

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

MAY 1, 2011



6 BIBLE PROPHECIES You Are Seeing Fulfilled

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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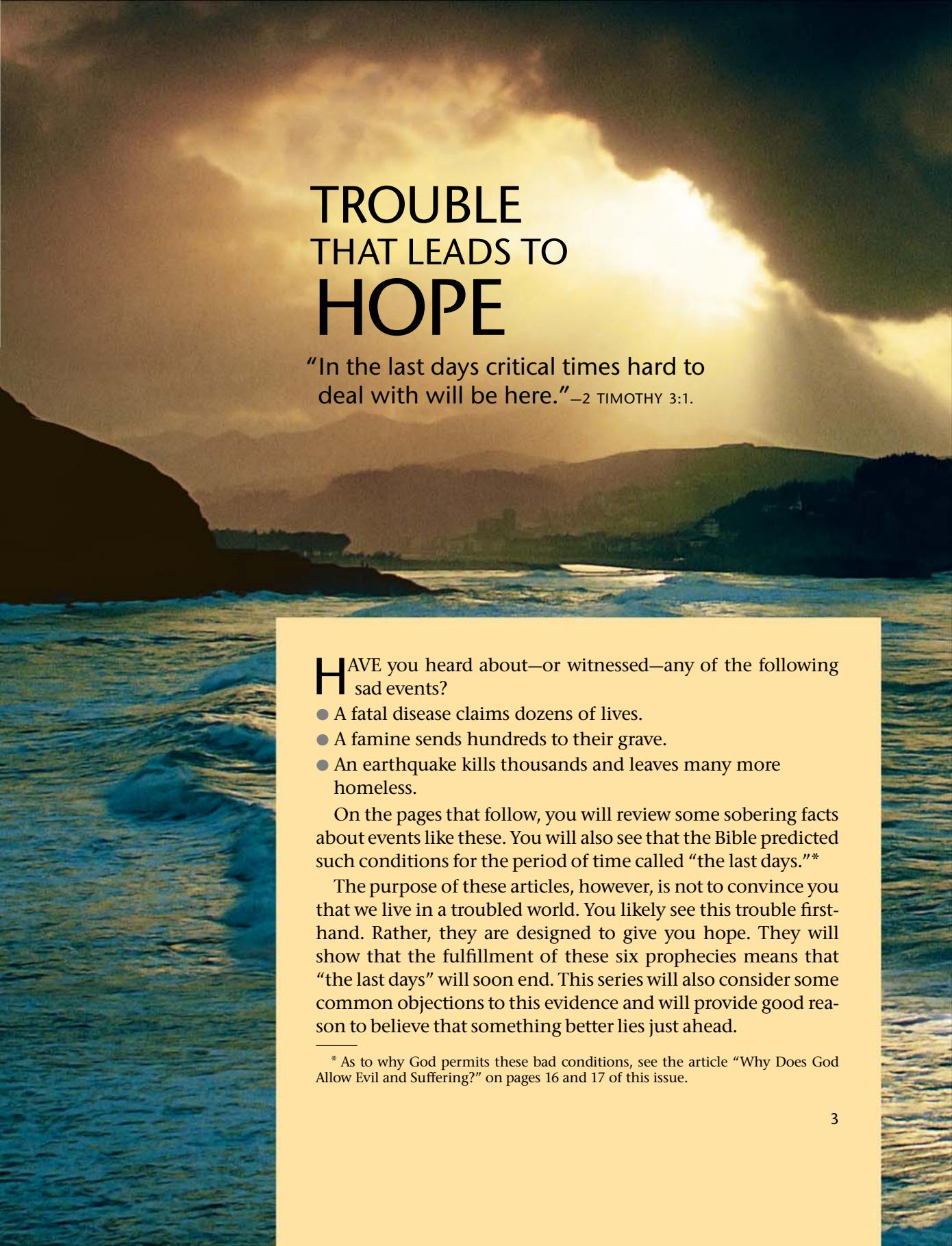


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TROUBLE THAT LEADS TO HOPE

"In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here." —2 TIMOTHY 3:1.

HAVE you heard about—or witnessed—any of the following sad events?

- A fatal disease claims dozens of lives.
- A famine sends hundreds to their grave.
- An earthquake kills thousands and leaves many more homeless.

On the pages that follow, you will review some sobering facts about events like these. You will also see that the Bible predicted such conditions for the period of time called "the last days."*

The purpose of these articles, however, is not to convince you that we live in a troubled world. You likely see this trouble first-hand. Rather, they are designed to give you hope. They will show that the fulfillment of these six prophecies means that "the last days" will soon end. This series will also consider some common objections to this evidence and will provide good reason to believe that something better lies just ahead.

* As to why God permits these bad conditions, see the article "Why Does God Allow Evil and Suffering?" on pages 16 and 17 of this issue.



1. EARTHQUAKES

"There will be great earthquakes."—LUKE 21:11.



"We [geophysicists] call them great earthquakes. Everybody else calls them horrible."

—KEN HUDNUT,
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

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2. FAMINE

"There will be food shortages."—MARK 13:8.

● A man seeks refuge in the village of Quaratajji, Niger. The man's cousins, brothers, and sisters have also come from the interior of the country in an effort to flee the hunger. Yet, the man lies alone on a mat on the ground. Why is he alone? "He cannot feed [his family] and cannot continue to look them in the eye," explains Sidi, the village chief.

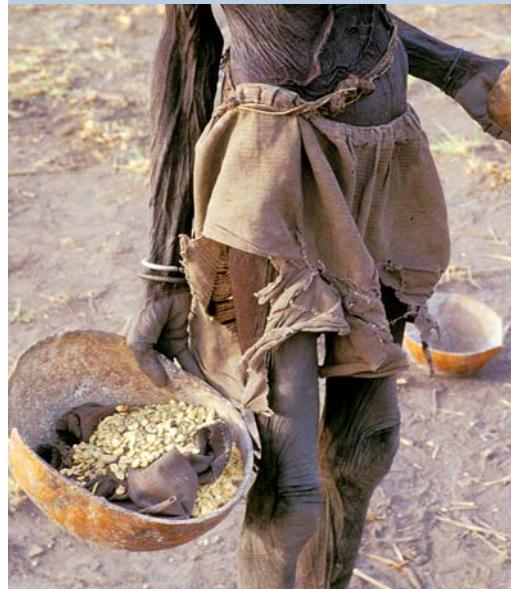
WHAT DO THE FACTS SHOW? Worldwide, almost 1 person in 7 does not get enough to eat each day. The numbers are worse in sub-Saharan Africa, where 1 in 3 is considered chronically hungry. To put that figure in perspective, imagine a family consisting of a father, a mother, and a baby. If there is only enough food for two of them, who will go hungry? The father? the mother? the baby? This is the choice that such families must make on a daily basis.

WHAT IS A COMMON OBJECTION? The earth produces more than enough food for everyone. Earth's resources just need to be better managed.

IS THAT OBJECTION VALID? True, farmers can produce and transport more food than ever before in history. Ideally, human governments should be able to manage earth's food supply to solve the hunger problem. However, even after decades of trying, they have been unable to do so.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Is Mark 13:8 being fulfilled? Despite advances in technology, are food shortages afflicting mankind on a global scale?

Earthquakes and famine often precede problems that arise from another facet of the sign of the last days.



"More than one-third of children who die from pneumonia, diarrhoea and other illnesses could have survived had they not been undernourished."

—ANN M. VENEMAN, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UN CHILDREN'S FUND.

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⁺ CD also available.

^o MP3 CD-ROM also available.

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



3. DISEASE

*"People will . . . suffer terrible diseases." —LUKE 21:11,
Contemporary English Version.*



"It's horrible to be eaten from without by a lion or something, but it's equally horrible to be eaten from the inside out by some terrible bug and to see that going on all around you."

—EPIDEMIOLOGIST MICHAEL OSTERHOLM.

© William Daniels/Panos Pictures

● Bonzali, a public health officer in an African country torn by civil war, does what little he can to treat mine workers in his town who are dying of Marburg virus.* His pleas for help from officials in a larger city have gone unanswered. Four months later, assistance finally arrives, but Bonzali is dead. He contracted Marburg from the miners he tried to save.

WHAT DO THE FACTS SHOW? Lower respiratory infections (such as pneumonia), diarrheal diseases, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria are among the most destructive diseases that afflict mankind. In a recent year, these five categories of disease killed an estimated 10.7 million individuals. Put another way, the diseases killed approximately one person every three seconds, all year long.

WHAT IS A COMMON OBJECTION? The world's population continues to grow, so there are, of course, more cases of disease. There are more people who can be infected.

IS THAT OBJECTION VALID? The world's population has increased drastically. But so has man's ability to diagnose, control, and treat disease. Logically, then, should not disease be losing its grip on the human family? Yet, just the opposite is happening.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Are people suffering from terrible diseases as the Bible foretold?

Earthquakes, famine, and disease are impersonal forces that wreak havoc on millions of people. Millions more suffer at the hands of fellow humans—many being victimized by those who should protect them. Note what Bible prophecy says would happen.

* Marburg Hemorrhagic Fever is caused by a virus that is related to Ebola.

4. LACK OF NATURAL LOVE

"People will . . . lack normal affection for their families."—2 TIMOTHY 3:1-3, God's Word Bible

- Chris works for a domestic-violence help group in North Wales. "I remember one lady coming in who was so badly beaten up I could not even recognise her from the last time I had seen her," says Chris. "Other women are so emotionally damaged they won't even lift their eyes off the floor."

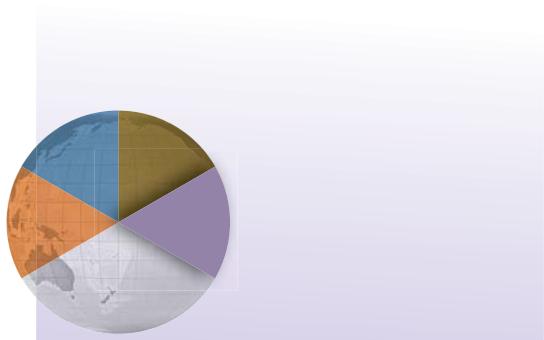
WHAT DO THE FACTS SHOW? In one African country, approximately 1 out of every 3 women has been sexually abused as a child. A survey conducted in that same country found that more than one third of men felt that it was acceptable to beat their wives. However, women are not the only victims of domestic violence. In Canada, for example, nearly 3 out of 10 men have been battered or otherwise abused by their partners.

WHAT IS A COMMON OBJECTION? There has always been domestic violence. It is just receiving more attention today than it did in times past.

IS THAT OBJECTION VALID? Awareness of domestic violence has been heightened in recent decades. But has greater awareness of the problem reduced the number of incidents of domestic violence? No, that has not been the case. A lack of natural affection is ever more prevalent.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Is 2 Timothy 3:1-3 being fulfilled? Do many lack the affection for their families that should come naturally?

The fifth prophecy you are seeing fulfilled involves our home, the earth. Consider what the Bible states on this subject.



"Domestic violence is acknowledged as one of the most chronically under-reported crimes in society. On average a woman will be assaulted by her partner 35 times before contacting the police."

—A SPOKESWOMAN FOR WALES DOMESTIC ABUSE HELPLINE.



5. RUINING OF THE EARTH

"[God will] bring to ruin those ruining the earth."

—REVELATION 11:18.

- Mr. Pirri works as a palm-wine tapper in Kpor, Nigeria. His trade has been devastated by a massive oil spill in the Niger Delta. "It kills our fish, destroys our skin, spoils our streams," he says. "I have no livelihood left."

WHAT DO THE FACTS SHOW? According to some experts, 6.5 million tons of litter enter the world's oceans each year. An estimated 50 percent of that litter is plastic that will drift for hundreds of years before it degrades. Besides polluting the earth, humans are depleting its natural resources at an alarming rate. Studies show that the earth needs one year and five months to regenerate what humans consume in a year. "If population and consumption trends continue, we will need the equivalent of two Earths by 2035," reports the Australian newspaper *Sydney Morning Herald*.

WHAT IS A COMMON OBJECTION? Humans are resourceful. We can reverse these problems and save the earth.

IS THAT OBJECTION VALID? Many hardworking individuals and groups have raised awareness of environmental issues. Yet, the earth continues to be polluted on a grand scale.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Is there a need for God to intervene and save our planet from being ruined—just as he has promised to do?

In addition to the five prophecies just considered, the Bible also foretold positive developments for the last days. Consider one example in the sixth prophecy.



"I feel like I've gone from owning a piece of paradise to owning a toxic waste dump."

—ERIN TAMBER,
A RESIDENT OF THE
GULF COAST, UNITED STATES,
CONCERNING THE EFFECTS
OF THE 2010 OIL SPILL IN THE
GULF OF MEXICO.

U.S. Coast Guard photo

Is God Responsible?

Since the Bible predicted the bad conditions we see today, does that make God responsible for them? Does he cause us to suffer? You can find satisfying

answers to those questions in chapter 11 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

6. A GLOBAL PREACHING WORK

"This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth."—MATTHEW 24:14.

- Vaiatea lives on a remote Pacific island in the Tuamotu Archipelago. Although Tuamotu consists of nearly 80 atolls spread across an area of more than 310,000 square miles (802,900 sq km), it has a population of only some 16,000 inhabitants. Yet, Vaiatea and her neighbors have been contacted by Jehovah's Witnesses. Why? Because the Witnesses wish to share the good news about God's Kingdom with all people—no matter where they live.

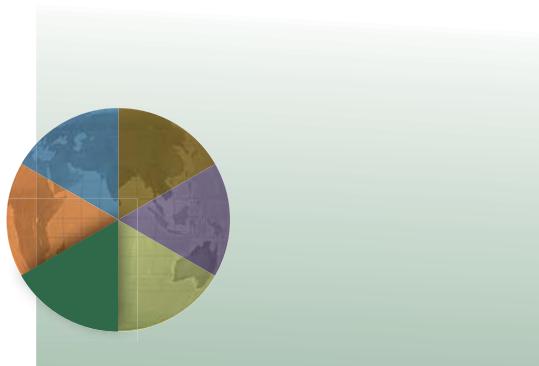
WHAT DO THE FACTS SHOW? The Kingdom message is reaching all corners of the globe. In 2010 alone, Jehovah's Witnesses spent over 1.6 billion hours proclaiming this good news in 236 lands. That is an average of 30 minutes in the preaching work each day by every Witness. Over the past decade, they have produced and distributed more than 20 billion items of Bible-education literature.

WHAT IS A COMMON OBJECTION? The Bible's message has been preached for thousands of years.

IS THAT OBJECTION VALID? True, many have preached something about the Bible's message. However, most have done so only for a brief time and on a limited scale. By contrast, Jehovah's Witnesses are accomplishing an organized, global preaching campaign that reaches hundreds of millions of people. The Witnesses have persevered in their preaching work despite severe opposition from some of the most powerful and ruthless organizations in human history.* (Mark 13:13) Moreover, Jehovah's Witnesses are not paid to preach. Rather, they volunteer their time, and they offer their literature free of charge. Their work is supported entirely by voluntary contributions.

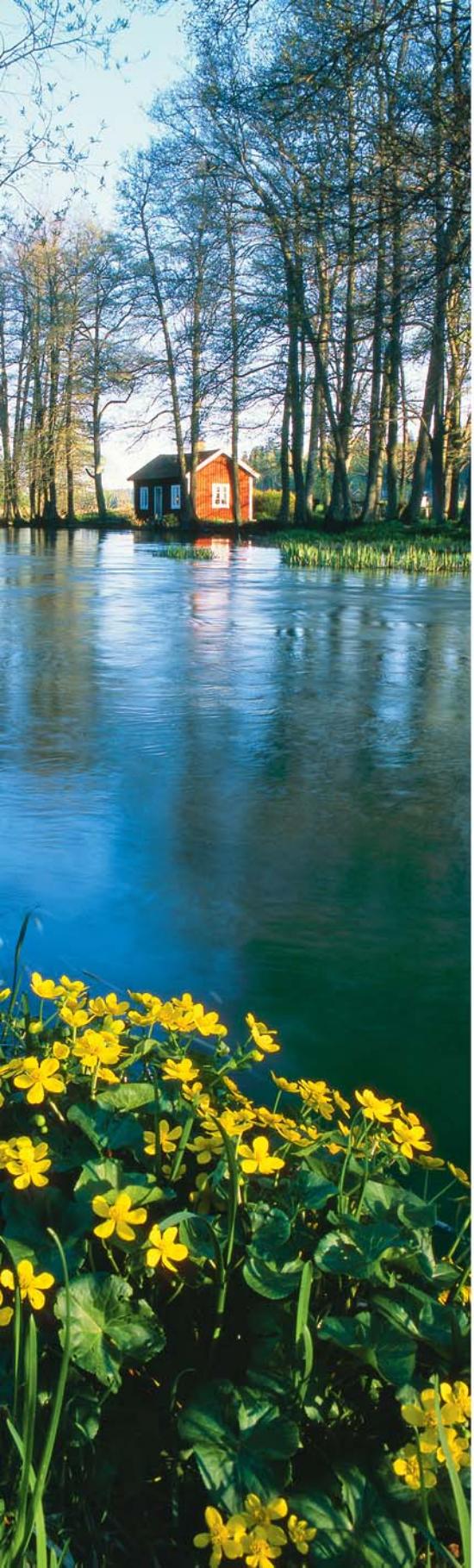
WHAT DO YOU THINK? Is the "good news of the kingdom" being preached worldwide? Could the fulfillment of this prophecy mean that something better lies just ahead?

* For more information, see the three video documentaries "Faithful Under Trials," "Purple Triangles," and "Jehovah's Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault," distributed by Jehovah's Witnesses.



"As long as Jehovah permits, we will continue to preach the Kingdom good news with zeal, using every possible means to reach people."

—2010 YEARBOOK OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES.



BETTER TIMES JUST AHEAD!

"Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more . . . But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."

—PSALM 37:10, 11.



WOULD you like to see the above-quoted prophecy come true? No doubt, you would. There are solid reasons for believing that it soon will.

The preceding articles discussed just some of the Bible prophecies that clearly indicate that we are living in "the last days." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) God inspired the Bible writers to foretell those events so that we might have hope. (Romans 15:4) The fulfillment of such prophecies means that the troubles we now face will soon end.

What will follow the last days? God's Kingdom will rule all mankind. (Matthew 6:9) Consider the Bible's description of conditions on earth at that time:

- **Hunger will be eliminated.** "There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow."—Psalm 72:16.
- **Disease will be eliminated.** "No resident will say: 'I am sick!'"—Isaiah 33:24.
- **The earth will be renewed.** "The wilderness and the waterless region will exult, and the desert plain will be joyful and blossom as the saffron."—Isaiah 35:1.

These are just a few of the encouraging Bible prophecies that will soon be fulfilled. Why not ask Jehovah's Witnesses to show you why they are so confident that better times are just ahead?



KEYS TO FAMILY HAPPINESS

How Children Change a Marriage

Charles:* "Mary and I were thrilled with the arrival of our baby daughter. But I lost a lot of sleep in the first few months after she was born. We had all sorts of plans for how to deal with her, but all of them quickly vanished."

Mary: "With the birth of our baby, my life was no longer my own. Suddenly, everything revolved around the next bottle, the next diaper change, or the next attempt to quiet the baby. The adjustment was immense. It took months before my relationship with Charles returned to normal."

MANY would agree that having children is one of the greatest joys in life. The Bible describes children as "a reward" from God. (Psalm 127:3) New parents like Charles and Mary also know that children can change a marriage in unexpected ways. For example, a new mother may focus on her baby and be surprised at how her body and heart respond to each whimper of the newborn. As for the new father, he may marvel at the bond formed between his wife and the baby, but he may also worry about suddenly being left out.

In fact, the birth of a first child may be a catalyst for a crisis in a marriage. An individual's emotional insecurities and a couple's unresolved issues may surface, exposed and magnified by the strains of parenthood.

How can new parents adjust to the hectic



first few months when the newborn requires all their attention? What can a couple do to maintain their intimacy? How can they handle any disagreements about parenting? Let us examine each of those challenges and consider how Bible principles can help a couple to meet them.

CHALLENGE 1: Life suddenly revolves around the child.

A new baby consumes its mother's time and thoughts. She may feel a deep sense of

* Names in this article have been changed.

emotional fulfillment in caring for her baby. Meanwhile, her husband might feel neglected. Manuel, who lives in Brazil, says: “My wife’s shift of focus from me to our baby was the most difficult change for me to accept. Before, it was just the two of us, and then all of a sudden, it was just my wife and the baby.” How can you cope with the upheaval?

■ **A key to success: Be patient.** “Love is long-suffering and kind,” says the Bible. Love “does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked.” (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5) When a new baby arrives, what can both husband and wife do to apply that counsel?

A wise husband proves his love for his wife by educating himself about the physical and mental impact childbirth has on a woman. If he does so, he will realize why his wife may be prone to sudden mood changes.* Adam, who lives in France and is the father of an 11-month-old girl, admits: “My wife’s mood changes are sometimes difficult to deal with. But I try to remember that her frustration is not really directed at me personally. Rather, it is a response to the unfamiliar stresses of our new situation.”

Does your wife sometimes misunderstand your attempts to help out? If so, do not quickly become offended. (Ecclesiastes 7:9) Instead, patiently look for her best interests, not your own, and you will avoid getting upset.—Proverbs 14:29.

On the other hand, a discerning wife will

* Many mothers suffer mild bouts of depression in the weeks following childbirth. Some experience a more serious condition known as postpartum depression. For information about how to identify and deal with this challenge, see the articles “I Won My Battle With Postpartum Depression,” in the July 22, 2002, issue of *Awake!* and “Understanding Postpartum Depression,” in the June 8, 2003, issue of *Awake!* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses. These articles can be read online at www.watchtower.org.

try to encourage her husband in his new role. She will involve him in child care, patiently showing him how to change diapers or prepare feeding bottles—even though he may seem clumsy at first.

Ellen, a 26-year-old mother, recognized that she needed to make some adjustments in the way she treated her husband. “I had to become less possessive of the baby,” she says. “And I had to remind myself not to be too picky when my husband tried to apply my suggestions about caring for the infant.”

TRY THIS: Wives, if your husband performs some child-care task in a different way than you do, resist the urge to criticize him or to redo the job. Commend him for what he does adequately, and you will build his confidence and encourage him to give you the support you need. Husbands, cut back on nonessential activities so that you will have as much time as possible to help your wife, especially during the first few months after the baby is born.

CHALLENGE 2: Your relationship as a couple weakens.

Exhausted by fragmented sleep and unexpected crises, many new parents struggle to remain close. Vivianne, a French mother of two infants, admits: “At first, I was so focused on my duty as a mother that I almost forgot my role as a wife.”

On the other hand, a husband may fail to recognize that pregnancy has taken a toll on his wife—both physically and emotionally. A new baby can consume time and energy that both of you formerly used to remain emotionally and sexually intimate. How, then, can a couple ensure that their helpless, lovable baby does not become a wedge that drives them apart?

■ **A key to success: Reaffirm your love for each other.** Describing marriage, the Bible states: “A man will leave his father and his mother and he must stick to his wife and they must become one flesh.”* (Genesis 2:24) Jehovah God intended that children eventually leave their parents. By contrast, God expects the one-flesh bond between a husband and his wife to last a lifetime. (Matthew 19:3-9) How can appreciating that fact help a couple with a new baby to maintain proper priorities?

Vivianne, quoted earlier, says: “I thought about the words at Genesis 2:24, and that verse helped me realize that I had become ‘one flesh’ with my husband—not with my child. I saw the need to strengthen our marriage.” Theresa, the mother of a two-year-old girl, says: “If I start to feel distant from my husband, I make immediate efforts to give him my full attention, even if only for a little while each day.”

If you are a husband, what can you do to strengthen the marriage? Tell your wife that you love her. Back up your words with acts of tenderness. Make a conscious effort to allay any feelings of insecurity that your wife may have. Sarah, a 30-year-old mother, says: “A wife needs to know that she is still valued and loved, even though her body is not what it was before her pregnancy.” Alan, who lives in Germany and is the father of two boys, sees the need for providing emotional support. He says: “I have always tried to be a shoulder for my wife to cry on.”

* According to one scholarly work, the Hebrew verb rendered “stick” at Genesis 2:24 can ‘carry the sense of clinging to someone in affection and loyalty.’



Understandably, the arrival of a baby disrupts a couple’s sexual relationship. So a husband and wife need to discuss each other’s needs. The Bible states that changes in a couple’s sexual relationship should be made by “mutual consent.” (1 Corinthians 7:1-5) That requires communication. Depending on your upbringing or cultural background, you might be reluctant to talk about sexual matters with your spouse. But such conversations are vital as a couple adjust to the routines of parenthood. Be empathetic, patient, and honest. (1 Corinthians 10:24) You and your spouse will thus avoid misunderstandings and will deepen your love for each other.—1 Peter 3:7, 8.

A couple can also deepen the love they feel for each other by expressing appreciation. A wise husband will realize that much of the work performed by a new mother goes unseen. Vivianne says: “By the end of the day, I often feel as if I have accomplished nothing—even though I have been busy caring for the baby constantly!” Despite being busy, a discerning wife will be careful not to belittle her husband’s contribution to the family.—Proverbs 17:17.

TRY THIS: Mothers, if possible, take a nap when your baby is sleeping. By thus “recharging your batteries,” you will have more energy for your marriage. Fathers, whenever possible, get up at night to feed or change the baby so that your wife can rest. Regularly reaffirm your love for your mate by leaving notes for her, sending her text messages, or talking to her on the telephone. As a couple, make time to have one-on-one conversations. Talk about each other, not only about your child. Keep your friendship with your spouse strong, and you will be better able to handle the challenges of parenthood.

CHALLENGE 3: You disagree about parenting.

A couple could find that their backgrounds cause them to argue. A Japanese mother named Asami and her husband, Katsuro, faced this challenge. Asami says: “I felt that Katsuro was too easy on our daughter, while he felt that I was being too hard on her.” How can you avoid working against each other?

■ **A key to success: Communicate with your mate, and support each other.** Wise King Solomon wrote: “By presumptuousness one only causes a struggle, but with those consulting together there is wisdom.” (Proverbs 13:10) How much do you know about your mate’s approach to raising children? If you wait until your baby is born before discussing specific child-training issues, you may find that you end up struggling with each other instead of dealing with the challenge successfully.

For example, what answers to the following questions have you agreed on: “How can we teach our child good eating and sleeping habits? Should we always pick up the baby if it cries at bedtime? How should we react to potty-training setbacks?” Obviously, the de-

cisions you make will be different from those of other couples. Ethan, the father of two, says: “You need to talk things over in order to be on the same wavelength. Then, together, you will be able to respond to your child’s needs.”

TRY THIS: Think about the parenting techniques that your own parents used when raising you. Decide which of their attitudes and actions you would like to imitate when raising your child. Also decide which, if any, attitudes and actions you want to avoid repeating. Discuss your conclusions with your mate.

A Child Can Change a Marriage for Good

Just as a pair of inexperienced skaters need time and patience to find their balance on the ice, you need time to adjust to your new roles as parents. Eventually, though, you will gain confidence.

Childrearing will test your commitment to your marriage and forever change your relationship with each other. However, it will also give you the opportunity to develop valuable qualities. If you apply the Bible’s wise advice, your experience will be like that of a father named Kenneth. He says: “Raising children has had a good effect on my wife and me. We are now less self-centered, and we have become more loving and understanding.” Those sorts of changes are certainly welcome in a marriage.

ASK YOURSELF . . .

- *During the last week, what have I done to show my spouse that I appreciate what he or she does for the family?*
- *When did I last make time to have a heartfelt conversation with my spouse that did not revolve around child rearing?*



DID YOU KNOW?

How do names on ancient clay seals compare with names mentioned in the Bible?



CLAY SEALS WITH THE NAMES HEZEKIAH AND AHAZ (FRONT) AND POSSIBLY BARUCH (BACK)

Back: Courtesy of Israel Museum, Jerusalem
Front: www.BibleLandPictures.com / Alamy

■ In antiquity, those who handled official documents rolled and tied them with a cord and then placed a lump of wet clay on the knot and stamped it with a seal. They used seal impressions to sign, witness, and authenticate the documents.

Seals were sometimes incorporated into signet rings and were considered precious objects. (Genesis 38:18; Esther 8:8; Jeremiah 32:44) Often, the seal carried the name of the owner, his official title, and the name of his father.

Researchers have found hundreds of ancient seal impressions, known as bullae. Some of these carry the names of people mentioned in the Bible. For example, archaeologists have found impressions made from what are believed

to be the personal seals of two Judean kings. One text reads: "Belonging to Ahaz [son of] Yehotam [Jotham], King of Judah." Other texts read: "Belonging to Hezekiah [son of] Ahaz, King of Judah." (2 Kings 16:1, 20) Ahaz and Hezekiah reigned during the eighth century B.C.E.

Scholars have examined a number of other bullae impressed with seals believed to have been owned by Bible characters. Among these are people mentioned in Jeremiah's writings, such as Baruch (Jeremiah's secretary), Gemariah ("son of Shaphan"), Jerahmeel ("son of the king"), Jucal ("son of Shelemiah"), and Seraiah (Baruch's brother).—Jeremiah 32:12; 36:4, 10, 26; 38:1; 51:59.

How are different times of the day identified in the Bible?

■ The Hebrew Scriptures use such expressions as "morning," "noon," "midday," and "evening." (Genesis 24:11; Deuteronomy 28:29; 1 Kings 18:26) The Hebrews divided the night into three watches of about four hours each but later adopted the Greek and Roman system of four night watches. Jesus evidently referred to this latter method of dividing time when he said: "Keep on the watch, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether late in the day or at midnight or at cockcrowing or early in the morning." (Mark 13:35) The watch "late in the day" ran from sunset to

9:00 p.m. The next ended at midnight, and the third, the "cockcrowing," ran till about three o'clock in the morning. The last, the early morning watch, ran until sunrise. It was during "the fourth watch period of the night" that Jesus walked on the water of the Sea of Galilee.—Matthew 14:23-26.

In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the term "hour" referred to one-twelfth of the period of daylight as counted from sunrise to sunset. (John 11:9) Since sunrise and sunset in Israel vary according to the season, only the approximate time of an event was usually given, such as "about the sixth hour."—Acts 10:9.



SUNDIAL, ROMAN IMPERIAL PERIOD (27 B.C.E.-476 C.E.)

© Gerard Degeorge / The Bridgeman Art Library International



LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

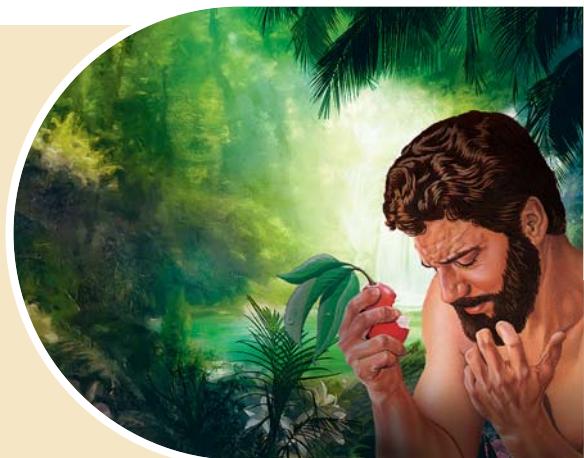
Why Does God Allow Evil and Suffering?

1. How did evil start?

Evil began on earth when Satan told the first lie. Satan was not evil when he was created. He was a perfect angel, but he "did not stand fast in the truth." (John 8:44) He developed a desire for worship that rightly belongs only to God. Satan lied to the first woman, Eve, and persuaded her to obey him instead of God. Adam joined Eve in disobeying God. Adam's decision resulted in suffering and death.
—*Read Genesis 3:1-6, 17-19.*

When Satan suggested that Eve disobey God, he was mounting a rebellion against God's sovereignty. The majority of mankind have joined Satan in rejecting God as Ruler. Satan has thus become "the ruler of the world."—*Read John 14:30; Revelation 12:9.*

This article raises questions you may have asked and shows where you can read the answers in your Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses would be pleased to discuss these answers with you.



Adam made an evil choice

2. Was God's creation defective?

The humans and angels whom God created were perfectly capable of obeying God's requirements. (Deuteronomy 32:5) God created us with the freedom to choose between do-

ing good and doing evil. That freedom gives us a way to express love for God.—*Read James 1:13-15; 1 John 5:3.*

3. Why has God allowed suffering?

For a time, Jehovah has tolerated rebellion against his sovereignty. Why? To show that no effort to rule without him benefits people. (Jeremiah 10:23) After 6,000 years of human history, the issue has been settled. Human rulers have failed to eliminate war, crime, injustice, and disease.—*Read Ecclesiastes 7:29; 8:9; Romans 9:17.*

By contrast, those who accept God as their Ruler benefit themselves. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) Soon, Jehovah will bring all human governments to an end. Only people who choose to be ruled by God will inhabit the earth.—*Isaiah 2:3, 4; 11:9; read Daniel 2:44.*

4. What opportunity does God's patience provide?

Satan claimed that Jehovah cannot win the loyal obedience of anyone. God's patience allows all of us opportunity to show whether we favor rule by God or rule by man. We indicate our choice by the way we live.—*Read Job 1:8-11; Proverbs 27:11.*



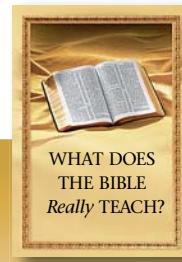
Our choices reveal whether we want God as our Ruler

5. How do we choose God as Ruler?

We choose God as Ruler when we seek out and practice true worship based on his Word, the Bible. (John 4:23) We also avoid involvement in politics and war, as Jesus did.—*Read John 17:14.*

Satan uses his power to promote immoral, harmful practices. When we reject such practices, some of our friends and relatives may ridicule or oppose us. (1 Peter 4:3, 4) So we face a choice. Will we associate with people who love God? Will we obey his wise and loving laws? If we do, we prove that Satan lied when he claimed that no one would do as God says. —*Read 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 15:33.*

For more information, see chapter 11 of this book,
published by Jehovah's Witnesses.





A NOTE TO THE CITIZENS OF RUSSIA: With the publication of the following account, tens of millions of people in more than 230 lands will learn of an unwarranted repression of freedom of worship in Russia. The *Watchtower* magazine is the most widely translated and distributed journal in the world. This article will appear in 188 languages. Over 40 million copies will be published. Some officials may not want the international community to know what is happening to Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia. But Jesus' words will prove true: "There is nothing carefully concealed that will not be revealed, and secret that will not become known."—LUKE 12:2.

A Peaceable People DEFEND THEIR GOOD NAME

IN December 2009 and January 2010, two of the highest courts in Russia declared the religious faith of Jehovah's Witnesses to be extremist. History seemed to be repeating itself. When the Soviets ruled Russia, thousands of Witnesses were wrongly charged with being enemies of the nation. They were exiled, sent to prisons, and forced into labor camps. After that regime collapsed, Jehovah's Witnesses were exonerated. The new government officially restored their good name.* Now, once again, some people seem determined to slander the Witnesses.

Early in 2009, the authorities launched an attack on the religious freedom of Jehovah's Witnesses. In February alone, prosecutors carried out more than 500 investigations across the country. The goal of this campaign? To identify supposed violations of the law by the Witnesses. In the following months, the police raided peaceful religious meetings held in Kingdom Halls and private homes. They confiscated literature and personal possessions. The authorities deported foreign lawyers who were assisting in the Witnesses' defense and barred them from reentering the country.

On October 5, 2009, customs officials detained a shipment of Bible-based literature at the border near St. Petersburg. The material had been printed in Germany and was

* See the box "Certificates of Rehabilitation."

intended for a large number of congregations in Russia. A special unit of Russian customs agents who handle dangerous contraband examined the shipment. Why? An official document stated that the shipment “may contain material intended to incite religious discord.”

The wave of harassment soon reached a critical point. The Supreme Courts of the Russian Federation and the Altay Republic (a part of Russia) declared a number of publications used by the Witnesses, including the magazine you are now reading, to be extremist. Jehovah’s Witnesses filed legal appeals, and the international community expressed concern—but to no avail! The rulings currently stand and make it illegal in Russia to import or distribute those Bible-based publications.

How would the Witnesses respond to these efforts to sully their reputation and restrict their activity? And what do the Courts’ rulings signify for the religious freedom of all Russian citizens?

An Urgent Response to the Growing Threat

On Friday, February 26, 2010, some 160,000 of Jehovah’s Witnesses throughout Russia began distributing 12 million copies of a special tract entitled *Could It Happen Again? A Question for the Citizens of Russia*. In the Siberian city of Usol’ye-Sibirskoye, for example, hundreds of Witnesses gathered on the streets at 5:30 in the morning. Among them were some who had been exiled to Siberia in 1951 for their faith. They braved temperatures of minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit (-40°C.) in order to distribute their allotment of 20,000 tracts.

To announce the three-day campaign, Jehovah’s Witnesses held a press conference in Moscow, the capital of Russia. Among those invited to speak was Mr. Lev Levinson, an expert from the Human Rights Institute. He briefly recounted the senseless harassment and persecution experienced by Jehovah’s Witnesses in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union and spoke of the subsequent official exoneration of the Witnesses. He also said: “All religious confessions that were persecuted during the Soviet period were declared by President Yeltsin’s decree to be rehabilitated. And everything that they lost was to have been returned to them. Jehovah’s Witnesses did not have any particular property under the Soviet Union, but *their good name was returned to them.*”

Certificates of Rehabilitation

The last of the Witnesses imprisoned during the Soviet era were released in 1990. Thousands of Jehovah’s Witnesses were thrilled to have their reputation cleared, receiving official documents that they were, not “enemies of the nation,” but *innocent victims*. Those documents are known as Certificates of Rehabilitation.

Do You Think They Are Extremist Publications?



Among the publications of Jehovah’s Witnesses that the Russian Federation Supreme Court has labeled as extremist are

- *My Book of Bible Stories** (above)
- *Draw Close to Jehovah*
- *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?*
- *Mankind’s Search for God**
- *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work, Volume 1**
- *What Does the Bible Really Teach?**

These publications promote respect for God and his Word, the Bible. They encourage readers to develop thinking ability and to examine closely the doctrines and philosophies they are taught. Do you think such publications should be banned?

* You can read these publications online in many languages at www.watchtower.org.



Vladimir Litvin (age 81) was exiled to Krasnoyarskiy Kray when he was 14. Early Friday morning of the campaign, he led a group of Jehovah's Witnesses as they distributed the special tract



A Powerful Message

The tract *Could It Happen Again? A Question for the Citizens of Russia* clearly shows the public that Jehovah's Witnesses are not extremists. It exposes the similarities between the current attempts to discredit the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses and the steps that led to the unwarranted and tragic persecution that the Witnesses experienced during Soviet times. The tract invites readers to visit a special Russian-language Web site, www.jw-russia.org, where they can find out more about the history and activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia. The tract also quotes an Internet video address by Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, given in honor of the national Day of Remembrance of Victims of Political Repression.* Although a small religious minority in the Soviet Union at the time, Jehovah's Witnesses were among those harshly repressed by the Soviet regime.

* See the box "Remembering the Oppressed."

That good name is again threatened. "In the same country that expressed its regret," said Mr. Levinson, "these people are being subjected to utterly groundless persecution."

The Campaign Strikes a Chord

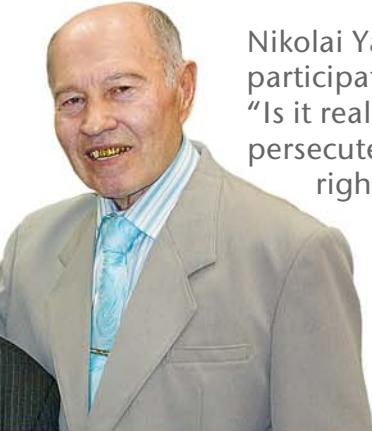
Did the tract campaign accomplish its goal? Mr. Levinson said: "On the way to the [press] conference I saw people in the metro who were sitting and reading a small pamphlet that Jehovah's Witnesses are distributing throughout Russia today.... People are sitting and reading it, and they are reading it attentively."* Note, for example, the following experiences.

An elderly woman in a predominantly Muslim region of central Russia accepted a tract and asked what it was about. When told that it discussed human rights and freedoms in Russia, she exclaimed: "Someone is finally directing attention to these issues! In this regard, Russia has been returning to the days of the Soviet Union. Thank you very much. Good job!"

A woman in Chelyabinsk who was offered a tract said: "I have already received a copy of this tract and read it. I am fully on your side. I do not know of any other religion that would defend its faith in such an organized way. I like the way you people dress, and you are always tactful. It is clear that you have strong confidence in your beliefs. It seems to me that God is with you."

In St. Petersburg, a man who said that he had already received the tract was asked whether he liked what he had read. "Yes," he replied. "While I was reading it,

* Hours before the press conference, congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow began distributing the tract.



Nikolai Yasinski (age 73) eagerly participated in the campaign. He asked, "Is it really so that they are going to persecute us again and take away our right to worship Jehovah?"

I got goose bumps, and I even cried. My grandmother was repressed [during Soviet times] and told me much about those who were imprisoned with her. There were many who were criminals, but there were also those who were innocent yet were imprisoned for their faith. I think that everyone should know about what happened, so you are doing the right thing."

What Does the Future Hold for Russia?

Jehovah's Witnesses value the measure of freedom they have enjoyed in Russia for the past two decades. Even so, they know only too well how easily freedom can be taken away. Whether the recent wave of slander launched against them indicates that Russia is receding into another dark period of repression, time will tell.

Jehovah's Witnesses, however, are firmly resolved to continue carrying out their work of preaching the Bible's message of peace and hope, come what may. The special tract sums up their resolve: "Repression will never succeed. We will not stop speaking tactfully and respectfully about Jehovah God and his Word, the Bible. (1 Peter 3:15) We did not stop when subjected to the horrors of Nazi Germany, we did not stop in the darkest days of our country's repression, and we will not stop now.—Acts 4:18-20."



Stepan Levitsky (age 85) and his wife, Yelena. He spent ten years in prison for possessing a single copy of the *Watchtower* magazine

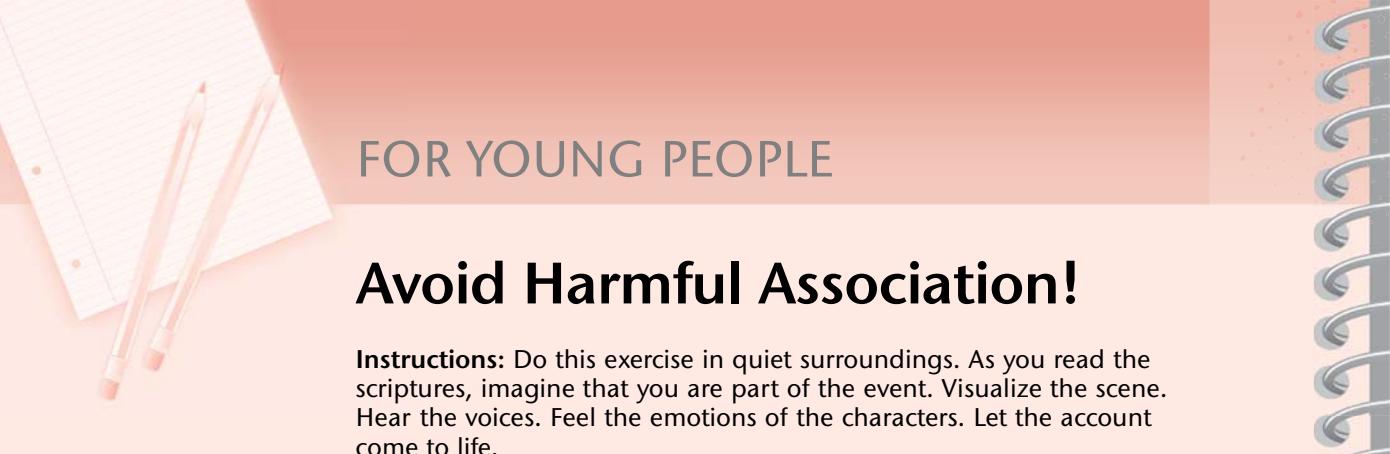
Remembering the Oppressed

During a recent observance of the day when Russians remember those who were oppressed under the Soviet regime, President Dmitri Medvedev made the following statements:

"Today is the Day of Remembrance of Victims of Political Repression. . . . It is impossible to grasp the scale of sheer terror that swept across the country . . . Whole

sectors and classes of our nation were exterminated. . . . Followers of all religious confessions were persecuted. [This memorial is for the] millions of ruined lives—for people executed without trial or record; for people exiled and sent to concentration camps, deprived of civil rights for having the 'wrong' occupation or the 'improper social origins.' The label 'enemies of the nation' and their 'abettors' was applied to entire families. Let's just think about it: Millions of people died as a result of terror and false accusations. They were deprived of all rights, even the right to a humane burial. For many years, their names were simply erased from history.

"There is no excuse for repression."



FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Avoid Harmful Association!

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

Main characters: Dinah, Shechem, Jacob, Simeon, and Levi

Summary: Dinah is violated by Shechem, and her outraged brothers seek vengeance.

① ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ GENESIS 34:1-31.

What activities do you think Dinah might have engaged in with her companions in Canaan? _____

With what kind of reasoning do you imagine that Shechem “kept speaking persuasively” to Dinah? _____

What emotions do you sense in Jacob’s voice when he chastises Simeon and Levi in verse 30? _____

② DIG DEEPER.

Why, do you think, did Dinah regularly visit the daughters of Canaan? (For example, what might she have had in common with them? What could she have found among the people of Canaan that she could not find at home?) _____

What attractive qualities might Dinah have observed in Shechem? (Reread verses 3, 12, and 19.) _____

How does the Bible indicate that Dinah was not a willing participant in the sexual act? (Reread verse 2.)

Do you think it was right for Simeon and Levi to take vengeance by killing the inhabitants of the city of Shechem? Why, or why not?

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

The need to choose your associates wisely.

The need for self-control, even if you are angry for a good reason.

FOR FURTHER APPLICATION.

What steps can you take to avoid being exploited sexually by people who have no regard for God's moral standards?

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



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



Money

"He sat down with the treasury chests in view and began observing how the crowd was dropping money into the treasury chests; and many rich people were dropping in many coins. Now a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins, which have very little value."—MARK 12:41, 42.

THE Bible often mentions money. As seen in the Gospel accounts, for instance, Jesus used different types of coins to teach vital principles. He drew a lesson from the widow's donation of "two small coins," referred to in the above quotation. On another occasion, he pointed to a type of coin known as a denarius to help his followers discern how they should view governmental authority.* —Matthew 22:17-21.

Why was money invented? How was it made in Bible times? How was it used? And what do we learn from the Bible about how we should view it?

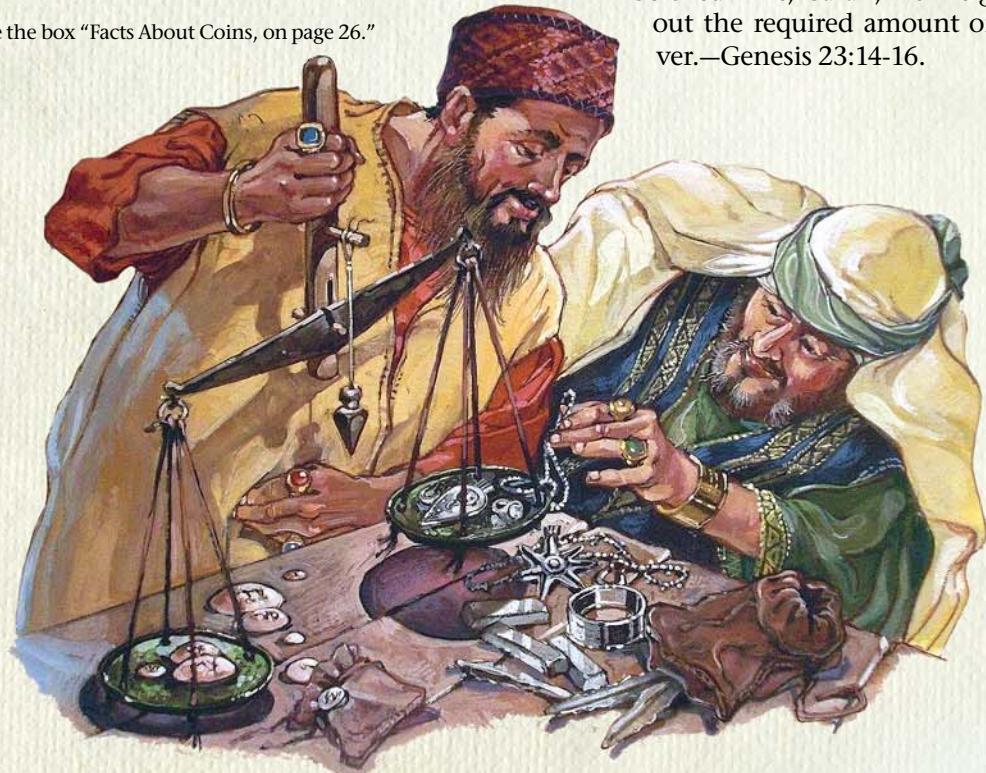
From Bartering to Precious Metals

Before money was invented, people traded, using the barter system. They exchanged

* See the box "Facts About Coins, on page 26."

goods and services of equal value. But bartering could be inconvenient. For the system to work, each party had to desire the goods that the other was offering. In addition, traders had to carry or care for cumbersome trade items, such as animals or bags of grain.

Traders eventually saw the need for a more convenient commodity that could be used to buy and sell goods. The solution was to use precious metals, such as gold, silver, and copper. In the accompanying picture, you see a merchant using precious metals in the form of jewelry and ingots to buy some goods or services. Those metals were carefully weighed on sensitive scales before an exchange of goods took place. For example, when Abraham bought a burial site for his beloved wife, Sarah, he weighed out the required amount of silver.—Genesis 23:14-16.



At the time that Jehovah gave Israel the written Law, greedy merchants used faulty scales or inaccurate weights to cheat customers. Dishonesty is detestable to Jehovah God, so he told the Israelite merchants: “You should prove to have accurate scales, accurate weights.” (Leviticus 19:36; Proverbs 11:1) Today, those who sell goods do well to remember that Jehovah’s feelings about greed and dishonesty have not changed.—Malachi 3:6; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

How Coins Were First Made

The first coins were likely minted in Lydia (modern-day Turkey), sometime before 700 B.C.E. Metalworkers in various countries were soon mass-producing coins, and people throughout the lands mentioned in the Bible began using them.

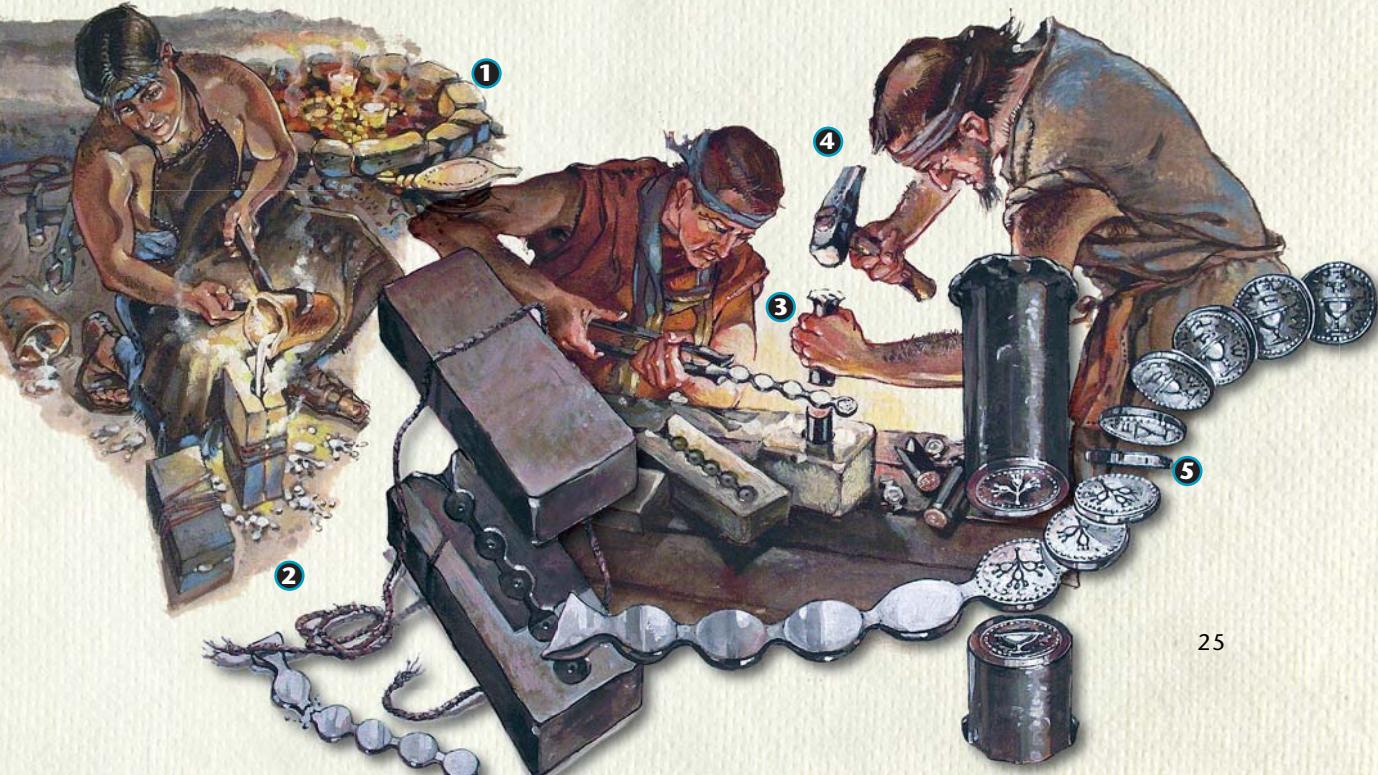
How were the coins made? A worker would remove molten metal from a furnace (1) and pour it into hollow casts, producing blank discs known as flans (2). He would then insert the flans between metal dies that were engraved with symbols or pictures (3). Next

came the hammer strike that imprinted the image onto the flan (4). The speed of the process often resulted in coins that were struck with the image off-center. Workers would sort the coins, weigh them to make sure that they were of a consistent value and, if needed, trim off any excess metal (5).

Money Changers, Tax Collectors, and Bankers

In the first century C.E., coins from various countries made their way into Palestine. For example, travelers to the temple in Jerusalem brought foreign coins with them. However, those caring for the temple would accept the temple tax only if it was paid with certain types of coins. Money changers set up their trade in the temple and often charged exorbitant fees to exchange foreign coins for acceptable currency. Jesus condemned those greedy men. Why? Because they were turning Jehovah’s house into “a house of merchandise” and “a cave of robbers.”—John 2:13-16; Matthew 21:12, 13.

Inhabitants of Palestine also had to pay various secular taxes. One was the “head tax”





Facts About Coins

- One of the smallest coins in circulation in first-century Palestine was the **copper lepton**, also known as a mite. A laborer would earn two lepta in just 15 minutes. It was likely two lepta that the widow dropped into the temple treasury chest.

—Mark 12:42.



- The **silver drachma** was a Greek coin that took almost a full day's labor to earn. (Luke 15:8, 9) Two drachmas was the amount all Jewish men paid yearly as a temple tax.—Matthew 17:24.



- The **silver denarius** was a Roman coin that bore the image of Caesar, so it was ideally suited to serve as "the tribute" coin exacted from every adult Jewish male during the Roman occupation. (Romans 13:7) An employer would pay a laborer one denarius for a 12-hour workday.

—Matthew 20:2-14.



- A pure **silver shekel** made in the city of Tyre circulated in Palestine during the time Jesus was on earth. The 30 "silver pieces" that the chief priests paid to Judas Iscariot for his betrayal of Jesus may have been Tyrian shekels.—Matthew 26:14-16.

Coins shown actual size

that Jesus' opposers questioned him about. (Matthew 22:17) Other taxes included a toll tax and taxes on imported and exported goods. Government tax collectors in Palestine had a reputation for dishonesty, and the people despised them. (Mark 2:16) The tax collectors would amass personal fortunes by overcharging taxpayers and then keeping the excess. However, some tax collectors, such as Zacchaeus, responded to Jesus' message and abandoned their dishonest practices. (Luke 19:1-10) Today, any who want to follow Christ must also be honest in all things, including their business dealings.

—Hebrews 13:18.

Another group who handled money were the bankers. In addition to exchanging foreign currency, they devised savings systems, made loans, and paid out interest to those who invested with the bank. Jesus referred to these bankers in an illustration about slaves

who were given various amounts of money with which to do business.—Matthew 25:26, 27.

The Proper View of Money

In most lands today, people must earn money to buy what they need. The statement that God inspired King Solomon to write centuries ago is still true: "Money is for a protection." But Solomon also stated that wisdom is worth more than money because it "preserves alive its owners." (Ecclesiastes 7:12) Such wisdom is found in the Bible.

Jesus helped his followers to gain a balanced view of money when he said: "Even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses." (Luke 12:15) Like Jesus' first-century disciples, we display wisdom when we handle money responsibly and honestly and avoid developing a love for it.—1 Timothy 6:9, 10.

OUR READERS ASK . . .

Will everlasting life in Paradise be boring?

- The Bible offers the hope that we can live forever in Paradise on earth. (Psalm 37:29; Luke 23:43) Will living endlessly in a perfect environment become boring?

That is a worthwhile question. Researchers have found that chronic boredom may cause a person to become anxious, depressed, and prone to taking risks. Those who see no purpose in life or who tire of their daily routine might succumb to boredom. Will the lives of those in Paradise lack purpose? Will the daily routine be dull?

First, consider that it is Jehovah God, the Author of the Bible, who makes the offer of everlasting life. (John 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:16) God's primary quality is love. (1 John 4:8) Jehovah loves us deeply and has given us all the good things that we now enjoy.—James 1:17.

Our Creator knows that in order to be happy, we need purposeful work. (Psalm 139:14-16; Ecclesiastes 3:12) In Paradise, workers will not feel like insignificant cogs in some massive machine. The work they do will directly benefit them and those they love. (Isaiah 65:22-24) If you had interesting, challenging, full-time work to do, would you find life boring?

Consider, too, that Jehovah God will not allow just anyone to live in Paradise. He offers the gift of everlasting life only to those who imitate his Son, Jesus. (John 17:3) While on earth, Jesus delighted to do his Father's will. He taught his followers both by word and by example that lasting happiness comes more from giving than from receiving. (Acts 20:35) In the restored Par-

adise, all will live by the two greatest commandments—those that call for love of God and love of neighbor. (Matthew 22:36-40) Imagine being surrounded by unselfish people who love you and who love their work! Do you think you would become bored in such company?

What else will life in Paradise involve? Each day, we will be able to learn something new about our Creator. Researchers have already made many remarkable discoveries about Jehovah's creative works. (Romans 1:20) So far, though, we have hardly scratched the surface. Thousands of years ago, the faithful man Job reviewed what he knew about God's creative works, and his conclusion is still true. "These are the fringes of [God's] ways," Job said, "and what a whisper of a matter has been heard of him! But of his mighty thunder who can show an understanding?"—Job 26:14.

No matter how long we live, we will never discover all there is to know about Jehovah God and his works. The Bible states that God has put the desire to live forever in our hearts. But it also says that we will "never find out the work that the true God has made from the start to the finish." (Ecclesiastes 3:10, 11) Do you think you will ever get bored with learning new things about your Creator?

Even now, those who are busy doing work that benefits others and brings glory to God seldom find that they are bored. We can be sure that if we remain busy doing similar work, we will never become bored—even if we live forever.



THE BIBLE CHANGES LIVES

WHY did a popular singer give up her career to become a full-time minister of religion? And what enabled a criminal described by a judge as being beyond reform to become a productive member of society? Read these accounts to find the answers.



"No one can slave for two masters."

—ANTOLINA ORDEN CASTILLO

YEAR BORN: 1962

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SPAIN
HISTORY: ACTRESS AND
ZARZUELA SINGER



MY PAST: I was born in the small village of Tresjuncos, in the region known as La Mancha. My family worked the land. My mother was Catholic, and my father, Protestant. He taught me to respect the Bible; I saw him reading it all the time. But my mother raised me as a Catholic and took me to Mass every Sunday.

When I was 15, I left the village and went to live in Madrid with my older sister. I missed my parents a lot but eventually adapted to city life. When I was 17, I had the chance to work for a few months with a zarzuela, a traditional Spanish light opera. I enjoyed that life very much and decided to become an actress. I quit the secretarial course I was taking and began working

with different zarzuela companies. About this time, I began a relationship with the brother of one of my friends. I felt so fortunate to have a good job, money, and love.

I began touring with different zarzuela companies throughout Spain as well as in other countries, such as Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Venezuela. I also sang with various groups that belonged to a popular musical movement in Madrid known as "*La movida madrileña*." One of the groups for which I was the main vocalist became very successful.

I liked the work but not the immoral atmosphere. Moreover, I became obsessed with my appearance and with maintaining my image. I kept to a very strict diet and began suffering from anorexia and bulimia.

My main goal still was to become an actress. Eventually, I was accepted at the Madrid School of Dramatic Arts. We were taught that acting requires that the individual dig into the character's feelings and also into his or her own feelings. When I applied this advice, I realized that I was emotionally empty. I had become a superficial, selfish woman.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: I knew that if I wanted to develop good qualities, I would have to work at it. But I didn't know where to start. I decided to go to an evangelical church in Madrid that I had once visited with my parents. I prayed to God, using his name, Jehovah.

Soon thereafter, two of Jehovah's Witnesses called at my home. I eagerly discussed the Bible with them, but I also raised many objections to what they were teaching. Esther, the Witness who conducted a regular Bible study with me, was very patient. She and her family showed me a great deal of love and tenderness. I began attending the meetings conducted by the Witnesses and soon realized that I had found the truth I had been looking for.

I had just finished my dramatic arts studies when all sorts of career opportunities opened up. I secured a role in a production that would be staged in a famous theater in Madrid. But I also realized that to succeed as an actress, I would have to commit myself totally to the arts. I finally decided to try to

find another form of employment, one that would allow me to focus on serving God. I took to heart Jesus' words: "No one can slave for two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stick to the one and despise the other. You cannot slave for God and for Riches." (Matthew 6: 24) My boyfriend of eight years did not share my convictions, so I decided to end the relationship. None of these changes were easy.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: At present, I work part-time, providing leisure activities and entertainment for the elderly. Doing so allows me to spend the majority of my time teaching the Bible to Arabic-speaking people who live in my area. I have to work hard at learning this new language, but I thoroughly enjoy sharing the good things that I have learned with people who are so hospitable and spiritually inclined.

The emptiness that I felt while I was studying to become an actress has now been replaced with a sense of purpose. I feel that Jehovah has helped me to become a better, happier person.

"I have proved the judge wrong."

—PAUL KEVIN RUBERY

YEAR BORN: 1954

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: ENGLAND

HISTORY: VIOLENT CRIMINAL

MY PAST: I was born in Dudley, a large industrial town in the West Midlands. From my childhood, Father instilled in me a love of reading. He also encouraged an appreciation for the marvels of nature, although he attributed those to evolution. He taught me that God did not exist. Even so, my parents sent me to a local Methodist Sunday school.

When I was eight, I saw some local boys set fire to a

boat on the canal. The police came, but fear stopped me from talking to them. The boys had threatened me. I was unjustly accused of the crime and became resentful. In response, I vandalized some local schools, churches, and factories, leaving a trail of destruction worth thousands of dollars. By the time I was ten, I had started breaking into houses and shops to steal. I became fascinated with fire and committed many acts of arson. At school, the teachers described me as uncontrollable.

When I was 12, I discovered a book about the occult and made my own Ouija board. Because my parents didn't believe in God, they thought that my interest in spiritism was just harmless fun and that it would keep me out of trouble. But by the time I left school, I had appeared many times before the juvenile court. I had joined a violent group called skinheads. I carried a razor and a bike chain as weapons. I found a job but soon lost it because I was sentenced to prison for a brief time. After my release, I again began vandalizing property and was arrested and sentenced to two years in prison. The judge described me as beyond reform and a menace to society.

After being released from prison, I met up with my former girlfriend, Anita. We married, and for a while I didn't steal or cause trouble. After a few years, though, I returned to a life of crime. I began breaking into businesses and robbing their safes. I started taking drugs, drinking heavily, and carrying a gun. I was again arrested and sentenced to prison.

My lifestyle placed Anita under a great deal of stress. Her doctor gave her a prescription for tranquilizers but told her that what she really needed was a divorce. Fortunately for me, she didn't take his advice.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: Early in our marriage, Anita studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses for a brief time.

Then, while I was serving what was to be my final prison sentence, she was again contacted by the Witnesses. It so happened that on the same day, I prayed to God, saying, "If you really exist, prove it to me."

When I was released from prison a few months later, I contacted the local vicar and asked him to study the Bible with me and Anita. He said that he would teach us only church creeds and a prayer.

Finally, I began reading the Bible. I was surprised to learn that the Bible condemns the practice of spiritism. (Deuteronomy 18: 10-12) Later, I found a copy of *The Watchtower* that the Witnesses had left with Anita on the day that I had prayed to God for help. What I read moved me to contact the Witnesses.

Our families, our friends, and my criminal associates were not happy to learn that we were studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Some said that I was being brainwashed. In all honesty, my brain needed cleansing. I had many personality flaws, a seared conscience, and in addition to other vices, I was smoking up to 60 cigarettes a day. The Witnesses who helped us learn about the Bible and those with whom we associated in the local congregation were very patient and kind. Eventually, I freed myself of my bad habits.—2 Corinthians 7:1.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: Anita and I have been married now for 35 years. One of our children and two of our grandchildren serve Jehovah along with us. In recent years, Anita and I have been able to spend much of our time helping others learn about the Bible.

Serving Jehovah God has given our lives real purpose and meaning. Back in 1970, a judge told the court that I could not be reformed. However, with help from God and guidance from the Bible, I have proved the judge wrong.



DRAW CLOSE TO GOD

"Jehovah Is My Shepherd"

LOOK at the picture on this page. Can you sense the security of that lamb nestled in the bosom of its shepherd? In Psalm 23, the Bible uses the metaphor of a shepherd and his sheep to illustrate the tender care that Jehovah gives his worshippers. He wants us to feel the security that comes to those who, like the psalmist David, can say with confidence: "Jehovah is my Shepherd."*—Verse 1.

The writer of this psalm, David, was a shepherd as a youth. He knew the needs of sheep and the responsibilities of a shepherd. David, who had experienced God's care in his life, wrote what has been called "a psalm of assurance or trust." The divine name, Jehovah, appears at the beginning and at the end of the psalm. (Verses 1, 6) The words between describe three ways in which Jehovah cares for his people as a shepherd cares for his sheep.—Psalm 100:3.

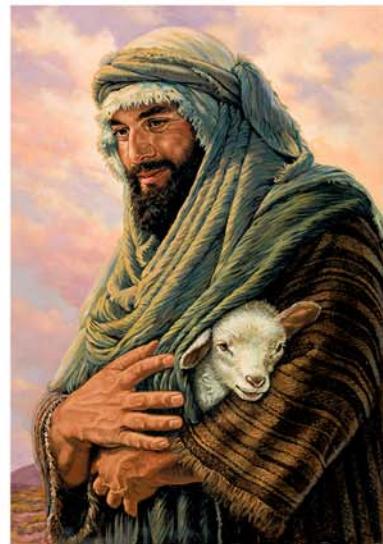
Jehovah leads his sheep. Sheep without their shepherd tend to get lost. Similarly, we need help to find the right path in life. (Jeremiah 10:23) Jehovah, explains David, guides his people to "grassy pastures" and "well-watered resting-places." He leads them "in the tracks of righteousness." (Verses 2, 3) These pastoral images reassure us that we can trust in God. By following the leadings of his spirit as reflected in the Bible, we can pursue a way of life that brings contentment, refreshment, and security.

Jehovah protects his sheep. Without their shepherd, sheep are fearful and helpless. Jehovah tells his people that they need not fear, not

even when they "walk in the valley of deep shadow"—during what may seem to be the darkest moments in life. (Verse 4) Jehovah watches over them, ever ready to help them. He can give his worshippers the wisdom and strength they need in order to cope with trials.
—Philippians 4:13; James 1:2-5.

Jehovah feeds his sheep. Sheep are dependent on their shepherd to find food for them. We have a spiritual need that can be filled only with God's help. (Matthew 5:3) Thankfully, Jehovah is a generous Provider, arranging before his servants a bounteous table. (Verse 5) The Bible and Bible study aids, such as the journal you are reading, are a source of spiritual food that satisfies our need to know the meaning of life and God's purpose for us.

David felt secure knowing that if he remained close to his heavenly Shepherd, he would experience Jehovah's loving care "all the days of [his] life." (Verse 6) Do you long for such security? If so, learn how you can draw close to Jehovah. Thus you may feel safe in the arms of the Great Shepherd, who leads, protects, and feeds those who remain loyal to him.—Isaiah 40:11.



* Many readers are familiar with the rendering "The LORD is my Shepherd." To find out why some Bible translations leave out the divine name, Jehovah, see pages 195-197 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR MAY:
■ Job 38-Psalm 25



Is the preaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses
a fulfillment of Bible prophecy? SEE PAGE 9.



What will conditions on earth be like when
God's Kingdom rules all mankind? SEE PAGE 10.



What can new parents do if they disagree
about child-rearing issues? SEE PAGE 11.



How did evil start? SEE PAGE 16.



Why has the Russian government banned some of the literature
produced by Jehovah's Witnesses? SEE PAGES 18-21.

Would you welcome a visit?