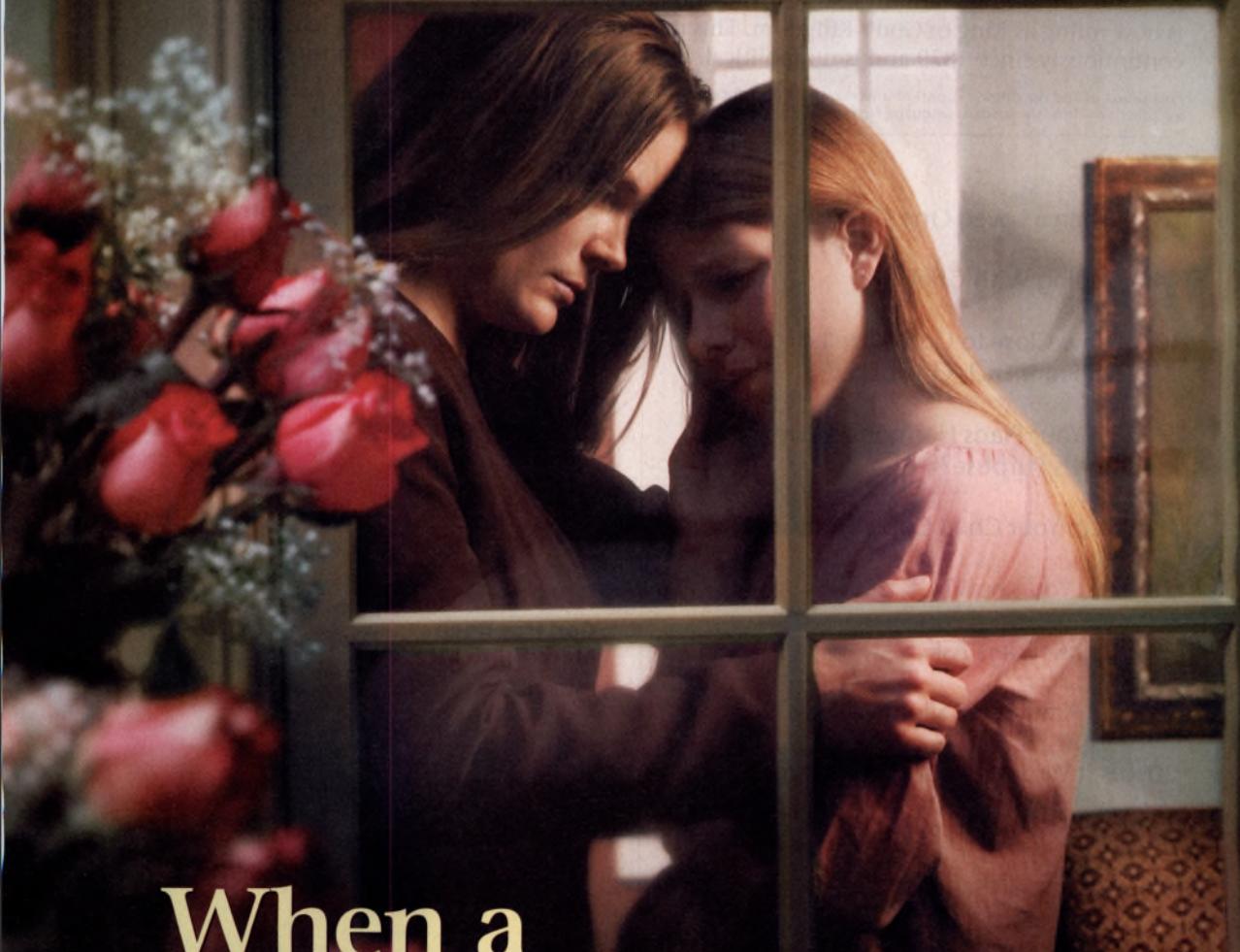


THE WATCHTOWER

JULY 1, 2008

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**When a
Loved One Dies
*How Can You Cope?***

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

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Merciful to Me**

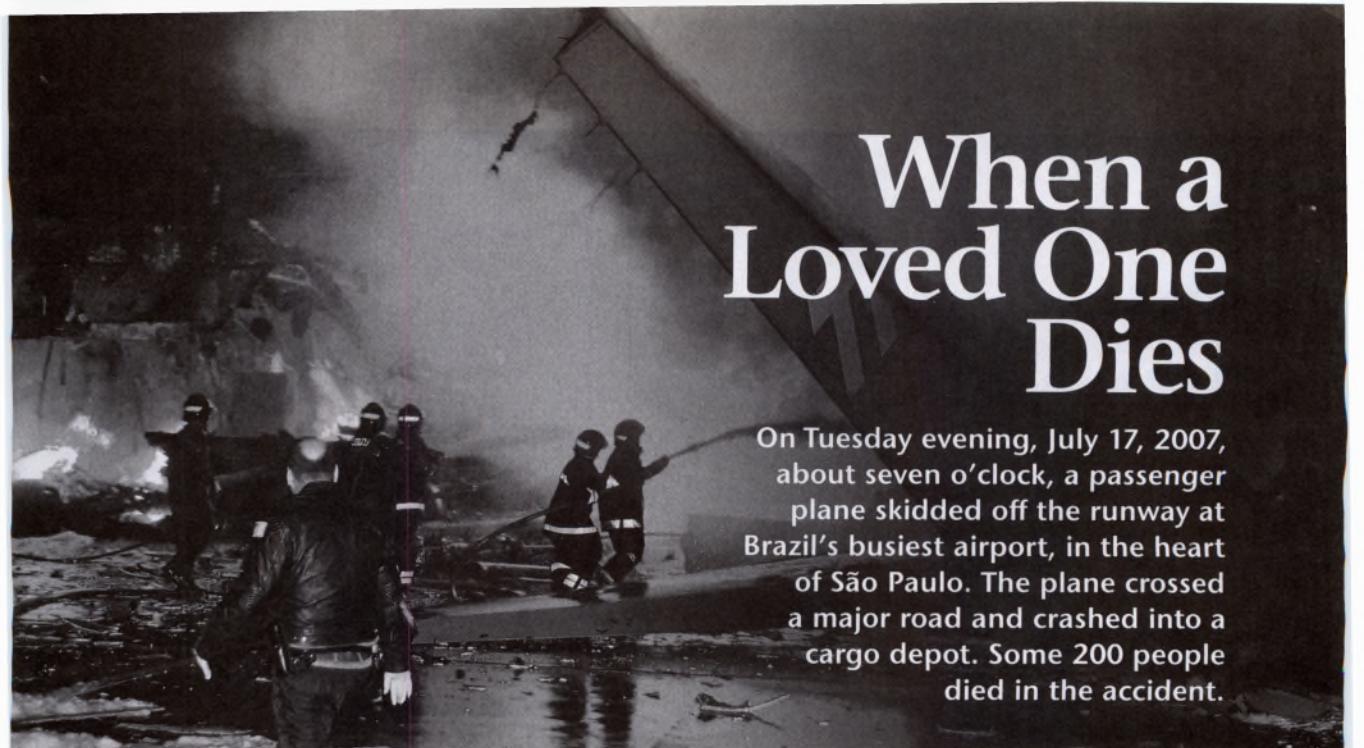
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When a Loved One Dies

On Tuesday evening, July 17, 2007, about seven o'clock, a passenger plane skidded off the runway at Brazil's busiest airport, in the heart of São Paulo. The plane crossed a major road and crashed into a cargo depot. Some 200 people died in the accident.

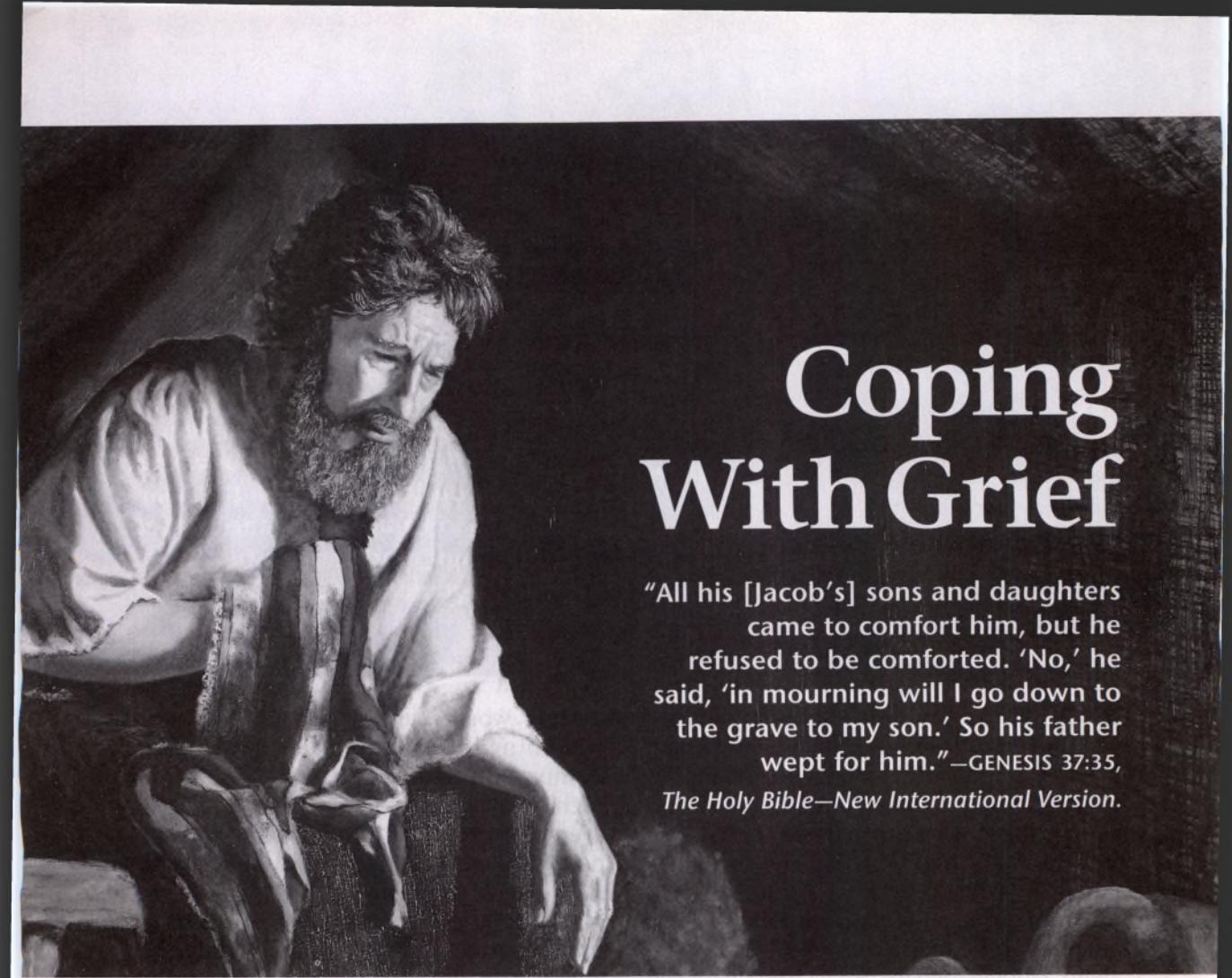
EVERTON DE FREITAS/AFP/Getty Images

WHAT has been described as Brazil's worst airline disaster will remain indelibly etched in the memories of those who lost loved ones. Claudete was among those who experienced such a loss. She was watching TV when she heard the news about the plane crash. Her son, Renato, was on the plane. He was only 26. He had planned to get married in October. Desperately Claudete tried to contact him on his cell phone, but there was no reply. She collapsed on the floor and cried inconsolably.

Antje lost her fiancé in a tragic car accident in January 1986. When she heard the news, she went into a state of shock. "My initial reaction was one of disbelief. I felt that it was a bad dream and that I would suddenly wake up and find out that it was not true. I trembled and felt terrible pains as if someone had hit me in the stomach." Antje suffered from depression for the next three years. Although more than 20 years have passed since the accident, she still trembles when she recalls what happened.

Mere words cannot convey the overwhelming feelings of shock, disbelief, numbness, and despair that can result from such tragic, unexpected losses. However, even when the death of a loved one is expected, as might be the case after his or her long illness, grief can still be very intense. No one is ever totally prepared for the death of a loved one. Nanci's mother died in 2002 after a long illness. Yet, the day her mother died, Nanci sat on the hospital floor in a complete state of shock. Life seemed to have lost all meaning for her. Five years have gone by, but she still cries when she thinks of her mother.

"People never get over a loss, they just get used to it," stated Dr. Holly G. Prigerson. If you have lost a loved one in death, unexpectedly or not, you may wonder: 'Is it normal to grieve? How is it possible to cope with the loss of a loved one? Will I ever see my loved one again?' The following article will discuss these and other questions you may have.



Coping With Grief

"All his [Jacob's] sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. 'No,' he said, 'in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son.' So his father wept for him."—GENESIS 37:35,

The Holy Bible—New International Version.

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THE patriarch Jacob grieved deeply over the loss of his son. He expected to grieve until the day he died. Like Jacob, you may feel that the pain of losing a loved one is so deep that it will never go away. Does such intense grief necessarily indicate a lack of faith in God? Definitely not!

The Bible portrays Jacob as a man of faith. Along with his grandfather Abraham and his father, Isaac, Jacob is commended for his outstanding faith. (Hebrews 11:8, 9, 13) Why, on one occasion, he even wrestled all night with an angel to get a blessing from God! (Genesis 32:24-30) Evidently, Jacob was a deeply spiritual man. What, then, can we learn from Jacob's grief? Deep feelings of grief and sorrow when a loved one dies are not incompatible with strong faith in God. Grief is the normal and natural response to the loss of someone we love.

What Is Grief?

Grief can affect us in various ways, but for many the overriding feeling is one of intense emotional pain. Consider the experience of Leonardo, who was 14 years old when his father suddenly died from cardiorespiratory problems. Leonardo will never forget the day his aunt broke the news to him. At first, he refused to believe that it was true. He saw his father's body at the funeral, but it all seemed strangely unreal. For about six months, Leonardo was unable to cry. Often, he found himself waiting for his father to come home from work. It took about a year before the full impact of the loss sank in. When it did, he felt terribly alone. Ordinary things—such as coming home to an empty house—reminded him of his father's absence. At such times, he often broke down and cried. How he missed his father!

As Leonardo's experience well

illustrates, grief can be intense. The good news is that recovery is possible. However, it may take some time. Just as a severe physical wound takes time to heal, so it is with bereavement. Recovering from grief may take months, a few years, or even longer. But the acute pain you feel in the beginning will lessen in time, and life will gradually seem less bleak and meaningless.

In the meantime, grief is said to be a necessary part of the healing process and of learning to adapt to the new situation. There is an empty space where before there was a living human. We need to adjust to life without that person. Grief may provide a necessary emotional release. Of course, not everyone grieves in exactly the same way. One thing, though, seems to hold true: Repressing your grief can be harmful mentally, emotionally, and physically. How, then, can you express your grief in healthy ways? The Bible contains some practical advice.*

* For a discussion of how to help children deal with the death of a loved one, see the article "Help Your Child Cope With Grief," on pages 18 to 20 of this magazine.

Talking about your feelings can bring a measure of relief



Coping With Grief

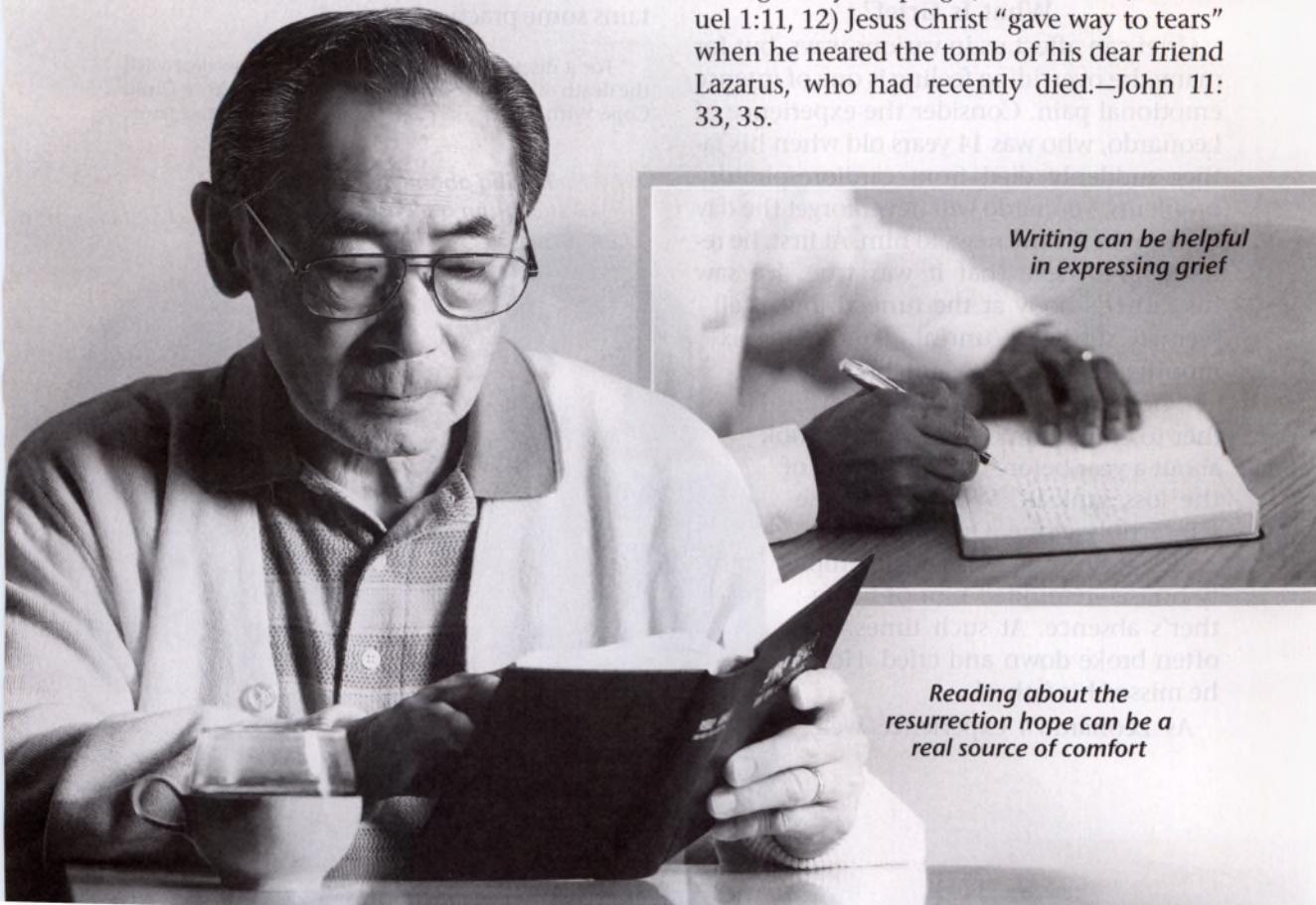
Many bereaved ones have found that *talking* can be a helpful release. Notice, for example, the words of the Bible character Job, who suffered the loss of all ten of his children and endured other tragedies. He said: "My soul certainly feels a loathing toward my life. I will give vent to my concern about myself. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul!" (Job 1:2, 18, 19; 10:1) Notice that Job needed to "give vent" to his concerns. How would he do so? "I will speak," he explained.

Paulo, who lost his mother, says: "One of the things that has helped me is to talk about my mother." So talking about your feelings to a trusted friend can bring a measure of relief. (Proverbs 17:17) After losing her mother, Yone asked her Christian brothers to visit her more often. "Talking helped to ease the pain," she recalls. You too may find that putting

ting your feelings into words and sharing them with a sympathetic listener will make it easier to deal with them.

Writing can also be a helpful release. Some who find it difficult to talk about their feelings may find it easier to express themselves in writing. Following the death of Saul and Jonathan, the faithful man David wrote a deeply mournful song in which he poured out his sorrow. This emotional dirge eventually became part of the Bible book of Second Samuel.—2 Samuel 1:17-27.

Crying may also serve as an emotional release. "For everything there is an appointed time, even . . . a time to weep," says the Bible. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4) To be sure, the death of someone we love is "a time to weep." Tears of grief are nothing to be embarrassed about. The Bible contains many examples of faithful men and women who openly expressed their grief by weeping. (Genesis 23:2; 2 Samuel 1:11, 12) Jesus Christ "gave way to tears" when he neared the tomb of his dear friend Lazarus, who had recently died.—John 11:33, 35.



*Writing can be helpful
in expressing grief*

*Reading about the
resurrection hope can be a
real source of comfort*

Working through grief takes patience, for you may feel that you are on an emotional roller coaster. Remember that you do not have to be ashamed of your tears. Many faithful individuals have found that shedding tears of grief is a normal and necessary part of the healing process.

Draw Close to God

The Bible tells us: "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you." (James 4:8) One of the principal ways to draw close to God is through prayer. Do not underestimate its value! The Bible makes this comforting prom-

ise: "Jehovah is near to those that are broken at heart; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves." (Psalm 34:18) It also assures us: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you." (Psalm 55:22) Think about this. As we noted earlier, many have found it helpful to talk about their feelings with a trusted friend. Would it not be even more helpful to pour out your feelings to the God who promises to comfort our hearts?—2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.

Paulo, who was mentioned earlier, commented: "When I just couldn't endure the pain anymore and felt that I could not cope, I

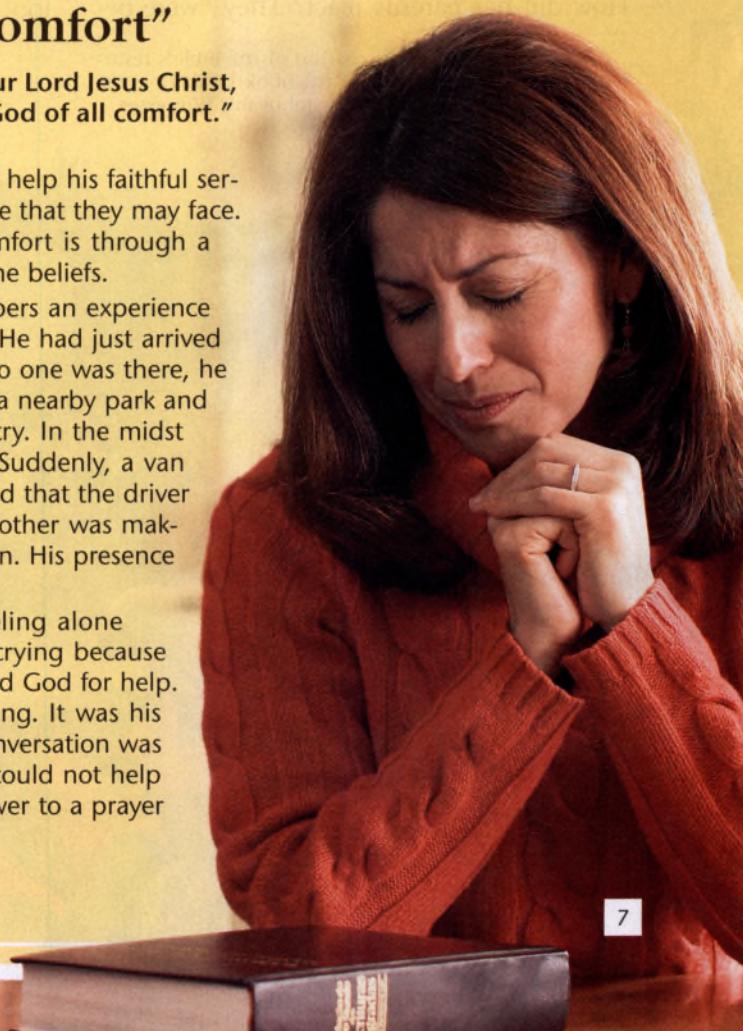
"The God of All Comfort"

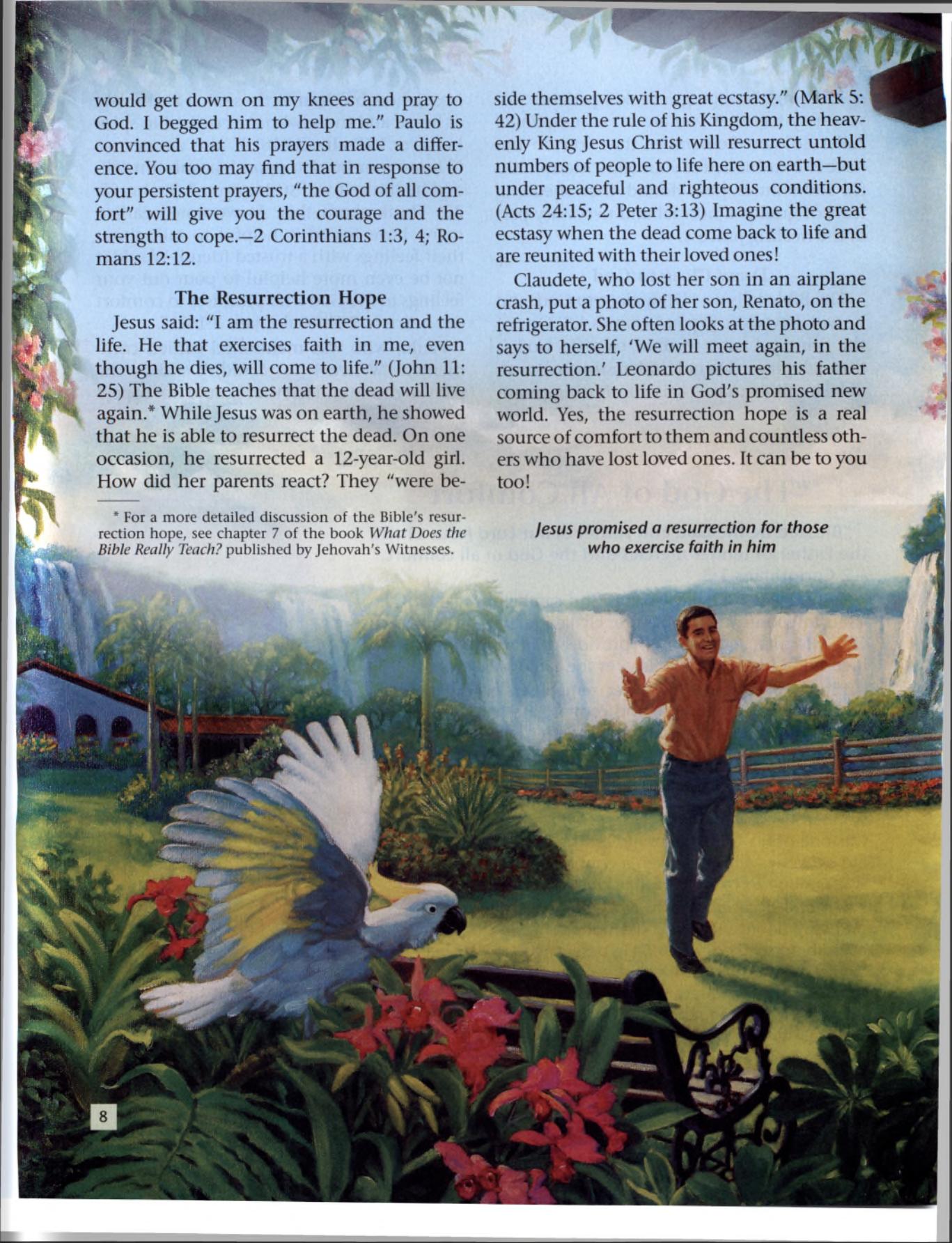
"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort."
—2 Corinthians 1:3.

This Bible verse indicates that God can help his faithful servants to endure any problem or challenge that they may face. One way that Jehovah may provide comfort is through a friend or a loved one who shares the same beliefs.

Leonardo, who lost his father, remembers an experience that brought him strength and comfort. He had just arrived home, and when he remembered that no one was there, he began to cry uncontrollably. He went to a nearby park and sat on a bench, where he continued to cry. In the midst of his tears, he pleaded for God's help. Suddenly, a van stopped nearby, and Leonardo recognized that the driver was one of his Christian brothers. The brother was making deliveries and had taken a wrong turn. His presence was enough to console Leonardo.

On one occasion, a widower was feeling alone and very depressed. He could not stop crying because everything seemed so dark. He beseeched God for help. While he was still praying, the phone rang. It was his granddaughter. He recalls: "Our brief conversation was enough to give me renewed courage. I could not help but feel that her phone call was the answer to a prayer for help."





would get down on my knees and pray to God. I begged him to help me." Paulo is convinced that his prayers made a difference. You too may find that in response to your persistent prayers, "the God of all comfort" will give you the courage and the strength to cope.—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; Romans 12:12.

The Resurrection Hope

Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life." (John 11:25) The Bible teaches that the dead will live again.* While Jesus was on earth, he showed that he is able to resurrect the dead. On one occasion, he resurrected a 12-year-old girl. How did her parents react? They "were be-

side themselves with great ecstasy." (Mark 5:42) Under the rule of his Kingdom, the heavenly King Jesus Christ will resurrect untold numbers of people to life here on earth—but under peaceful and righteous conditions. (Acts 24:15; 2 Peter 3:13) Imagine the great ecstasy when the dead come back to life and are reunited with their loved ones!

Claudete, who lost her son in an airplane crash, put a photo of her son, Renato, on the refrigerator. She often looks at the photo and says to herself, 'We will meet again, in the resurrection.' Leonardo pictures his father coming back to life in God's promised new world. Yes, the resurrection hope is a real source of comfort to them and countless others who have lost loved ones. It can be to you too!

***Jesus promised a resurrection for those
who exercise faith in him***

* For a more detailed discussion of the Bible's resurrection hope, see chapter 7 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Bringing Comfort to Others

"[God] comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation through the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God."—2 Corinthians 1:4.

Many true Christians have experienced firsthand what those words mean. Having received comfort to cope with the loss of a loved one, they find that they are able to give encouragement and comfort to others.

Consider the example of Claudete, who regularly visits others to share her Bible-based beliefs. Before she lost her son, she had been visiting a woman whose son had died from leukemia. The woman enjoyed the visits, but she felt that Claudete would never fully comprehend her pain. However, soon after Claudete's son died, the woman visited her and told her that she had come to see if

Claudete still maintained her faith now that her son had died. Impressed by Claudete's strong faith, the woman is having a regular Bible study with Claudete and is finding much comfort from God's Word.

After losing his father, Leonardo decided to learn sign language so that he could share the Bible's comforting message with deaf individuals. He has found that his efforts to help the deaf have greatly benefited him. He says: "One of the things that has helped me to cope with my grief is my desire to help the deaf to learn about God. I have dedicated a lot of time and energy to helping them. My feelings of sadness turned to joy when I saw my first Bible student get baptized! In reality, for the first time since my father's death, I felt a deep sense of happiness."

—Acts 20:35.



“He Is Not Far Off From Each One of Us”

Acts 17:24-27

COMPARED to this vast universe, humans are puny indeed. Perhaps you have wondered, ‘Is it really possible for mere humans to have a close relationship with Almighty God?’ That could be possible only if God, whose name is Jehovah, wants us to be close to him. Does he? The comforting answer can be found in the apostle Paul’s eloquent words to the learned men of Athens, as recorded at Acts 17:24-27. Notice four things that Paul mentions about Jehovah.

First, Paul says that God “made the world and all the things in it.” (Verse 24) The beauty and variety that make life so enjoyable bear testimony to the thoughtfulness and love of our Maker. (Romans 1:20) It would be absurd to imagine that such a God would choose to be remote from the objects of his love.

Second, Jehovah “gives to all persons life and breath and all things.” (Verse 25) Jehovah is the Sustainer of life. (Psalm 36:9) The air, water, and food that are so vital to life are all gifts from our Creator. (James 1:17) Is it reasonable to believe that our generous God would keep to himself and thereby deny us the gift of knowing who he is and of drawing close to him?

Third, God “made out of one man every nation of men.” (Verse 26) Jehovah is impartial and completely free

from bias or prejudice of any kind. (Acts 10:34) How could he be otherwise? He created the “one man,” Adam, from whom all nations and races have descended. God’s “will is that all sorts of men should be saved.” (1 Timothy 2:4) So the opportunity to draw close to him is open to us regardless of our skin color, nationality, or ethnic background.

Finally, Paul expresses a most reassuring truth: Jehovah is “not far off from each one of us.” (Verse 27) Although highly exalted, Jehovah is ever accessible to those who sincerely want to be close to him. His Word assures us that he is, not far off, but “near to all those calling upon him.”—Psalm 145:18.

It is clear from Paul’s words that God wants us to be close to him. However, he grants such closeness only to those who are willing “to seek” and “groping for” him, explains Paul. (Verse 27) A reference work for Bible translators says that “both verbs are understood to express either an obtainable possibility . . . or an obtainable wish.” To illustrate: In a dark but familiar room, you might grope for the light switch or the door, yet you know that your search will be successful. So, too, if we sincerely seek God and grope for him, we can be sure that our efforts will be rewarded. We will “really find him,” Paul assures us.—Verse 27.

Do you long to be close to God? If in faith you begin “to seek God” and “groping for him,” you will not be disappointed. Jehovah is not hard to find, for “he is not far off from each one of us.”

Do Your Plans Harmonize With God's Purpose?



THE bird known as Clark's nutcracker is a gray-white songbird that can be seen flitting through the forests of western North America. It collects and buries as many as 33,000 seeds annually, storing them in some 2,500 different locations in preparation for the frigid winter months. Indeed, this bird is "instinctively wise" in the way it makes provision for the future.—Proverbs 30:24.

Humans possess an even more remarkable ability. Of all Jehovah's earthly creations, humans have an unsurpassed capacity to learn from past experiences and to allow these lessons to influence their plans for the future. "Many are the plans in the heart of a man," observed wise King Solomon.—Proverbs 19:21.

Even so, humans generally have little choice but to base their plans on *assumptions* about the future. For example, you plan tomorrow's activities assuming that the sun will rise and that you will still be alive. The first assumption is well-founded; the second is less certain. Realistically, the Bible writer

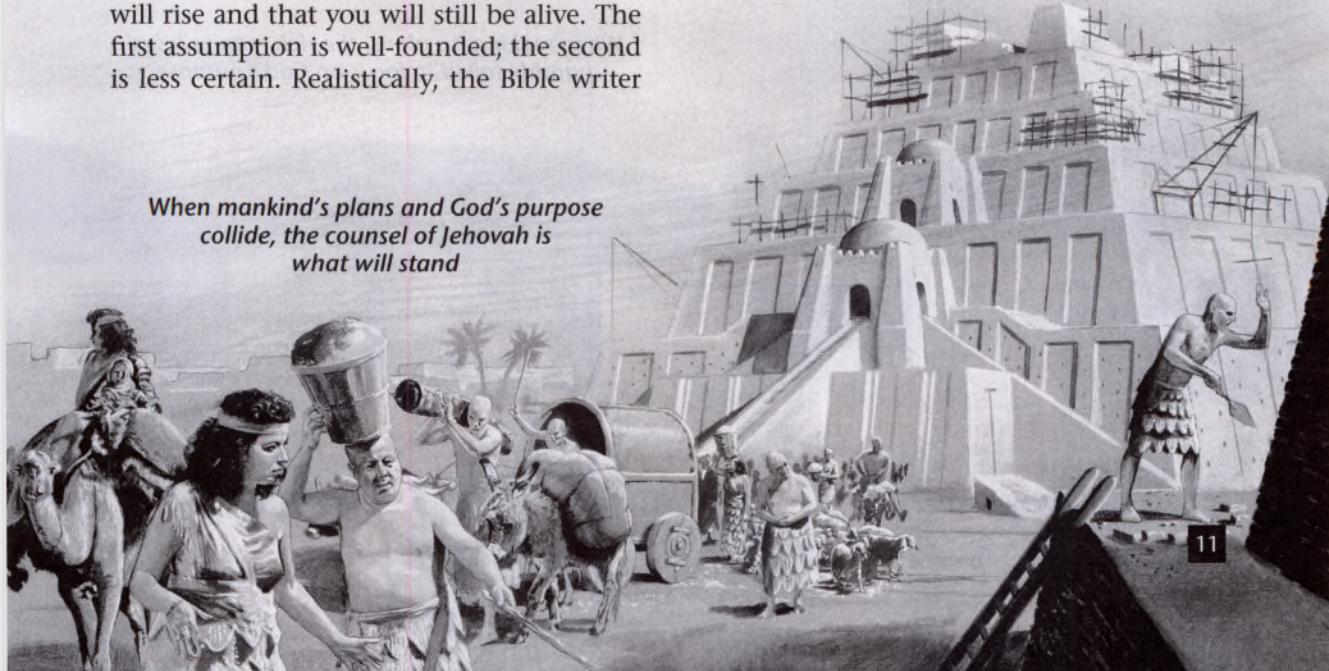
James said: "You do not know what your life will be tomorrow."—James 4:13, 14.

Jehovah God does not have such limitations. He knows "from the beginning the finale." His stated purpose will be fulfilled, come what may. "My own counsel will stand," he declares, "and everything that is my delight I shall do." (Isaiah 46:10) What happens, though, when mankind's plans conflict with God's purpose?

When Human Plans Disregard God's Purpose

Some 4,000 years ago, the builders of the Tower of Babel planned to restrict the spread of the human race. "Come on!" they said. "Let us build ourselves a city and also a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a celebrated name for ourselves, for fear we may be scattered over all the surface of the earth."—Genesis 11:4.

When mankind's plans and God's purpose collide, the counsel of Jehovah is what will stand



However, God's purpose for the earth was quite different. He had commanded Noah and his sons: "Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth." (Genesis 9:1) How did God deal with the goals of the rebellious people of Babel? He confused their language so that they could not communicate with one another. The result? "Accordingly Jehovah scattered them from there over all the surface of the earth." (Genesis 11:5-8) Babel's builders were forced to learn a valuable lesson. When human plans and God's purpose differ, "the counsel of Jehovah is what will stand." (Proverbs 19:21) Do you allow such lessons from the past to influence your life?

A Rich Man's Folly

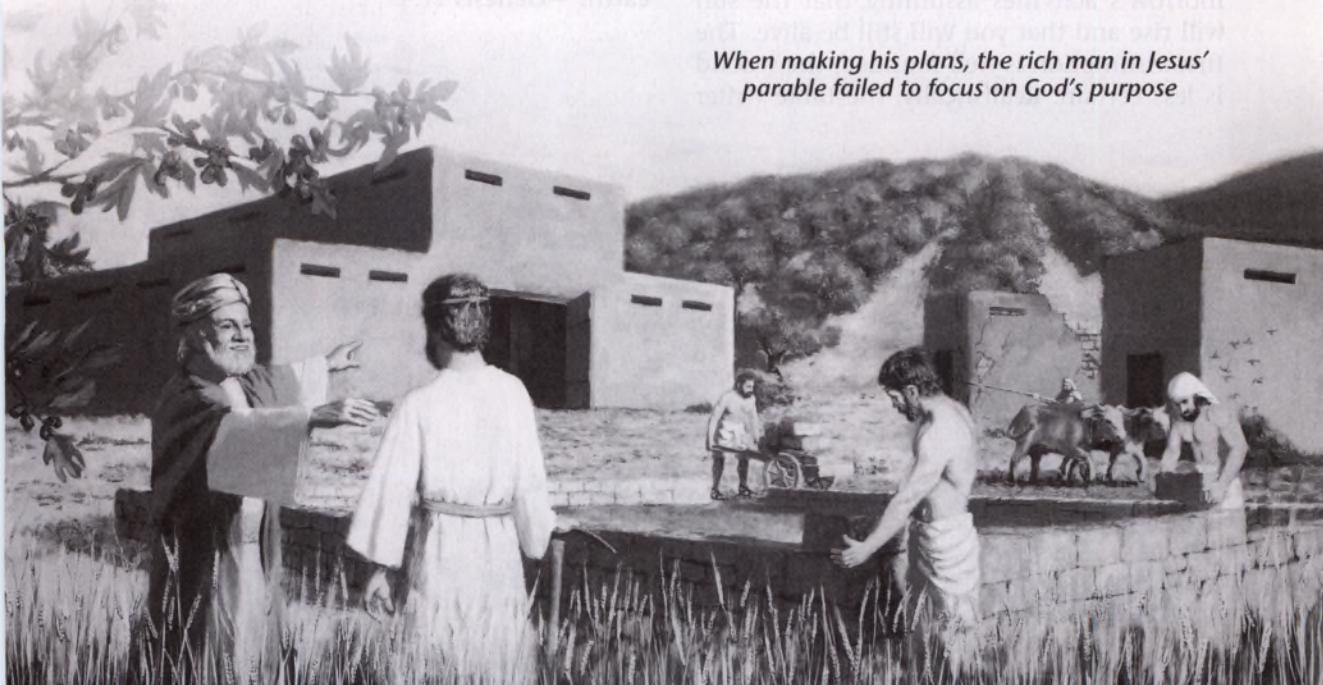
You may not plan to build a tower, but many today plan to build a large bank account and to accumulate material possessions so that they can be comfortable in retirement. It is only natural for a person to want to enjoy the fruits of his labor. "Every man should eat and indeed drink and see good for all his hard work," wrote Solomon. "It is the gift of God."—Ecclesiastes 3:13.

Jehovah holds us accountable for the way we use this gift. Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus

emphasized this point to his disciples by means of an illustration. He said: "The land of a certain rich man produced well. Consequently he began reasoning within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, now that I have nowhere to gather my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my storehouses and build bigger ones, and there I will gather all my grain and all my good things; and I will say to my soul: 'Soul, you have many good things laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, enjoy yourself.'" (Luke 12:16-19) The rich man's goal sounds reasonable, does it not? Like the bird mentioned earlier, Clark's nutcracker, the man in the illustration seemed to be preparing for his future needs.

The man's thinking, though, was flawed. Jesus continued: "But God said to him, 'Unreasonable one, this night they are demanding your soul from you. Who, then, is to have the things you stored up?'" (Luke 12:20) Was Jesus contradicting Solomon's statement that work and the good things it produces are gifts from God? No. What was Jesus' point? "So it goes," said Jesus, "with the man that lays up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God."—Luke 12:21.

When making his plans, the rich man in Jesus' parable failed to focus on God's purpose



Jesus was teaching his audience that Jehovah wants us to take Him into account as we make our plans. The rich man could have been rich toward God by seeking ways to grow in godly devotion, wisdom, and love. That man's words reveal no interest in such things, nor in leaving some of his crops for the poor to glean, nor in presenting gift offerings to Jehovah. Such spiritual pursuits and unselfish actions were not part of the rich man's life. His plans revolved purely around his own desires and comforts.

Have you observed that many people today have priorities in life like those of the rich man Jesus described? Whether we are well-off or poor, it is all too easy to fall into a materialistic frame of mind, allowing the needs and desires of daily life to push aside spiritual needs. What can you do to avoid that trap?

Planning a "Normal" Life

Unlike the rich man of Jesus' illustration, you may be struggling financially. Nevertheless, if you are married, you no doubt plan to provide the necessities of life for your family and, if possible, a good basic education for your children. If you are single, your plans likely include finding a job or keeping the job you have, so that you are not a burden to others. These are worthwhile goals.—2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; 1 Timothy 5:8.

Even so, it is possible that working, eating, drinking—living what is considered to be a normal life—could bring a person into conflict with God's will. How so? 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, eating and drinking, men marrying and women being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and they took no note until the flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will be."—Matthew 24:37-39.

Prior to the Flood, people in general enjoyed what they might have considered a normal life. Their problem, however, was that they "took no note" of God's purpose to wipe out that wicked world by means of a global deluge. They no doubt thought that Noah's lifestyle was abnormal. Yet, when the Flood came, it was the lifestyle of Noah and his family that proved to be truly wise.

Today, all available evidence proves that we are living in the time of the end. (Matthew 24:3-12; 2 Timothy 3:1-5) Soon, God's Kingdom will "crush and put an end" to the current system of things. (Daniel 2:44) Under that Kingdom, the earth will be transformed into a paradise. The Kingdom will remove sickness and death. (Isaiah 33:24; Revelation 21:3-5) All earth's creatures will live in harmony and be free from hunger. —Psalm 72:16; Isaiah 11:6-9.

Before he acts, though, Jehovah purposed that the good news of his Kingdom "be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) In harmony with God's purpose, some seven million Witnesses of Jehovah are preaching this good news in 236 lands and in over four hundred languages.

To the world, the lifestyle of Jehovah's Witnesses may seem strange in some ways—even ridiculous. (2 Peter 3:3, 4) Like those living before the Flood, most people today are preoccupied with the routine of daily life. They may view as unbalanced anyone who refuses to live a lifestyle that society considers to be normal. But from the perspective of those who have faith in God's promises, a life centered on serving God is truly balanced.

Therefore, whether you are rich or poor or somewhere in-between, it is wise from time to time to review your plans for the near future. As you do, ask yourself, 'Do my plans harmonize with God's purpose?'



"Look! Jehovah's Slave Girl!"

MARY looked up, wide-eyed, as the visitor entered her home. He did not ask for her father or her mother. He was there to see her! He could not be from Nazareth; of that she was sure. In a small town like hers, strangers stood out. This one would stand out anywhere. He addressed Mary in a way that was altogether new to her, saying: "Good day, highly favored one, Jehovah is with you."—Luke 1:28.

Thus the Bible introduces us to Mary, daughter of Heli, of the town of Nazareth in Galilee. We meet her at a crossroads, in a sense. She was engaged to marry the carpenter Joseph—not a wealthy man but a faithful one. So her course may have seemed to lie neatly mapped out before her—a simple life of working supportively as the wife of Joseph, raising a family together with him. Suddenly, though, she found herself faced with this visitor who brought her an assignment from her God, a responsibility that would change her life.

You might be surprised to learn that the Bible does not tell us much about Mary. It says little of her background, less of her personality, and nothing at all of her appearance. Yet, what God's Word does say about her is revealing indeed.

In order to get acquainted with Mary, we need to look beyond many preconceptions about her that are promoted in various religions. So let us set aside the countless "likenesses" executed in paint, marble, or plaster. Let us set aside, too, the complex theology

and dogma that bestow on this humble woman such lofty titles as "Mother of God" and "Queen of Heaven." Let us instead focus on what the Bible actually reveals. It gives us priceless insight into her faith and how we can imitate it.

A Visit From an Angel

Mary's visitor, as you may know, was no mere man. It was the angel Gabriel. When he called Mary "highly favored one," she was "deeply disturbed" by his words and wondered about this unusual greeting. (Luke 1:29) Highly favored by whom? Mary did not expect to be highly favored among men. But the angel was speaking of the favor of Jehovah God. That mattered to her. Still, she did not proudly presume that she had God's favor. If we strive for God's favor, never haughtily assuming that we already have it, we will learn a vital lesson that young Mary fully understood. God opposes the haughty, but he loves and supports the lowly and humble.—James 4:6.

Mary would need such humility, for the angel held out to her an almost unimaginable privilege. He explained that she was to bear a child who would become the most important of all humans. Gabriel said: "Jehovah God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule as king over the house of Jacob forever, and there will be no end of his kingdom." (Luke 1:32, 33) Mary surely knew of the promise God had made to David more than one thousand years earlier

—namely, that one of his descendants would rule forever. (2 Samuel 7:12, 13) So her son would be the Messiah that God's people over the centuries had been hoping for!

What is more, the angel told her that her son would "be called Son of the Most High." How could a human woman produce God's Son? Really, how could Mary produce a son at all? She was engaged to Joseph but not yet married to him. This question Mary put into frank words: "How is this to be, since I am having no intercourse with a man?" (Luke 1:34) Note that Mary spoke of her virginity without a trace of shame. On the contrary, she treasured her chastity. Today, many youths are eager to cast off their virginity and quick to ridicule those who do not. The world has certainly changed. Jehovah, however, has not changed. (Malachi 3:6) As in Mary's day, he values those who adhere to his moral standards.—Hebrews 13:4.

Although she was a faithful servant of God, Mary was an imperfect human. How, then, could she produce a perfect offspring, the Son of God? Gabriel explained: "Holy spirit will come upon you, and power of the Most High will overshadow you. For that reason also what is born will be called holy, God's Son." (Luke 1:35) Holy means "clean," "pure," "sacred." Normally, humans pass on their unclean, sinful state to their offspring. In this case, though, Jehovah would perform a unique miracle. He would transfer the life of his Son from heaven to the womb of Mary and then use his active force, or holy spirit, to "overshadow" Mary, shielding the child from any taint of sin. Did Mary believe the angel's promise? How did she respond?

Mary's Response to Gabriel

Skeptics, including some theologians of Christendom, have a hard time believing that a virgin could give birth. For all their education, they fail to grasp a simple truth. As

Gabriel put it, "with God no declaration will be an impossibility." (Luke 1:37) Mary accepted Gabriel's words as truth, for she was a young woman of great faith. However, that faith was not gullibility. Like any reasoning person, Mary needed evidence on which to base her faith. Gabriel was prepared to add to her store of such evidence. He told her about her elderly relative Elizabeth, long known as a barren woman. God had miraculously enabled her to conceive!

Now what would Mary do? She had her assignment before her and had evidence that God was going to do all that Gabriel had said. We should not assume that this privilege presented no fears, no hardships. For one thing, she had her engagement to Joseph to consider. How could their marriage proceed when he found out about her pregnancy? For another thing, the assignment itself may have seemed a daunting responsibility. She was to



carry the life of the most precious of all of God's creatures—his own beloved Son! She would have to care for him when he was a helpless infant and protect him in a wicked world. Indeed, a weighty responsibility!

The Bible shows that even strong, faithful men have sometimes hesitated to accept challenging assignments from God. Moses protested that he could not speak fluently enough to act as God's spokesman. (Exodus 4:10) Jeremiah objected that he was "but a boy," too young to take on the task God assigned him. (Jeremiah 1:6) And Jonah ran away from his assignment! (Jonah 1:3) What about Mary?

Her words echo through the ages in their simple humility and obedience. She said to Gabriel: "Look! Jehovah's slave girl! May it take place with me according to your declaration." (Luke 1:38) A slave girl was the lowliest of servants; her life was entirely in the hands of her master. That is how Mary felt about her Master, Jehovah. She knew that she was safe in his hands, that he is loyal to those who are loyal to him, and that he would bless her as she did her best with this challenging assignment.—Psalm 18:25.

Sometimes God asks us to do what may seem difficult, even impossible, in our eyes. However, in his Word he gives us ample reasons to trust him, to place ourselves in his hands as Mary did. (Proverbs 3:5, 6) Will we? If we do, he will reward us, giving us reasons to build even stronger faith in him.

The Visit With Elizabeth

Gabriel's words about Elizabeth meant a lot to Mary. Of all the women in the world, who could understand her situation better? Mary hurried to the mountainous country of Judah, a trip of perhaps three or four days. As she entered the home of Elizabeth and Zechariah the priest, Jehovah rewarded Mary with further solid evidence to bolster her faith.

Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting and immediately felt the infant in her womb leap for joy. She was filled with holy spirit and spoke of Mary as "the mother of my Lord." God revealed to Elizabeth that Mary's son would become her Lord, the Messiah. Further, she was inspired to commend Mary for her faithful obedience, saying: "Happy too is she that believed." (Luke 1:39-45) Yes, everything that Jehovah had promised Mary would come true!

In turn, Mary spoke. Her words are carefully preserved at Luke 1:46-55. It is by far Mary's longest speech in the Bible record, and it reveals much about her. It shows her thankful, appreciative spirit, as she praised Jehovah for blessing her with the privilege of serving as mother to the Messiah. It shows the depth of her faith, as she spoke of Jehovah as abasing the haughty and powerful and helping the lowly and poor who seek to serve him. It also hints at the extent of her knowledge. By one estimate, she made over 20 references to the Hebrew Scriptures!

Clearly, Mary thought deeply about God's Word. Still, she remained humble, preferring to let the Scriptures do the talking rather than speaking of her own originality. The son who was then growing in her womb would one day show the same spirit, saying: "What I teach is not mine, but belongs to him that sent me." (John 7:16) We do well to ask ourselves: 'Do I show such respect and reverence for God's Word? Or do I prefer my own ideas and teachings?' Mary's answer is clear.

Mary remained with Elizabeth for three months, no doubt receiving and providing a great deal of encouragement. (Luke 1:56) Both women remind us of the importance of friendships. If we seek out friends who truly love our God, Jehovah, we are sure to grow spiritually and draw closer to him. (Proverbs 13:20) Finally, though, it was time for Mary

to return home. What would Joseph say when he learned of her condition?

Mary and Joseph

Mary likely did not wait for her pregnancy to reveal itself. She no doubt had to speak to Joseph. Beforehand, she may have wondered how this decent, God-fearing man would respond to what she had to tell him. Nonetheless, she approached him and told him all that had happened to her. As you might imagine, Joseph was deeply troubled. He wanted to believe this dear girl, but what she told him about was something that had never happened before. The Bible does not say what thoughts went through his mind or how he reasoned. But it does say that he decided to divorce her, for engaged couples were then viewed as being married. However, he did not want to expose her to public shame or to punishment, so he chose to divorce her in secret. (Matthew 1:18, 19) It

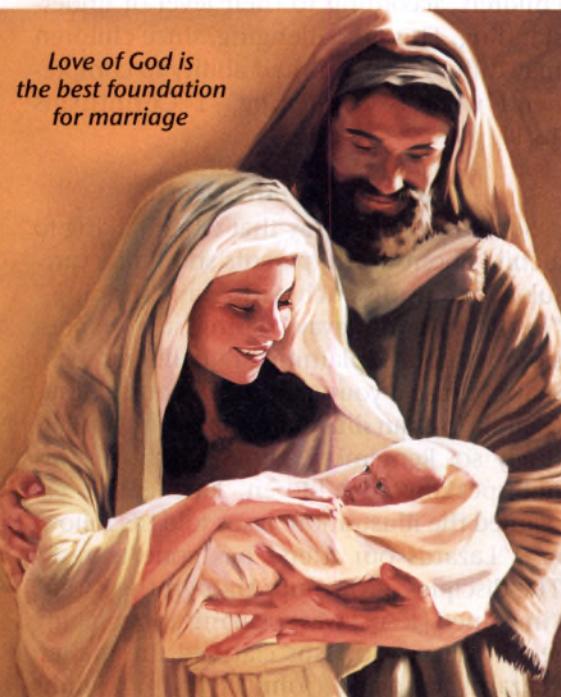
must have pained Mary to see this kind man agonizing over this unprecedented situation. Yet, Mary was not embittered.

Jehovah did not let Joseph go ahead with what seemed to him the best course. In a dream, God's angel told him that Mary's pregnancy was indeed miraculous. That must have been a relief! Joseph now did what Mary had done from the start—he acted in harmony with Jehovah's leading. He took Mary as his wife, and he prepared to take on the unique responsibility of caring for Jehovah's Son.—Matthew 1:20-24.

Married people—and those contemplating marriage—do well to learn from this young couple of 2,000 years ago. As Joseph saw his young wife fulfill the duties and cares of motherhood, he was surely pleased that Jehovah's angel had directed him. Joseph must have seen the importance of leaning on Jehovah when making major decisions. (Psalm 37:5; Proverbs 18:13) He no doubt remained careful and kind in making decisions as the family head.

On the other hand, what can we surmise from Mary's willingness to marry Joseph? Although at first he may have found her story difficult to comprehend, she waited on him as the man who would be the family head. That certainly was a good lesson for her, as it is for Christian women today. Finally, these incidents likely taught both Joseph and Mary much about the value of honest and open communication.

That young couple certainly started their marriage off on the best of foundations. They both loved Jehovah God above all and yearned to please him as responsible, caring parents. Of course, greater blessings awaited them—and greater challenges too. Before them lay the prospect of raising Jesus, who would grow up to be the greatest man the world has ever known.



Help Your Child Cope With Grief



IN A busy bookstore, an exasperated mother cried out to a salesperson: "You have a store full of books but nothing to help my child!" The mother was seeking guidance to help her young son cope with the sudden death of a close family member.

This mother's concern was valid. How distressing it is for a young child to face the reality of death! Children thrive under the care of their family, yet death can take away a loved one with whom a child has formed a close bond. As a parent, how can you help your child when such a loss is imminent or has already occurred?

Of course, faced with the loss of a loved one, you may be struggling to cope with your own emotions; you may feel anguished and preoccupied. However, you must not forget that your child needs your support. "Children overhear bits and pieces of conversations, and, when left to their own devices, frequently distort or misinterpret information," notes a publication distributed by a hospice in Minnesota, U.S.A. It further

states: "Children need to be told the facts." So it may be wise to explain the facts to your children, according to their level of understanding. This is challenging, since children may differ greatly in their ability to comprehend what is happening.—1 Corinthians 13:11.

How to Explain Death

Some researchers say that when talking to a child about death, parents should be careful about using such terms as "sleeping," "lost," or "gone away." Using such expressions without explaining or qualifying them may confuse a young child. Of course, Jesus used sleep as an illustration for death and fittingly so. Remember, though, that he was not speaking to children. Further, he explained the illustration. Jesus told his followers: "Lazarus our friend has gone to rest." The disciples, grown-ups though they were, "imagined [Jesus] was speaking about taking rest in sleep." So Jesus clarified the matter: "Lazarus has died." (John 11:11-14) If adults

need such clear explanations, how much more so do our children!

"A parent may try to soften her language when explaining death to her child," say authors Mary Ann Emswiler and James P. Emswiler, "but by doing so, she may plant ideas in his head that weren't there before and that may be frightening or harmful." For instance, simply telling a young child that a deceased loved one is only sleeping

Encourage your child to ask questions and talk about his concerns

may cause the child to fear that if he goes to sleep at night, he may not wake up again. If told only that a deceased loved one has "gone away," a young child may feel rejected or abandoned.

When trying to explain death to a child, many parents have found that children understand simple, direct words more readily than they do abstract concepts or euphemisms. (1 Corinthians 14:9) Researchers recommend that you encourage your child to ask questions and talk about his concerns. Frequent conversations may help you to clear up misunderstandings and could reveal other ways to assist your child.

A Reliable Source of Guidance

During a period of mourning, your child will look to you for direction, support, and answers. Where, then, can you find reliable information on the subject of death? Many people have found the Bible to be a reliable source of comfort and hope. It provides definitive information on the origin of death, the condition of the dead, and the hope for the dead. The plain truth that "the dead . . . are conscious of nothing at all" should help

your child to realize that his deceased loved one is not suffering. (Ecclesiastes 9:5) Moreover, in the Bible, God extends the hope that we will see our dead loved ones again on a paradise earth.—John 5:28, 29.

By turning to the Holy Scriptures, you can help your child to learn that the Bible provides reliable guidance and comfort in every distressing situation. At the same time, your child will observe that you as a parent depend on God's Word for direction on important matters in life.—Proverbs 22:6; 2 Timothy 3:15.

Your Questions Answered

In helping your child to cope with bereavement, you may encounter situations that puzzle you. What can you do?* Let us consider some common questions that may come up.

- *Should I hide my grief from my child?* It is natural to want to protect your child. But is it wrong for your child to see that you are grieving? Many parents have found it best to be honest about their sorrow, thus showing their child that it is normal to grieve. Some have discussed with their children Bible examples of individuals who openly grieved. For example, Jesus gave way to tears when his dear friend Lazarus died. Jesus did not hide his emotions.—John 11:35.

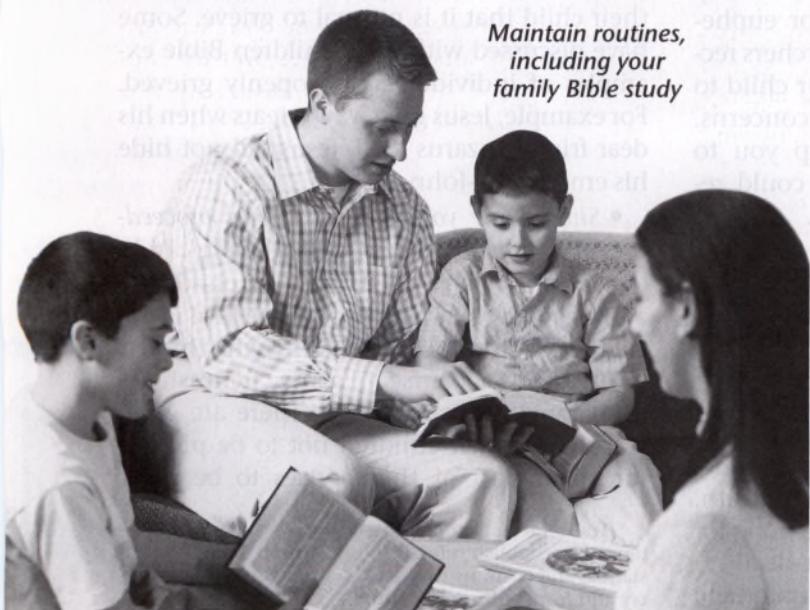
- *Should my young child attend proceedings at a funeral home or at the graveside or be present at a memorial service?* If a child is to attend, it may be wise to explain to him in advance what to expect, including why the service is held. Of course, in some circumstances, parents may decide that there are good reasons for their children not to be present for all or part of the services to be held.

* The information presented in this article is not intended to establish rules. It should be noted that circumstances and customs vary greatly from country to country and from culture to culture.

Children who are present at funeral services conducted by Jehovah's Witnesses may benefit from the Bible-based discourse that is given. In addition, the "tender affection" and love evident among those present can make it a meaningful and soothing experience, even for a child.—Romans 12:10, 15; John 13:34, 35.

• *Should I talk to my child about the deceased loved one?* Some researchers say that if you completely avoid this topic, your child may mistakenly conclude that you are keeping something secret about the deceased or are trying to erase all memory of that one. Author Julia Rathkey observes: "It's important to help children learn to live with the memory and not to be afraid." Speaking freely about the deceased, including mentioning positive aspects of that one's personality and life, may well help in the grieving process. Witness parents comfort their children with the Bible's hope of the resurrection to a paradise earth, where sickness and death will be no more.—Revelation 21:4.

*Maintain routines,
including your
family Bible study*



• *How can I help my child while he is mourning?* During the grieving process, your child may experience physical symptoms, perhaps illness. The child may become angry or troubled because of feeling helpless and frustrated. Do not be surprised if your child is plagued with guilt, clings more closely to you, or panics if you arrive late or become ill. How can you handle your child's turmoil? Your child should never feel that you do not notice that something is wrong. So be perceptive and monitor the situation. Try not to misjudge or underestimate how much your child is affected by death. Provide regular reassurance, and encourage questions and open communication. You can strengthen your child's hope—and yours as well—"through the comfort from the Scriptures."—Romans 15:4.

• *How soon should I restore family routines and other activities?* Maintain as many routines as possible, say experts. Keeping healthy routines is said to be an effective tool for managing grief. Among Jehovah's Witnesses, many parents have found that keeping up a good spiritual routine, which includes having a regular family Bible study and attending Christian meetings, can have a stabilizing and strengthening effect on the family.—Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Hebrews 10:24, 25.

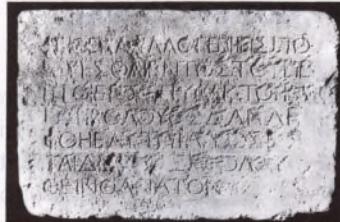
Until the time when Jehovah God brings an end to sickness and death, children will from time to time be confronted by the tragedy of death. (Isaiah 25:8) However, with proper reassurance and support, children can be helped to cope successfully with the loss of a loved one.

Did You Know?

At Ephesians 2:11-15, was the apostle Paul referring to a physical barrier when he spoke of a wall separating the Jews from the Gentiles?

In writing the letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul contrasts the Israelites with "strangers." There was a "wall," he said, that "fenced" the two groups off from each other. (Ephesians 2:11-15) Paul was referring to "the Law of commandments" given through Moses, but his use of the word "wall" might have reminded readers of a stone barrier that really existed.

In the first century C.E., Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem had a number of courtyards with restricted access. Anyone could enter the Court of the Gentiles, but entry into any of the temple's courtyards was restricted to Jews and proselytes. Separating the reserved areas from those accessible to all was the *Soreg*, an elaborate stone balustrade, said to be about four feet high. According to first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, inscriptions in Greek and Latin were posted on this barrier, warning Gentiles not to cross it so as not to set foot within the holy precincts.



Archaeological Museum of Istanbul

One complete Greek inscription from this partition wall has been recovered. It reads: "Let no foreigner enter inside of the barrier and the fence around the sanctuary. Whosoever is caught will be responsible for his death which will ensue."

Paul apparently used the *Soreg* to represent the Mosaic Law covenant, which had long separated Jews and Gentiles. The sacrificial death of Jesus abolished the Law covenant and thus "destroyed the wall in between."

Why is reference generally made to the 12 tribes of Israel when there were actually 13 tribes?

The tribes, or families, of Israel descended from the sons of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. This patriarch had 12 sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. (Genesis 29:32-30:

24; 35:16-18) Eleven of these brothers had tribes named after them, but no tribe was named after Joseph. Instead, two tribes were named after his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who received full status as tribal heads. So the number of tribes in Israel amounted to 13. Why, then, does the Bible usually speak of 12 tribes?

Among the Israelites, the men of the tribe of Levi were set apart for service at Jehovah's tabernacle and later at the temple. Hence, they were exempted from military service. Jehovah told Moses: "Only the tribe of Levi you must not register, and the sum of them you must not take in among the sons of Israel. And you yourself appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony and over all its utensils and over everything that belongs to it." —Numbers 1:49, 50.

The Levites did not receive a territorial allotment in the Promised Land either. Rather, they were assigned 48 cities scattered throughout the territory of Israel.—Numbers 18:20-24; Joshua 21:41.

For these two reasons, the tribe of Levi was not generally included when the tribes were listed. The tribes of Israel were thus usually numbered as 12. —Numbers 1:1-15.

Our Readers Ask

WHY DO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES NOT GO TO WAR?

Jehovah's Witnesses, wherever they live, have a long history of abstaining from carnal warfare between nations or between combatants within the same nation. "Jehovah's Witnesses maintain a strict neutrality in time of war," noted the *Australian Encyclopaedia* half a century ago.

A major reason why the Witnesses refrain from taking part in war is that participating in such conflicts would violate their Christian conscience. Their conscience has been shaped by the commands and example of the Lord Jesus Christ. He directed his followers to love their neighbor. He also commanded: "Continue to love your enemies, to do good to those hating you." (Luke 6:27; Matthew 22:39) When one of his disciples tried to defend him with a sword, Jesus told him: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52) Thus, by word and example, he plainly showed that his followers are not to wield weapons of carnal warfare.

Another reason Jehovah's Witnesses do not go to war is that they are members of a worldwide community of believers. War would pit brother against brother, and that would fly in the face of Jesus' command to have 'love among themselves.'—John 13:35.

The above principles governing love are not mere theory to Jehovah's Witnesses. As an example, examine their course of action during World War II, 1939-1945. In the United States, more than 4,300 Witnesses of Jehovah were in-

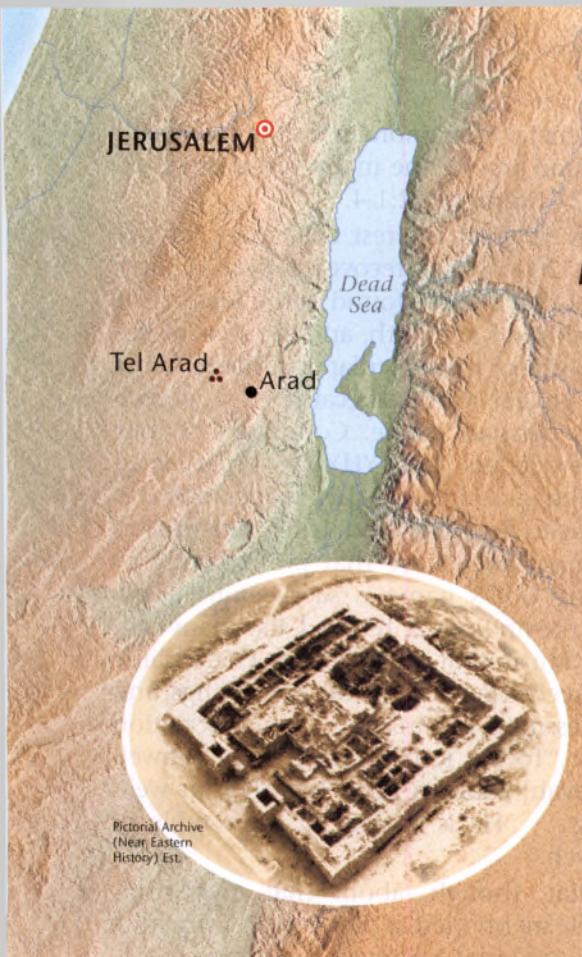


carcerated in federal prisons for refusing to perform military service. In Britain, upwards of 1,500, including more than 300 women, were imprisoned for declining to perform war duties. In Nazi Germany, upwards of 270 Witnesses were executed by State order for their refusal to take up arms. Under the Nazi regime, more than 10,000 Witnesses were incarcerated, either in prisons or in

concentration camps. Witnesses in Japan suffered terribly as well. Any individuals who lost their loved ones on the battlefields of World War II—or any subsequent war for that matter—can rest assured that not a single one of Jehovah's Witnesses was responsible for such deaths.

The view of Jehovah's Witnesses toward war is eloquently expressed in the final words of Wolfgang Kusserow. In 1942 the Nazis beheaded this 20-year-old German because he refused to go to war. (Isaiah 2:4) He stated before the military tribunal: "I was brought up as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, according to God's word contained in the Holy Scriptures. The greatest and most holy law he gave mankind is: 'You shall love your God above all else and your neighbor as yourself.' Other commandments read: 'You must not kill.' Did our Creator have all this written down for the trees?"—Mark 12:29-31; Exodus 20:13.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that only Jehovah, the almighty God, will bring permanent peace to the earth. They look to him to fulfill his promise that he will make "wars to cease to the extremity of the earth."—Psalm 46:9.



JERUSALEM

Tel Arad

Dead
Sea

Arad

Pictorial Archive
(Near Eastern
History) Est.

Tel Arad

| BEARS SILENT WITNESS

A lost city. A mysterious temple. A cache of ancient inscriptions. These might sound like the basis for an adventure movie. In fact, all of this and more lay hidden for centuries under layers of desert sand at Tel Arad, Israel, until archaeologists began digging there.

TODAY, modern Arad strikes many visitors as a typical Israeli town. With 27,000 inhabitants, it is located in the Judean wilderness to the west of the Dead Sea. However, the ancient Israelite city of Arad was located some five miles to the west. It is there that archaeologists have carefully stripped away layers of sand, uncovering a wealth of structures and inscriptions.

These inscriptions were found on ostraca, fragments of pottery used as writing tablets. Writing in that way was a common practice in Bible times. The dig at Tel Arad yielded what has been described as the richest collection of such ostraca ever found in Israel. What, though, is the value of this archaeological dig?

The findings at Tel Arad cover a long period of Bible history, ranging from the days of the Judges of Israel down to the Babylonian invasion of Judah in 607 B.C.E. So these discoveries help to confirm the accuracy of the Bible. They also provide enlightening examples of the way people in ancient Israel viewed the personal name of God.

Arad and the Bible

True, the Bible has relatively little to say about Arad. But this strategically located city once controlled a key trade route. Not surprisingly, then, historical records and archaeological discoveries indicate that this ancient site was repeatedly conquered, destroyed, and rebuilt during its checkered

history. The constant rebuilding created an imposing tell, or city mound.

The Bible first refers to Arad when recounting the final part of the Israelites' 40-year wilderness trek. Soon after the death of Moses' brother, Aaron, God's people passed close to the southern border of the Promised Land. The Canaanite king of Arad evidently found these wilderness wanderers a target too tempting to resist. He launched an attack. With the support of Jehovah God, the Israelites valiantly fought back, achieved a complete victory, and razed Arad to the ground, though some of the people evidently survived.—Numbers 21:1-3.

The Canaanites were quick to rebuild their strategic city; when Joshua reached the area a few years later, invading from the north and systematically clearing the Canaanites from "the mountainous region and the Negeb," one of the opposers facing him was "the king of Arad." (Joshua 10:40; 12:14) Later, descendants of Hobab the Kenite, who had supportively joined the Israelite camp during the wilderness sojourn, settled in this area of the Negev.—Judges 1:16.

Archaeological Finds

When it comes to some later events in the Biblical record, the ruins at Tel Arad offer some interesting support. For example, archaeologists have found a sequence of fortifications. Some of these may well date from the reign of King Solomon, who was known for his extensive city construction projects. (1 Kings 9:15-19) One layer of the dig bears evidence of a fiery conflagration and has been dated to the beginning of the tenth century B.C.E. Such findings line up with the time of the invasion of the Egyptian King Shishak, just five years after Solomon's death. At Karnak in southern Egypt, a

wall relief commemorates that invasion and lists Arad among the many vanquished cities.—2 Chronicles 12:1-4.

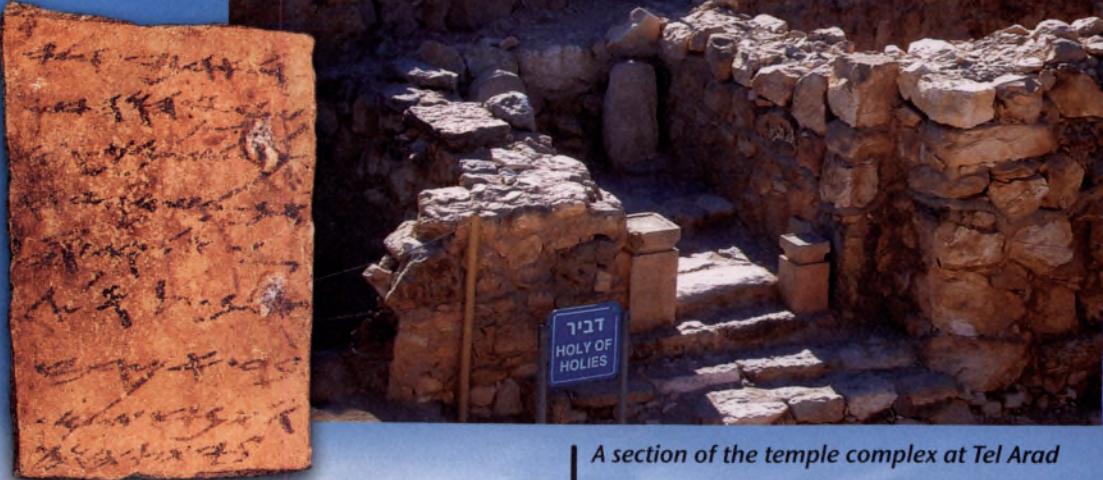
It is of great interest that many of the about 200 ostraca recovered bear Hebrew names that are also found in the Bible, such as Pashhur, Meremoth, and the sons of Korah. Some of these secular documents are of even greater interest because they include God's personal name. Composed of four Hebrew letters יְהָוָה (YHWH)—often called the Tetragrammaton—this proper name is unique to Almighty God. Later, superstition led many to believe that pronouncing or writing God's name is sacrilegious. However, the findings at Tel Arad, like many others, confirm that in Bible times God's name was freely used in daily life, in greetings, and in blessings. For instance, one inscription reads: "To my lord Elyashib. May Yahweh [Jehovah] concern himself with your well-being. . . . He is staying in the temple of Yahweh."

What, though, about that mysterious temple mentioned at the outset? A structure at Tel Arad that has given rise to much con-



A detail of the wall relief at Karnak, Egypt

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.



▼ Todd Boles/Bible Pictures.com

A section of the temple complex at Tel Arad

This inscription reads in part:
"May Yahweh [Jehovah]
concern himself with your
well-being"

View of the Tel Arad fort from the east side



ecture is a temple complex, complete with an altar, from the Judean period. Though much smaller than Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, it bears many resemblances to that sacred structure. Why and when was the Arad temple constructed? How was it used? Archaeologists and historians can only speculate.

Jehovah plainly decreed that the temple in Jerusalem was the only center acceptable to him for celebrating annual festivals and offering sacrifices. (Deuteronomy 12:5; 2 Chronicles 7:12) So the Arad temple was constructed and used in defiance of God's Law, perhaps during an era when alternative

altars and rites were distracting many from pure worship. (Ezekiel 6:13) In such a case, this center of counterfeit worship was probably abolished during the thorough reforms by Hezekiah or Josiah in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E.—2 Chronicles 31:1; 34:3-5, 33.

Clearly, the little of Arad's past that survived does have important lessons for us. Under the sand of centuries, artifacts have emerged that confirm the accuracy of the Bible, document the rise and fall of a corrupt imitation of true worship, and provide examples of the respectful everyday use of Jehovah's name.

GOD HAS BEEN MERCIFUL TO ME

AS TOLD BY
BOLFENK MOČNIK



"Now keep strong." Those were the firm, urgent words of Mother as she gave me a hug. Militiamen separated us, and the trial took its course. Finally, the sentence was pronounced: five years in prison. Perhaps most people would have been devastated. In truth, though, I at last felt a deep inner peace. Let me explain.

THE events described above unfolded in 1952 in Slovenia.* But my story really starts over two decades earlier, in 1930. That is when the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called, arranged the first group baptism in my country. My parents, Berta and Franz Močnik, were among those baptized. I was six then, and my sister, Majda, was four. Our home in the city of Maribor was a center of Christian activity.

Adolf Hitler took power in Germany in 1933 and began to persecute the Witnesses. Many German Witnesses moved to Yugoslavia to help with the preaching work. My parents were fond of having such faithful people as guests. One guest whom I remember well was Martin Poetzinger, who later spent nine years in Nazi concentration camps. Much later, from 1977 until his death in 1988, he served as a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses.

When visiting us, Martin always slept in my bed, while my sister and I slept in the bedroom with our parents. He had a small, colorful pocket encyclopedia that fired my childhood imagination. I loved to leaf through that book.

A Time of Severe Trials

In 1936, as Hitler's power grew, my parents attended the momentous international convention in Lucerne, Switzerland. Since Father had a pleasant baritone voice, on that occasion he was selected to make recordings of Bible sermons that were later played to householders throughout Slovenia. Not long after that memorable convention, Witnesses in Europe began to be persecuted terribly. Many suffered and died in Nazi concentration camps.

In September of 1939, World War II began, and by April of 1941, German troops occupied parts of Yugoslavia. Slovenian schools were closed. We were forbidden to use our

* Six republics, including Slovenia, then made up Yugoslavia.

language in public. Because Jehovah's Witnesses remain neutral in all political conflicts, they refused to join the war effort.* As a result, many were arrested and some were executed—including a young man named Franc Drogz, whom I knew well. The Nazi firing squads did their work about a hundred yards from our house. I can still see Mother wrapping her ears with cloth, trying to block out the sound of the shots. The last words of Franc's farewell letter to a close friend were, "See you in God's Kingdom."

A Course I Deeply Regret

I was then 19. Although I admired Franc for his firm stand, I was frightened. Would I die too? My faith was weak, and my relationship with Jehovah God shallow. Then I received a military call-up. My fear was stronger than my faith, so I answered the call.

I was sent to the Russian front. Soon I saw comrades dying all around me. The war was horrifying and cruel. My conscience troubled me more and more. I begged Jehovah for forgiveness and for the strength to walk in the

* For the Scriptural reasons why Jehovah's Witnesses refuse to go to war, see the article "Our Readers Ask" on page 22 of this magazine.

Left to right: My parents, Berta and Franz Močnik, Majda, and me, in Maribor, Slovenia, 1940's



right way. When a heavy assault caused confusion in our company, I saw a chance to flee.

I knew that if I was caught, I would be executed. During the next seven months, I found various hiding places. I even managed to send a postcard to Majda with the words: "I have left my employer and now work for another one." I meant that I intended to work for God now, but it took some time before I really did so.

In August 1945, three months after Germany surrendered to the Allies, I was able to return to Maribor. Remarkably, all of us—my father, mother, and sister—had survived that terrible war. By then, though, the Communists were in control, and they were persecuting Jehovah's Witnesses. The preaching work was officially banned, but the Witnesses went underground and kept right on preaching.

In February 1947, three faithful Witnesses—Rudolf Kalle, Dušan Mikić, and Edmund Stropnik—were sentenced to death. Later, though, the sentences were changed to 20-year prison terms. The news media covered all of this extensively, and many people thus learned about the unjust treatment of the Witnesses. Upon reading those news articles, I felt cut to the heart. I knew what I had to do.

I Gain Spiritual Strength

I was painfully aware that I had to take my stand for Bible truth, so I intensified my efforts to be used in our underground preaching work. As a result of serious Bible reading, I gained the spiritual strength to quit unclean habits, such as the use of tobacco.

In 1951, I was baptized in symbol of my dedication to God, and I resumed a life course I had left nearly a decade earlier. Finally, I began to experience Jehovah as a true Father—faithful, loyal, and unfading in his love. Although I had made unwise decisions

as a young man, I was touched by the Bible's assurance of divine forgiveness. As a loving Father, God kept drawing me "with the cords of love."—Hosea 11:4.

During that difficult time, we held Christian meetings secretly in the homes of various Witnesses, and we carried on our preaching work in an informal way. Less than a year after my baptism, I was arrested. Mother saw me briefly before the trial. As mentioned at the outset, she hugged me tightly and urged me: "Now keep strong." When the sentence of five years in prison was handed down, I remained calm and resolute.

I was put in a tiny cell with three other prisoners, so I was able to share Bible truth with men who could not otherwise have been reached. Although I had no Bible or Bible literature, I was amazed that I was able to recall scriptures and their explanations from my hours of personal Bible study. I kept telling fellow inmates that if I had to serve in prison for five years, Jehovah would give me the strength to do so. However, he might open a door for me earlier. If he did, I reasoned, who could shut it?

Serving Under a Measure of Freedom

In November 1953, the government declared an amnesty; all of Jehovah's Witnesses in prison were freed. I then learned that the ban on our preaching work had been lifted two months earlier. We immediately started to reorganize the congregations and our preaching activity. We found a meeting place in the basement of a building in the center of Maribor. We put a sign on the wall that read: "Jehovah's Witnesses—Maribor Congregation." The joy of serving Jehovah in freedom filled our hearts with deep appreciation.

Early in 1961, I began to serve in the full-time ministry as a pioneer. About six months later, I was invited to work at the branch of-

fice of Jehovah's Witnesses in Yugoslavia. It was located in Zagreb, Croatia. The branch then consisted of one small room and a staff of three men. Fellow Christians who lived nearby came during the day to help with the production of the *Watchtower* magazine in local languages.

Christian women who lived nearby also helped with the work. Among other things, they stitched the pages of the magazines together. I did various jobs, including proofreading, translation, courier service, and the compiling of records.

Change of Assignment

In 1964, I was assigned to serve as a traveling overseer, which involved making regular visits to a number of congregations of Witnesses to strengthen them spiritually. I particularly cherished this work. Most of the time, I traveled from one congregation to the next by bus or by train. To reach Witnesses living in smaller villages, I often traveled by bicycle or on foot, sometimes in ankle-deep mud.

Life was not without its lighter moments. A Christian brother once took me to the next congregation in a horse-drawn cart. As we bounced along the dirt road, one of the cart's wheels came loose and fell off. We both ended up on the ground. As we sat in the dirt, looking up at the horse, it stared at us in what seemed like wide-eyed astonishment. Even years later, we still laughed about that. The unhypocritical love of those dear ones in the countryside was a joy that I will always treasure.

In the town of Novi Sad, I became acquainted with Marika, who served as a pioneer. Her love for Bible truth and her zeal in the ministry impressed me so much that I wanted to marry her. Some time after we were married, we began serving the congregations together in the traveling work.

My family had endured their own hardships during the ban. My father was falsely charged with collaborating with the enemy during the war and lost his job. He fought a long, futile battle to get it back and was very discouraged as a result. For a while his faith weakened, but he regained it before the end of his life. He was active in his congregation when he died in 1984. My humble, faithful mother had passed away earlier, in 1965. Majda still serves with the congregation in Maribor.

Our Ministry in Austria

In 1972, Marika and I received an invitation to go to Austria to preach to the many Yugoslavian migrant workers there. When we arrived in Vienna, the capital, we had no idea that this would become our permanent assignment. Gradually, new congregations and groups that speak the languages used in Yugoslavia were established throughout Austria.

In time, I began to serve as a traveling overseer, visiting the growing number of these congregations and groups throughout the country. Later, we were invited to extend our visits to Germany and Switzerland as well, where similar congregations had been formed. I was able to assist in organizing many assemblies and conventions in these countries.

On occasion, such large conventions were visited by members of the Governing Body, and I was able to meet Martin Poetzinger again. We reminisced about events of some 40 years earlier when he was a frequent guest in our home. I asked him, "Do you remember how I loved to leaf through your pocket encyclopedia?"



"Wait a moment," he replied as he left the room. He returned with the book and handed it to me. "Take it as a present from a friend," he said. The book is still a treasured part of my library.

Health Challenges—But Still Active

In 1983, I was diagnosed with cancer. Not long afterward, I was told that my condition was terminal. This was a stressful time, especially for Marika, but as a result of her loving care and the practical support of many Christian brothers, I still enjoy a rich and full life.

Marika and I continue in the full-time ministry in Vienna. Most of the time, I commute to our branch facility in the mornings and do translation work, and Marika keeps busy in the preaching work in the city. It fills me with great joy to observe how the small group of Yugoslavian immigrants to Austria who became Witnesses has grown to well over 1,300. Marika and I have been privileged to help many of them to learn Bible truth.

In recent years, I have had the privilege to share in the dedication programs of new branch office facilities in the former republics of Yugoslavia—one in Croatia in 1999 and another in Slovenia in 2006. I was one of the old-timers who were asked to share memories of the beginnings of the preaching work in these countries some 70 years ago.

Jehovah indeed is a loving Father who is ready to forgive in a large way our failures and mistakes. How grateful I am that errors are not what he watches! (Psalm 130:3) He has certainly been kind and merciful to me.*

* Bolfenk Močnik died on April 11, 2008, as this article was being finalized for publication.



IS IT WRONG TO USE GOD'S NAME?

IN the Hebrew Scriptures, often referred to as the "Old Testament," God's name appears almost 7,000 times in the form יְהֹוָה (read from right to left). That is to say, God's name is represented by four Hebrew letters *Yohdh, He, Waw, and He*, commonly transliterated YHWH.

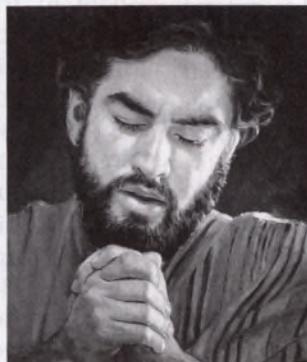
In antiquity, the Jews came to have the superstitious idea that it was wrong to use God's name. As a result, they refused to pronounce it, and in their texts, they began to use substitute expressions for it. Many Bible translators, however, have rendered the name "Yahweh," or "Jehovah." Among the translations that do so is the Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*. According to this translation, when Moses asked God how he should respond if the Israelites were to ask him who had sent him to them, God replied: "You are to say to the sons of Israel: 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name for all time; by this name I shall be invoked for all generations to come."—Exodus 3:15.

While praying, Jesus said regarding his own use of the divine name: "I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known." And in what is commonly known as the Our Father prayer, Jesus said: "Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy."—John 17:26; Matthew 6:9, JB.

It might come as a surprise, then, to learn that in his recent book *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict XVI had this to say concerning the use of the divine name: "The Israelites were . . . perfectly right in refusing to utter this self-designation of God, expressed in the word YHWH, so as to avoid degrading it to the level of names of pagan deities. By the

same token, recent Bible translations were wrong to write out this name—which Israel always regarded as mysterious and unutterable—as if it were just any old name."

What do you think? Is it right or wrong to use God's name? If Jehovah himself says: "This is my name for all time; by this name I shall be invoked for all generations to come," can anyone rightly contradict him?



*Jesus used the divine name
in prayer*

A Brother's Anger

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. Let the account come to life.



ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ GENESIS 4:1-12.

Using your imagination, how would you describe the physical appearance and the disposition of Cain? What about Abel?

Which "works of the flesh" were evident in Cain, and how was this apparent? (Galatians 5:19-21)

DIG DEEPER.—READ VERSES 4-7 AGAIN.

Was it only the offerings that Jehovah accepted or rejected, or was something more involved? (Proverbs 21:2)

In what cases might anger be justified, but why was it totally wrong for Cain to become "hot with anger"?

When might jealousy be appropriate, but why was it not appropriate in the case of Cain? (1 Kings 19:10)

What steps could Cain have taken to "get the mastery over" his anger?

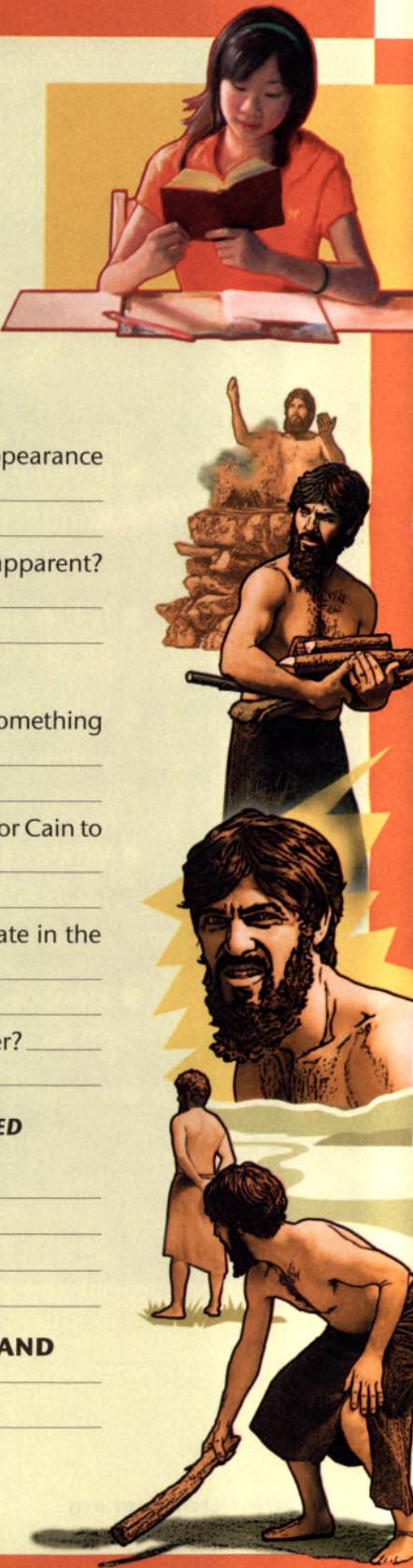
APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT....

Anger.

Jealousy.

How to "get the mastery over" wrong inclinations.

WHAT ABOUT THIS ACCOUNT MEANS THE MOST TO YOU, AND WHY?



- If you have lost a loved one in death, how can you handle your grief in healthy ways?

SEE PAGE 6.

- Is it really possible for us to draw close to God?

SEE PAGE 10.

- Why is it practical to take God into account when you make your plans?

SEE PAGE 11.

- What can we learn from Mary, the mother of Jesus?

SEE PAGE 14.

- How can you explain death to a child?

SEE PAGE 18.

- Is it wrong to address God by his personal name?

SEE PAGE 30.