

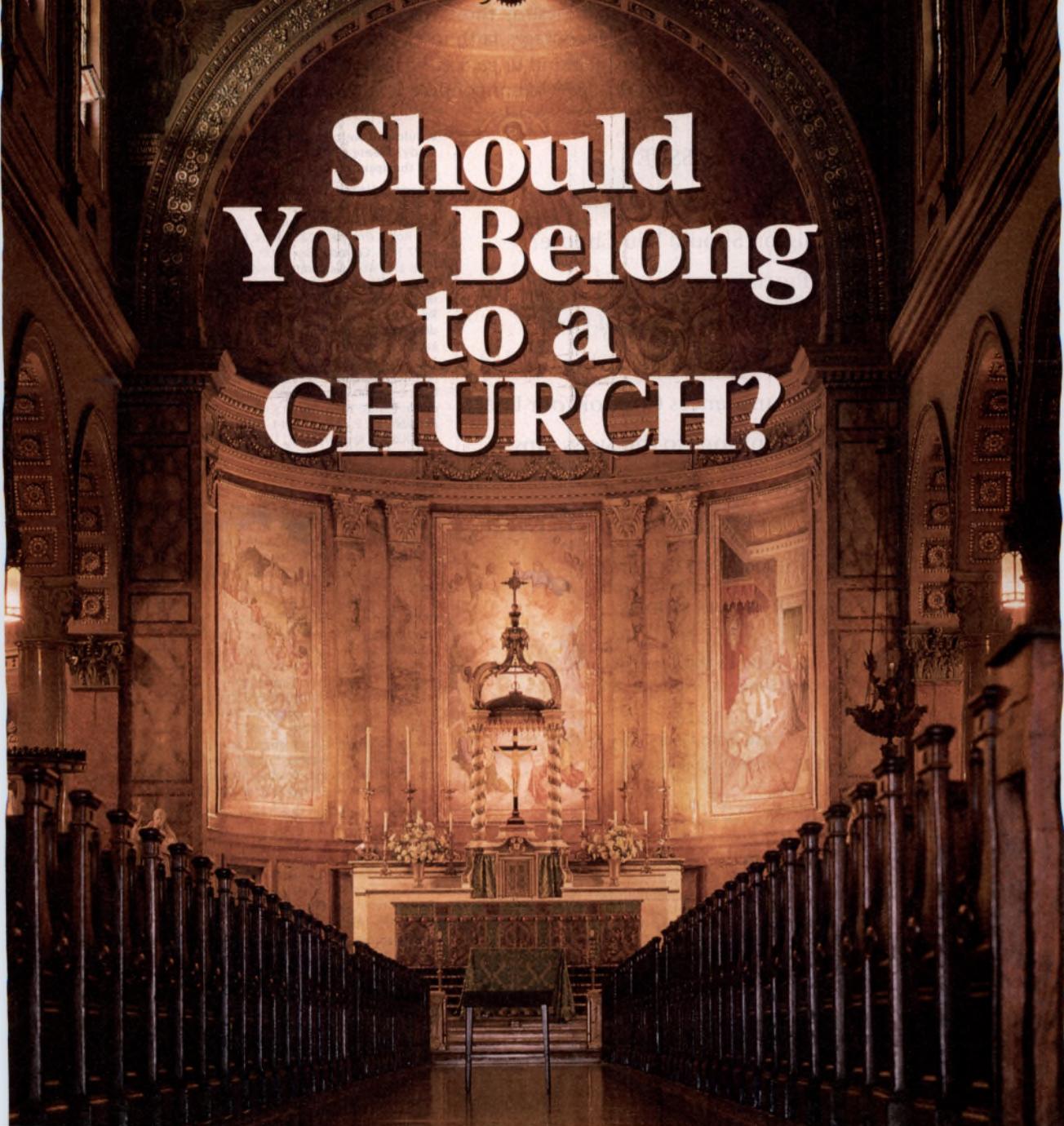


JUNE 1, 2004

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

## Should You Belong to a CHURCH?





# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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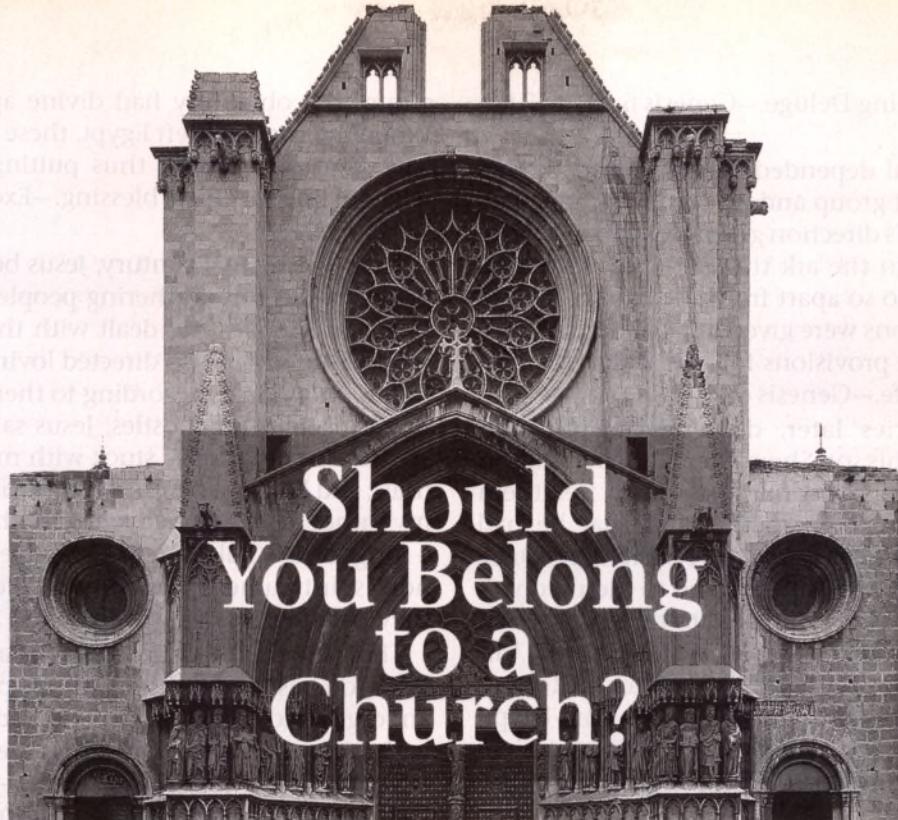
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# Should You Belong to a Church?

'I DON'T have to belong to a church or go to church regularly in order to believe in God!' That is how many people feel about membership in a church or in any religious organization. In fact, some say that they feel closer to God when enjoying nature outdoors than when attending a religious service in a church. Today, it is a commonly held opinion that affiliation with a religious group or denomination is not a prerequisite for belief in God.

Others, however, sincerely feel differently. They contend that church membership and attendance are necessary, even vital, if one is to have God's approval. So the question of whether religious affiliation is really necessary is more than just a matter of statistical or academic interest. In any case, since our relationship with God is involved, would it not be logical to find out God's

view on the matter? What, then, can we learn from his Word, the Bible, on this subject?

## How God Dealt With People in the Past

Almost 4,400 years ago, a catastrophic flood struck the entire earth. Such an event could not easily be forgotten, and peoples the world over have stories about it in their early history. Although differing in details, these stories have much in common, including the fact that only a few humans and some animals survived.

Were the Flood survivors simply individuals fortunate enough to have randomly escaped destruction? The Bible account shows that this was not the case. Significantly, God did not inform each individual about the coming Flood. Rather, he told Noah, who in turn warned his contemporaries of the

approaching Deluge.—Genesis 6:13-16; 2 Peter 2:5.

Survival depended on being part of this close-knit group and on being willing to accept God's direction given to Noah. Even the animals in the ark that survived the Flood did not do so apart from this group. Precise instructions were given to Noah to make appropriate provisions for the preservation of animal life.—Genesis 6:17-7:8.

Centuries later, descendants of Noah through his son Shem came into bondage in Egypt. Yet, God's purpose was to free them and bring them to the land that he had promised their forefather Abraham. Once again, this was not revealed to each individual but was first revealed to those chosen to be their leaders—Moses and his brother, Aaron. (Exodus 3:7-10; 4:27-31) After the former slaves were delivered as a group from Egypt, they were given God's Law at Mount Sinai and formed into the nation of Israel.—Exodus 19:1-6.

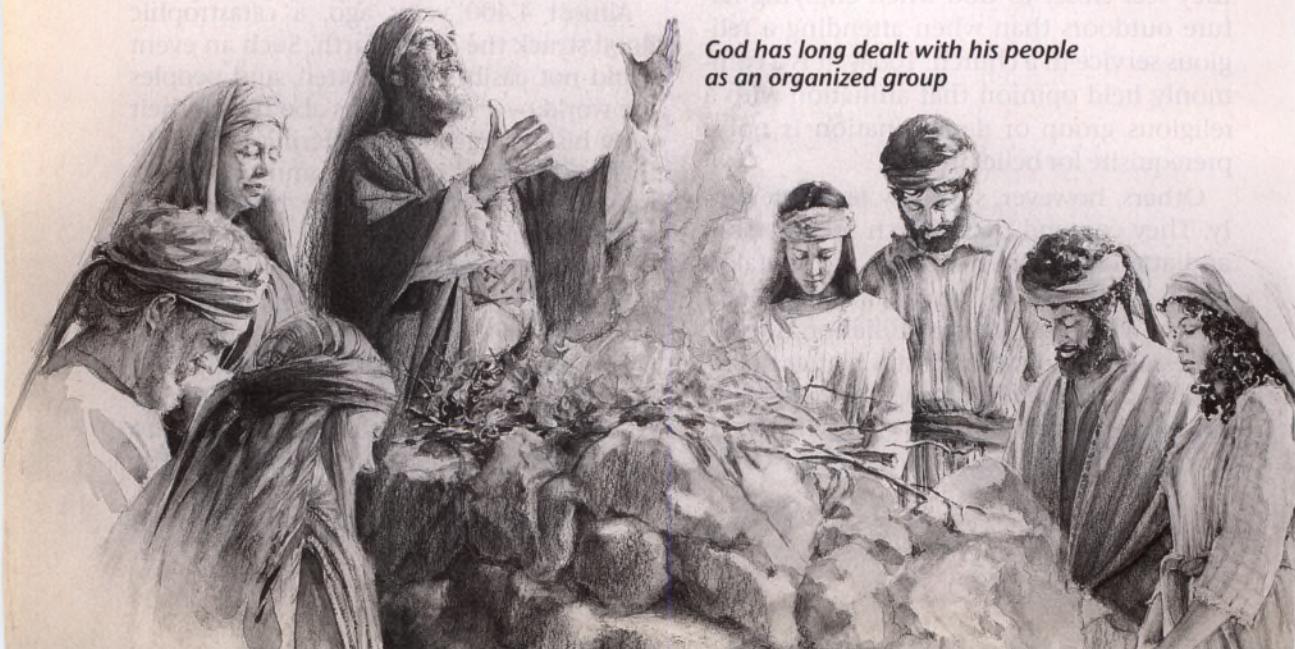
Deliverance was possible for individual Israelites only because they were associated with a divinely established group and followed the direction of this group's appointed leaders. Provisions were even made for individual Egyptians to associate with this

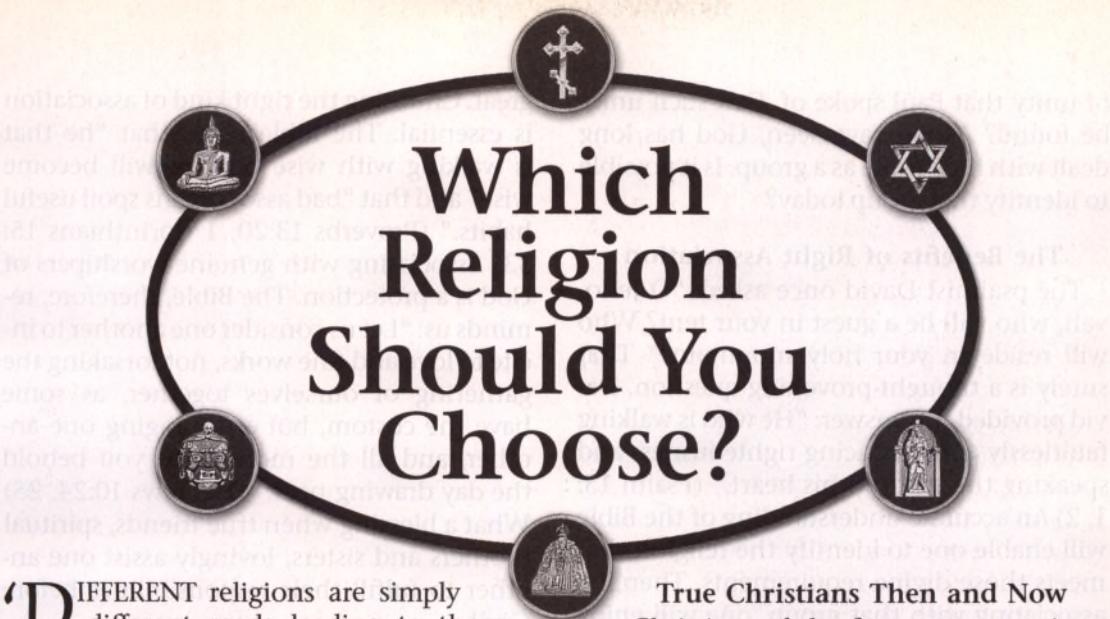
group that obviously had divine approval. When the Israelites left Egypt, these individuals went with them, thus putting themselves in line for God's blessing.—Exodus 12:37, 38.

Then, in the first century, Jesus began his preaching activity, gathering people together as his disciples. He dealt with them as a group, though he also directed loving attention to individuals according to their needs. To the 11 faithful apostles, Jesus said: "You are the ones that have stuck with me in my trials; and I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom." (Luke 22:28, 29) Later, God's holy spirit came upon the disciples when they were together as a group.—Acts 2:1-4.

These examples clearly show that in the past God has always dealt with his people as an organized group. The few individuals with whom God had dealings personally—Noah, Moses, Jesus, and others—were, in fact, used by Him to communicate with a closely associated group. There is no reason to believe that God deals any differently with his servants today. Of course, this gives rise to another question: Will affiliation with just any religious group suffice? We will consider this vital question in the next article.

*God has long dealt with his people as an organized group*





# Which Religion Should You Choose?

**D**IFFERENT religions are simply different roads leading to the same goal. After all, there is only one God, is there not? That sentiment is shared by many who feel that although religious affiliation is important, it does not really matter which religion one chooses to follow.

At first glance, this argument may seem plausible, since it is true that there is only one God, the Almighty. (Isaiah 44:6; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6) However, we cannot overlook the obvious differences—even contradictions—among the many religious groups who claim to serve the true God. They differ greatly in their practices, their beliefs, their teachings, and their requirements. The differences are so great that those belonging to one religion or group find it difficult to understand or accept what the others teach or believe.

On the other hand, Jesus said: "God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) Does worshiping God with *truth* allow for a range of contradictory ideas about who God is, what his purposes are, and how he wants to be worshiped? Is it logical to believe that it is immaterial to Almighty God how we worship him?

## True Christians Then and Now

Christians of the first century at times had different opinions about things. For example, speaking of those in Corinth, the apostle Paul said: "Disclosure was made to me about you, my brothers, by those of the house of Chloe, that dissensions exist among you. What I mean is this, that each one of you says: 'I belong to Paul,' 'But I to Apollos,' 'But I to Cephas,' 'But I to Christ.'" —1 Corinthians 1:11, 12.

Did Paul view these differences as of little significance? Was each individual simply following his own path to salvation? Far from it! Paul admonished: "I exhort you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you should all speak in agreement, and that there should not be divisions among you, but that you may be fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought." —1 Corinthians 1:10.

Of course, unity of belief cannot be achieved by coercion. It is achieved only when individuals carefully investigate matters and arrive at and accept the same conclusions. Thus, a personal study of God's Word and an honest desire to apply what is learned are essential steps to enjoy the kind

of unity that Paul spoke of. Can such unity be found? As we have seen, God has long dealt with his people as a group. Is it possible to identify that group today?

### The Benefits of Right Association

The psalmist David once asked: "O Jehovah, who will be a guest in your tent? Who will reside in your holy mountain?" That surely is a thought-provoking question. David provided the answer: "He who is walking faultlessly and practicing righteousness and speaking the truth in his heart." (Psalm 15: 1, 2) An accurate understanding of the Bible will enable one to identify the religion that meets those divine requirements. Then, by associating with that group, one will enjoy upbuilding fellowship with people who worship God in unity and "with spirit and truth."

Jehovah's Witnesses have demonstrated that it is possible to achieve unity in belief and action even in today's disunited world. In their ranks are former members of many different religions and ethnic groups. Other Witnesses were formerly agnostics or atheists. Still others simply gave no serious thought to religion. Out of this diversity of religions, cultures, and philosophies have come individuals who now enjoy a religious unity that is not otherwise seen in the world today.

The basis for such unity is God's Word, the Bible. Of course, Jehovah's Witnesses realize that they cannot dictate to others what to do. But they appreciate the privilege of encouraging others to learn from the Bible so as to base their choice in matters of worship upon that solid foundation. In this way, many more can share in the benefits that come from worshiping God "with spirit and truth."

Today, the danger of falling victim to harmful influences and enticements is

great. Choosing the right kind of association is essential. The Bible notes that "he that is walking with wise persons will become wise" and that "bad associations spoil useful habits." (Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15: 33) Associating with genuine worshipers of God is a protection. The Bible, therefore, reminds us: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24, 25) What a blessing when true friends, spiritual brothers and sisters, lovingly assist one another to fulfill their responsibilities before God!

Ottmar affirms this view. Raised in a Catholic family in Germany, he discontinued going to church. He explains: "Whenever I attended church, I came out feeling as empty as when I went in." Still, he retained his faith in God. Then he came into contact with Jehovah's Witnesses and became convinced that they are true servants of God. He saw the need to associate with them. He now says: "Being active in a worldwide organization, I enjoy peace of mind and heart. I am progressively being helped to have a more accurate knowledge of the Bible. That is something of great value to me personally."

### An Invitation to Those Seeking

Like-minded people working closely as a group can accomplish a task far more effectively than individuals working independently of one another. For example, Jesus' parting instructions to his followers were: "Go therefore and 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, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19, 20) How could such a task be

satisfactorily accomplished if there were no direction or organization? How could one obey this Scriptural injunction if he tried to serve God independently?

During the last year, Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide distributed 91,933,280 Bible-based books, booklets, and brochures, plus 697,603,247 magazines, thereby reaching hundreds of millions of people in 235 lands with the message from God's Word. What outstanding proof that united, well-organized group effort accomplishes far more than unassisted individual effort ever could!

In addition to distributing Bible literature, Jehovah's Witnesses conduct Bible studies free of charge to assist people to get an in-depth understanding of what God requires. Last year, on an average, 5,726,509 such Bible studies were conducted each week with individuals or groups.

This Bible instruc-

tion has helped millions of people to acquire a solid basis on which to make their choice in matters of worship. You are invited to learn of the divine requirements as set forth in the Bible. Then you can make your choice.—Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 1:9; 1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Peter 3:18.

If you want to please God, religious affiliation is vital—but not with just *any* religious group or denomination. You need to base your choice of religion on accurate Bible knowledge, not on unproved dogmas or hearsay. (Proverbs 16:25) Learn the requirements for true religion. Compare them with your own beliefs. Then choose accordingly.—Deuteronomy 30:19.

***Jehovah's Witnesses enjoy unity  
in a disunited world***



## 'Step Over and Help Us'

**I**N JULY 2000, a call went out in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland for German-speaking Witnesses to move to Bolivia. Why? Because in isolated farming colonies within a 180-mile radius of Santa Cruz, Bolivia, German-speaking Mennonites were showing keen interest in the Bible.

About 140 Witnesses responded to the invitation. Some went for a few weeks, others for a year or more. In so doing, they displayed a spirit similar to that of first-century missionaries who heeded the call: "Step over into Macedonia and help us."—Acts 16: 9, 10.

What is it like to work in that territory? An elder in the local congregation explains: "Traveling to one of the 43 Mennonite colonies can take as long as eight hours over dirt roads in a four-wheel-drive vehicle. Visiting the more distant points often requires four days and sleeping in tents some nights. But it is certainly worth the effort, for hardly any of these people have ever heard the good news before."

At first, many of the Mennonites did not welcome the visits. But repeated efforts have helped them to appreciate what the Witnesses have to offer. For example, one



farmer said that he had been reading the *Awake!* magazine for a year. Then he added: "I know that many people here don't agree with what you say, but I believe it is the truth." In another colony, a man said: "Some of my neighbors say that you are false prophets, others say that you have the truth. I want to find out for myself."

There is now a German-speaking congregation in Bolivia, with 35 publishers, including 14 full-time evangelizers. To date, 14 former Mennonites have become Kingdom proclaimers, and 9 others attend meetings regularly. One older man who was recently baptized said: "We clearly see Jehovah's direction. He has sent experienced, German-speaking brothers and sisters to help us. We are very grateful." The man's 17-year-old daughter, who is also baptized, added: "The enthusiasm of the young brothers and sisters who have come here is contagious. Most of them are pioneers, spending their time and money to help others. It makes me want to do the same."

Truly, those who reached out to "step over" to help are reaping great joy and satisfaction.

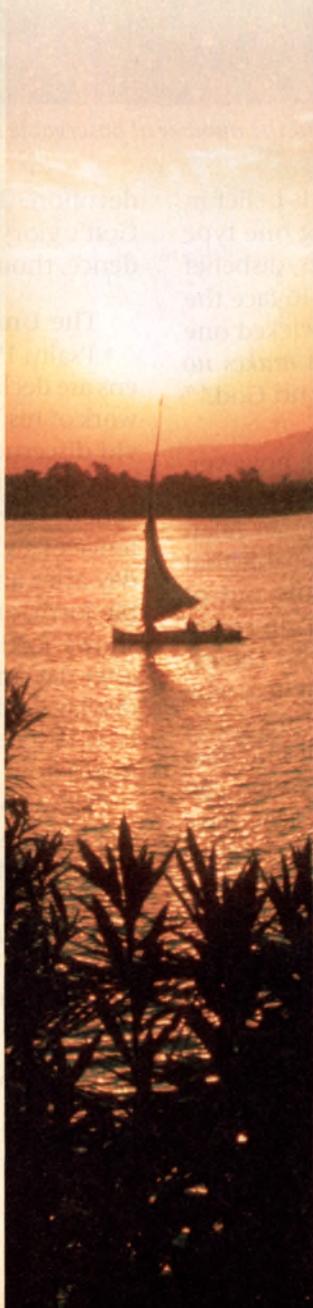
# CREATION DECLARES THE GLORY OF GOD!

*"The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling." —PSALM 19:1.*

**“Y**OU are not able to see my face, because no man may see me and yet live." (Exodus 33:20) Thus Jehovah warned Moses. Because humans are made of frail flesh, they cannot withstand viewing God's glory directly. In a vision, however, the apostle John was given a spectacular view of Jehovah on His glorious throne.—Revelation 4:1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Unlike humans, loyal spirit creatures are able to look upon Jehovah's face. Among them are the "twenty-four elders" in John's heavenly vision, who represent the 144,000. (Revelation 4:4; 14:1-3) How do they respond to their view of God's glory? According to Revelation 4:11, they declare: "You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created."

1, 2. (a) Why are humans unable to see God's glory directly? (b) How do the 24 elders give glory to God?



## Why "Inexcusable"

<sup>3</sup> Are you moved to give God glory? The vast majority of mankind are not, some even denying that God exists. For instance, one astronomer wrote: "Was it God who stepped in and so providentially crafted the cosmos for our benefit? . . . A heady prospect. Unfortunately I believe it to be illusory. . . . God is not an explanation."

<sup>4</sup> Scientific research is limited—restricted to what humans can actually observe or study. Otherwise it is mere theory or guesswork. Since "God is a Spirit," he simply cannot be subjected to direct scientific scrutiny. (John 4:24) It is arrogant, therefore, to dismiss faith in God as unscientific. Scientist Vincent Wigglesworth of Cambridge University observed that the scientific method itself is "a religious approach." How so? "It rests upon an unquestioning faith that natural phenomena conform to 'laws of

3, 4. (a) Why is faith in God not unscientific? (b) In some cases, what is behind dismissing belief in God?



*Scientists estimate that the number of observable stars is 70 sextillion!*

nature.' " So when someone rejects belief in God, is he not simply exchanging one type of faith for another? In some cases, disbelief appears to be a deliberate refusal to face the truth. The psalmist wrote: "The wicked one according to his superciliousness *makes no search*; all his ideas are: 'There is no God.'" —Psalm 10:4.

<sup>5</sup> Belief in God is not blind faith, however, for there is overwhelming evidence of God's existence. (Hebrews 11:1) Astronomer Allan Sandage said: "I find it quite improbable that such order [in the universe] came out of chaos. There has to be some organizing principle. God to me is a mystery, but is the explanation for the miracle of existence, why there is something instead of nothing." The apostle Paul told Christians in Rome that 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, so that they [disbelievers] are inexcusable." (Romans 1:20) Since "the world's creation"—particularly since the creation of intelligent human creatures, who could perceive God's existence—it has been evident that there is a Creator of immense power, a God worthy of

#### 5. Why is disbelief in God inexcusable?

devotion. Those who fail to acknowledge God's glory are thus inexcusable. What evidence, though, does creation provide?

#### The Universe Declares God's Glory

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 19:1 answers by saying: "The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling." David discerned that the stars and the planets that shone through "the expanse," or atmosphere, gave irrefutable proof of the existence of a glorious God. He continues: "One day after another day causes speech to bubble forth, and one night after another night shows forth knowledge." (Psalm 19:2) Day after day and night after night, the heavens display God's wisdom and creative power. It is as if speech praising God were 'bubbling forth' from the heavens.

<sup>7</sup> However, it takes discernment to hear this witness. "There is no speech, and there are no words; no voice on their part is being heard." Yet, the silent testimony of the heavens is powerful. "Into all the earth their measuring line has gone out, and to the extremity of the productive land their utterances." (Psalm 19:3, 4) It is as if the heavens sent out

6, 7. (a) How do the heavens declare the glory of God? (b) For what purpose have the heavens sent out 'measuring lines'?

'measuring lines' to make sure that their silent witness filled every corner of the earth.

<sup>8</sup> David next describes another wonder of Jehovah's creation: "In them [the visible heavens] he has set a tent for the sun, and it is like a bridegroom when coming out of his nuptial chamber; it exults as a mighty man does to run in a path. From one extremity of the heavens is its going forth, and its finished circuit is to their other extremities; and there is nothing concealed from its heat."—Psalm 19:4-6.

<sup>9</sup> As stars go, the sun is only medium sized. Yet, it is a remarkable star, dwarfing the planets orbiting it. One source says that it has a mass of "2 billion of billion of billion tons"—99.9 percent of the mass of our solar system! Its gravitational pull allows the earth to orbit at a distance of 93 million miles without drifting away or being sucked in. Only about half a billionth of the sun's energy reaches our planet, but that is enough to sustain life.

<sup>10</sup> The psalmist speaks of the sun in figurative language, picturing it as "a mighty man" who runs from one horizon to the other during the day and retires at night in "a tent." When that mighty star dips below the horizon, from earth's vantage point, it appears to go into "a tent," as if to rest. In the morning, it seems to burst out, beaming radiantly "like a bridegroom when coming out of his nuptial chamber." As a shepherd, David knew the extreme cold of night. (Genesis 31:40) He recalled how the sun's rays would rapidly warm him and the landscape around him. Clearly, it was not exhausted from its "journey" from east to west but was like "a mighty man," ready to repeat the journey.

8, 9. What are some outstanding facts regarding the sun?

10. (a) How does the sun go in and out of its "tent"? (b) How does it run as "a mighty man"?

## The Awesome Stars and Galaxies

<sup>11</sup> Without a telescope, David could see only a few thousand stars. However, according to one recent study, the number of stars in the universe visible by means of modern telescopes is 70 sextillion—7 followed by 22 zeros! Jehovah indicated that enormous numbers were involved when he linked the number of stars with "the grains of sand that are on the seashore."—Genesis 22:17.

<sup>12</sup> For years, astronomers observed what was described as "small luminous regions with a nebulous, not resolved appearance." Scientists presumed that these "spiral nebulae" were objects in our Milky Way galaxy. In 1924, it was discovered that the closest such nebula, Andromeda, was actually a galaxy itself—some two million light years away! Scientists now estimate that there are billions of galaxies, each containing thousands—sometimes billions—of stars. Yet, Jehovah "is counting the number of the stars; all of them he calls by their names."—Psalm 147:4.

<sup>13</sup> Jehovah asked Job: "Can you tie fast the bonds of the Kimah constellation, or can you loosen the very cords of the Kesil constellation?" (Job 38:31) A constellation is a number of stars that appear to form a distinctive pattern. Although the stars could be huge distances from one another, their relative positions remain fixed from earth's perspective. Because their positions are so precise, the stars are "helpful guides in navigation, to astronauts in spacecraft orientation, and for star identification." (*The Encyclopedia Americana*) Yet, no one fully comprehends "the bonds" that hold the constellations together. Yes, scientists still cannot answer the

11, 12. (a) What is remarkable about the Bible's linking of stars with grains of sand? (b) Just how vast may the universe be?

13. (a) What is remarkable about constellations? (b) How is it evident that scientists do not know "the statutes of the heavens"?

question posed at Job 38:33: "Have you come to know the statutes of the heavens?"

<sup>14</sup> Scientists cannot answer another question posed to Job: "Where, now, is the way by which the light distributes itself?" (Job 38: 24) One writer called this inquiry about light "a profoundly modern scientific question." By way of contrast, some Greek philosophers felt that light emanated from the human eye. In more modern times, scientists have thought that light consists of tiny particles. Others have thought of it as moving in waves. Today, scientists believe that light behaves both as a wave and as a particle. Still, the nature of light and how it "distributes itself" is far from fully understood.

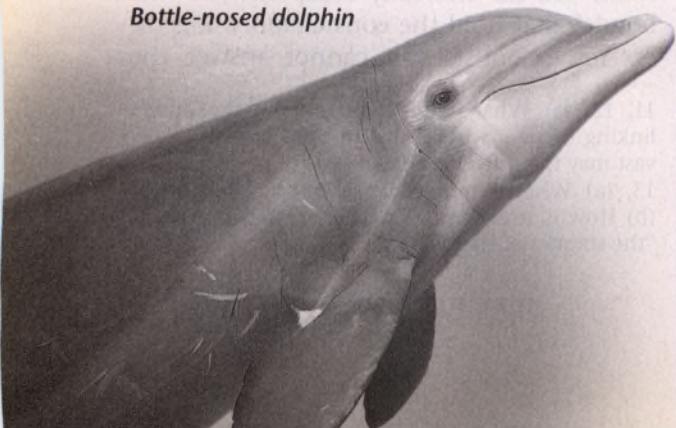
<sup>15</sup> Contemplating all of this, one cannot help but feel like the psalmist David, who said: "When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have prepared, what is mortal man that you keep him in mind, and the son of earthling man that you take care of him?"—Psalm 8: 3, 4.

### The Earth and Its Creatures Glorify Jehovah

<sup>16</sup> Psalm 148 enumerates other ways in which creation declares God's glory. Verse 7 reads: "Praise Jehovah from the earth, you

- 
- 14. In what way is the distribution of light a mystery?
  - 15. Like David, how should we feel when we contemplate the heavens?
  - 16, 17. How do creatures in the "watery deeps" praise Jehovah?

#### *Bottle-nosed dolphin*



sea monsters and all you watery deeps." Yes, the "watery deeps" are full of wonders that highlight God's wisdom and power. The blue whale has an average weight of 120 tons—as much as 30 elephants! Its heart alone weighs over 1,000 pounds and is able to pump some 14,000 pounds of blood through its body! Are these mammoth sea monsters slow and clumsy in the water? Hardly. They "zip around the oceans" at impressive speeds, says a report by European Cetacean Bycatch Campaign. Satellite tracking showed that "one animal migrated more than 10,000 miles in 10 months."

<sup>17</sup> The bottle-nosed dolphin normally dives to depths of 150 feet, but the deepest recorded dive for a dolphin is 1,795 feet! How does this mammal survive such a dive? Its heartbeat slows down during the dive, and blood is diverted to the heart, lungs, and brain. Also, its muscles contain a chemical that stores oxygen. Elephant seals and sperm whales can dive to even greater depths. "Instead of fighting the pressure," says *Discover* magazine, "they let it collapse their lungs completely." They store most of the oxygen they need in their muscles. Clearly, these creatures are living testimony to the wisdom of an all-powerful God!

<sup>18</sup> Even seawater reflects Jehovah's wisdom. Says *Scientific American*: "Every drop of water in the top 100 meters of the ocean contains thousands of free-floating, microscopic flora called phytoplankton." This "invisible forest" cleans our air by drawing out billions of tons of carbon dioxide. Phytoplankton generates more than half of the oxygen we breathe.

<sup>19</sup> Psalm 148:8 says: "You fire and hail, snow and thick smoke, you tempestuous wind, accomplishing his word." Yes, Je-

- 
- 18. How does seawater show Jehovah's wisdom?
  - 19. How do fire and snow accomplish Jehovah's will?



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### Snowflake

hovah also uses the inanimate forces of nature to accomplish his will.

Consider fire. In decades past, forest fires

were viewed only as destructive. Researchers now believe that fire plays an important ecological role, eliminating old or dying trees, promoting the germination of many seeds, recycling nutrients, and actually reducing the risk of wildfire. Snow is also vital, watering and fertilizing the ground, replenishing rivers, and insulating plants and animals from freezing temperatures.

<sup>20</sup> "You mountains and all you hills, you fruit trees and all you cedars," recounts Psalm 148:9. Majestic mountains are a testimony to Jehovah's great power. (Psalm 65:6) But they also serve a practical purpose. A report from the Institute of Geography in Bern, Switzerland, says: "All the major rivers in the world have their headwaters in mountains. More than half of humanity relies on the fresh water that accumulates in mountains . . . These 'water towers' are crucial to the welfare of humankind." Even the commonplace tree is a glory to its Maker. A report by the United Nations Environment Programme says that trees "are important for the well-being of people in all countries . . . Many tree species are of major economic importance as the source of products such as timber, fruits, nuts, resins and gums. Worldwide, 2 billion people depend on wood for cooking and fuel."

<sup>21</sup> Evidence of a wise creator is seen in the very design of a tree. Consider a simple leaf. The outside

20. How do mountains and trees benefit mankind?

21. Explain how a simple leaf shows evidence of design.

has a waxy coating that keeps the leaf from drying out. Right under the coating on the upper side is an array of cells containing chloroplasts. These contain chlorophyll, which absorbs light energy. Through a process called photosynthesis, leaves become "food factories." Water is taken up through the tree's roots and transported to the leaves by a sophisticated "plumbing system." Thousands of tiny "valves" (called stomata) on a leaf's underside open and close, letting in carbon dioxide. Light supplies the energy for water and carbon dioxide to combine and produce carbohydrates. The plant can now feed on the very food it has created. Yet, this "factory" is silent and beautiful. Instead of polluting, it emits oxygen as a by-product!

<sup>22</sup> "You wild animals and all you domestic animals, you creeping things and winged birds," says Psalm 148:10. Many land animals and flying creatures display amazing abilities. The Laysan albatross can fly enormous distances (in one case 25,000 miles in just 90 days). The blackpoll warbler makes the trip from North to South America, staying aloft for over 80 hours nonstop. The camel stores water, not in his hump as commonly thought, but in his digestive system, allowing him to go for long periods without becoming dehydrated. Little wonder, then, that engineers carefully observe the animal kingdom



Young Laysan albatross



22, 23. (a) What remarkable abilities do some birds and land animals have? (b) What further questions do we need to consider?

when designing machines and new materials. "If you want to build something that will behave well . . . and fit flawlessly in its environment," says writer Gail Cleere, "chances are you'll find a good example somewhere in nature."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Yes, creation truly declares the glory of God! From the starry heavens to plants and animals, each in its own way brings praise to its Creator. But what about us humans? How can we join nature in singing God's praises?

## BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO GIVE GLORY TO GOD

*"They will bow down before you, O Jehovah, and will give glory to your name."*

—PSALM 86:9.

JEHOVAH is worthy of praise from *all* his creation. While his inanimate creation silently brings him glory, we humans have the ability to reason, to comprehend, to appreciate, and to worship. It is to us, then, that the psalmist says: "Shout in triumph to God, all you people of the earth. Make melody to the glory of his name. Render his praise glorious."—Psalm 66:1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> The majority of mankind refuse to acknowledge God or to give him glory. However, in 235 lands, more than six million Witnesses of Jehovah demonstrate that they see God's "invisible qualities" through the things he has made and that they have "heard" the silent witness of creation. (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:2, 3) By studying the Bi-

1. Why are we able to bring God glory in ways that surpass what inanimate creation can do?
2. Who have responded to the command to give glory to God's name, and why?

### Do You Remember?

- Why are those who deny God's existence inexcusable?
- How do the stars and the planets glorify God?
- How do sea and land animals give evidence of a loving Creator?
- How do inanimate forces of nature carry out Jehovah's will?

ble, they have also come to know and love Jehovah. Psalm 86:9, 10 foretold: "All the nations whom you have made will themselves come, and they will bow down before you, O Jehovah, and will give glory to your name. For you are great and are doing wondrous things; you are God, you alone."

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 7:9, 15 similarly describes "a great crowd" of worshipers as "rendering [God] sacred service day and night in his temple." It is not that God literally demands nonstop praise from his servants, but his worshipers are a global organization. So when it is nighttime in some lands, God's servants on the other side of the globe are busy witnessing. Thus it can be said that the sun never sets on those bringing glory to Jehovah. Soon "every breathing thing" will raise its voice in praise to Jehovah. (Psalm

3. How does the "great crowd" render "sacred service day and night?"



*As the Gadites fought  
against marauding bands,  
Christians must fight  
against Satan's attacks*

150:6) In the meantime, though, what can we individually do to give glory to God? What challenges might we face? And what blessings await those who give God glory? In answer, let us consider a Bible account regarding the Israelite tribe of Gad.

### An Ancient Challenge

<sup>4</sup> Before entering the Promised Land, members of Israel's tribe of Gad requested that they be allowed to settle in the cattle country east of the Jordan. (Numbers 32:1-5) Living there would mean coping with serious challenges. The tribes to the west would have the protection of the Jordan Valley—a natural barrier to military invasion. (Joshua 3:13-17) However, concerning the lands east of the Jordan, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, by George Adam Smith, says: “[They] all roll off, with almost no intervening barrier, upon the great Arabian plateau. Consequently they have been exposed in all ages to the invasion of the hungry nomads, some of whom swarm upon them every year for pasture.”

<sup>5</sup> How would the tribe of Gad fare under

4. What challenge was faced by the tribe of Gad?
5. How did Jacob encourage the descendants of Gad to respond when under attack?

such unrelenting pressure? Centuries earlier, in his death-bed prophecy, their forefather Jacob foretold: “As for Gad, a marauder band will raid him, but he will raid the extreme rear.” (Genesis 49:19) At first glance those words may seem gloomy. In reality, though, they amounted to a command for the Gadites to strike back. Jacob assured them that if they did so, the raiders would make a humiliating retreat, with the Gadites pursuing their extreme rear.

### Challenges to Our Worship Today

<sup>6</sup> Like the tribe of Gad, Christians today are exposed to the pressures and burdens of Satan's system; no miraculous protection spares us from grappling with them. (Job 1: 10-12) Many of us must cope with the pressures of attending school, making a living, and rearing children. Not to be overlooked are the pressures of a personal or internal kind. Some must endure “a thorn in the flesh” in the form of a serious disability or ailment. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) Others are plagued with feelings of low self-worth. “The calamitous days” of old age may hinder elderly Christians from serving Jehovah

- 6, 7. How is the situation of Christians today similar to that of the tribe of Gad?

with the vigor they once had.—Ecclesiastes 12:1.

<sup>7</sup> The apostle Paul also reminds us that “we have a wrestling . . . against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12) We are constantly exposed to “the spirit of the world,” the spirit of rebellion and moral corruption that Satan and his demons promote. (1 Corinthians 2:12; Ephesians 2:2, 3) Like God-fearing Lot, we today may be distressed by the immoral things that people around us say and do. (2 Peter 2:7) We are also exposed to Satan’s direct attack. Satan is waging war with the remnant of anointed ones, “who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus.” (Revelation 12:17) Jesus’ “other sheep” too experience Satan’s attack in the form of bans and persecutions.—John 10:16.

### Give In or Fight Back?

<sup>8</sup> What should be our response to Satan’s attacks? Like the ancient tribe of Gad, we must be spiritually strong and fight back in accord with God’s directions. Sad to say, some have begun to give in under the pressures of life, neglecting their spiritual responsibilities. (Matthew 13:20-22) One Witness said this about why meeting attendance in his congregation was low: “The brothers are just getting tired. They’re all stressed out.” Granted, people today have many reasons to be tired. It is, therefore, easy to view God’s worship as another pressure, a burdensome obligation. But is that a healthy—or correct—view?

<sup>9</sup> Consider what Jesus said to the crowds in his day who were likewise beaten down by the pressures of life: “Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you.” Did Jesus suggest that refresh-

8. How should we respond to Satan’s attacks, and why?

9. How does taking on Christ’s yoke lead to refreshment?

ment would come by curtailing one’s service to God? On the contrary, Jesus said: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls.” A yoke is a wooden or metal frame that allows a human or an animal to carry a heavy burden. Why, then, would anyone want to take on such a yoke? Are we not already “loaded down”? Yes, but the Greek text could also read: “Get under my yoke with me.” Just think: Jesus offers to help us pull our load! We do not have to do it in our own strength. —Matthew 9:36; 11:28, 29, footnote; 2 Corinthians 4:7.

<sup>10</sup> When we take on the yoke of discipleship, we are fighting against Satan. “Oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you,” promises James 4:7. This is not to say that doing so is easy. Serving God entails considerable effort. (Luke 13:24) But the Bible makes this promise at Psalm 126:5: “Those sowing seed with tears will reap even with a joyful cry.” Yes, we do not worship an ungrateful God. He is “the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him,” and he blesses those who give him glory. —Hebrews 11:6.

### Glorifying God as Kingdom Preachers

<sup>11</sup> Jesus commanded: “Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations.” The preaching work is the primary way to offer God “a sacrifice of praise.” (Matthew 28:19; Hebrews 13:15) Having our “feet shod with the equipment of the good news of peace” is an indispensable part of our “complete suit of armor”—our defense against Satan’s attacks. (Ephesians 6:11-15) Praising God in the field ministry is a fine way to nourish our faith. (2 Corinthians 4:13) It helps us to keep our minds off negative thoughts. (Philippians 4:8) Sharing in the

10. What results from our efforts to give God glory?

11. How does the field ministry serve as a defense against Satan’s attacks?

field ministry allows us to enjoy upbuilding association with fellow worshipers.

<sup>12</sup> The preaching work can also be a wholesome family activity. To be sure, young ones need balanced recreation. However, time spent as a family in the field ministry does not have to be drudgery. Parents can make it more enjoyable by training their children to be effective in the ministry. Do not young ones tend to enjoy things that they do well? Showing balance, not driving youngsters beyond their limitations, parents can help them to find joy in the ministry.—Genesis 33:13, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Additionally, a family that praises God together forges close bonds. Consider one sister who was abandoned by her unbelieving husband and was left with five children. She thus faced the challenge of entering the work force and providing materially for her children. Was she so overwhelmed that she ignored the spiritual interests of her children? She recalls: “I studied the Bible and Bible publications diligently and tried to apply what I read. I took the children to meetings and in the door-to-door ministry on a regular basis. The results of my efforts? All five children are baptized.” A full share in the ministry can likewise help you in your efforts to raise your children “in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah.”—Ephesians 6:4.

<sup>14</sup> Young ones, if you live in a land where the law permits it, do you give God glory

12, 13. How can regular participation in the field ministry benefit families? Illustrate.

14. (a) How can young ones give God glory in school? (b) What can help youths not to be “ashamed of the good news”?



*We enjoy upbuilding association in the field ministry*

by witnessing in school, or do you allow fear of man to hold you back? (Proverbs 29:25) A 13-year-old Witness in Puerto Rico writes:

“I have never felt embarrassed to preach in school because I know this is the truth.

In class I always raise my hand and tell what I have learned from the Bible. If I have free time, I go to the library and read the *Young People Ask* book.”\*

Has Jehovah blessed her efforts? She reports: “Sometimes my classmates ask me questions and even ask for a copy of the book.” If you have been holding back in this regard, perhaps you need to prove to yourself “the good and acceptable and perfect will of God” by diligent personal study. (Romans 12:2) When you are convinced that what you have learned is the truth, you will never be “ashamed of the good news.”—Romans 1:16.

#### An ‘Open Door’ of Service

The apostle Paul wrote that “a large door that leads to activity” had been opened to him. (1 Corinthians 16:9) Might your circumstances permit you to enter a door to activity? Engaging in the regular or auxiliary pioneer ministry, for example, involves devoting 70 or 50 hours a month to the preaching work. Naturally, pioneers are appreciated by fellow Christians for their faithful service. But the fact that they spend more time in the

\* The book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work* is published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

15, 16. What “large door that leads to activity” have some Christians entered, and what blessings have resulted?



**Pioneering may open the door to other privileges of service, including:**

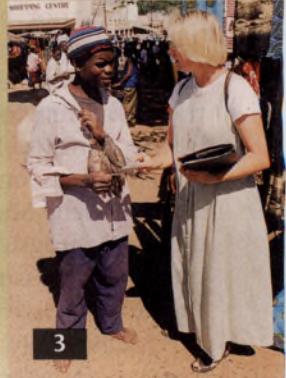
- 1. International service**
- 2. Bethel service**
- 3. Missionary service**

ministry does not make them feel superior to their brothers and sisters. Rather, they cultivate the attitude encouraged by Jesus: "We are good-for-nothing slaves. What we have done is what we ought to have done."—Luke 17:10.

<sup>16</sup> Pioneering requires self-discipline, personal organization, and a willingness to make sacrifices. The blessings, though, are well worth it. "Being able to handle God's Word of truth aright is a real blessing," says a young pioneer named Tamika. "When you pioneer, you use the Bible so much. Now when I go from door to door, I can think of scriptures that are appropriate for each householder." (2 Timothy 2:15) Says a pioneer named Mica: "Seeing how the truth affects people's life is another amazing blessing." A youth named Matthew similarly speaks of the joy of "seeing someone come into the truth. No other kind of joy can replace this."

<sup>17</sup> Could you consider entering the door to

17. How did one Christian overcome negative feelings about pioneering?



pioneering? Perhaps you would like to do so but feel inadequate. "I had negative feelings about pioneering," admits a young sister named Kenyatte. "I didn't feel capable. I didn't know how to prepare introductions or reason from the Scriptures." However, the elders assigned a mature pioneer sister to work with her. "It was fun working with her," Kenyatte recalls. "That made me want to pioneer." With some encouragement and training, perhaps you too will want to pioneer.

<sup>18</sup> Pioneering may open the door to other privileges of service. For example, some married couples may qualify for missionary training to be sent out to preach in a foreign land. Missionaries must adapt to a new country, perhaps a new language, a new culture, and new foods. But the blessings make such inconveniences pale into insignificance. Mildred, a veteran missionary in

18. What blessings may come to those who enter missionary service?

Mexico, says: "I've never regretted my decision to become a missionary. It's something that has been my desire since I was a little girl." What blessings has she enjoyed? "Back home, finding a Bible study was difficult. Here, I have had up to four students at a time starting out in field service!"

<sup>19</sup> Rich blessings also come to those in Bethel service at branch offices of Jehovah's Witnesses. Sven, a young brother serving in Germany, says of his work at Bethel: "I feel that I am doing something that has lasting value. I could have used my skills in the world. But it would have been like depositing money in a bank that is about to go bankrupt." True, serving as an unsalaried volunteer involves sacrifice. But Sven says: "When you go home, you know that everything you've done that day was for Jehovah. And that gives you a 'super' feeling."

<sup>20</sup> Some brothers have enjoyed the blessing of international service, working on branch construction in foreign lands. One couple who have served in eight foreign assignments wrote: "The brothers here are wonderful. It will be a heartbreak to leave—the eighth time our hearts have been 'broken.' What a fantastic experience we've had!" Then there is the Ministerial Training School. It offers spiritual training to qualified single brothers. Wrote one graduate: "I am perplexed as I try to find the way to thank you for such a marvelous school. What other organization would put forth so much effort to give training?"

<sup>21</sup> Yes, many doors of activity are open. Granted, most of us are not able to serve at Bethel or in a foreign land. Jesus himself acknowledged that Christians would produce

19, 20. How have Bethel service, international service, and the Ministerial Training School brought blessings to many?

21. What challenge do all Christians face in their service to God?

different amounts of "fruit" because of different circumstances. (Matthew 13:23) Our challenge as Christians, then, is to make the most of our situation—to have as full a share in Jehovah's service as our circumstances permit. When we do that, we are giving glory to Jehovah, and we can be assured that he is well pleased. Consider Ethel, an elderly sister in a nursing home. She witnesses regularly to fellow residents in her home and engages in telephone witnessing. Despite her limitations, she is whole-souled in her service.—Matthew 22:37.

<sup>22</sup> Remember, though, that preaching is just one way in which we bring glory to Jehovah. By being exemplary in our conduct and appearance when we are on our job, in school, and at home, we make Jehovah's heart rejoice. (Proverbs 27:11) Proverbs 28:20 promises: "A man of faithful acts will get many blessings." We should therefore 'sow bountifully' in our service to God, knowing that we will reap bountiful blessings. (2 Corinthians 9:6) Doing so, it will be our privilege to be alive at that marvelous time when "every breathing thing" will give Jehovah the glory he so richly deserves!—Psalm 150:6.

22. (a) In what additional ways can we bring God glory? (b) What marvelous time awaits us?

### Do You Recall?

- How do God's people serve Jehovah "day and night"?
- What challenge did the tribe of Gad face, and what does that teach Christians today?
- How does the field ministry act as a protection against Satan's attacks?
- What 'open door' have some entered, and what blessings have they enjoyed?

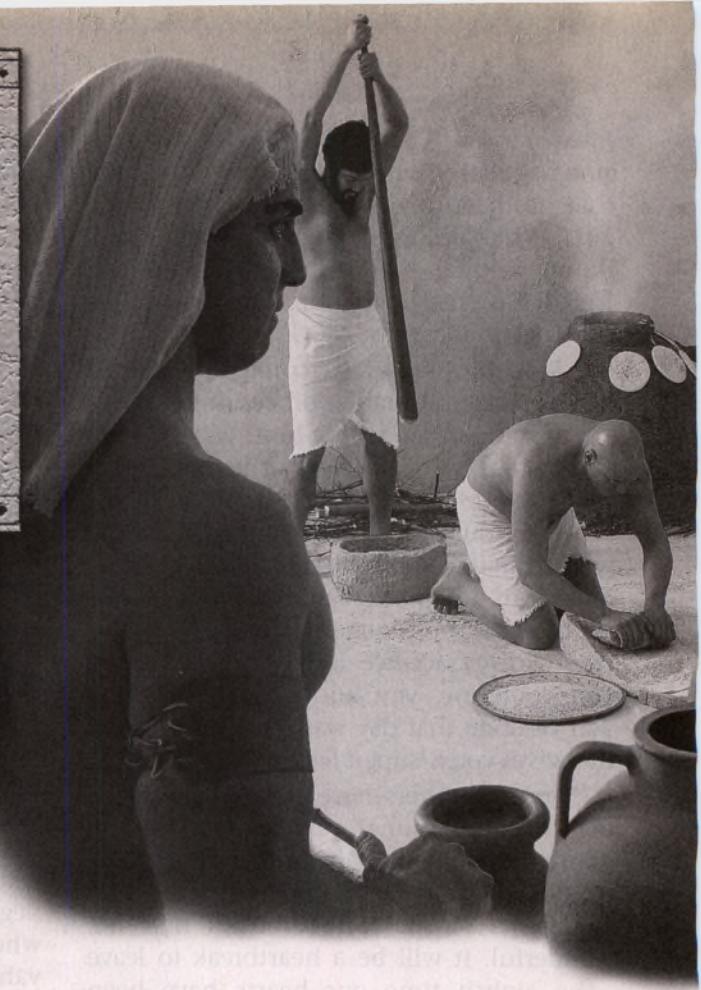
# Do Your Circumstances Control Your LIFE?

DISTRESSING circumstances and problems are commonplace in these "critical times." (2 Timothy 3:1) Some problems may be temporary and thus will eventually pass away. Others persist for months or even years. As a result, many feel as did the psalmist David, who cried out to Jehovah: "Distresses of my heart have multiplied; from the stresses upon me O bring me out."—Psalm 25:17.

Are you grappling with overwhelming problems? If so, you can find help and encouragement in the Bible. Let us consider the lives of two faithful servants of Jehovah who successfully coped with difficulties: Joseph and David. By examining how they responded to adversity, we can learn practical lessons that will help us to meet similar challenges today.

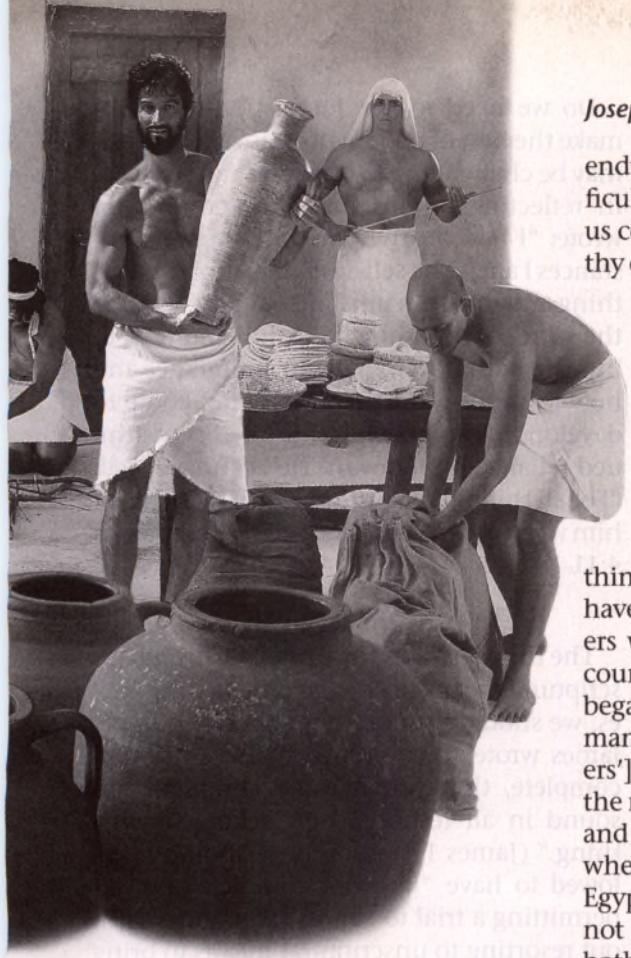
## Faced With Serious Challenges

By the time he reached the age of 17, Joseph had a serious problem within his own family. His older brothers saw that Jacob, their father,



"loved [Joseph] more than all his brothers." Consequently, "they began to hate him, and they were not able to speak peacefully to him." (Genesis 37:4) We can imagine the anxiety and stress that this situation caused Joseph. Eventually, the hatred of Joseph's brothers became so intense that they sold him into slavery.—Genesis 37:26-33.

While a slave in Egypt, Joseph had to resist the immoral advances of his master's wife. Angry at being rejected, she falsely accused Joseph of trying to rape her. He was given "over to the prison house," where "with fetters they afflicted his feet, into irons his soul came." (Genesis 39:7-20; Psalm 105:17, 18) How trying this must have been! For about 13 years, Joseph was either a slave or a prisoner because of injustices brought on him by others, including members of his own family.—Genesis 37:2; 41:46.



David of ancient Israel too faced trials as a young man. For a number of years, he was forced to live as a fugitive, hunted like an animal by King Saul. David's life was in constant danger. On one occasion, he went to Ahimelech the priest for provisions. (1 Samuel 21:1-7) Upon learning that Ahimelech had helped David, Saul ordered the execution not only of Ahimelech but also of all the priests and their families. (1 Samuel 22:12-19) Can you imagine the anguish David must have felt at having indirectly caused this tragedy?

Think of the years of adversity and mistreatment that Joseph and David

### *Joseph worked to make the best of his circumstances*

endured. By examining how they handled their difficult situations, we can learn valuable lessons. Let us consider three ways in which these men are worthy of imitation.

#### **Let Go of Resentment and Bitterness**

First, these faithful men refused to become trapped in a web of bitterness and resentment. While Joseph was in prison, he could easily have dwelt negatively on his betrayal by his brothers, perhaps imagining the revenge he might take if he ever saw them again. How do we know that Joseph resisted such destructive thinking? Consider how he reacted when he did have an opportunity to take vengeance on his brothers who had come to Egypt to buy grain. The account says: “[Joseph] turned away from them and began to weep. . . . After that Joseph gave the command, and [his servants] went filling up [the brothers’] receptacles with grain. Also, they were to return the money of the men to each one’s individual sack and to give them provisions for the journey.” Later, when sending his brothers to bring their father to Egypt, Joseph encouraged them with the words: “Do not get exasperated at one another on the way.” In both word and deed, Joseph proved that he had not let bitterness and resentment poison his life.—Genesis 42:24, 25; 45:24.

Similarly, David did not nurture resentment toward King Saul. On two occasions David had opportunity to put Saul to death. Yet, when his men urged him to do so, David said: “It is unthinkable, on my part, from Jehovah’s standpoint, that I should do this thing to my lord, the anointed of Jehovah, by thrusting out my hand against him, for he is the anointed of Jehovah.” David left the matter with Jehovah, telling his men: “As Jehovah is living, Jehovah himself will deal him a blow; or his day will come and he will have to die, or down into battle he will go, and he will certainly be swept away.” Later, David even composed a dirge mourning the death of Saul and Saul’s son Jonathan. Like Joseph, David did not allow himself to be consumed

by resentment.—1 Samuel 24:3-6; 26:7-13; 2 Samuel 1:17-27.

Do we harbor feelings of resentment and bitterness when some injustice causes us pain? This can easily happen. If we allow our emotions to dominate us, the result may prove more damaging to us than the injustice itself. (Ephesians 4:26, 27) Even though we may have little or no control over what others do, we can control our reaction. It is easier to let go of resentment and bitterness when we have faith that Jehovah will care for matters in his due time.—Romans 12:17-19.

### Make the Best of Your Situation

The second lesson we can learn is not to let our circumstances paralyze our life. We may become so preoccupied with what we cannot do that we lose sight of what we can do. Our circumstances, in effect, begin to control us. This could have happened to Joseph. Instead, he chose to make the best of his situation. While serving as a slave, Joseph “kept finding favor in [his master’s] eyes and waited upon him continually, so that he appointed him over his house.” Joseph took a similar approach while in prison. Because of Jehovah’s blessing and Joseph’s diligence, “the chief officer of the prison house gave over into Joseph’s hand all the prisoners who were in the prison house; and everything that they were doing there he proved to be the one having it done.”—Genesis 39:4, 21-23.

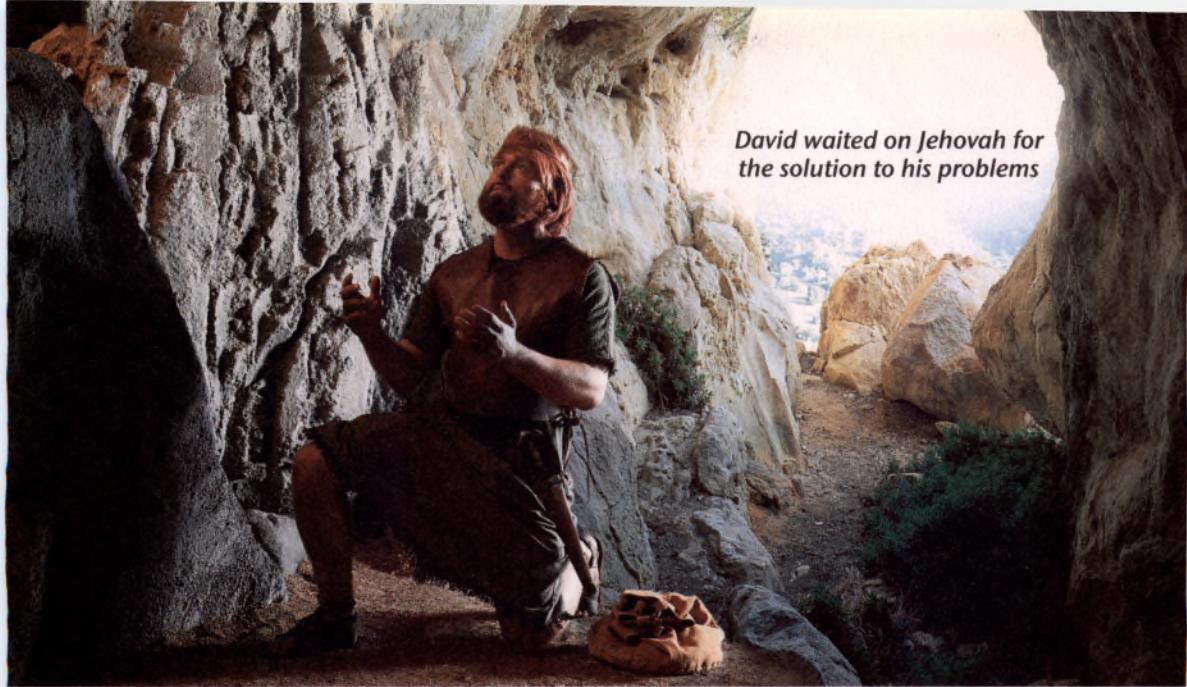
During the years that David lived as a fugitive, he too made the best of his circumstances. While dwelling in the wilderness of Paran, he and his men protected the flocks of Nabal from marauding bands. “A wall was what they proved to be around us both by night and by day,” said one of Nabal’s shepherds. (1 Samuel 25:16) Later, during his stay at Ziklag, David raided towns held by Israel’s enemies to the south, thus securing Judah’s boundaries.—1 Samuel 27:8; 1 Chronicles 12:20-22.

Do we need to put forth more effort to make the best of our circumstances? While it may be challenging to do so, we can succeed. In reflecting on his life, the apostle Paul wrote: “I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be self-sufficient.... In everything and in all circumstances I have learned the secret of both how to be full and how to hunger, both how to have an abundance and how to suffer want.” How did Paul come to develop this approach to life? By his continued reliance on Jehovah. He acknowledged: “For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me.”—Philippians 4:11-13.

### Wait on Jehovah

The third lesson is that instead of using unscriptural means to change our circumstances, we should wait on Jehovah. The disciple James wrote: “Let endurance have its work complete, that you may be complete and sound in all respects, not lacking in anything.” (James 1:4) Endurance should be allowed to have “its work complete” by our permitting a trial to run its full course without resorting to unscriptural means to bring it to a swift end. Then our faith will be tested and refined, and its sustaining power will be revealed. Joseph and David had this kind of endurance. They did not try to work out a solution that might incur Jehovah’s displeasure. Instead, they worked to make the best of their situations. They waited on Jehovah, and what blessings they received for doing so! Jehovah used both of them to deliver and to lead his people.—Genesis 41:39-41; 45:5; 2 Samuel 5:4, 5.

We too may face situations for which we could be tempted to seek unscriptural solutions. For example, are you discouraged because you have not yet found a suitable marriage mate? If so, avoid any temptation to disobey Jehovah’s command to marry “only



*David waited on Jehovah for the solution to his problems*

in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 7:39) Are you dealing with problems in your marriage? Rather than give in to the spirit of the world that promotes separation and divorce, work through the hard times together. (Malachi 2:16; Ephesians 5:21-33) Are you having difficulties caring for your family because of your economic situation? Waiting on Jehovah includes avoiding questionable or illegal activities to try to obtain money. (Psalm 37:25; Hebrews 13:18) Yes, all of us must work hard to make the best of our circumstances and put forth effort to give Jehovah something to bless. As we do so, let us be determined to wait on Jehovah for the perfect solution.—Micah 7:7.

### **Jehovah Will Sustain You**

Meditating on how Bible characters like Joseph and David successfully dealt with disappointments and difficult situations can have a positive effect on us. Though their stories are described in just a few pages of the Bible, their trials lasted for many years. Ask yourself: ‘How did such servants of God come to terms with their circumstances?’

How did they maintain their joy? What qualities did they have to develop?’

We also do well to consider the endurance of modern-day servants of Jehovah. (1 Peter 5:9) The *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines contain many life stories each year. Do you read and meditate on the examples of these faithful Christians? Additionally, in our congregations are those who faithfully endure unpleasant circumstances. Do you regularly associate with them and learn from them at the congregation meetings?—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

When you are beset by challenging circumstances, be assured that Jehovah cares for you and will sustain you. (1 Peter 5:6-10) Work hard not to allow your circumstances to control your life. Follow the examples of Joseph, David, and others by letting go of resentment, by making the best of your situation, and by waiting on Jehovah for the perfect solution. Draw close to him through prayer and spiritual activities. In this way, you too will see that joy and happiness can be yours even during difficult times.—Psalm 34:8.



## FROM DARK DUNGEONS TO THE SWISS ALPS

AS TOLD BY  
**LOTHAR WALTER**

After spending three long years in the dark dungeons of East Germany's Communist prisons, I could hardly wait to enjoy the sweet taste of freedom and the warm company of my family.

I WAS not prepared, however, for the bewildered look on the face of my six-year-old son, Johannes. For the second half of his life, he had not seen his father. To him, I was a total stranger.

Unlike my son, I had enjoyed the loving companionship of my parents. A warm atmosphere prevailed in our home in Chemnitz, Germany, where I was born in 1928. My father was very open about his discontent with religion. He recalled that during World War I, "Christian" soldiers on each side wished those on the other side "Merry Christmas" on December 25, only to resume killing one another the next day. To him, religion was the ultimate form of hypocrisy.

### Disillusionment Gives Way to Faith

Happily, I was spared such disappointment. World War II ended when I was 17 years old, and I narrowly escaped being conscripted. Still, I was distressed over such disquieting questions as, 'Why all the killing? Whom can I trust? Where can I find true security?' East Germany, where we lived, came under Soviet control. The Communist ideals of justice, equality, solidarity, and peaceful amity appealed to those who were worn out by the ravages of war. Soon many of these sincere individuals would be gravely disillusioned—this time, not by religion, but by politics.



Fotosammlung des Stadtarchiv Zwickau, Deutschland

***The Osterstein Castle,  
in Zwickau***

Belzig

Torgau

Chemnitz

Zwickau

It was during my personal quest for meaningful answers that one of my aunts, who was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, spoke to me about her faith. She gave me a Bible-based publication that moved me to read—for the first time ever—the whole 24th chapter of Matthew. I was struck by the reasonable and convincing explanations given in the book, identifying our times as "the conclusion of the system of things" and pointing out the root cause of mankind's problems.—Matthew 24:3; Revelation 12:9.

Soon I received more publications of Jehovah's Witnesses, and as I devoured them, I realized that I had found the truth that I had been searching for so fervently. It was thrilling to learn that Jesus Christ had been enthroned in heaven in 1914 and that he would soon subdue ungodly elements in order to bring blessings to obedient mankind. For me, another great discovery was the clear understanding of the ransom. It helped me to turn to Jehovah God in heartfelt prayer, asking for forgiveness. I was deeply touched by the kind invi-

tation found at James 4:8: "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you."

Despite my unbounded enthusiasm for my newfound faith, my parents and my sister were at first reluctant to accept what I told them. This, however, did not dampen my desire to attend the Christian meetings held near Chemnitz by a small group of Witnesses. To my surprise, my parents and my sister went with me to the

first meeting! That was in the winter of 1945/46. Later, when a Bible study group was formed in Harthau, where we lived, my family started attending regularly.

**"I Am But a Boy"**

Learning important Bible truths and regularly associating with Jehovah's people led me to dedicate my life to Jehovah, and I was baptized on May 25, 1946. To my deep satisfaction, my family members also progressed spiritually, and in time all three became faithful Witnesses. My sister is still an active member of one of the congregations in Chemnitz. My mother and father served loyally until their deaths in 1965 and 1986 respectively.

Six months after my baptism, I started serving as a special pioneer. This marked the beginning of a lifetime of service "in favorable season, in troublesome season." (2 Timothy 4:2) Soon new opportunities for service opened up. There was a need for full-time evangelizers in a remote area in eastern Germany. A brother and I applied for this assignment, but I felt that I had neither the experience nor the maturity for such a responsible task. Since I was only 18, I shared Jeremiah's feelings: "Alas, . . . Jehovah! Here I actually do not know how to speak, for

I am but a boy." (Jeremiah 1:6) Despite my misgivings, the responsible brothers kindly decided to give us a chance. Thus, we were assigned to Belzig, a small town in the state of Brandenburg.

Preaching in that territory was very challenging, but it provided valuable training for me. In time, several prominent businesswomen accepted the Kingdom message and became Jehovah's Witnesses. Their stand, however, went against the deep-seated traditions and fears of that small rural community. Both Catholic and Protestant clergy opposed us adamantly and made slanderous accusations against us for our preaching work. But trusting in Jehovah for guidance and protection, we were able to help a number of interested people to embrace the truth.

### Clouds of Intolerance Gather

The year 1948 brought both blessings and unexpected difficulties. First, I received a pioneer assignment in Rudolstadt, Thuringia. There I came to know many faithful brothers and sisters, and I enjoyed their companionship. Another far-reaching blessing came in July of that year. I married Erika Ullmann, a faithful and active young Christian woman whom I had known from the time I began to attend meetings in the Chemnitz Congregation. Together we took up the pioneer service in Harthau, my hometown. In time, however, Erika was not able to continue in the full-time service because of health problems and for other reasons.

Those were hard times for Jehovah's people. The Labor Department in Chemnitz re-



*With my wife, Erika*

voked my food ration card in an effort to force me to give up the preaching work and get a full-time secular job. Responsible brothers used my case to press for legal recognition by the State. This was denied, and on June 23, 1950, I was sentenced to pay a fine or spend 30 days in prison. We appealed the decision, but the higher court rejected the appeal, and I was sent to prison.

That was just a hint of the gathering storm of opposition and adversity to come. Hardly a month later, in September 1950, after launching a campaign of defamation in the media, the Communist regime banned our activities. Because of our rapid growth and our neutral stand, we were branded as a dangerous spy agency of the West, carrying on "dubious activity" under the cloak of religion. On the very day that the prohibition was issued, my wife gave birth to our son, Johannes, at home while I was in prison. Despite protests from the midwife, State Security officers forced their way into our apartment and searched for evidence to prove their accusations. Of course, they found nothing. Nonetheless, they later succeeded in planting an informant in our congregation. That led to the arrest of all the responsible brothers, including me, in October 1953.

### In Dark Dungeons

After being convicted and given sentences ranging from three to six years, we joined a number of our brothers in the slimy dungeons of Osterstein Castle, in Zwickau. Despite the abysmal conditions there, it was a real joy to associate with mature broth-

ers. Our lack of freedom did not mean lack of spiritual food. Although despised and banned by the regime, *The Watchtower* found its way into the prison and right into our cells! How?

Some of the brothers were assigned to work in coal mines, where they met Witnesses from the outside who gave them the magazines. The brothers then brought the magazines secretly into the prison and by sheer ingenuity managed to pass on the much-needed spiritual food to the rest of us. I was so happy and encouraged to experience Jehovah's care and direction in this way!

By the end of 1954, we were transferred to the infamous prison in Torgau. The Witnesses there were happy to have us. Until then, they had remained spiritually strong by reciting what they could remember from older issues of *The Watchtower*. How they yearned for a fresh supply of spiritual food! Now it was our duty to share with them points that we had studied in Zwickau. But how could we do so when we were strictly forbidden to speak to one another during our daily walks? Well, the brothers had given us precious tips on how to proceed, and Jehovah's mighty protective hand was over us. This taught us the importance of diligent Bible study and meditation while we have the freedom and opportunity to do so.

### Time for Important Decisions

With Jehovah's help, we remained steadfast. To our great surprise, a number of us were granted amnesty at the end of 1956. It is difficult to describe our happiness when the prison gates were opened! By then, my son was six years old, and it was a tremendous joy for me to rejoin my wife and to share in rearing our child. For a while Johannes treated me like a stranger, but soon a warm bond was established between us.

Jehovah's Witnesses in East Germany were facing a very difficult time. Rising hostility toward our Christian ministry and our neutral stand meant that we had to live under constant threat—a life plagued with danger, anxiety, and weariness. Thus, Erika and I had to look at our situation carefully and prayerfully, and we felt the need to move in order to live under more favorable conditions so as not to be consumed by worry. We wanted to have the freedom to serve Jehovah and to pursue spiritual goals.

In the spring of 1957, an opportunity opened up for us to move to Stuttgart, West Germany. The evangelizing work was not banned there, and we could associate freely with our brothers. Their loving support was overwhelming. We spent seven years with the congregation in Hedelfingen. During those years, our son began school and made good progress. In September 1962, I enjoyed the privilege of attending the Kingdom Ministry School in Wiesbaden. There I was encouraged to move with my family to serve where German-speaking Bible teachers were needed. This included certain areas of Germany and Switzerland.

### On to the Swiss Alps

Thus, in 1963 we moved to Switzerland. We were directed to work with a small congregation in Brunnen, on beautiful Lake Lucerne, in the central part of the Swiss Alps. To us, it was like being in a paradise. We had to get accustomed to the German dialect spoken there, to the local way of life, and to the mentality of the people. Nevertheless, we enjoyed working and preaching among peace-loving people. We spent 14 years in Brunnen. Our son grew up there.

In 1977, when I was almost 50, we received an invitation to serve at the Swiss Bethel in Thun. We considered it an

## "Double Victims" Stand Firm Under Persecution

Under the German Democratic Republic (GDR), also known as East Germany, Jehovah's Witnesses were singled out for brutal suppression. Records show that over 5,000 Witnesses were sent to forced labor camps and detention centers because of their Christian ministry and neutrality.—Isaiah 2:4.

Some of these have been described as "double victims." Some 325 of them had been incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps and prisons. Then, in the 1950's, they were pursued and imprisoned by the *Stasi*, the State Security Service of the GDR. Even some of the prisons served double duty—as Nazi prisons first and then as *Stasi* prisons.

During the first decade of intense persecution, from 1950 to 1961, a total of 60 Witnesses—men and women—died in prison from mistreatment, malnutrition, sickness, and old age. Twelve Witnesses were given life sentences that were later commuted to 15 years in prison.

Today, in the former *Stasi* headquarters in Berlin, there is a permanent exhibit highlighting the 40 years of official persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in East Germany. The photographs and personal accounts displayed there give silent testimony to the courage and spiritual strength of these Witnesses who were faithful under fire.

unexpected privilege and accepted it with great appreciation. My wife and I spent nine years in Bethel service, which we remember as a special milestone in our Christian life and personal spiritual development. We also enjoyed preaching with the local publishers in Thun and areas nearby, always having a view of Jehovah's "wonderful works," the majestic snowcapped mountains of the Bernese Alps.—Psalm 9:1.

### Yet Another Move

Our next move came in early 1986. We were asked to serve as special pioneers in a very large territory assigned to the Buchs Congregation in the eastern part of Switzerland. Again, we had to get used to a different way of life. However, motivated by our desire to serve Jehovah wherever we could be used best, we tackled this new assignment, with his blessing. At times, I have substituted for traveling overseers, visiting and strengthening congregations. Eighteen years have passed, and we have had many happy experiences preaching in this area. The congregation in Buchs has grown, and we enjoy meeting in a beautiful Kingdom Hall, dedicated five years ago.

Jehovah has cared for us in a most generous way. We have spent the better part of our life in the full-time ministry, yet we have never lacked anything. We have the joy and satisfaction of seeing our son, his wife, and their children, as well as the children's families, walk faithfully in the way of Jehovah.

Looking back, I feel that, indeed, we have served Jehovah "in favorable season, in troublesome season." My pursuit of the Christian ministry has taken me from the dark dungeons of Communist prisons to the splendorous mountains of the Swiss Alps. My family and I have not regretted a single moment.

## Questions From Readers

**Why did David, a faithful servant of Jehovah, allow his wife Michal to have a teraphim image, or idol, as indicated at 1 Samuel 19:12, 13?**

First, let us briefly consider the context. When news of King Saul's plot to kill David reached David's wife, she responded immediately. The Bible says: "Michal had David descend through the window, that he might go and run away and escape. Then Michal took the teraphim image [which was evidently the size and shape of a man] and placed it on the couch, and a net of goats' hair she put at the place of his head, after which she covered it with a garment." When the messengers of Saul came to seize David, Michal told them: "He is sick." This ploy bought valuable time, and David made good his escape.—1 Samuel 19:11-16.

Archaeological findings suggest that in ancient times, teraphim images were kept not only for religious use but also for legal purposes. Just as title deeds and written testaments determine inheritance rights today, so did teraphim images long ago. Evidently, the possession of the teraphim could, under certain circumstances, give a son-in-law the right to claim the estate of

*The second of the Ten Commandments prohibited making idols, such as the teraphim shown here*

From the book *The Holy Land*, Vol. II, 1859



his deceased father-in-law. This may explain why, on an earlier occasion, Rachel took her father's teraphim images and why he was so anxious to recover them. In that instance, Rachel's husband, Jacob, was unaware of what his wife had done.—Genesis 31:14-34.

When the Israelites became a nation, they received the Ten Commandments, the second of which specifically prohibits the making of idols. (Exodus 20:4, 5) Later, the prophet Samuel alluded to this law in speaking to King Saul. He said: "Rebelliousness is the same as the sin of divination, and pushing ahead presumptuously the same as using uncanny power and teraphim." (1 Samuel 15:23) For this reason, it is not likely that the teraphim served for purposes of inheritance in Israel. Nonetheless, this ancient form of Jewish superstition appears to have continued in some Israelite households. (Judges 17:5, 6; 2 Kings 23:24)

That Michal kept a teraphim image among her possessions suggests that her heart was not complete with Jehovah. David either did not know about the teraphim image or tolerated it because Michal was the daughter of King Saul.

David's view of exclusive devotion to Jehovah is expressed in the words: "Jehovah is great and very much to be praised, and he is to be feared more than all other gods. For all the gods of the peoples are valueless gods. As for Jehovah, he made the heavens."—1 Chronicles 16:25, 26.

# Working What Is Good IN TIMES of NEED

**L**EТ us work what is good toward all," urged the apostle Paul, "but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Galatians 6:10) Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide diligently endeavor to apply that principle in their lives, working what is good toward everyone, particularly their fellow believers. This is seen again and again in times of need. Let us consider recent examples from three countries.

In December 2002, a powerful typhoon slammed into Guam, with winds exceeding 190 miles per hour. Many homes were torn apart, some completely destroyed. Local congregations quickly organized cleanup crews to help the Witness families who were hit the hardest. The Guam branch supplied materials and manpower to repair damaged homes, and the Hawaii branch gave support. Within weeks, a team of carpenters arrived from Hawaii to help with

the reconstruction work, and to assist them, some local brothers took vacation from their jobs. The spirit of joyful cooperation was a witness to all in the community.

In a suburb of the city of Mandalay, Myanmar, a fire broke out not far from a Kingdom Hall. Nearby was a house belonging to an inactive sister and her family. The wind was blowing in the direction of her home, so she ran to the hall to ask for help. At that time, the hall was being renovated, so there were many brothers on hand. They were surprised to meet the sister because they did not know that she lived in the area. Quickly, the brothers assisted in moving the family's belongings to safety. When the husband, who was not a Witness, heard about the fire, he rushed home to find the brothers caring for his household. Impressed and grateful, he was also relieved because looters often exploit such situations. This expression of kindness by the brothers motivated the sister and her son to associate once again with the Christian congregation, and they are now attending all the meetings.

During the past service year, many in Mozambique faced famine on account of droughts and crop failures. The local branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses responded quickly by providing food for needy ones. Distribution took place at Kingdom Halls, sometimes after the congregation meetings.

## IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

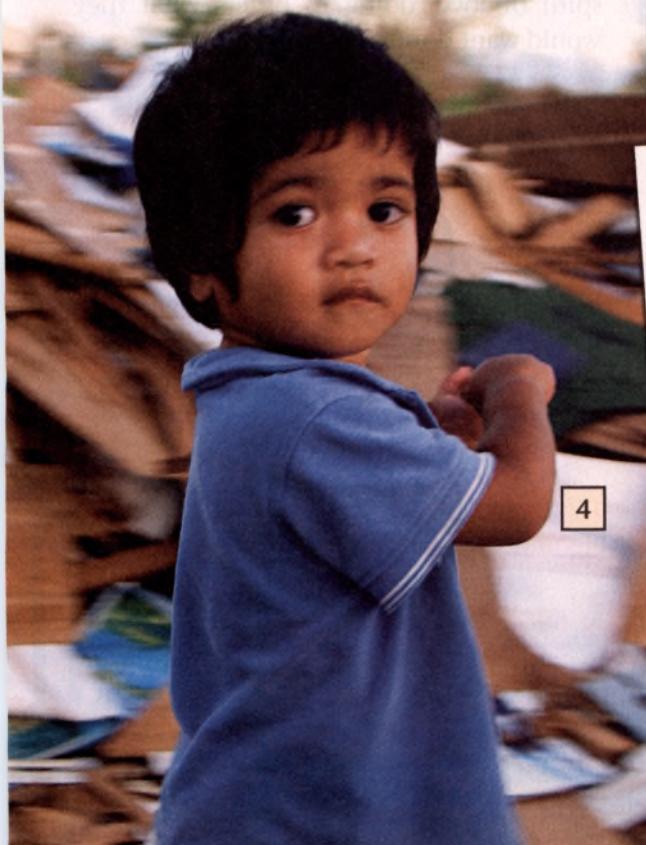
Can the Bible Help You Train Your Children?

Who Were the Anabaptists?

Rightly Value Your Gift of Life

One sister who is a single parent said: "I came to the meeting depressed, not knowing what I would give my children to eat when we returned home." The loving assistance provided by the brothers quickly lifted her spirits. "It was like a resurrection for me!" she said.

The Witnesses also "work what is good" in a spiritual way by sharing the Bible's message of comfort and hope. They believe as did the wise man of long ago: "As for the one listening to [godly wisdom], he will reside in security and be undisturbed from dread of calamity."—Proverbs 1:33.



4



1



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1, 2. Distribution of food to needy ones in Mozambique

3, 4. The typhoon in Guam destroyed many homes

Child, left: Andrea Booher/FEMA News Photo; woman, above: AP Photo/Pacific Daily News, Masako Watanabe

# TO DO OR NOT TO DO TO OTHERS?

**“W**HAT you do not want done to you, do not do to others." This ethical maxim is attributed to the renowned Chinese teacher and philosopher Confucius. Today, some 2,500 years later, many still hold to the belief that a person has done his moral duty simply by refraining from doing any harm to others.

To be sure, this Confucian code of conduct has its merits. The Bible, on the other hand, reveals another dimension of human behavior and interaction. In addition to what might be called the sin of commission, that is, committing wrongs against one's fellow humans, the Bible speaks of the sin of omission. The Christian disciple James wrote: "If one knows how to do what is right and yet does not do it, it is a sin for him." (James 4:17) Rather than simply instructing Christians not to do bad to others, Jesus Christ offered this counsel: "All things . . . that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them."—Matthew 7:12.

God originally purposed that all mankind treat one another as they would like to be treated. He set the finest example in expressing care for the welfare of others in the way he created humans: "God proceeded to create the man in his image, in God's im-

age he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27) This means that God lovingly endowed humans with a conscience, which, when properly trained, would guide them to treat others the way they themselves would want to be treated.

Many today suffer hopelessly and helplessly at the hands of thoughtless and self-centered people. Clearly, what is needed is more than simply not to do what is bad and harmful to others but, rather, to do what is good and helpful to them. Because of this, Jehovah's Witnesses voluntarily take positive action to help others to learn of the marvelous hope found in God's Word. When they call on their neighbors with the good news from the Bible, they do so in a spirit of love, doing to others what they would want done to themselves.

