a date when I would stop smoking and then destroyed anything I owned that was related to smoking. I also told my friends not

"I would walk miles just to get a marijuana cigarette"

to give me cigarettes and asked them not to smoke near me. Even so, things did not go as planned. I twice succumbed to my craving

for cigarettes and marijuana. Still, this did not discourage me. I kept in mind the principle recorded at Proverbs 24:16: "The righteous one may fall even seven times, and he will certainly get up." Eventually, I overcame my addiction.

The more I learned about Jehovah, the more I wanted to make him my closest friend. One Bible verse that touched my heart was Psalm 27:10: "In case my own father and my own mother did leave me, even Jehovah himself would take me up." As I continued my in-depth study of the Bible, I experienced the truthfulness of those words. I felt that Jehovah became to me a real and caring Father.



AGE: 29

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: BRAZIL

HISTORY: THRASH METAL BAND MEMBER

"I have found real purpose in life."

—MARCOS PAULO DE SOUSA



MY PAST: My family lived in the town of Jaguariuna, in São Paulo. My parents were staunch Catholics, and when I was young, I served as an altar boy. As a result, my classmates in elementary school gave me the nickname Father. At the age of 15, though, I discovered heavy metal rock music. I began associating with rock singers. I let my hair grow. And in 1996,

I also regularly associated with Jehovah's Witnesses. Among them I could see a spirit of genuine friendship and love for one another. Never before had I experienced such a feeling.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: With Jehovah's help and that of fellow Witnesses, I have improved my grooming, dress, conduct, and speech. Looking back, I think my life has changed in the way that an ugly caterpillar becomes a beautiful butterfly. My relatives are thankful for this transformation, and I have now gained their trust. Today, I am married and am striving to be a loving husband to my wife and a caring father to my children.

my father helped me buy my first drum kit.

In 1998, I joined a thrash metal rock band. The music we played was satanic and obscene. It glorified violence. The music influenced my thinking, conduct, and attitude. I became increasingly negative and aggressive.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED

MY LIFE: I first met Jehovah's Witnesses in 1999. They offered to study the Bible with me, and I accepted, even though I really didn't have much interest. However,

what I learned from the Bible changed my outlook on life.

I was known as "the long-haired guy," "the rock star," or "the drummer." But I began to realize that playing in the band had made me egocentric and competitive, and I

became dissatisfied with my reputation. It dawned on me that the singers I worshipped had no real purpose in their lives. I gradually understood that if I wanted to please Jehovah God, I would have to leave behind heavy metal music and the lifestyle of immorality and idolatry that is linked with it.

"What I learned from the Bible changed my outlook on life"

I loved my music and my long hair. I wondered if I would survive without them. I also had a violent temper and knew that I would have to learn to control it. However, through my Bible study, I began to love Jehovah more and more. Learning of God's love, patience, and mercy endeared him to me. I prayed to Jehovah for help to change, and he has

helped me. I have learned for myself the truth of Hebrews 4:12. That verse says: "The word of God is alive and exerts power."

When I began associating with Jehovah's Witnesses, I discovered that they were different. For the first time in my life, I saw real love in action. This love was especially evident at the big conventions held by the Witnesses. I was impressed by the way zealous volunteers worked to make the gatherings more comfortable for others.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: With Jehovah's help, I am now able to control my temper. I feel that I am no longer egocentric and proud.

I must admit that for a while, I missed my old lifestyle—but not anymore. Now I have found real purpose in life. I am happy that I am learning to become interested in other people and in their welfare.



"I experience the joy of caring for others."

—GEOFFREY NOBLE

AGE: 59

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
UNITED STATES

HISTORY: REJECTED RELIGIOUS AND GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY



MY PAST: I was raised in Ipswich, Massachusetts, a working-class seaside town. As an adult, I chose to live in a remote area of Vermont. By North American standards, my girlfriend and I had a very spartan existence. We had no electricity, so we heated our house and cooked our food with wood we collected from the forest. We had an outdoor latrine and no running water most of the year. We had rejected established society, and we looked the part. At one point, I took pride in the fact that I had not combed my hair for six months.

At that time, the United States was involved in the Vietnam War. This affected my attitude toward authority. I saw the hypocrisy in government and religion. I felt that there were no answers to be found in such institutions and that each individual should decide for himself what is right or wrong. So I thought nothing of stealing anything that I needed.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: My girlfriend and I had started reading the Bible but couldn't make any sense of it. I was taking drugs, yet I was trying to give them up. My girlfriend wanted to get married and have children. At that point, one of Jehovah's Witnesses called at our home, and she began to study the Bible with us.

I was soon able to stop my bad habits; however, it was more difficult for me to adjust my attitude toward authority. I had learned to question everything. I had grown up with very few boundaries on my behavior, so the idea of living by somebody else's rules was difficult for me to accept.

I had always believed in a Creator, but I had formed only a vague concept of him. As I studied the Bible, though, Jehovah God's personality became evident to me. I saw that he spelled out exactly what he wanted from me. There was nothing wishy-washy about his requirements. I also learned that he has a definite purpose for making the earth a paradise. (2 Peter 3:13) These truths made me want to change so that I would qualify to serve him.

I was especially impressed by the way Jehovah's Witnesses refused to become involved in war. No other worldwide religion that I knew of held to the same Bible-based standard.

I knew that if I wanted to serve Jehovah, I would have to clean up my appearance. At first, I was uncomfortable with conforming

to the dress standards promoted by the Witnesses. Neither I nor my friends owned a dress shirt, a pair of dress slacks, or dress shoes. And I certainly did not own a tie! But I cut my hair and improved my appearance. Even so, I remember the first time I went from door to door preaching. There was a pane of glass that reflected my new image. I

"I was uncomfortable with conforming to the dress standards promoted by the Witnesses"

wondered to myself, 'What have I done?' Eventually, I became comfortable with my new appearance.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I married my girlfriend, and we are still happily married. The two of us have been able to raise our three children to love and serve Jehovah. I have also had the pleasure of helping others learn the same Bible truths that helped me to transform my life.

I used to pride myself on the fact that I didn't care what others thought. Now I experience the joy of caring for others and having others care about me.





DRAW CLOSE TO GOD

When “a Heart Broken and Crushed” Seeks Forgiveness

2 SAMUEL 12:1-14

WE ALL sin many times. No matter how sorry we are, we may wonder: ‘Does God hear my sincere prayers of repentance? Will he forgive me?’ The Bible teaches this comforting truth: Although Jehovah never condones sin, he is willing to forgive a repentant sinner. This truth was clearly demonstrated in the case of King David of ancient Israel, according to 2 Samuel chapter 12.

Imagine the setting. David is guilty of serious sins. He committed adultery with Bath-sheba, and when efforts to cover over the sin failed, he arranged to have her husband killed. David then kept silent about his sins, maintaining an appearance of innocence for a number of months. Jehovah, however, was watching. He saw David’s sins. But he also saw that David’s heart was not beyond repentance. (Proverbs 17:3) What would Jehovah do?

Jehovah sends the prophet Nathan to David. (Verse 1) Guided by holy spirit, Nathan approaches the king with tact, knowing he must choose his words carefully. How can he remove the veil of self-deception and get David to see the enormity of his sins?

Nathan sidesteps David’s defenses by telling a story that is sure to reach the heart of a former shepherd. It is about two men, one rich and one poor. The rich man had “many sheep and cattle,” but the poor man had “but one female lamb.” The rich man received a visitor and wanted to prepare a meal. Rather than use one of his own sheep, he took the poor man’s only lamb. Evidently thinking that the story

was true, David is outraged and blurts out: “The man doing this deserves to die!” Why? “Because he did not have compassion,” explains David.*—Verses 2-6.

Nathan’s parable has achieved its intended purpose. David has, in effect, indicted himself. Nathan now tells him plainly: “You yourself are the man!” (Verse 7) As Nathan speaks for God, it is clear that Jehovah takes David’s actions personally. By breaking God’s laws, David has shown a lack of respect for the Lawgiver. “You despised me,” God says. (Verse 10) His heart pierced by the stinging rebuke, David confesses: “I have sinned against Jehovah.” Nathan assures David that Jehovah forgives him, but David will have to live with the consequences of his actions.—Verses 13, 14.

After his sin was brought out in the open, David penned what is now Psalm 51. In it, David poured out his heart, revealing the depth of his repentance. By his sins, David had despised Jehovah. But once the contrite king experienced the beauty of divine forgiveness, he could say to Jehovah: “A heart broken and crushed, O God, you will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17) Few words could be more reassuring to a repentant sinner seeking Jehovah’s mercy.

* Preparing a lamb for a visitor was a hospitable gesture. But stealing a lamb was a crime, the penalty for which was fourfold compensation. (Exodus 22:1) In David’s view, the rich man acted mercilessly by taking the lamb. He thereby deprived the poor man of an animal that might have provided his family with milk and wool and even have served as the beginning of a flock of sheep.



OUR READERS ASK . . .

What is a Kingdom Hall?

■ A Kingdom Hall is a house of worship used by Jehovah's Witnesses for their religious services. There are tens of thousands of Kingdom Halls in use throughout the world. Each week, more than 105,000 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses meet in such halls.

Every Kingdom Hall has an auditorium where Bible study programs and lectures are held. In most auditoriums, a stage serves as a teaching platform for the conducting of meetings. Usually, seating is provided for between 100 and 300 people. The Kingdom Hall may also have one or more auxiliary classrooms, an office, and a small library containing Bible-related literature and reference works that can be used for research by any member of the congregation.

In a Kingdom Hall, however, you will not find any of the religious emblems and fixtures typically associated with the churches of Christendom. There are no altars, images, or crosses on display. Why not? Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the use of such items conflicts with the Bible's command to "flee from idolatry." (1 Corinthians 10:14; John 4:24) Many churches and temples are ornate and lavishly decorated. By contrast, Kingdom Halls are designed to be functional and are modest in design. The emphasis is placed on the Bible instruction that takes place within the building rather than on the structure itself.

Why the name Kingdom Hall? Public gather-

ings at a Kingdom Hall focus primarily on the teachings of the Bible and its central message about "the kingdom of God," the theme of Jesus' ministry. (Luke 4:43) So the name Kingdom Hall, which was coined in the 1930's, appropriately describes the purpose of these buildings—to promote true worship and serve as a hub for the preaching of the "good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) Thus, Kingdom Halls are not used for social or commercial activities. Construction, operating costs, and support expenses are funded entirely by voluntary donations. A collection plate is never passed. Rather, there is a box in a fixed location for any who wish to make a contribution.

Kingdom Halls serve the same purpose in all parts of the world, but they are built in a wide range of sizes and styles. The design varies according to the building materials available locally, the climate, and the financial circumstances of Jehovah's Witnesses in the area. Some buildings are constructed from brick, wood, and stone. Others might be open-sided structures, with bamboo walls and thatched roofs.

Visitors are always welcome to attend meetings at any Kingdom Hall. (Hebrews 10:25) In fact, a public meeting is held each week, focusing on a Bible-based theme that is of interest both to regular members of the congregation and to visitors. Why not visit the Kingdom Hall in your community?

Malawi, Africa



England, Great Britain





What three steps has God taken to relieve human suffering?

SEE PAGES 5-6.



What are some specific things you can do to comfort a widow or a widower? SEE PAGES 10-12.



Why should a follower of Christ preach to others? SEE PAGE 17.



What is one thing you can do to help your child become a responsible adult? SEE PAGE 19.



What motivated a man who rejected religious and governmental authority to become a minister of religion? SEE PAGES 28-29.

