

MAY 1, 2009

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



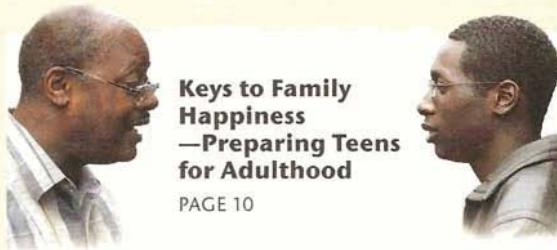
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE  
Stronger Faith?

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.

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

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# What Is Faith?

HOW would you define faith? Some equate it with blind belief. Influential American essayist and journalist H. L. Mencken once called faith "an illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable."

The Bible, in contrast, describes faith as being neither blind nor illogical. God's Word says: "Faith is the *assured expectation* of things hoped for, the *evident demonstration* of realities though not beheld."—Hebrews 11:1.

Given the different opinions about faith, let us consider the answers to the following questions:

- How is the Bible's definition different from what many refer to when they talk about faith?
- Why is it vital that we develop the kind of faith that the Bible describes?
- How can you build strong faith?

## A Title Deed and Solid Evidence

At the time of the writing of the Bible book of Hebrews, the Greek term translated "assured expectation" was commonly used. It often appeared in business documents and carried the idea of a guarantee of future possession of something. Therefore, one reference work suggests that Hebrews 11:1 could be translated: "Faith is the *title-deed* of things hoped for."

If you have ever bought an item from a reputable company and then waited for it to be delivered, you have exercised that type of faith. The sales receipt in your hand gave you reason for faith in the company from which you bought the item. In a sense, that receipt was your title deed, your guarantee that you would receive what you purchased. If

you had lost the receipt or had thrown it away, you would have lost the proof of your claim of ownership. Similarly, those who have faith that God will fulfill his promises are guaranteed to receive what they hope for. On the other hand, those who do not have faith, or who lose it, are not entitled to receive the things God promises.—James 1:5-8.

The second expression at Hebrews 11:1, translated "evident demonstration," carries the idea of producing evidence that contradicts that which only appears to be factual. For instance, the sun appears to revolve around the earth—rising in the east, moving through the sky, and setting in the west. However, evidence from astronomy and mathematics reveals that the earth is not the center of the solar system. Once you become familiar with that evidence and accept it as true, you have faith that the earth revolves around the sun—despite what your eyes tell you. Your faith is not blind. On the contrary, it gives you the ability to see things as they really are, not merely as they seem to be.

## How Important Is Strong Faith?

This is the type of faith that the Bible encourages—strong faith built on solid evidence, even if it requires that we adjust our beliefs. Such faith is vital. The apostle Paul wrote: "Without faith no one can please God. Anyone who comes to God must believe that he is real and that he rewards those who truly want to find him."—Hebrews 11:6, *New Century Version*.

There are many challenges to developing strong faith. But if you take the four steps discussed on the following pages, you can succeed.

# 1 Build Confidence in the Bible

"All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight."  
—2 Timothy 3:16.

**WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?** Many maintain that the Bible is nothing more than a book of human wisdom. Some believe that it is historically inaccurate. Others claim that the Bible's counsel is impractical or out-of-date.

**HOW CAN YOU OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE?** Often, those who question the reliability or usefulness of the Bible have not investigated the matter for themselves. They merely repeat what others say. However, the Bible warns: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps."—Proverbs 14:15.

Instead of blindly accepting what others say, why not follow the example of the first-century Christians who lived in Beroea, in what is now northern Greece? They did not just accept what others told them. Rather, they had a reputation for "carefully examin-

ing the Scriptures daily as to whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11) Let us briefly consider two reasons why you can have confidence that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

*The Bible is historically accurate.* Over the years, skeptics have challenged—and continue to challenge—the Bible's accuracy regarding the names of people and places it mentions. Time and again, though, evidence has proved the skepticism to be unfounded and the Bible record to be trustworthy.

For example, at one time scholars doubted the existence of Assyrian King Sargon, mentioned at Isaiah 20:1. However, in the 1840's, archaeologists began unearthing the palace of this king. Now, Sargon is one of the best-known Assyrian kings.

Critics questioned the existence of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor who ordered Je-



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**NOW PUBLISHED IN 174 LANGUAGES:** Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Armenian (West), Aymara, Azerbaijani, Azerbaijani (Cyrillic), Baoulé, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese<sup>a</sup> (audio Mandarin only), Chinese (Simplified), Chitonga, Chuukese, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,<sup>b</sup> Danish, Dutch,<sup>c</sup> Efik, English<sup>d</sup> (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,<sup>e</sup> French,<sup>f</sup> Ga, Georgian, German,<sup>g</sup> Gilbertese, Greek, Greenlandic, Guarani, Gujarati, Gun, Haitian Creole, Hausa, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,<sup>h</sup> Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Isoko, Italian,<sup>i</sup> Japanese,<sup>j</sup> Kannada, Kaonde, Kazakh, Kikongo, Kiluba, Kinyarwanda, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Kongo, Korean,<sup>k</sup> Kosraean, Kwangali, Kwanyama/Ndonga, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luganda, Lunda, Luo, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Marshallese, Mauritian

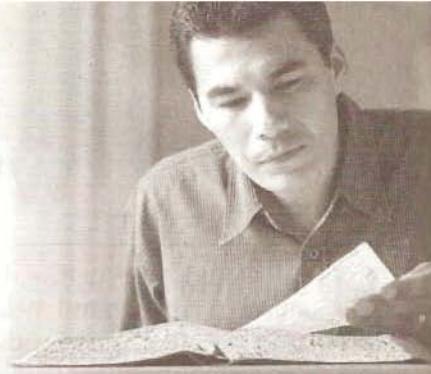
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<sup>a</sup> Audio cassettes also available.

<sup>b</sup> CD also available.

<sup>c</sup> MP3 CD-ROM also available.

<sup>d</sup> Audio recordings also available at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org).



sus' death. (Matthew 27:1, 22-24) But in 1961 a stone bearing Pilate's name and rank was discovered near the city of Caesarea in Israel.

Regarding the historical accuracy of the Bible, the October 25, 1999, issue of *U.S. News & World Report* said: "In extraordinary ways, modern archaeology has affirmed the historical core of the Old and New Testaments—corroborating key portions of the stories of Israel's patriarchs, the Exodus, the Davidic monarchy, and the life and times of Jesus." While faith in the Bible does not hinge on archaeological discoveries, such historical accuracy is what you would expect of a book inspired by God.

*The practical wisdom contained in the Bible benefits people of all backgrounds.* Long before the discovery of microorganisms and their role in spreading disease, the Bible recommended hygienic practices that are still relevant today. (Leviticus 11:32-40; Deuteronomy 23:12, 13) Family members

who apply the Bible's advice about how to treat one another are happier. (Ephesians 5:28-6:4) A person who lives by Bible principles may become a more conscientious employee or a more reasonable employer. (Ephesians 4:28; 6:5-9) Applying Bible principles is beneficial for emotional health as well. (Proverbs 14:30; Ephesians 4:31, 32; Colossians 3:8-10) Such practical advice is what we would expect from our Creator.

**WHAT IS THE REWARD?** The wisdom found in the Bible can make even an inexperienced person wise. (Psalm 19:7) In addition, once we gain confidence in the Bible, it can help us as no other book can in taking the next step toward having stronger faith.

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For more information, see chapter 2, "The Bible—A Book From God," in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*\*

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

## 2 Gain Accurate Knowledge of God

"This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God."—John 17:3.

**WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?** Some say that God is not real. Others hold that God is a vast, impersonal force. Those who believe that he is a real person teach conflicting doctrines about who he is and the qualities that he displays.

**HOW CAN YOU OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE?** One way to gain knowledge of God is to look at the things he has made.

The apostle Paul said: "[God's] invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship." (Romans 1:20) By carefully observing the natural world, you can learn much about the wisdom and power of our Creator.—Psalm 104:24; Isaiah 40:26.

However, to gain accurate knowledge of God's personality, each individual needs to open God's Word, the Bible, and examine it for himself. Do not passively allow others to mold your thinking. Instead, follow the Bible's advice: "Quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making *your* mind over, that you may prove to *yourselves* the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) For example, consider the following facts that the Bible reveals about God.

*God has a personal name.* God's personal name originally appeared thousands of times throughout the Bible. Many translations include it at Psalm 83:18, which says: "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth."—King James Version.

*Jehovah God has feelings that are affected by the actions of humans.* After Jehovah liberated the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, they at times ignored his wise counsel. Their rebellious course made him "feel hurt." Their actions "pained even the Holy One of Israel."—Psalm 78:40, 41.

*Jehovah cares for us as individuals.* Speaking to his disciples, Jesus said: "Do not

two sparrows sell for a coin of small value? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore have no fear: you are worth more than many sparrows."—Matthew 10:29-31.

*God does not favor one race or culture over another.* The apostle Paul told Greeks in Athens that God "made out of one man every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth." He also stated that God "is not far off from each one of us." (Acts 17:26, 27) The apostle Peter said: "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him."—Acts 10:34, 35.

**WHAT IS THE REWARD?** Some have "a zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge." (Romans 10:2) If you know what the Bible really teaches about God, you will avoid being misled and will be able to "draw close to God."—James 4:8.

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For more information, see chapter 1, "What Is the Truth About God?," in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*\*

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\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

*One way to gain knowledge of God is to look at the things he has made*



### 3 Learn the Truth About Jesus

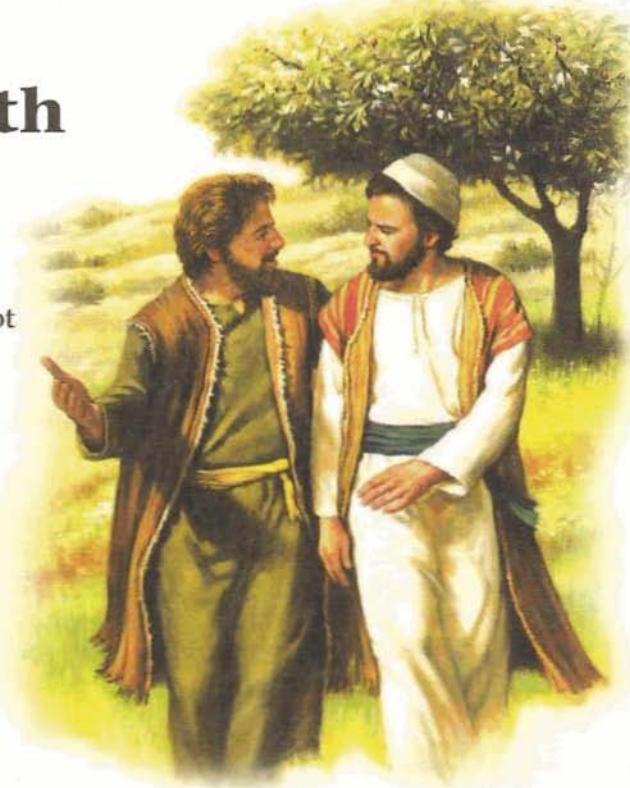
"God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."

—John 3:16.

**WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?** Some would have you believe that Jesus was not a real person. Others acknowledge that he existed but assert that he was just an ordinary man who has long been dead.

**HOW CAN YOU OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE?** Imitate the disciple Nathanael.\* His friend Philip told him that he thought he had found the Messiah—"Jesus, the son of Joseph, from Nazareth." However, Nathanael did not just take Philip's word for it. In fact, he replied: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Even so, he accepted Philip's invitation to "come and see" for himself. (John 1:43-51) You too will benefit from examining for yourself the evidence regarding Jesus. What can you do?

*Investigate the historical evidence that Jesus was a real person.* Josephus and Tacitus were two respected historians who lived in the first century and were not Christians. They mention Jesus Christ as a historical figure. Describing how Roman Emperor Nero blamed the Christians for the fire in Rome in 64 C.E., Tacitus wrote: "Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus [Christ], from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty dur-



*Like Nathanael, investigate the evidence about Jesus*

ing the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus."

Regarding the references made by first- and second-century historians to Jesus and the early Christians, the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2002 Edition, says: "These independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus, which was disputed for the first time and on inadequate grounds at the end of the 18th, during the 19th, and at the beginning of the 20th centuries." In 2002, an editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* stated: "Most scholars, barring the stray atheist, have already accepted Jesus of Nazareth as a historical person."

*Consider the proof that Jesus was resurrected.* When Jesus was arrested by his opposers,

\* The Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, and Luke apparently refer to Nathanael by the name Bartholomew.



his closest companions abandoned him, and his friend Peter fearfully denied knowing him. (Matthew 26:55, 56, 69-75) After Jesus' arrest, his followers scattered. (Matthew 26:31) Then, suddenly, his disciples sprang into action. Peter and John courageously faced the very men who contrived Jesus' death. Jesus' disciples became so motivated that they spread his teaching throughout the Roman Empire, preferring to face death rather than compromise their beliefs.

What was one reason for this drastic change in attitude? The apostle Paul explains that Jesus was raised from the dead and "appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve." Paul adds: "After that he appeared to upward of five hundred brothers at one time." The majority of the eyewitnesses

were still alive at the time Paul penned those words. (1 Corinthians 15:3-7) The testimony of one or two eyewitnesses may have been easy for skeptics to dismiss. (Luke 24:1-11) But the testimony of more than five hundred eyewitnesses provided compelling evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead.

**WHAT IS THE REWARD?** Those who have faith in Jesus and obey him can have their sins forgiven and can maintain a clean conscience. (Mark 2:5-12; 1 Timothy 1:19; 1 Peter 3:16-22) If they die, Jesus promises to resurrect them "at the last day."—John 6:40.

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For more information, see chapter 4, "Who Is Jesus Christ?," and chapter 5, "The Ransom—God's Greatest Gift," in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*"

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

## 4 Face Your Doubts

**"You with little faith, why did you give way to doubt?"—Matthew 14:31.**

**WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?** Even Jesus' disciples at times gave way to doubt. (Matthew 14:30; Luke 24:36-39; John 20:24, 25) In fact, the Bible describes lack of faith as "the sin that easily entangles us." (Hebrews 12:1) The apostle Paul wrote: "Faith is not a possession of all people." (2 Thessalonians 3:2) Not that some are incapable of exercising this quality. Rather, many do not work to acquire it. God will bless the efforts of those who do.

**HOW CAN YOU OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE?** Identify issues that cause you to doubt. For instance, the disciple Thomas doubted that Jesus was resurrected, even though other disciples said that they had seen him. Thomas wanted proof. The result? Jesus provided him

with the evidence he needed to have strong faith.—John 20:24-29.

By means of the Bible, Jehovah God provides the answers we need to remove our doubts. For example, many lose faith in God because they either directly or indirectly blame him for the wars, violence, and misery that afflict mankind. What does the Bible say on this matter?

*God does not rule through human governments.* Jesus referred to the invisible spirit named Satan as “the ruler of the world.” (John 14:30) Satan offered Jesus authority over all the kingdoms of the earth for one act of worship, saying: “I will give you all this authority and the glory of them, because it has been delivered to me, and to whomever I wish I give it.” Jesus did not deny that Satan had such authority. Instead, He said: “It is written, ‘It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.’” (Luke 4:5-8) It is Satan and human governments that are to blame for the world’s suffering, not God.—Revelation 12:9, 12.

*Soon Jehovah God will remove all causes of suffering.* He has already arranged for a Kingdom, or government, under his Son, Christ Jesus, to rule mankind. (Matthew 6:9, 10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28) In fulfillment of Bible prophecy, the good news about this Kingdom is now being preached throughout the earth. (Matthew 24:14) Soon this Kingdom will remove all who oppose it and will eliminate the causes of human suffering.—Daniel 2:44; Matthew 25:31-33, 46; Revelation 21:3, 4.

**WHAT IS THE REWARD?** Those who give way to doubt are like waves that are tossed about by “every wind

of teaching by means of the trickery of men.” (Ephesians 4:14; 2 Peter 2:1) In contrast, those who find satisfying answers to their questions are able to “stand firm in the faith.”—1 Corinthians 16:13.

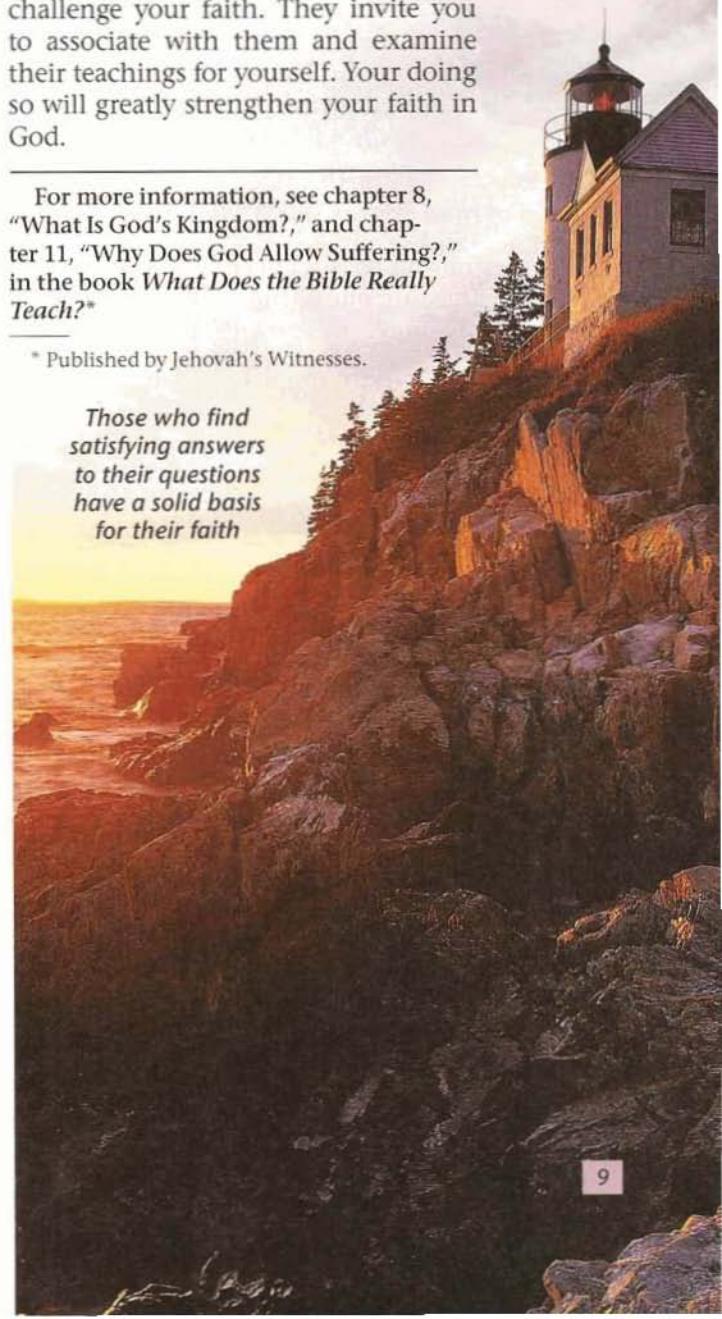
Jehovah’s Witnesses, the publishers of this journal, would like to help you find answers to questions that may challenge your faith. They invite you to associate with them and examine their teachings for yourself. Your doing so will greatly strengthen your faith in God.

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For more information, see chapter 8, “What Is God’s Kingdom?,” and chapter 11, “Why Does God Allow Suffering?,” in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*\*<sup>2</sup>

\* Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

*Those who find satisfying answers to their questions have a solid basis for their faith*



# Preparing Teens for Adulthood

*"Talking to my sons used to be pleasant. They listened carefully to what I had to say, and they responded immediately.*

*But now that they are teenagers, we have conflicts over everything. They even question our spiritual routine. 'Do we really have to talk about the Bible?' they ask. Before my sons hit puberty, I never imagined that this would happen to my family—even when I saw it happen to others."—Reggie.\**

**A**RE you raising an adolescent? If so, you are witnessing one of the most fascinating stages of your child's growth. It can also be one of the most nerve-racking. Do the following scenarios sound familiar?

- *When your son was younger, he was like a boat tied to a dock—you. Now as a teenager, he is tugging at the rope, eager to set sail, and you get the impression that you are not invited on board.*

- *When your daughter was a child, she told you everything. Now as a teenager, she has formed a 'social club' with her friends, and you feel as if you were not granted membership.*

If something similar is happening in your home, do not hastily conclude that your child is becoming an irreformable rebel. What is happening then? To answer that question, let us consider the pivotal role that adolescence plays in your child's development.

## Adolescence—A Milestone

From birth onward, a child's life is a list of firsts—the first steps taken, the first word

spoken, the first day of school, to name just a few. Parents rejoice when their child reaches a milestone. The accomplishment provides evidence of something that they yearn to see—growth.

Adolescence too is a milestone—although some parents may not greet its arrival with applause. Their apprehension is understandable. After all, what dad or mom is happy to see a compliant child turn into a moody teen? Still, adolescence is a vital phase of growth. In what way?

The Bible states that in time "a man will leave his father and his mother." (Genesis 2:24) A major function of adolescence is to help prepare your son or daughter for that bittersweet day. At that time, your child should be able to say, as did the apostle Paul: "When I was a babe, I used to speak as a babe, to think as a babe, to reason as a babe; but now that I have become a man, I have done away with the traits of a babe."—1 Corinthians 13:11.

In essence, that is what your son or daughter is doing during the teen years—shedding the traits of childhood and learning to become a responsible young adult who

\* Name has been changed.

is self-reliant and mature enough to leave home. In fact, one reference work poignantly describes adolescence as “one long good-bye.”

Granted, right now the very idea that your “little” boy or girl will become independent may arouse your skepticism. You might ask:

■ *“If my son is not responsible enough to keep his room clean, how will he maintain an apartment?”*

■ *“If my daughter is not dependable enough to keep her curfew, how will she keep a job?”*

If you wrestle with such concerns, remember this: Independence is not a door that your child simply walks through; it is a road that he or she travels, and it takes years to complete the journey. For now, you know from observation that “foolishness is tied up with the heart of a boy”—or a girl.—Proverbs 22:15.

With proper guidance, however, your child will likely emerge from adolescence as a responsible young adult with his or her “perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong.”—Hebrews 5:14.

### Keys to Success

To prepare your adolescent for adulthood, you need to help him develop his “power of reason” so that he will be able to make sound decisions *on his own.*\* (Romans 12:1, 2) The following Bible principles will help you to do that.

**Philippians 4:5: “Let your reasonableness become known.”** Your teenager makes a request, perhaps for a later curfew. You immediately refuse it. Your adolescent whines, “You’re treating me like a child!” Before replying, “Well, you’re *acting* like one,” consider the following: Teenagers tend to demand more freedom than they can handle,

but parents may tend to extend less freedom than they could grant. Might it be that you could make a concession from time to time? Why not at least think about your teen’s point of view?

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**TRY THIS:** Write down one or two areas in which you could extend a little more freedom to your adolescent. Explain to him that you are extending this freedom on a trial basis. If he handles it responsibly, in time he can be granted more. If he does not do so, the freedoms he has been granted will be curtailed.—Matthew 25:21.

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Colossians 3:21: “Fathers, do not nag your children. If you are too hard to please, they may want to stop trying.”—*International Children’s Bible*. Some parents try to micromanage their teen. To keep him in line, they all but lock him in the house. They pick his friends for him and eavesdrop on his phone calls. But these techniques can backfire. Confining him may only make him want to escape; constantly criticizing his friends might only increase their appeal; eavesdropping could compel him to find ways to communicate with his friends behind your back. The more you try to gain control, the less control you may end up having. Really, if your teen never learns to make decisions for himself while at home, how will he know how to make them after he leaves?

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**TRY THIS:** The next time you talk to your teen about an issue, help him to reason on how his choices reflect on him. For example, instead of criticizing his friends, say: “What if [name] got arrested for breaking the law? How would that make you look?” Help your teen to see how his choices either enhance his reputation or tarnish it.—Proverbs 11:17, 22; 20:11.

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\* While we will refer to the child as a male, the principles discussed apply to both genders.

Ephesians 6:4: "Do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." The term "mental-regulating" refers to more than imparting facts. It means to appeal to the moral consciousness of the child in such a way that it influences his actions. This is especially crucial when your child becomes an adolescent. "The older your children get," says a father named Andre, "the more you need to adjust your approach and to reason with him."—2 Timothy 3:14.

**TRY THIS:** When an issue arises, try reversing roles. Ask your teen what advice he would give you if you were his child. Have him do research to come up with reasons to support—or challenge—his thinking. Discuss the matter again within a week.

Galatians 6:7: "Whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap." A child can be taught by means of punishment—perhaps sending him to his room or denying him a favorite activity. With an adolescent, you would do well to think more in terms of consequences.—Proverbs 6:27.

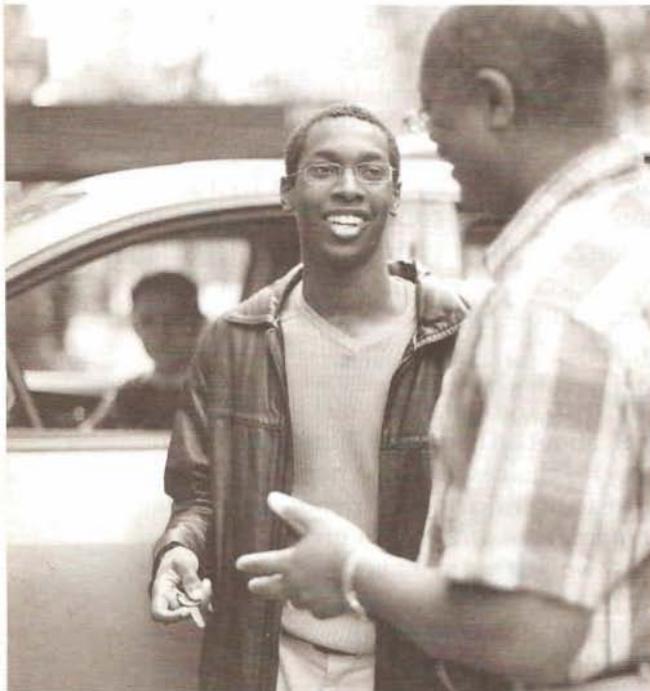
**TRY THIS:** Do not rescue him by paying off his debts or by making excuses to his teacher for a failing grade. Let him feel the consequences, and the lesson will be long lasting.

As a parent, you probably wish that adolescence were like a runway down which your child could swiftly and efficiently pick up speed and take off into adulthood. Rarely, though, is the takeoff that smooth. Still, your child's adolescence provides you with a wonderful opportunity to "train up a boy according to the way for him." (Proverbs 22:6) Bible principles are a solid foundation upon which you can build family happiness.

### ASK YOURSELF . . .

*By the time he or she leaves home, will my adolescent be able to do the following?*

- maintain a regular spiritual routine
- make good choices and decisions
- effectively communicate with others
- care for personal health
- manage personal finances
- clean and maintain a home or an apartment
- be self-motivated



*If your teenager has demonstrated responsible behavior, can you entrust him or her with more freedom?*

# WORD PICTURES IN THE BIBLE

## Do You Understand Them?



A PICTURE may be worth a thousand words, but sometimes just one or two words can paint a picture. Word pictures, or expressions that paint a picture in the mind of the reader, are generously scattered throughout the pages of the Bible.\* For example, by one count, Jesus used over 50 different word pictures in just one sermon that he delivered—the Sermon on the Mount.

Why should you be interested in these word pictures? For one thing, understanding them will add color and warmth to your Bible reading, enhancing your appreciation for God's Word. Additionally, if you correctly identify word pictures, you will better understand the Bible's message. In fact, failing

\* As used in this article, the expression "word picture" refers in a general sense to all figures of speech—metaphors, similes, or some other literary device that involves figurative language.

to identify a word picture in the Bible may not only result in confusion but also lead to wrong conclusions.

### Understanding Word Pictures

A word picture compares one concept with another. The concept being compared is called the **topic**, and the concept it is compared with, the **image**. The comparison between the two concepts is the **point of similarity**. The key, therefore, to appreciating the true meaning of a word picture lies in your identifying and understanding each of these three elements.

At times, it may be relatively easy to identify the topic and the image. But there may be several possibilities with regard to the point of similarity. What will help you to identify accurately the similarity? Often the answer is found in the context, or the surrounding material.\*

For example, Jesus said to the congregation in Sardis: "Certainly unless you wake up, I shall come as a thief." Jesus was here likening his coming (the topic) to the coming of a thief (the image). But what was the point of similarity? The context helps us. Jesus went on to say: "You will not know at all at what hour I shall come upon you."

\* The two-volume Bible encyclopedia *Insight on the Scriptures*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, provides extensive background information that in many cases helps to explain the point of similarity.

### How Word Pictures Help

Word pictures help us in several ways. A difficult point may be compared to something that is easily understood. More than one word picture may be used to illuminate several aspects of one particular subject. Important concepts may be emphasized by means of word pictures or may be made more appealing.

(Revelation 3:3) So the comparison does not point to the purpose of his coming. He was not implying that he would come to steal anything. Rather, the point of comparison involves the unexpected, unannounced aspect of his arrival.

Sometimes, though, a word picture that appears in one part of the Bible may help you to understand a similar word picture in another part. For instance, the apostle Paul used the same word picture Jesus used, writing: "You yourselves know quite well that Jehovah's day is coming exactly as a thief in the night." (1 Thessalonians 5:2) The context of Paul's words is not explicit in spelling out the point of similarity. However, comparing this word picture with the one used by Jesus at Revelation 3:3 can help you to understand the point of similarity. What a powerful reminder this word picture is that all true Christians must remain spiritually awake!

### Word Pictures That Teach Us About God

No human can possibly grasp all aspects of the personality and powers of the Almighty. In ancient times, King David wrote that Jehovah's "greatness is unsearchable." (Psalm 145:3) After considering some of

### Identify the Different Elements

WORD PICTURE: "You are the salt of the earth." (Matthew 5:13)

TOPIC: You (Jesus' disciples)

IMAGE: Salt

POINT OF SIMILARITY IN THIS CONTEXT:  
Preservative

LESSON: The disciples had a message that could preserve the lives of many people

God's creative works, Job exclaimed: "Look! These are the fringes of his ways, and what a whisper of a matter has been heard of him! But of his mighty thunder who can show an understanding?"—Job 26:14.

Even so, the Bible uses word pictures to help you comprehend, in a limited way, the magnificent qualities of our heavenly God. Jehovah is depicted as a King, a Lawmaker, a Judge, and a Warrior—clearly someone you should respect. He is also portrayed as a Shepherd, a Counselor, a Teacher, a Father, a Healer, and a Savior—someone you can love. (Psalm 16:7; 23:1; 32:8; 71:17; 89:26; 103:3; 106:21; Isaiah 33:22; 42:13; John 6:45) Each of these simple descriptions invokes a host of warm images with several points of similarity. Such word pictures convey more than an abundance of words adequately could.

The Bible also likens Jehovah to inanimate things. He is described as "the Rock of Israel," as a "crag," and as a "stronghold." (2 Samuel 23:3; Psalm 18:2; Deuteronomy 32:4) What is the point of similarity? Just as a large rock is solidly placed, unmovable, so Jehovah God can be a solid Source of security for you.

The book of Psalms is packed with word pictures that describe different facets of Jehovah's personality. For example, Psalm 84:11 speaks of Jehovah as "a sun and a shield" because he is the Source of light, life, energy, and protection. On the other hand, Psalm 121:5 says that "Jehovah is your shade on your right hand." Just as a place of shade can protect you from the blazing sun, Jehovah can protect those who serve him from the heat of calamity, giving them shadowlike protection under his "hand" or under his "wings."—Isaiah 51:16; Psalm 17:8; 36:7.

### Word Pictures That Describe Jesus

The Bible repeatedly refers to Jesus as the "Son of God." (John 1:34; 3:16-18) Some

non-Christians find this hard to understand, since God does not literally have a wife and is not of human nature. Obviously, God does not produce a son in the same manner as does a human. So this expression is a word picture. It is designed to help the reader understand that Jesus' relationship with God is like that of a human son with his father. This word picture also emphasizes that Jesus received his life from Jehovah, being created by Him. In a similar way, the first man, Adam, is also spoken of as the "son of God." —Luke 3:38.

Jesus used word pictures to describe the various roles he plays in the outworking of God's purpose. For example, he said: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the cultivator." Jesus then compared his disciples to the branches of a vine. (John 15:1, 4) What important points does this word picture teach? To remain alive and fruitful, the branches of a literal vine must remain attached to the trunk. Similarly, Christ's disciples must remain in union with him. "Apart from me you can do nothing at all," Jesus said. (John 15:5) And just as a cultivator expects a vine to produce fruit, Jehovah expects those in

union with Christ to produce spiritual fruitage.—John 15:8.

### Make Sure of the Point of Similarity

We may get the wrong impression from just reading a word picture without establishing the point of similarity. Take, for example, the words found at Romans 12:20: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by doing this you will heap fiery coals upon his head." Does the heaping of fiery coals on a person's head indicate a retaliatory punishment? No, not when we understand the point of similarity. This word picture is drawn from the ancient process of smelting. Ore was heated on a bed of coals, and some coals were heaped on top of the ore as well. This process melted the ore and caused the pure metal to separate from any impurities. Likewise, exercising kindness will tend to soften a person's attitude and bring out the good in him.

The correct understanding of word pictures not only enlightens our minds but also touches our hearts. We feel the heaviness of sin when it is likened to a debt. (Luke 11:4) But when Jehovah forgives us and cancels the debt that would otherwise be charged against our account, what a relief we feel! When we are told that he 'covers over' and 'blots out' our sins—wiping the slate clean as it were—we are reassured that he will not hold such sins against us in the future. (Psalm 32:1, 2; Acts 3:19) And how comforting it is to know that Jehovah can take sins that are as glaring as scarlet or crimson and make them as white as snow!—Isaiah 1:18.

These are just a few of the hundreds of word pictures found in God's Word, the Bible. So when you read your Bible, take special note of the word pictures. Take time to ascertain the points of similarity and meditate on these. Doing so will enrich your understanding of and appreciation for the Scriptures.

*"Jehovah is my Shepherd.  
I shall lack nothing."*

PSALM 23:1



# About “the End”

## *What will end?*

Jesus' disciples asked him: "What will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (Matthew 24:3) When answering that question, Jesus did not say that the literal earth would end. Previously, he had talked about "the system of things" and had used the term to refer to the entire secular and religious system that is dominated by Satan. (Matthew 13:22, 40, 49) So that was the system he had in mind when he said: "The end will come."—Matthew 24:14.

## *How did Jesus describe the end?*

The end of this unjust system is "good news." Jesus said: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and

then *the end will come.*" Jesus described the end of the present system of things this way: "There will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again. In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved."—Matthew 24:14, 21, 22.

## *Who will be destroyed?*

Only those who do not love and serve Jehovah and Jesus will be destroyed. Such people do not pay attention to God. Jesus said: "Just as the days of Noah were, so the presence of the Son of man will be. For as they were in those days before the flood, . . . they took no note until the flood came and swept them all away." (Matthew 24:36-39) Jesus said that many are on a road leading to



destruction. However, he gave the assurance that there is a "cramped . . . road leading off into life."—Matthew 7:13, 14.

### *When will this system of things end?*

When asked about the sign of his presence "and of the conclusion of the system of things," Jesus replied: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes . . . and because of the increasing of lawlessness the love of the greater number will cool off." (Matthew 24:3-12) Thus, all of today's sad news has an encouraging meaning—soon God's Kingdom government will bring peace to obedient mankind. Jesus said: "When you see these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near."—Luke 21:31.

### *What should you do?*

Jesus said that God "gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed

but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) To exercise faith in God and his Son, you need to know them well. Hence, Jesus said: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3.

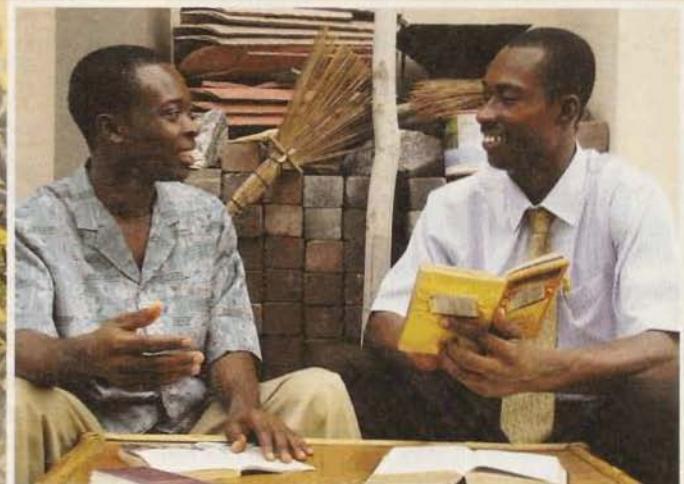
Take care that anxieties and problems do not prevent you from learning how to demonstrate your love for God. Jesus said: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with . . . anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare. For it will come." If you heed Jesus' warning, you will "succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur."—Luke 21:34-36.

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**For more information,  
see chapter 9, "Are We Living  
in 'the Last Days'?", of the book  
*What Does the Bible  
Really Teach?\****

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\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



## When Jehovah Described Himself

*Exodus 34:6, 7*

**H**OW would you describe God—his personality and his ways? Imagine that you could ask God about himself and then listen as he described his own attributes. The prophet Moses had just such an experience. Thankfully, he was inspired to record what happened.

Up on Mount Sinai, Moses implored Jehovah: “Cause me to see, please, your glory.” (Exodus 33:18) The next day, the prophet was privileged to be given a glimpse of God’s glory.\* Moses did not describe in detail what he saw in the magnificent vision. Instead, he recorded something of more profound importance—what God said. Let us examine what Jehovah said, as found at Exodus 34:6, 7.

The first thing Jehovah reveals about himself is that he is “a God merciful and gracious.” (Verse 6) According to one scholar, the Hebrew word rendered “merciful” bespeaks God’s “tender compassion, like that of a father to his children.” The word rendered “gracious” is related to a verb that “depicts a heartfelt response by someone who has something to give to one who has a need.” Clearly, Jehovah wants us to know that he looks after his worshippers as parents look after their children—with tender love and deep concern for their needs.—Psalm 103:8, 13.

\* Moses did not see Jehovah directly, for no human may see God and yet live. (Exodus 33:20) Jehovah evidently gave Moses a vision of His glory, communicating with him through an angelic representative.

Next, Jehovah says that he is “slow to anger.” (Verse 6) He is not prone to become angry with his earthly servants. Rather, he is patient with them, putting up with their shortcomings while giving them time to change their sinful ways.—2 Peter 3:9.

God continues, saying he is “abundant in loving-kindness and truth.” (Verse 6) Loving-

kindness, or loyal love, is a precious quality by which Jehovah forges between himself and his people a bond that is steadfast, unfailing. (Deuteronomy 7:9) Jehovah is also a wellspring of truth. He can neither deceive nor be deceived. Since he is “the God of truth,” we can have complete faith in everything he says, including his promises for the future.

—Psalm 31:5.

Another great truth that Jehovah wants us to know about himself is that he pardons “error and transgression and sin.” (Verse 7) He is “ready to forgive” repentant sinners. (Psalm 86:5) At the same time, Jehovah never condones badness. He explains that “by no means will he give exemption from punishment.” (Verse 7) The holy and just God will not leave willful sinners unpunished. Sooner or later the consequences of their sinful behavior will catch up with them.

Jehovah’s description of his qualities is a clear indication that he wants us to get to know him and to become acquainted with his personality and ways. Are you not moved to learn more about his beautiful qualities?



# PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST WICKED SPIRITS

JAMES was raised in a remote part of the island of Malaita, in the Solomon Islands. From his youth on, he was taught to honor the spirits. "I would never have considered appealing to the spirits to bring harm to others," he says, "but I did not think it was possible to have a happy life without using *rara-fono* [traditional practices that call for help from the spirits] for protection from harm."

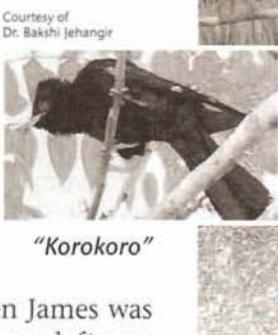
As is the case of people in numerous other parts of the world, inhabitants of the Solomon Islands believe that spirits can either help or harm a person. In fact, many Melanesians view so-called benevolent spirits with affection, not with fear.

Belief in the activity of spirits is manifest in a variety of ways. For example, when James was young, women in his village would rush their children inside the house whenever they heard the call of the *korokoro* bird (common koel). Why? They believed that the bird's call meant that someone was about to be harmed.

Some villagers place a special white stone above the doorway of their houses. James did this, believing that the stone would protect him from harmful spirits. And when James was at work, he would collect any scraps left over from his lunch and keep them in a bag to be disposed of later. His main concern was that



"Korokoro"



Courtesy of  
Dr. Bakshi Jehangir

a magic man would find the scraps and use them to cast a spell that would cause him to become ill.

Although these specific practices may not be common in your part of the world, perhaps like James you have felt the need to follow traditional customs in order to obtain protection from wicked spirits. You may believe that adhering to such customs is essential to your welfare.

If you respect the Bible, you no doubt want to know what it says in answer to the following questions: (1) What harm can wicked spirits bring upon you? (2) Could following some traditional customs actually cause you to fall under the influence of the demons? (3) How can you find real protection from wicked spirits and be happy?

## How Wicked Spirits Cause Harm

The Bible reveals that wicked spirits cannot possibly be the spirits of the dead. "The



A girl collects food scraps so that they cannot be used to cast a spell

living are conscious that they will die," states God's Word, "but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) Wicked spirits are, in fact, rebellious angels who have joined Satan in trying to mislead humans.—Revelation 12:9.

The Scriptures plainly state that we need protection from wicked spirits. The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus: "We have a wrestling, not against blood and flesh, but against . . . the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." The apostle Peter described the ruler of all wicked spirits, Satan the Devil, as being like "a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone."—Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8.

Satan causes harm primarily by misleading people, tricking or tempting them into acting in a way that offends God. The Bible says that Satan "keeps transforming himself into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14) He pretends to be a protective spirit, when in fact, his intent is wicked. Satan blinds people's minds to the truth about him and to the truth about God. (2 Corinthians 4:4) What is his goal in misleading people?

Satan craves worship and wants people, either knowingly or unknowingly, to give him such worship. When God's own Son, Jesus, was on earth, Satan wanted him to "fall down and do an act of worship" to him. Jesus said: "Go away, Satan! For it is written, 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship.'" (Matthew 4:9, 10) Jesus refused to do anything that would imply worshipful submission to Satan.

Jehovah is the most powerful of all spirits and will not let any lasting harm come to those who obey him. (Psalm 83:18; Romans 16:20) But if we are going to please Jehovah God as Jesus did, we need to avoid any act of submission to Satan or his demons. To that end, we need to identify traditional practices

that give worshipful honor to wicked spirit forces. How can you do so?

### Identify Customs That Displease God

Jehovah God warned his ancient people, the Israelites, against copying some of the traditional practices of nearby nations. He said: "There should not be found in you anyone who . . . employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone who looks for omens or a sorcerer, or one who binds others with a spell." Regarding those who followed these customs, the Bible says: "Everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah."—Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

Therefore, when considering customs prevalent in your area, consider the following questions: Does the custom encourage a belief in omens? Does it attribute magical protective powers to inanimate objects? Does it involve the casting of or protection from spells? Will it involve an act of submission to a spirit other than Jehovah or his appointed representative, Jesus?—Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:9, 10.

It is vital that you reject any customs that encourage such practices. Why? The apostle Paul was inspired to write: "You cannot be partaking of 'the table of Jehovah' and the table of demons." He warned that those who tried to please both God and other spirits would be "inciting Jehovah to jealousy." (1 Corinthians 10:20-22) Jehovah God demands and deserves exclusive devotion.—Exodus 20:4, 5.

Consider, too, this question: Does the custom promote the idea that a person is not responsible for his or her own actions? For example, adultery and sex before marriage are frowned upon in many communities and are condemned in the Bible. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) However, in some Pacific cultures, such practices might become acceptable if the girl claims that she has been "green

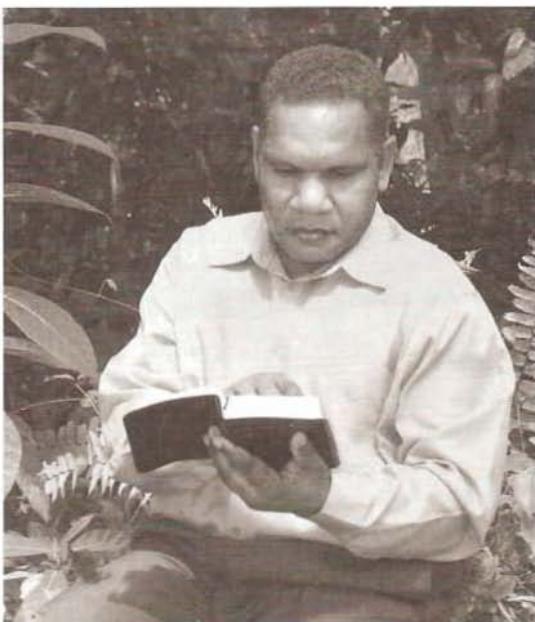
leafed,"\* that is, she says that she has been impelled to have sex because of a spell placed on her.

The Bible, however, teaches that we are responsible for our actions. (Romans 14:12; Galatians 6:7) For instance, the first woman, Eve, felt that she was deceived by Satan to participate in disobeying God, saying: "The serpent—it deceived me and so I ate." However, Jehovah held Eve accountable for her actions. (Genesis 3:13, 16, 19) He also holds us accountable for our conduct.—Hebrews 4:13.

### What Must You Do?

If you want to please God and live by Bible principles, you need to take decisive action. Honesthearted individuals living in Ephesus in the first century set a good example in this regard. To separate themselves from the influence of wicked spirits, they collected all the books they owned that dealt with spiritistic practices and "burned them up before everybody."—Acts 19:19.

\* This term refers to the custom of making an incantation over a special plant leaf or food. This item is then given to a girl. The leaf or food is claimed to produce in the girl an attraction for a man. This custom is not the same as when a girl is unknowingly drugged and then forced to have sex against her will. In the latter case, the girl is an innocent victim.



Prior to burning the books, these individuals "would come and confess and report their practices openly." (Acts 19:18) Touched to the heart by Paul's teaching about the Christ, they were moved to destroy their spiritistic books. They also changed their feelings regarding their traditional practices.

True, abandoning traditional practices may not be easy to do. James, mentioned earlier, faced this challenge. He began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and enjoyed what he learned. However, he continued to practice *rarafono*. On examining his feelings with regard to these practices, he found that he believed in Jehovah's promises for the future but felt that to be protected from harm, he still needed to rely on traditional practices.

What helped James to change his outlook? He says: "I prayed to Jehovah for his protection and for help to put my trust in him. At the same time, I abandoned my traditional practices." Has any harm come to him? "No," says James. "All that has happened is that I have learned to trust in Jehovah. I have seen how close Jehovah can be as a friend." In fact, for the past seven years, James has served as a full-time minister, helping others learn what the Bible teaches.

Why not follow James' example? Examine the customs that are adhered to in your community, and use your "power of reason" to determine if they are in harmony with the "will of God." (Romans 12:1, 2) Then have the courage to separate yourself from superstitious practices. If you do so, you can have confidence that Jehovah will "take you in" and protect you. (2 Corinthians 6:16-18) Like James, you will experience the truthfulness of the Bible's promise: "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower. Into it the righteous runs and is given protection." —Proverbs 18:10.

# BROOKLYN BETHEL

## 100 YEARS OF HISTORY

THE year 1909 was a momentous one for New York City. The Queensboro Bridge was opened, connecting the borough of Queens with Manhattan, and the Manhattan Bridge was opened, making another connection between Manhattan and Brooklyn.

It was also a momentous year for Jehovah's Witnesses. Earlier, Charles Taze Russell, president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, the legal arm of Jehovah's Witnesses, had seen the potential for expanding the

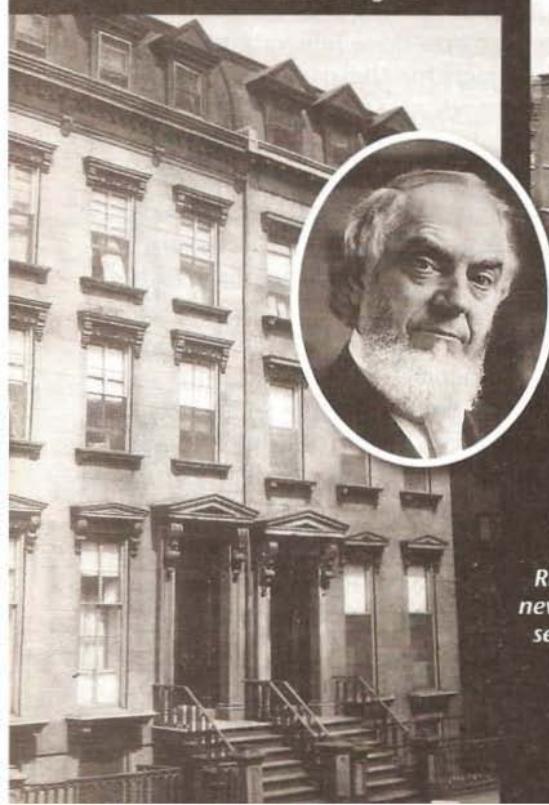
preaching of the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) He believed that moving the Society's headquarters from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Brooklyn, New York, would be an important step in doing so. Preparations for the move had begun in 1908, and the move was made early the following year.

### Why Move to Brooklyn?

Those taking the lead in the preaching work back then knew that evangelizing by

*Bethel Home*

122-124 Columbia Heights



Russell's  
newspaper  
sermons

13-17 Hicks Street  
(1909-1918)



35 Myrtle Avenue  
(1920-1922)



*Hail Him! Hail Him!  
Earth's New Sovereign*

*"THEY KNEW NOT THE TIME"*

sermons printed in newspapers was an effective way to spread Bible truth. In fact, by the year 1908, Russell's weekly Bible sermons appeared in 11 newspapers with a combined circulation of 402,000.

However, Russell wrote: "Brethren familiar with newspaper methods . . . assure us that if the weekly sermons emanated from a [larger center] it would possibly result in the publication of the sermons all over the United States; that within a year there might be hundreds of papers publishing them regularly." Therefore, the hunt was on for the best location to expand the preaching work.

Why Brooklyn? Russell said: "Altogether we concluded, after seeking Divine guidance, that Brooklyn, N.Y., with a large population . . . and known as 'The City of Churches,' would, for these reasons, be our most suitable center for the harvest work." The re-

sults speak for themselves. In a short space of time, 2,000 newspapers were publishing Russell's sermons.

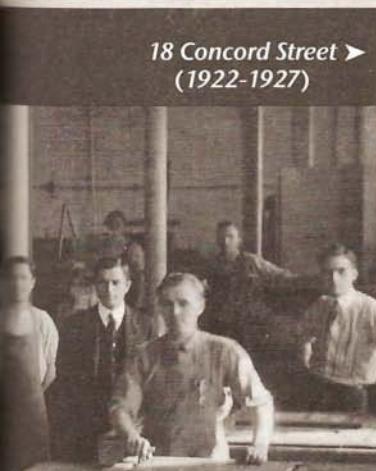
New York was a good choice for yet another reason. By 1909, branch offices had been established in Great Britain, Germany, and Australia, with more soon to follow. Hence, it made sense to locate the world headquarters in a seaport city that also had substantial road and rail links.

### Why Called Bethel?

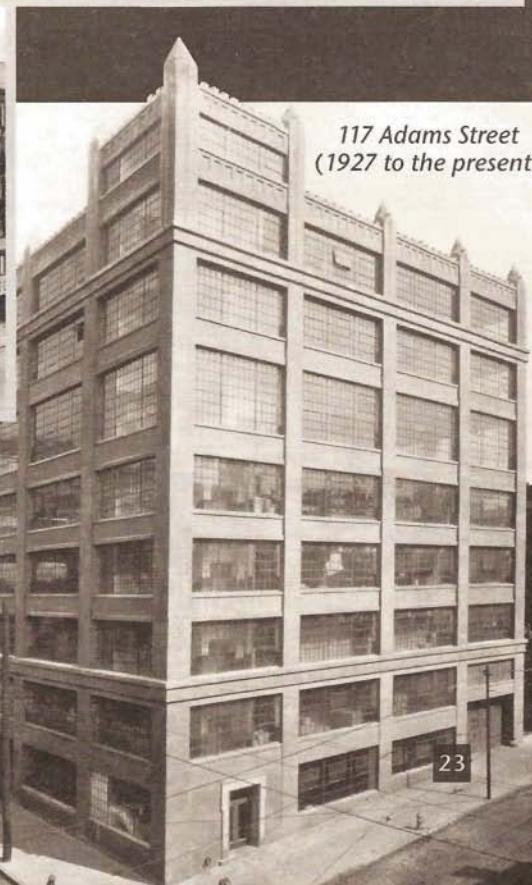
The original headquarters of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society was established in the 1880's, in Allegheny (now part of Pittsburgh), Pennsylvania. Back then, it was called the Bible House. By 1896, this facility was staffed by 12 members.

With the move to Brooklyn in 1909, though, the new residence for the staff

**18 Concord Street ▶  
(1922-1927)**



**117 Adams Street  
(1927 to the present)**



members was called Bethel.\* Why Bethel? The property that the Watch Tower Society purchased at 13-17 Hicks Street was owned by the prominent clergyman Henry Ward Beecher and was known as the Beecher Bethel. Beecher's former residence, located at 124 Columbia Heights, was also purchased. The March 1, 1909, issue of *The Watch Tower* reported: "It certainly seems very remarkable that we should get the old Beecher Bethel and then by accident get his former residence. . . . The new home we shall call 'Bethel,' and the new office and auditorium, 'The Brooklyn Tabernacle'; these names will supplant the term 'Bible House.'"

Today, the greatly expanded facilities in Brooklyn and at two other locations in New York State, Wallkill and Patterson, including both the residence, the printery, and the offices, have come to be called Bethel. In fact, worldwide there are now Bethel homes in

\* The Hebrew word "Bethel" means "House of God." In the Bible, Bethel was a prominent Israelite city. Only the city of Jerusalem is mentioned more frequently.

113 countries. They are staffed by more than 19,000 ministers, who help to distribute Bible information.

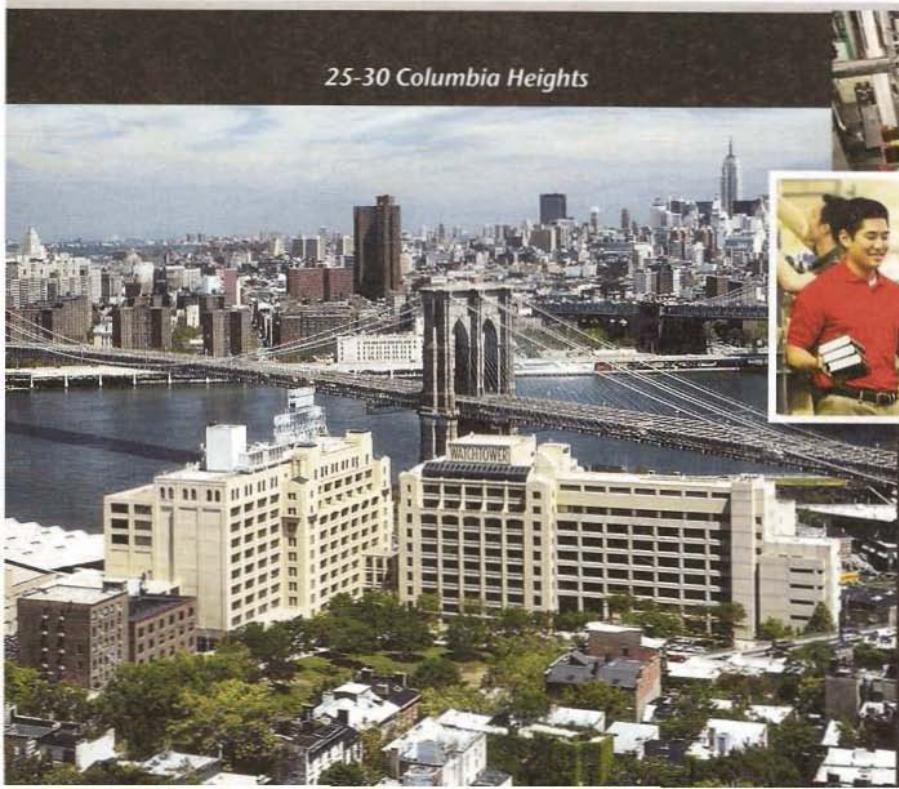
### A Warm Welcome to Visitors

The facilities were dedicated on January 31, 1909. Monday, September 6, 1909, was Reception Day at Bethel. Hundreds of Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known, toured the facility. Many of them came directly from a Christian convention held in Saratoga Springs, about 200 miles upriver from New York City. Charles Taze Russell personally welcomed and greeted the visitors.\*

Visitors continue to be welcome at Bethel. In fact, each year more than 40,000 people tour the Brooklyn facilities. Brooklyn Bethel continues to play a vital role in the expansion of Jehovah's Kingdom interests, to the blessings of untold millions.

\* For additional historic details, see *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, pages 718-723, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

25-30 Columbia Heights



Wallkill printery

Patterson  
Educational Center



# What Do You Know About the WATCH TOWER BIBLE and TRACT SOCIETY?

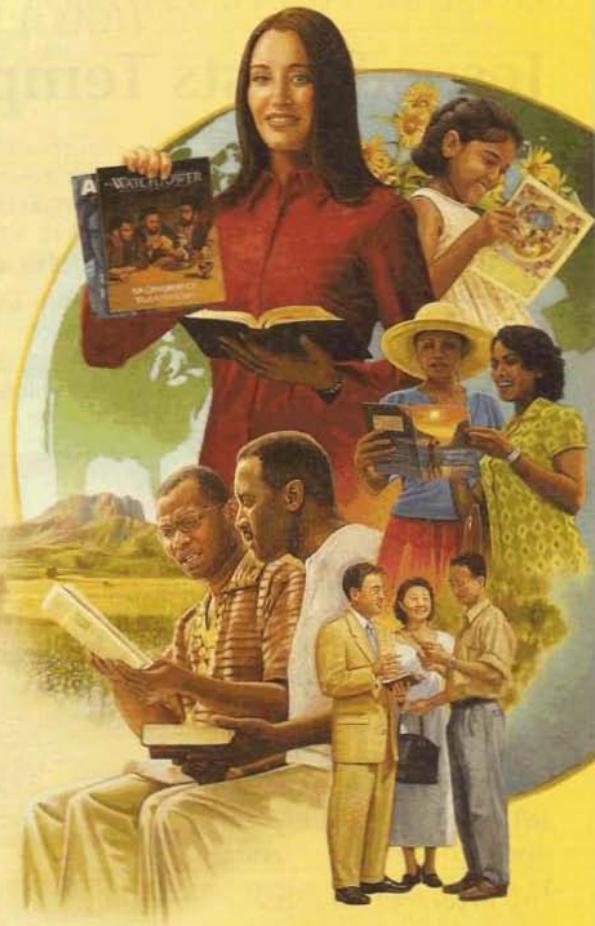
The corporation now known as the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania was chartered in 1884 as Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society. Its purpose was to spread abroad Bible truth, especially by means of the printed page. Today, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society remains one of the legal instruments used worldwide by Jehovah's Witnesses.\*—Philippians 1:7.

The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society has produced Bibles and Bible-based publications in 473 languages. It has published in whole or in part more than 150 million copies of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in 72 languages. In addition to the *New World Translation*, the Society has printed on its own presses or has commissioned the printing of the following Bible translations: the *American Standard Version*, *The Bible in Living English*, *The Emphatic Diaglott*, Holman's *Linear Parallel Edition*, the *King James Version* (including the *Bible Students Edition*), and *The New Testament Newly Translated and Critically Emphasized, Second Edition*.

Apart from printing Bibles, over just the past ten years, Jehovah's Witnesses have produced more than 20 billion other items, such as books, magazines, tracts, CDs, DVDs, and similar Bible-based material.\* The majority of these items have been printed, packaged, and shipped from Bethel homes located in such countries as Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Colombia, Finland, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Spain, and the United States.

\* In 2008, there were 7,124,443 Jehovah's Witnesses in 236 lands. They were organized into 103,267 congregations.

\* This material is not sold. The Bible education work of Jehovah's Witnesses is supported by voluntary contributions.



## 1998-2008 PRODUCTION

Books	458,230,708
Magazines	11,292,413,199
Tracts	7,996,906,376
Brochures	862,050,233
CDs/MP3s	34,621,130
DVDs	13,500,125
Other	129,083,031
Total	20,786,804,802

# Jesus Resists Temptation

**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 main characters.

## **ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ MATTHEW 4:1-11.**

Describe the wilderness in which Jesus spent 40 days. \_\_\_\_\_

What tone do you detect in the Tempter's voice? in Jesus' voice? \_\_\_\_\_

## **DIG DEEPER.**

How did Satan show himself to be an opportunist? (Reread verse 2.)

Why did the Devil present to Jesus not only all the kingdoms of the world but also "their glory"? (Reread verse 8.)

Why might Satan have chosen to tempt Jesus by offering him rulership?

(a) What does each of Satan's temptations reveal about his thinking?

(b) In contrast, what does each of Jesus' responses reveal?

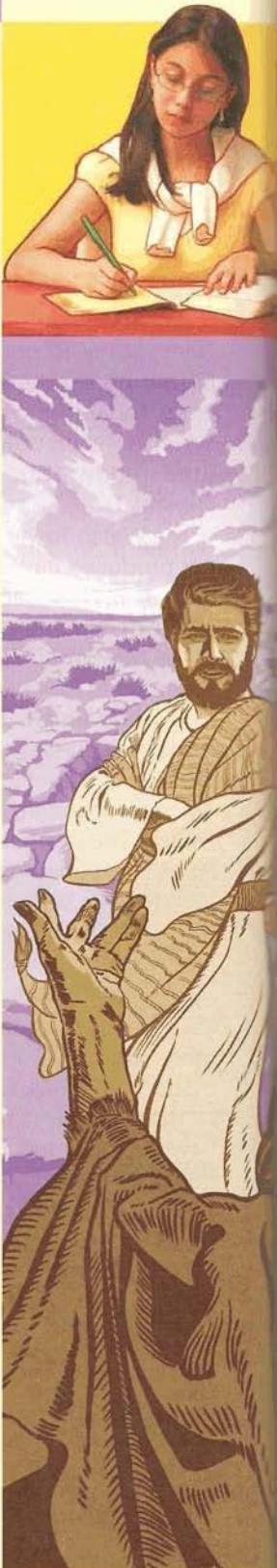
## **APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT...**

When temptation is likely to strike. \_\_\_\_\_

The various methods Satan may use to tempt us. \_\_\_\_\_

How to face up to temptation. \_\_\_\_\_

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



## Did You Know?

### Was Jerusalem ever surrounded by pointed stakes, as Jesus foretold would happen?

In his prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus said of that city: "Days will come upon you when your enemies will build around you a fortification with pointed stakes and will encircle you and distress you from every side." (Luke 19:43) Jesus' words came true in the year 70 C.E. when the Romans, commanded by Titus, erected a siege wall, or palisade, around the city. Titus' objective was threefold—to prevent the Jews from fleeing, to encourage their surrender, and to starve the inhabitants into submission.

According to Flavius Josephus, a first-century historian, once the decision to build this palisade was made, the various legions and lesser divisions of the Roman army competed with one another to see which could complete its assigned section of the siege wall first. The countryside to a distance of some ten miles around the city was stripped of trees, and the palisade, which proved to be about four and a half miles long, took a mere three days to complete.

At that, says Josephus, "all hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews." Reduced to famine and to murderous struggles among its various armed factions, the city fell to the besiegers some five months later.



### Did King Hezekiah really build a tunnel into Jerusalem?

Hezekiah was a king of Judah in the late eighth century B.C.E., a time of conflict with the mighty Assyrian power. The Bible tells us that he did a great deal to protect Jerusalem and to secure its water supply. Among the works he undertook was the construction of a 1,749-foot-long tunnel, or conduit, to bring springwater into the city.—2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:1-7, 30.

In the 19th century, just such a tunnel was discovered. It became known as Hezekiah's Tunnel, or the Siloam Tunnel. Inside the tunnel, an inscription was found that described the final phases of the tunnel's excavation. The shape and form of the letters of this inscription lead most scholars to date it to the time of Hezekiah. A decade ago, however, some suggested that the tunnel was built about 500 years later. In 2003, a team of Israeli scientists published the results of their research aimed at fixing a reliable date for the tunnel. What conclusion did they reach?

Dr. Amos Frumkin of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem says: "The carbon-14 tests we carried out on organic material within the plaster of the Siloam Tunnel, and uranium-thorium dating of stalactites found in the tunnel, date it conclusively to Hezekiah's era." An article in the scientific journal *Nature* adds: "The three independent lines of evidence—radiometric dating, palaeography and the historical record—all converge on about 700 BC, rendering the Siloam Tunnel the best-dated Iron-Age biblical structure thus far known."

## *Our Readers Ask*

### **IS ALL MIRACULOUS HEALING FROM GOD?**

There is no doubt that Jehovah God has the power to heal. Also, there is no doubt that he can give that power to his worshippers. For instance, during the time of the apostles, miraculous healing was one of the special gifts of his holy spirit. The apostle Paul writes: "The manifestation of the spirit is given to each one for a beneficial purpose. For example, to one there is given through the spirit speech of wisdom, . . . to another gifts of healings by that one spirit, . . . to another prophesying, . . . to another different tongues."—1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

However, Paul also wrote in that same letter to the Corinthians that the miraculous gifts of God's holy spirit would end. He said: "Whether there are gifts of prophesying, they will be done away with; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will be done away with."—1 Corinthians 13:8.

During the first century, miraculous healings were performed by Jesus Christ and his apostles. At that time in Christian history, the gifts of the spirit, including the ability to perform healings, were for the glory of God and were a sign of Jehovah's approval and blessing on the young Christian congregation. But once mature or fully established, rather than pointing to special gifts, the Christian congregation would point to its display of unwavering faith, hope, and love as evidence of God's approval. (John 13:35; 1 Corinthians 13:13) Thus, about the year 100 C.E., miraculous healings as a mark of God's favor ceased.\*

\* Evidently, with the death of the apostles, the transmittal of the gifts ended, and the miraculous gifts of the spirit ceased altogether as those who had received these gifts died.

Yet, you may wonder, 'Why do I still hear reports of miraculous cures?' For example, one newspaper report told of a man who was purportedly afflicted with cancer. He had tumors on his head, on his kidneys, and even deep inside his bones. His future looked grim until the day that God "spoke" with him. A few days later, his cancer was gone, the report said.

When confronted with such a story, why not ask yourself: 'Is this report factual? Is there documented, clinical evidence to support the claim? And even if there did seem to be a cure, does the Bible teach that God is responsible for all occurrences that appear to be miraculous healings?'

The answer to that last question is particularly important. Jesus cautioned his followers: "Be on the watch for the false prophets . . . Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works [miracles] in your name?' And yet then I will confess to them: I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness."—Matthew 7:15, 21-23.

Clearly, so-called miraculous healing can come from a source other than God. To avoid being deceived by those who claim to work miracles in God's name, we need to gain accurate knowledge of God, to use our God-given ability to reason, and to learn how to identify those who are doing his will.—Matthew 7:16-19; John 17:3; Romans 12:1, 2.

# FINDING JOY DESPITE MY DISABILITIES

AS TOLD BY  
PAULETTE GASPAR



*Although I weighed a good six pounds at birth, the doctor knew that something was seriously wrong with me. During the delivery, my bones had fractured. You see, I suffer from a condition called osteogenesis imperfecta, better known as brittle bone disease. I was rushed into surgery, but the doctors held out little hope. They expected me to die within 24 hours.*

I WAS born in Canberra, Australia's capital city, on June 14, 1972. Against all odds, I lasted through that first day. But then I contracted pneumonia. Because they thought I would die anyway, the doctors did not give me medication of any sort and decided to "let nature take its course." Well, nature did take its course, and I survived.

I can only imagine how difficult it must have been for my parents during that time. Because my chances for survival seemed very slim, well-meaning medical staff advised my parents not to become too attached to me. In fact, during the first three months of my stay in the hospital, my parents were not even allowed to touch me. The risk of injuring me was too great. When it became obvious that I would survive, doctors suggested that my parents put me in a home for disabled children.

My parents, however, decided to take me home. You see, my mother had just begun to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses.

What she learned heightened her sense of obligation to care for me. But it must have been difficult for her to bond with me, since all her emotional and physical strength was spent on the intensive care that I required. I was frequently taken to the hospital. My bones would break from something as simple as being bathed. Even if I just sneezed, a bone could crack.

## My Slide Into Depression

As I grew up, the wheelchair was my constant companion. Learning to walk was out of the question. Despite difficulties, my parents cared for my physical needs exceptionally well.

In addition, my mother tried her best to teach me the Bible's consoling message. For instance, she taught me that in the future, God will make the earth a paradise in which all people will enjoy perfect spiritual, mental, and physical health. (Psalm 37:10, 11; Isaiah 33:24) However, my mother frankly

admitted that she found it difficult to imagine any pleasant kind of life for me until that time arrived.

Early on, I attended a school for the disabled. My teachers held out no goals for me, and I set no goals for myself. In fact, just enduring school became a major challenge. Many children there were cruel to me. Later, I attended a regular school. I found that learning to get along with others took all my physical, emotional, and mental strength. Nonetheless, I was determined to complete my 12 years of education.

Especially during my high-school years, I thought about how hopeless and empty the lives of my fellow students seemed to be. I also thought about what my mother had taught me from the Bible. Mentally, I knew that what she said was the truth. But Bible teachings did not at that time reach my heart. For a while, I decided to try to fill my life with fun and laughter, without any thought for tomorrow.

When I was 18, I moved out of my parents' home and into a house with a group of other disabled people. I found this move both exciting and daunting. New freedoms, independence, having friends and a great

### **"I tried to accept my life as it was. Even so, I slid into deep depression"**

social life were all very appealing. Many of my friends married. I also felt a yearning for a marriage mate and love. Because of my disabilities, though, finding a marriage mate was highly unlikely for me. This realization made me sad.

However, I never blamed God for my condition. I had learned enough about God to know that it would be far from his way of acting ever to do anything unjust. (Job 34:10) I tried to accept my life as it was. Even so, I slid into deep depression.

### **The Long Road to Recovery**

Thankfully, my mother became aware of my situation and contacted one of the congregation elders who lived near me. He called me on the telephone and invited me to attend Christian meetings at the local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. Additionally, a sister in the congregation began studying the Bible with me each week.

As I was reminded of the Bible truths my mother had taught me years before, my outlook on life began to improve. I enjoyed the company of fellow Christians. However, I had learned to guard my feelings because I was afraid of being hurt emotionally. I think this made it difficult for me to feel a deep love for God. Even so, I knew it was right to dedicate my life to him. So in December 1991, I was baptized in symbol of my dedication.

I moved out of the house I had shared with my disabled companions and into an apartment by myself. This change brought both benefits and problems. For example, I was very lonely. And the thought of male intruders frightened me. Soon I again slipped into deep depression. Although I put on a brave face and a happy smile, all was not well. I desperately needed a good, stable friend.

I feel that Jehovah God provided just such a friend for me. The elders in the local congregation kindly arranged for Suzie, a married sister, to continue studying the Bible with me. Suzie was more than just my teacher. She became my close friend whom I love dearly.

Suzie trained me to share what I was learning with others—both in the door-to-door ministry and informally. Now I began to appreciate more fully God's qualities. However, although baptized, I had not yet developed a deep love for God. On one occasion, I even

contemplated giving up my service to him. I confided in Suzie, and she helped me through the crisis.

Suzie also helped me realize that much of my unhappiness stemmed from my associating with some who did not have a strong love for Jehovah. So I began to make friends with spiritually mature people—especially older ones. Also, my relationship with my mother was strained; hence, I began to rebuild good relations with her and also with my brother. I was surprised to experience a feeling of happiness that I had not felt before. My spiritual brothers and sisters, my family and, above all, Jehovah became to me a source of joy and strength.—Psalm 28:7.

#### A New Career

After attending a convention at which I heard a discourse that stressed the joys many

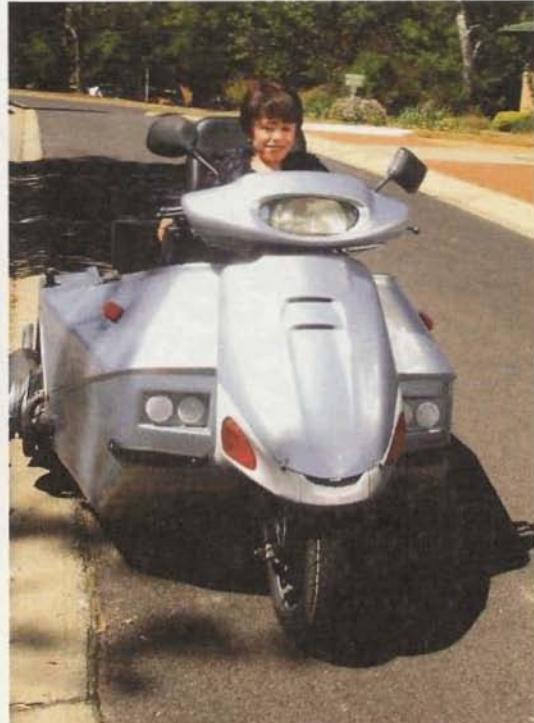
experience in the full-time Christian ministry, I thought to myself, ‘Why, I could do that!’ Of course, I realized that this would be a real challenge physically. But after prayerfully considering the matter, I decided to submit an application to become a full-time Bible teacher, and in April 1998, I began my career as one.

How do I share in the preaching activity in my physical condition? I am very independent by nature and hate to be a burden to people, depending on them for transportation and other help. So Suzie and her husband, Michael, suggested a solution: Buy a motorbike! But how could I ride a motorbike? As the accompanying picture shows, my motorcycle is custom-made just for me. And I don’t even have to lift my tiny 42-pound body out of the wheelchair!

My newfound independence allows me to visit people and to study the Bible with them at times suitable for them and for me. I must admit that I love riding my bike and feeling the wind in my face—one of life’s little pleasures!

I enjoy striking up casual conversations with people on the streets, who on the whole are polite and respectful to me. I take pleasure in helping others learn about the Bible. I fondly recall one occasion when I was in the house-to-house ministry with a tall companion. He greeted the householder who, in turn, just stared at me in amazement and then asked my companion, “Can she talk?” Both of us just burst out laughing. When I finished preaching to her, the woman knew for sure that I really *can* talk!

I enjoy life now and have learned to love Jehovah God. I am so grateful to my mother for teaching me Bible truths, and with confidence I look forward to the near future when God will ‘make all things new,’ including my little body.—Revelation 21:4, 5.



- What proof is there that Jesus was a historical figure? See page 7.
- Why is it important that you face your doubts about God? See page 9.
- How can you prepare your teenager for the challenges of adulthood? See pages 10-12.
- How might wicked spirits cause you harm? See page 20.
- Does God empower people to perform miraculous healings today? See page 28.