

THE WATCHTOWER

JANUARY 1, 2010

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



ALCOHOL

What Is God's View?

- 3. Using One More Drink
- 4. What Is God's View of Alcohol?
- 6. Keeping Alcohol in the Bible

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

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

FROM OUR COVER

- 3 "Just One More Drink"
- 4 What Is God's View of Alcohol?
- 6 Keeping Alcohol in Its Place



REGULAR FEATURES

- 11 Did You Know?
- 12 Draw Close to God
—A Fulfiller of Promises
- ◀ 24 Imitate Their Faith
—He Was Loyal in the Face of Tests
- 29 Our Readers Ask . . .
- 30 For Young People
—A Man of Humility and Courage

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 13 Why Did God Wage War Against the Canaanites?
- ◀ 16 The Life and Times of First-Century Christians
—Where They Lived
- 19 Can the Dead Help the Living?
- 22 Will the Earth Come to an End?



"JUST ONE MORE DRINK"

ALLEN began abusing alcohol when he was 11 years old.* He and his friends played in the woods, imitating characters they saw in the movies. The characters they copied were fictional, but the liquor Allen and his friends drank was real.

Tony was 40 when he gradually increased his drinks from one or two each evening to five or six. Eventually, he lost count of how many drinks he had throughout the day.

Allen sought help for his alcohol problem. Tony rejected the assistance offered by caring family and friends. Allen is alive today to tell his story; Tony died some years ago in a motor vehicle accident after drinking too much liquor.

Even when someone overdrinks alone, the effects of his excesses inevitably spill over into other people's lives, often with tragic consequences.[#] Alcohol misuse is frequently a factor in verbal and physical abuse, in assaults and murder, in car accidents and work-related injuries, as well as in a host of health problems. Alcohol abuse costs society billions of dollars per year, not to mention the personal and emotional toll it takes on individuals, families, and children.

Even so, "not everyone who drinks regularly has a drinking problem," states the U.S. National Institutes of Health, "and not all problem drinkers drink every day." Many who are not alcoholics have developed excessive drinking habits without realizing it. Others drink sporadically but consume more than five drinks on one occasion.

If you choose to drink alcohol, how much is too much? How can you know when not to have "just one more drink"? (Proverbs 23:29, 30, *Contemporary English Version*) The following articles will consider helpful information on this subject.

* Some names have been changed.

[#] Because men are four times more likely to become alcoholics than are women, the male pronoun is used throughout this series of articles. However, the information applies to both males and females.



SEI WOULD TALK
about a lot more in this article if it didn't
seem like we're getting off the point. A few
years ago, we asked our readers what
they wanted to know about alcoholism. We
received a lot of responses, and we've
selected a few of them to answer here.

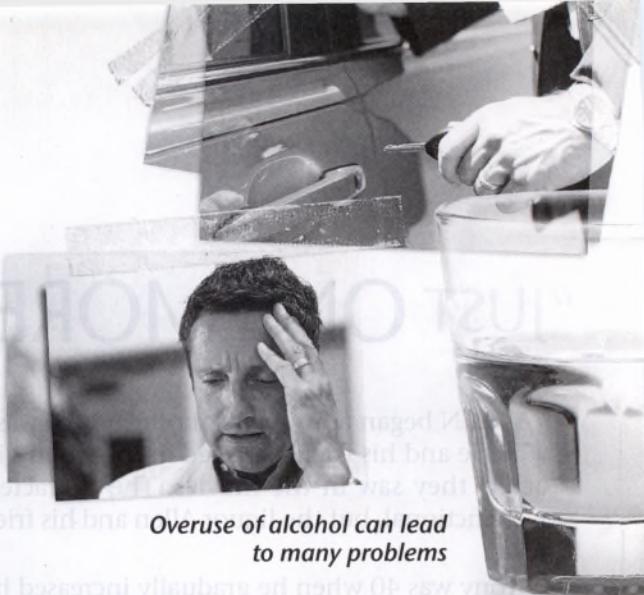
What Is GOD'S VIEW of Alcohol?

OUR Creator, who wants what is best for us, does not prohibit the moderate use of alcohol.* On the contrary, he has given man "wine to make him happy, olive oil to make him cheerful, and bread to give him strength." (Psalm 104:15, *Today's English Version*) On one occasion, Jesus Christ contributed to the enjoyment of a wedding by turning water into "the best wine."—John 2:3-10, *New Jerusalem Bible*.

It stands to reason that the Creator knows precisely how alcohol affects the function of the body and the brain. Through the pages of the Bible, our heavenly Father 'teaches us to benefit ourselves,' and he strongly cautions us against the abuse of strong drink. (Isaiah 48:17) Notice these frank warnings:

"Do not be getting drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery." (Ephesians 5:18) "Drunkards . . . will never inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, *Jerusalem Bible*) God's Word condemns "getting drunk, wild parties, and things similar to these."—Galatians 5:19-21, *Byington*.

* In this article, "alcohol" and "drink" refer broadly to beer, wine, and other spirits.



Overuse of alcohol can lead to many problems

Let us now consider some of the dangers of drinking too much alcohol.

Dangers of Overdrinking

While alcohol can do some good, it contains potent ingredients that alter how the mind and body function. Overuse of alcohol can cause any of the following problems:

Heavy drinking impairs the drinker's judgment, so that he 'will not be able to think clearly.' (Proverbs 23:33, TEV) Allen, the heavy drinker mentioned in the preceding article, explains: "Alcoholism is not just a disease of the body; it's a disease of one's thinking and attitudes. You block out the hurt that it causes other people."

Drinking too much alcohol can also result in lowered inhibitions. The Scriptures warn:

THE WATCHTOWER ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Jehovah's Witnesses, using one of the addresses below. For a complete list of addresses, see www.watchtower.org/address.

America, United States of: 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. *Australia:* PO Box 280,

Ingleburn, NSW 1890. *Bahamas:* PO Box N-1247, Nassau, NP. *Britain:* The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. *Canada:* PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. *Germany:* Zweigbüro, Am Steinfeil, 65618 Selters. *Guam:* 143 Jehovah St, Barrigada, GU 96913. *Guyana:* 352-360 Tyrell St, Republic Park Phase 2 EBD. *Hawaii:* 2055 Kamehameha IV Road, Honolulu, HI 96819-2619. *Jamaica:* PO Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. *Japan:* 4-7-1 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa-Pref, 243-0496. *Puerto Rico:* PO Box 3980, Guayanabo, PR 00970. *South Africa:* Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. *Trinidad and Tobago:* Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299.

© 2010 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

Semimonthly

ENGLISH



"Wine and sweet wine are what take away good motive." (Hosea 4:11) How so? Under the deceptive influence of alcohol, thoughts and desires that we normally suppress can begin to seem quite acceptable—if not inviting. Our resolve to stick to what is right can be weakened. Alcohol can undermine our moral defenses, resulting in spiritual disaster.

John, for example, had argued with his wife and had stormed off to the bar. He had already had a few drinks to calm down when a woman approached him. After a few more drinks, John left with her and committed adultery. Afterward, John deeply regretted doing something he would never have contemplated had his inhibitions not been lowered by alcohol.

John, for example, had argued with his wife and had stormed off to the bar. He had already had a few drinks to calm down when a woman approached him. After a few more drinks, John left with her and committed adultery. Afterward, John deeply regretted doing something he would never have contemplated had his inhibitions not been lowered by alcohol.

NOW PUBLISHED IN 180 LANGUAGES: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Armenian (West), Aymara, Azerbaijani, Azerbaijani (Cyrillic), Baoulé, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese^o (audio Mandarin only), Chinese (Simplified), Chitonga, Chuukese, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,^o Danish,^o Dutch,^o Efik, English^{o+o} (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,^o French,^{o+o} Ga, Georgian, German,^{o+o} Gilbertese, Greek, Greenlandic, Guarani, Gujarati, Gun, Haitian Creole, Hausa, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,^o Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Isoko, Italian,^{o+o} Japanese,^o Kannada, Kaonde, Kazakh, Kikongo, Kili-

ba, Kinyarwanda, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Kongo, Korean,^o Kosraean, Kwangali, Kwayama, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luganda, Lunda, Luo, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Marshallese, Mauritian Creole, Maya, Mizo, Moore, Myanmar, Ndonga, Nepali, Niuenean, Norwegian,^{o+o} Nyaneke, Oromo, Ossetian, Otetela, Palauan, Pangasinan, Papiamento (Curacao), Persian, Polish,^{o+o} Ponapean, Portuguese,^{o+o} Punjabi, Quechua (Ancash), Quechua (Ayacucho), Quechua (Bolivia), Quechua (Cuzco), Quichua, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian,^{o+o} Samar-Leyte, Samoan, Sango, Sepedi, Serbian, Serbian (Roman), Sesotho, Seychelles Creole, Shona, Silozi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian,

Drinking too much alcohol can result in uncontrolled speech and actions. "Who is always in trouble? Who argues and fights?" asks the Bible. "Everyone who stays up late, having just one more drink." (Proverbs 23:29, 30, *Contemporary English Version*) Overdrinking can make you "feel as if you were out on the ocean, seasick, swinging high up in the rigging of a tossing ship." (Proverbs 23:34, *TEV*) A man who has overindulged can wake up "bruised all over, without even remembering how it all happened."—Proverbs 23:35, *CEV*.

Overdrinking can damage physical health. "In the end [alcohol] bites like a snake and poisons like a viper." (Proverbs 23:32, *New International Version*) Medical science has confirmed the wisdom of that ancient proverb. Alcohol in large quantities is a potentially lethal toxin that can lead to various cancers, alcoholic hepatitis, cirrhosis of the liver, pancreatitis, low blood sugar in diabetics, fetal alcohol syndrome, stroke, or heart failure—to name but a few consequences. And even one instance of overdrinking or bingeing can result in coma or in death. The most serious consequences of overindulgence, though, are not described in medical textbooks.

The greatest danger. Even though a person may not get drunk, immoderate drinking poses *spiritual dangers*. The Bible plainly says: "Woe to those who are getting up early in the morning that they may seek just intoxicating liquor, who are lingering till late

Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,^{o+o} Sranantongo, Swahili, Swati, Swedish,^o Tagalog, Tahitian, Tamil, Tatar, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Tiv, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Tumbuka, Turkish, Tuvaluan, Twi, Tzotzil, Ukrainian, Umbundu, Urdu, Urund, Uzbek, Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Xhosa, Yapese, Yoruba, Zande, Zapotec (Isthmus), Zulu

* CD also available.

o MP3 CD-ROM also available.

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

in the evening darkness so that wine itself inflames them!" Why? Isaiah explains the spiritual consequences of immoderate drinking: "The activity of Jehovah they do not look at, and the work of his hands they have not seen."—Isaiah 5:11, 12.

God's Word advises us not "to be among *heavy drinkers* of wine." (Proverbs 23:20) Aged women are cautioned not to be "enslaved to *a lot of wine*." (Titus 2:3) Why not? Slowly—often imperceptibly—people start consuming a little more alcohol with increasing frequency. Eventually, the drinker may "lie awake asking, 'When will morning come, so I can drink some more?'" (Proverbs 23:35, CEV) Drinkers cross a perilous threshold when they crave an eye-opener, a

drink in the morning to recover from the previous night's excesses.

The Bible warns that those who engage in "*excesses with wine*, revelries, drinking matches . . . will render an account to the one ready to judge those living and those dead." (1 Peter 4:3, 5) And regarding the crucial times in which we live, Jesus warned: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and *heavy drinking* and anxieties of life, and suddenly [Jehovah's] day be instantly upon you as a snare."—Luke 21: 34, 35.

What, though, can immoderate drinkers do to prevent becoming 'weighed down with heavy drinking'?

KEEPING ALCOHOL in Its Place

TONY, mentioned in the opening article, could have enjoyed a very different life—if only he had faced up to his drinking problem. However, because he seemed to be able to consume many drinks without obvious symptoms, he believed that he was in control of his life. Why was his self-assessment so faulty?

His judgment was skewed by excessive alcohol consumption. Whether Tony realized it or not, the very organ that monitored his physical, mental, and emotional condition—his brain—was malfunctioning when it was overloaded with alcohol. The more he drank, the less capable his brain was of accurately evaluating his condition.

A second reason for Tony's faulty self-appraisal was his overwhelming urge to

preserve his drinking pattern. Allen, mentioned in the previous articles, initially denied that he had a problem with alcohol. "I would hide my drinking," he admits, "and I would make excuses and try to downplay my overdrinking. I had one aim—to protect my drinking." Even though others could see that drinking was taking control of Tony and Allen, each kept telling himself that everything was normal. Both men needed to take action to get control of their drinking. But what action?

Take Action!

Many who have stopped abusing alcohol have taken action in line with Jesus' words: "If, now, that right eye of yours is making you stumble, tear it out and throw it away

from you. For it is more beneficial to you for one of your members to be lost to you than for your whole body to be pitched into Gehenna.”—Matthew 5:29.

Of course, Jesus was not advocating self-mutilation. Rather, he was stressing metaphorically that we should be willing to cut out of our life anything that is spiritually harmful. True, the action we take may be very painful. But it will protect us from the sort of thinking and situations that can lead to alcohol abuse. Thus, if others have expressed concern that your alcohol consumption is becoming excessive, take steps to control it.* If it is clear that you cannot control your drinking, be willing to cut it out of your life. As painful as that may be, it is much less painful than a ruined life.

Even if you are not an alcoholic, do you tend to drink too much? If so, what practical steps can you take to help you keep alcohol in its place?

Where to Get Help

1. Have faith in the power of frequent, heartfelt prayer. The Bible offers this advice to all who want to please Jehovah God: “In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6, 7) What can you pray about to acquire this peace of mind?

Honestly admit that you have a problem with alcohol, a problem that is your own responsibility. Telling God what you would like to do about it will invite his blessing on your efforts to find relief and to avoid more serious problems. “He that is covering over his transgressions will not succeed, but he

that is confessing and leaving them will be shown mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13) Jesus also said we could pray: “Do not bring us into temptation, but rescue us from what is wicked.” (Matthew 6:13; footnote) How, though, can you work in harmony with such prayers, and where can you find the answers to your supplications?

2. Acquire strength from God’s Word.

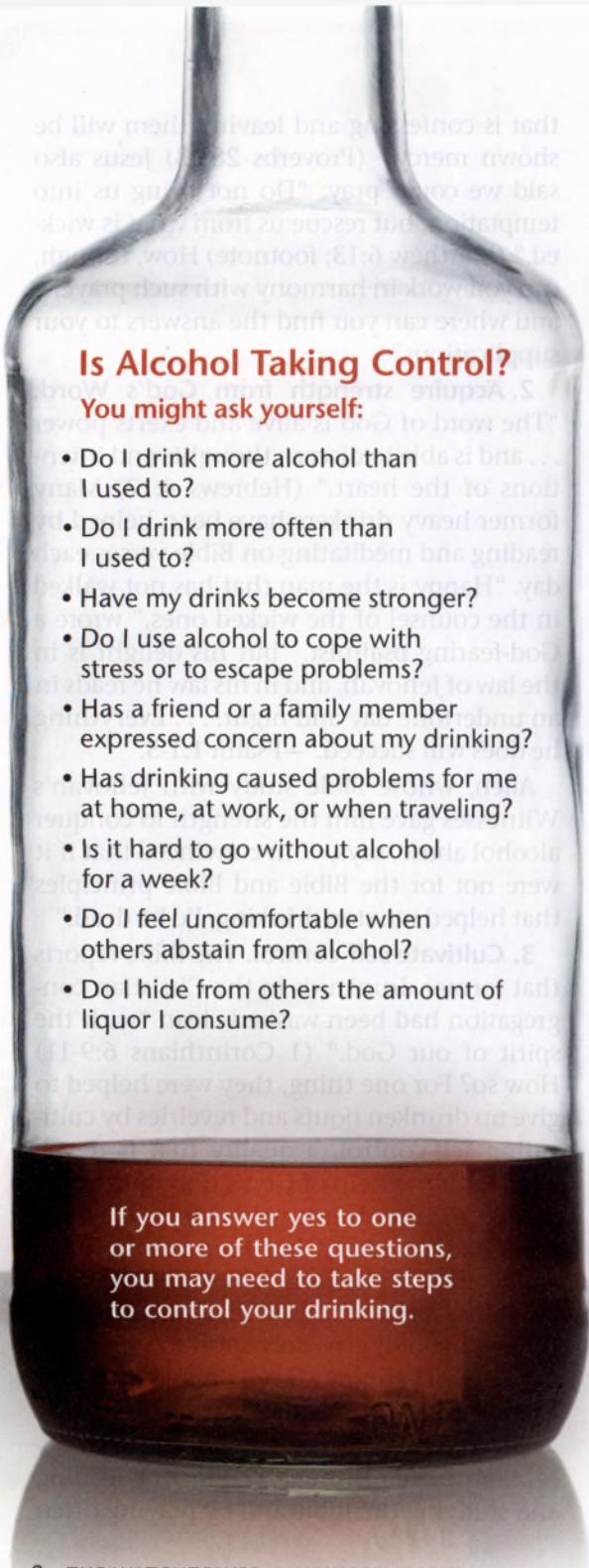
“The word of God is alive and exerts power . . . and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12) Many former heavy drinkers have been helped by reading and meditating on Bible verses each day. “Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones,” wrote a God-fearing psalmist, “but his delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night. . . . Everything he does will succeed.”—Psalm 1:1-3.

Allen, whose Bible study with Jehovah’s Witnesses gave him the strength to conquer alcohol abuse, says, “I’m convinced that if it were not for the Bible and Bible principles that helped me stop drinking, I’d be dead.”

3. Cultivate self-control. The Bible reports that former drunkards in the Christian congregation had been washed clean “with the spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) How so? For one thing, they were helped to give up drunken bouts and revelries by cultivating self-control, a quality that is developed with the help of God’s holy spirit. “Do not be getting drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery, but keep getting filled with spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:21-23) Jesus Christ promised that “the Father in heaven [would] give holy spirit to those asking him.” Therefore, “keep on asking, and it will be given you.”—Luke 11:9, 13.

Those who wish to worship Jehovah acceptably can cultivate self-control by reading and studying the Bible and by praying often

* See the box “Is Alcohol Taking Control?” on page 8.



Is Alcohol Taking Control?

You might ask yourself:

- Do I drink more alcohol than I used to?
- Do I drink more often than I used to?
- Have my drinks become stronger?
- Do I use alcohol to cope with stress or to escape problems?
- Has a friend or a family member expressed concern about my drinking?
- Has drinking caused problems for me at home, at work, or when traveling?
- Is it hard to go without alcohol for a week?
- Do I feel uncomfortable when others abstain from alcohol?
- Do I hide from others the amount of liquor I consume?

If you answer yes to one or more of these questions, you may need to take steps to control your drinking.

and from the heart. Rather than cave in to discouragement, accept this promise found in God's Word: "He who is sowing with a view to the spirit will reap everlasting life from the spirit. So let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out."—Galatians 6:8, 9.

4. Choose wholesome associates. "He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly." (Proverbs 13:20) Tell your friends about your determination to keep your use of alcohol under control. God's Word forewarns, though, that when you give up "excesses with wine, revelries, [and] drinking matches," some former companions will be "puzzled and go on speaking abusively of you." (1 Peter 4:3, 4) Be willing to cut out association with those who undermine your resolve to control your drinking.

5. Set definite limits. "Quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) If you let the principles of God's Word help you to set your personal limits rather than allow your associates or "this system of things" to do so, you will enjoy a way of life that will be acceptable to God. But how can you determine what a safe limit is for you?

Any amount of alcohol that impairs your judgment and dulls your power of reason is too much for you. Hence, if you choose to drink, it is not wise to set a vague limit that hovers between sobriety and drunkenness. Do not let denial undermine your honest appraisal of your drinking. Set a definite, risk-free limit

that is well within the range of moderation—one that will not allow you to deviate into overindulgence.



Making Wise Decisions About Alcohol

Before drinking alcohol, consider:

- **Is it advisable for me to drink alcohol, or should I abstain?**

Recommendation: One who cannot limit his drinks should abstain.

- **How much should I drink?**

Recommendation: Determine your limit before alcohol distorts your judgment.

- **When will I drink?**

Recommendations: Not before driving or engaging in activities that require alertness; not before engaging in religious activities; not during pregnancy; not with certain medications.

- **Where will I drink?**

Recommendations: In a wholesome setting; not in secret to hide the drinking; not in front of people who are offended by alcohol.

- **With whom will I drink?**

Recommendations: With wholesome friends or family; not with problem drinkers.

6. Learn to say no. "Just let your word Yes mean Yes, your No, No." (Matthew 5:37) Learn to decline politely the persistent offers of a kind but misguided host. "Let your utterance be always with graciousness, seasoned with salt, so as to know how you ought to give an answer to each one."—Colossians 4:6.

7. Seek personal help. Enlist the help of supportive friends who can reinforce your resolve to control your drinking and can provide spiritual help. "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their hard work. For if one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up." (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10; James 5:14, 16) The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in the United States likewise advises: "Cutting down on your drinking may be difficult at times. Ask your family and friends for support to help you reach your goal."

8. Stick to your resolve. "Become doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves with false reasoning. But he who peers into the perfect law that belongs to freedom and who persists in it, this man, because he has become, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, will be happy in his doing it."—James 1:22, 25.

Breaking Free From Addiction

Not everyone who drinks excessively becomes an alcoholic. But some begin drinking so much—or so frequently—that they become addicted to alcohol. Because alcohol addiction includes physical and psychological dependence on a potent substance, such people may need more than willpower and spiritual help to break free from alcoholism. "When I was giving up alcohol," recalls Allen, "the physical pain of withdrawal was tremendous. That's when I realized that I needed medical treatment in addition to the spiritual help I was getting."



God's Word Helps a Former Drunkard

Supot, in Thailand, was a heavy drinker. Initially, he drank only in the evenings. Gradually, he started drinking in the morning and then also at lunchtime. He would often drink simply to get drunk. But then he started studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Learning that drunkenness is not acceptable to Jehovah God, Supot quit drinking. After a while, though, he reverted to his former drinking habits. His family was devastated.

However, Supot still loved Jehovah and wanted to worship him properly. Supot's friends continued to help him and encouraged his family to spend more time with him and not to give up on him. At that time, the frank statement found at 1 Corinthians 6:10 that 'drunkards will not inherit God's kingdom' helped Supot to see the seriousness of his situation. He realized that he needed to make an all-out effort to overcome his drinking problem.

This time, Supot was determined to quit drinking alcohol completely. Eventually, with the power of God's holy spirit, the guidance of God's Word, and the help of his family and congregation, Supot gained spiritual strength and overcame his desire for alcohol. His family was delighted when he was baptized in symbol of his dedication to God. Supot now enjoys the close relationship with God that he always desired, and he uses his time to help others spiritually.

Many drinkers need medical treatment to reinforce their spiritual battle to break free from and stay away from alcohol abuse.* Some need to be hospitalized to cope with severe withdrawal symptoms or to receive medication to reduce the extreme craving for alcohol and to help maintain abstinence. The miracle-working Son of God noted: "Those who are strong do not need a physician, but those who are ill do."—Mark 2:17.

Benefits of Heeding Divine Instruction

The Bible's sensible advice on alcohol comes from the true God, who wants the best for us—not only for our present enjoyment but also for our lasting benefit. Twenty-four years after giving up alcohol, Allen recalls: "It was wonderful to know that I could be different, to learn that Jehovah wanted to help me straighten myself out, that he . . ." Allen pauses and holds back the tears as memories overwhelm him. "Um, . . . to know that Jehovah understands and cares and provides the needed help—that has been incredible."

Therefore, if you are in the grip of alcohol misuse or addiction, do not be quick to give up on yourself or to conclude that there is no hope. Allen and countless others have been where you are now and have either cut down on alcohol or have cut it out altogether. They have no regrets; neither will you.

Whether you personally choose to drink alcohol in moderation or not at all, heed God's loving appeal: "O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea."—Isaiah 48:18.

* There are many treatment centers, hospitals, and recovery programs that can provide help. *The Watchtower* does not endorse any particular treatment. Each individual should carefully evaluate treatment options and then make a personal decision that does not conflict with Bible principles.

DID YOU KNOW?

What road did the apostle Paul travel during his first journey to Rome?



VIA APPIA

■ Acts 28:13-16 states that the ship on which Paul sailed to Italy arrived at Puteoli (modern-day Pozzuoli), on the Bay of Naples. He then traveled to Rome on the Via Appia, the city's main highway.

The Via Appia was named after Appius Claudius Caecus, the Roman statesman who began building it in 312 B.C.E. This road, some 18 to 20 feet wide and paved with large blocks of volcanic rock, eventually extended 362 miles southeast from Rome. It linked Rome with the port of Brundisium (modern Brindisi), the gateway to the East. Wayfarers broke their journey at stopover points—spaced 15 or

so miles apart—to buy supplies, to sleep, or to change horses or vehicles.

Paul, however, was probably walking. The section of the Via Appia he traveled was 132 miles long. Part of this stretch crossed the Pontine Marshes, a swampy area that caused one Roman writer to complain about the mosquitoes and foul smell. Just north of those marshes were the Marketplace of Appius—about 40 miles from Rome—and Three Taverns, a rest stop some 30 miles from the city. At these two stops, Christians from Rome were waiting for Paul. Upon seeing them, “Paul thanked God and took courage.” —Acts 28:15.

What kind of writing tablet is referred to at Luke 1:63?

■ Luke’s Gospel records that friends of Zechariah inquired of him what his newborn son was to be named. Zechariah “asked for a tablet and wrote: ‘John is its name.’” (Luke 1:63) According to one scholarly work, the Greek term here rendered “tablet” refers to “a small writing tablet normally made of wood with a prepared wax surface.” Shallow recesses in hinged wooden panels were overlaid with smooth beeswax. Using a stylus, a writer could make notes on this surface. The writing could thereafter be

erased and the newly smoothed surface be reused.

The book *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* says: “Paintings from Pompeii, sculptures from various parts of the Roman Empire and actual examples dug up at many sites scattered from Egypt to Hadrian’s Wall [Northern Britain] display the widespread use of the tablets.” A variety of individuals may have had such tablets at hand—traders, government officials, and perhaps even some of the first-century Christians.



SCHOOLBOY'S
WAX TABLET,
2ND CENTURY C.E.

By permission of the
British Library



DRAW CLOSE TO GOD

A Fulfiller of Promises

JOSHUA 23:14

IS IT hard for you to trust others? Sadly, we live in a world where trust is routinely destroyed. If you were hurt by someone you believed in—perhaps because of lies or broken promises—your trust may have been shattered. There is, however, someone you can trust without ever being disappointed. “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart,” Proverbs 3:5 urges us. Why is Jehovah deserving of such trust? To answer that, let us examine the words of Joshua—a man who put his complete trust in Jehovah—recorded at Joshua 23:14.

Consider the setting. Joshua, Moses’ successor as leader of Israel, is approaching 110 years of age. During his long life, he has observed firsthand many of the mighty acts that Jehovah performed in behalf of Israel, including the miraculous deliverance through the Red Sea some 60 years earlier. Now, a reflective Joshua calls together Israel’s “older men and its heads and its judges and its officers.” (Joshua 23:2) The words he now speaks reveal not just a wisdom born of age but the meditations of a heart full of faith.

“I am going today in the way of all the earth,” explains Joshua. The phrase “the way of all the earth” is an idiom for death. Joshua is, in effect, saying, “I do not have much longer to live.” Knowing that he is about to die, Joshua no doubt has spent many quiet hours contemplating his life. What parting words does he have for his fellow worshippers?

Joshua continues: “Not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has

failed.” These are the words of a man who has full trust in God. The reason? Looking back on all that he has seen, Joshua has come to know that Jehovah fulfills His promises—always.* The implication is clear: Joshua wants his fellow Israelites to have absolute faith that all of Jehovah’s promises for their future will also come true.

Commenting on Joshua 23:14, one Bible reference work says: “Bring forth every promise from the Bible; then search the annals of the world; and inquire of every creature in it, to find one single instance of God’s violating or forgetting a promise.” If it were possible to conduct such an examination, we would reach the same conclusion as did Joshua—Jehovah’s promises never fail to come true.—1 Kings 8:56; Isaiah 55:10, 11.

The Bible contains a record of God’s promises that have been fulfilled, including some that are being fulfilled before our very eyes. It also contains Jehovah’s wonderful promises for our future.* Why not examine that record for yourself? A study of the Bible may convince you that the Fulfiller of promises is worthy of your trust.

* Here are a few of the promises, or assurances, that Joshua saw fulfilled. Jehovah would give Israel a land of their own. (Compare Genesis 12:7 with Joshua 11:23.) Jehovah would deliver Israel out of Egypt. (Compare Exodus 3:8 with Exodus 12:29-32.) Jehovah would sustain his people.—Compare Exodus 16:4, 13-15 with Deuteronomy 8:3, 4.

[#] For more information about God’s promises for our future, see chapters 3, 7, and 8 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.



WHY DID GOD WAGE WAR AGAINST THE CANAANITES?

"Completely destroy all the people: the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, as the LORD ordered you to do."—DEUTERONOMY 20:17, TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION.

"Be peaceable with all men."—ROMANS 12:18.

DO THOSE Bible verses seem contradictory to you? Many struggle to reconcile God's command to destroy the Canaanites with the Bible's admonition to be peaceable.* (Isaiah 2:4; 2 Corinthians 13:11) To them, these instructions seem morally inconsistent.

If you could discuss this subject with God, what would you ask him? Consider five common questions and the Bible's answers.

1. Why were the Canaanites displaced?

The Canaanites were, in a sense, squatters in a land that did not belong to them. How so? Some 400 years earlier, God had promised the faithful man Abraham that his descendants would possess the land of Canaan. (Genesis 15:18) God kept that promise when he caused the nation of Israel, which descended from Abraham, to occupy the region. Of course, some might protest that the Canaanites already lived there and therefore had a right to the land. But surely, as the Sovereign of the universe, God has the ultimate right to determine who will live where.—Acts 17:26; 1 Corinthians 10:26.

* In this article, the term "Canaanites" refers to all the nations God ordered Israel to displace.

2. Why did God not allow the Canaanites to coexist with the Israelites? "They should not dwell in your land," God warned regarding the Canaanites, "that they may not cause you to sin against me. In case you should serve their gods, it would become a snare to you." (Exodus 23:33) The prophet Moses later told Israel: "It is for the wickedness of these nations that Jehovah your God is driving them away." (Deuteronomy 9:5) Just how wicked were those nations?

Immorality, pagan worship, and child sacrifice were widespread in Canaan. Bible historian Henry H. Halley notes that archaeologists excavating the area "found great numbers of jars containing the remains of children who had been sacrificed to Baal [a prominent god of the Canaanites]." He adds: "The whole area proved to be a cemetery for new-born babes. . . . Canaanites worshipped, by immoral indulgence, as a religious rite, in the presence of their gods; and then, by murdering their first-born children, as a sacrifice to these same gods. It seems that, in large measure, the land of Canaan had become a sort of Sodom and Gomorrah on a national scale. . . . Archaeologists who dig in the ruins

of Canaanite cities wonder that God did not destroy them sooner than he did."

3. Were there not other wicked people on earth at the time? Why single out the Canaanites? God has selectively executed sinners on many occasions. When "the earth became filled with violence" in Noah's day,

Does the Bible Condone Human Warfare?

Does God's commanding Israel to destroy the Canaanites justify human warfare today? No, for at least three reasons:

- **No earthly nation today has special favor with God.** When the Israelites rejected Jesus as the Messiah, they ceased to represent God in any official capacity—including that of executioners. (Matthew 21:42, 43) Jehovah thus held the Israelites to the same standard as other nations. (Leviticus 18:24-28) From that time on, no earthly nation could rightly claim to have God's backing in warfare.
- **Jehovah no longer assigns his worshippers to any specific land or geographic region.** Rather, his servants can be found in "all nations and tribes" of the earth.—Revelation 7:9; Acts 10:34, 35.
- **Jesus clearly indicated that his followers would not engage in warfare.** When warning of an impending attack on Jerusalem, he instructed his disciples not to stay and fight but, rather, to flee, which they did. (Matthew 24:15, 16) Instead of taking up arms, true Christians put their complete trust in God's Kingdom, which will soon remove all wickedness from this earth.
—Daniel 2:44; John 18:36.

God caused a deluge that wiped out all but one family—Noah's family. (Genesis 6:11; 2 Peter 2:5) God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah when the sin of their inhabitants became "very heavy." (Genesis 18:20; 2 Peter 2:6) And he pronounced judgment against the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, "the city of bloodshed," although he spared that city when its inhabitants repented from their bad ways. (Nahum 3:1; Jonah 1:1, 2; 3:2, 5-10) As for the Canaanites, God destroyed them in order to protect Israel, the nation that would eventually produce the Messiah.—Psalm 132:11, 12.

4. Did not the Canaanites' destruction conflict with God's love? On the surface, God's exterminating the Canaanites might seem inconsistent with his love. (1 John 4:8) However, that love becomes quite apparent when we take a closer look.

God knew long beforehand that Canaan's inhabitants were headed in the wrong direction. Yet, instead of immediately wiping them out, he patiently allowed 400 years to pass until their error had "come to completion."—Genesis 15:16.

When the sin of the Canaanites reached the point where all hope of improvement was gone, Jehovah brought their end. Even so, he did not blindly execute *all* Canaanites. Why? Because not all were beyond reform. Those willing to change, such as Rahab and the Gibeonites, were shown mercy.—Joshua 9:3-11, 16-27; Hebrews 11:31.

5. How could a God of love destroy any humans? That question is understandable, for the destruction of human life is not pleasant to contemplate. Really, though, it was God's love that impelled him to take such drastic measures against the wicked. To illustrate: When a patient develops gangrene, doctors often have little choice but to amputate the infected limb. Few would enjoy performing such a procedure, but a good doctor

Rahab's example shows that anyone who truly wants to can please God



knows that the alternative—the spread of infection—is worse. Because he cares, he carries out this unpleasant task for the good of his patient.

Similarly, Jehovah did not enjoy destroying the Canaanites. He himself says: "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." (Ezekiel

33:11, *Darby*) At the same time, he purposed for the nation of Israel to produce the Messiah, the one who would open the way to salvation for all those exercising faith. (John 3:16) Thus, God simply could not allow Israel to become infected by the disgusting practices of the Canaanites. He therefore ordered the Canaanites to be cut off, or evicted, from the land. In so doing, God demonstrated outstanding love—love that moved him to perform an unpleasant task for the benefit of his faithful worshippers.

Value for Us

Does the record of the Canaanites' destruction have value for us today? Yes, for Romans 15:4 states: "All the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope." How does what happened in Canaan instruct us and give us hope?

These accounts teach us much. For example, God mercifully spared Rahab and the Gibeonites when they turned to him in faith. This reminds us that anyone who truly wants to please God can do so, regardless of his background or past sins.—Acts 17:30.

Accounts of the destruction in Canaan also give us hope by providing us with a preview of what God will do in the near future. They assure us that he will not allow evil to snuff out good completely. Rather, the Bible affirms that he will soon act to destroy all wicked ones, whereas he will deliver those who love him into a righteous new world. (2 Peter 2:9; Revelation 21:3, 4) At that time, these comforting words will be fulfilled: "Hope in Jehovah and keep his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it."—Psalm 37:34.

Where They Lived

"I did not hold back from . . . teaching you publicly and from house to house." —ACTS 20:20.

ENTERING through the massive gate, you are instantly thrust into a first-century city. Like many cities, it is situated on a hill. Above you is a ridge, where the upper city is revealed. Numerous luxurious white villas, many with walled gardens, glisten in the sun. This is the neighborhood of the wealthy. Down the slope, more houses of different sizes and shapes come into view. These large multistoried stone houses of the middle-class merchants and landowners line the paved streets. Farther down in the lower valley are the poorer areas. The drab houses here are small, boxlike structures packed on narrow alleyways or clustered around small courtyards.

As you walk along the congested streets, the sounds and smells excite your senses. Women are cooking, filling the neighborhood with tantalizing aromas. You hear the sounds of animals and of children at play. Men are busily working in noisy, smelly shops.

For the Christian family, life centered in these houses. They set the scene for daily life, spiritual instruction, and worship.

The Smaller Houses Like homes today, the size and type of dwellings varied according to location and the family's financial circumstances. The smallest houses (1) consisted of one cramped, dark room, which provided living space for an entire family. Many small houses were built of sun-dried mud-brick walls. Others were of rough-hewn stone walls. Both types were usually constructed on a stone foundation.



The interior walls were plastered and the floors were paved, requiring constant maintenance. At least one small opening in the roof or wall allowed kitchen smoke to escape. Furnishings were limited to essential household items.

An earthen roof rested on branches, reeds, and rafters over wooden beams, supported by posts. The packed clay was then plastered, making a reasonably waterproof ceiling. Roof access usually involved a climb on an outside ladder.

Even in such close quarters, Christian homes were pleasant places, where even a poor family could be spiritually rich and happy.

The Middle Class The bigger two-story stone houses (**2**) of the middle class featured a guest room. (Mark 14:13-16; Acts 1:13, 14) This large upper chamber could accommodate meetings and was often available at festival times. (Acts 2:1-4) These houses and even larger houses (**3**) of merchants and landowners were constructed of limestone blocks, bonded with lime

lime mortar. The paved floors and interior walls were plastered; exterior walls were whitewashed.

mortar. The paved floors and interior walls were plastered; exterior walls were whitewashed.

Access to the upper rooms and roof was by a staircase. All flat roofs were rimmed by a parapet intended to prevent falls and other accidents. (Deuteronomy 22:8) During the heat of the day, under a makeshift shade structure, the roof would be a delightful place to retire to for study, meditation, prayer, or rest.—Acts 10:9.

While often accommodating extended families, these sturdy houses with larger rooms allowed for additional living space, separate bedrooms, and a larger kitchen and dining area.

The More Luxurious Homes The Roman-style houses (**4**) varied considerably in size, design, and construction. Spacious rooms were centered around a large dining room (triclinium), the hub of family activities. Some designs included a second or third story (**5**) or were adorned with walled gardens.

The more luxurious homes may have been well-equipped with elaborate furniture, some of it inlaid with ivory and gold. These homes

4

5



had such conveniences as running water and baths. The floors may have been made of wood or multicolored marble, and the walls may have been paneled with cedar. Braziers were used for heating. Lattice, usually of wood, was installed in window openings for security, and curtains afforded a measure of privacy. Window seats were cut into the thick stone walls.—Acts 20:9, 10.

Whatever the size or shape of their house, the early Christians were open and generous with their belongings. Traveling overseers thus had no difficulty finding a warm, hospitable family with whom to stay until they completed their ministry in that city or town.

—Matthew 10:11; Acts 16:14, 15.

"The Home of Simon and Andrew" Jesus found a warm welcome in "the home of Simon and Andrew." (Mark 1:29-31) The house of these fishermen may have been part of an enclosed cluster of unpretentious structures (6) crowded around a paved courtyard.

At such houses, doors and windows opened onto the courtyard, which often was the center of daily activities, including cook-

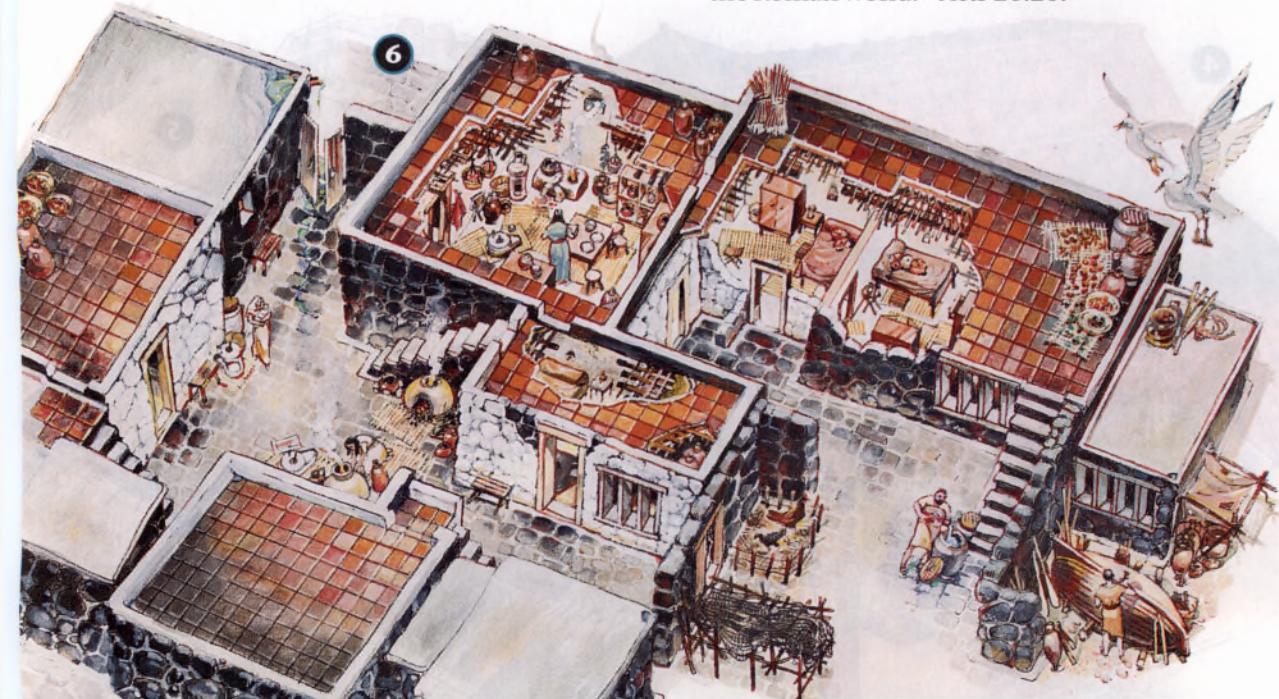
ing, baking, grinding grain, and socializing and eating.

The one-story houses in Capernaum were constructed from uncut local basalt (volcanic rock). The exterior stairs led to a flat roof made of packed clay or tile put over reeds and rafters that rested on beams. (Mark 2:1-5) The interior floors were paved, often covered with woven mats.

Blocks of houses formed streets and alleys along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was an ideal setting for the fishermen who earned their living from the sea.

"From House to House" All in all, the houses of the first-century Christians were varied—from the single-room mud-brick houses to the large, luxurious stone villas.

Those houses served as more than a shelter for the family. The home was a place of spiritual instruction. Within the walls, the family worshipped together. They assembled in private homes to study the Scriptures and to enjoy association with fellow believers. What they learned in their homes they put to good use as they carried out their all-important work, namely, preaching and teaching "from house to house" throughout the Roman world.—Acts 20:20.





Can the Dead Help the Living?

THAMBA, a young man in West Africa, was about to take a school examination.* His mother insisted that he needed the help of dead relatives in order to succeed. In Palermo, Sicily, tourists visit catacombs where hundreds of carefully preserved corpses are on display. Some believe that these mummified remains provide divine protection for the living. Each year, people visit Lily Dale, a town in western New York State, U.S.A., known for the unusually high number of spirit mediums who live there. Visitors come in hopes that they can contact dead relatives or friends and receive their help.

Across the globe, the belief that the dead can help the living persists. What do you think? Perhaps you have been taught such a belief or are close to some who cherish the idea. It is only natural to long for loved ones whom we have lost in death. Spirit mediums promise to meet that need. One medium was quoted in *Time* magazine as saying that the spirit realm "is always available if called to help." Is that true? Can the dead really help the living? The Bible's clear answer may surprise you.

Are the Dead Alive Somewhere?

The Bible explains in simple, easy-to-understand terms the condition of the dead. Note what Ecclesiastes 9:5 states: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all." Is it possible that the dead have feelings? Verse 6 answers: "Their love and their hate and their jealousy have already perished, and

* Name has been changed.

they have no portion anymore to time indefinite in anything that has to be done under the sun." Note, too, that verse 10 of that same chapter states that "there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol, the place to which you are going." The Hebrew word "Sheol" used here means "mankind's common grave." Interestingly,

It is only natural to long for loved ones whom we have lost in death

the Greek equivalent of this word, "Hades," is used in the Scriptures to indicate where Jesus Christ went for a time after he died.—Acts 2:31.

Jesus helped many while he was alive, but he knew that he would have to die. Did he expect that he would still be able to help people during his time in the grave? No. He compared his own impending death to a nighttime when work would be impossible. (John 9:4) Jesus well knew that when humans cease to live, they are "impotent in death."—Isaiah 26:14.

Jesus also used a comparison that made a similar point about death. When his friend Lazarus died, Jesus likened death to sleep. (John 11:11-13) We do not expect a sleeping person to help us, do we? A sleeper is unconscious, unable to act in anyone's behalf.

Does the Soul Survive Death?

Many have been taught that the soul is a shadowy thing that survives death. The Bible teaches something different. The first book

of the Bible, Genesis, identifies the soul for us. Genesis 2:7 states that at the first man's creation, he "came to be a living soul." Man, in his entirety, is a soul; animals are also souls. (Genesis 1:20-25) So, logically, when a human or an animal dies, the soul dies. The Bible confirms this.—Ezekiel 18:4.

However, some may ask, 'What about the many stories of people contacting the dead, hearing their voices, or even seeing them?' Such accounts are common in many parts of the world. They fill bereaved relatives or close friends with hope, moving many to seek out a spirit medium who claims to be able to contact the dead.

Are such stories true? If so, would this not contradict the above Bible-based statements? Christ Jesus described God's Word as truth. (John 17:17) Truth does not contradict itself. Actually, there is clear direction in the Bible on how we should view claims that the dead can help the living. The Bible tells us about someone who attempted to get help from the dead. A careful reading of the account will reveal the truth.

A King Asks for Help From the Dead

The setting was a battlefield in northern Israel. King Saul and his forces were confronted by a fearsome Philistine army. When Saul got to see the camp of the Philistines, "his heart began to tremble very much." At this point in his kingship, Saul had abandoned true worship. As a result, his pleadings to Jehovah were answered with silence. Where would Saul turn for help? God's prophet Samuel was dead.—1 Samuel 28:3, 5, 6.

Saul sought direction from a spirit medium in En-dor. He begged the medium to "bring up Samuel" from the dead. The medium summoned an apparition. This "Samuel" told Saul that the Philistines would prevail and that Saul and his sons would die in bat-

Did the prophet Samuel come back from the dead and communicate with King Saul?



tle. (1 Samuel 28:7-19) Was that really Samuel returned from the dead?

Think about it. The Bible states that at death a person "goes back to his ground" and that "his thoughts do perish." (Psalm 146:4) Both Saul and Samuel knew that God condemned contact with spirit mediums. Why, Saul had earlier taken the lead in ridding the land of spiritistic practices!—Leviticus 19:31.

Reason on the matter. If faithful Samuel were still alive as a spirit, would he violate God's law and cooperate with a spirit medium in order to meet Saul? Jehovah had refused to talk with Saul. Could a medium, in effect, force God Almighty to communicate with Saul by means of dead Samuel? No. Clearly, this "Samuel" was not God's faithful prophet in any form. It was a spirit—a wicked demon pretending to be dead Samuel.

Demons are angels who rebelled against God's authority early in man's history. (Genesis 6:1-4; Jude 6) These demons can observe people while they are alive; they know how each one talked, looked, and acted. They are

eager to promote the idea that what the Bible says is untrue. No wonder the Bible warns against having any contact with such spirit forces! (Deuteronomy 18:10-12) These wicked spirits are still active today.

Now we may see why many tell of "hearing" or "seeing" dead loved ones. Though such apparitions at times may seem friendly, wicked spirit forces are out to deceive humans.* (Ephesians 6:12) Also, think about this: Jehovah is a loving God who cares for us. If the dead were alive somewhere and they could come to the aid of their friends and family, would our loving Creator forbid such contact and refer to it as "detestable"? Surely not! (1 Peter 5:7) Is there, then, any reliable source of help?

Real Help for the Living and the Dead

We understand from the foregoing that the dead are powerless to help the living. What is more, efforts to seek the help of the dead are worse than ineffective; they are extremely dangerous, as they violate God's law and put us at risk of demonic influence.

The Bible directs us to the best Source of help—our Creator, Jehovah. He can deliver us from death itself. (Psalm 33:19, 20) Today, he is available to help us. He thus provides real hope, unlike false hopes from spirit mediums.

Tamba, mentioned in the introduction, learned firsthand the difference between the false hopes that spirit mediums offer and the truth that Jehovah holds out to us. Mediums claimed that if he did not perform a sacrifice to his dead ancestors, he would fail the school exam. Tamba had begun to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. He had

* For more information on this subject, see the brochure *Spirits of the Dead—Can They Help You or Harm You? Do They Really Exist?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

learned the real condition of the dead and also the evil source of those who pretend to be dead ancestors. Despite great pressure from his mother to get help from a medium, Tamba refused, telling her, "If I fail, I will try harder next year."

What was the result? He finished first in the exam! His mother was amazed, lost faith in the mediums, and never mentioned sacrifices of that nature again. Tamba learned that Jehovah warns us to avoid making "application to dead persons in behalf of living persons." (Isaiah 8:19) Bible study gave Tamba the confidence that if he took delight in God's law, he would succeed.—Psalm 1:1-3.

What, though, about the loved ones we have lost? Is there no hope for them? In addition to helping us who are alive, Jehovah has promised to help those who are in the grave. After describing how powerless the dead are, notice what the prophet Isaiah announces in chapter 26, verse 19: "Your dead ones will live. . . . Awake and cry out joyfully, you residents in the dust!" The prophecy further states that "those impotent in death" will live again.

Imagine that! The helpless billions who lie sleeping in the grave will be brought back to life! In fact, the Bible reveals that Jehovah has "a yearning" to give life to the dead. (Job 14:14, 15) Do such promises sound too good to be true? Jesus Christ was so sure of this hope that he described the dead as already alive in Jehovah's eyes.—Luke 20:37, 38.

Would you like to make this hope your own?* Continue to take in accurate knowledge from the Bible. As you study, you will be convinced that Jehovah can help the living and the dead and that his promises are "faithful and true."—Revelation 21:4, 5.

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



AP photo

WILL THE EARTH COME TO AN END?

"THE end of the world never goes out of style, at least as far as film is concerned." So stated columnist John Scalzi. Why are audiences captivated by movies depicting the end of the world? "Because they speak to our fears," reasoned Scalzi. Would you agree? Do we have legitimate reasons to be fearful about how and when the earth—and all life upon it—might come to an end?

Almost daily, we hear of natural disasters wreaking havoc around the globe. Terrifying footage of such destruction is replayed over and over on TV and on the Internet. When we are bombarded with images of real people and real places being destroyed, it is easy to view the end of the world as an actual threat and not just the stuff of movies.

Fueling such fears, scientists theorize about how the earth might end. Some even predict what might be called earth's expiration date. In March 2008, the *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* reported that a pair of astronomers forecast that in approximately 7.59 billion years, the sun will engulf and vaporize our planet.

Will the earth really expire someday?

Does Our Planet Have an Expiration Date?

The Bible assures us: "Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever." (Ecclesiastes 1:4, *New International Version*) Jehovah God securely "founded the

earth upon its established places" and designed it to last "to time indefinite, or forever." (Psalm 104:5) Do these inspired words of God sound too good to be true? Why should you believe that our earth will not expire, when some scientists claim otherwise?

Well, think for a moment about products on the shelf at a store. Some are labeled with an expiration date. Who set that date? Was it just an educated guess by the store manager? Of course not! The manufacturer determined the expiration date. We trust that date because the manufacturer knows his products better than anyone else. How much more so should we trust the Maker of our planet! His Word clearly states that he "solidly fixed the earth" to last forever. There is no expiration date—ever!—Psalm 119:90.

Is it possible, though, that irresponsible humans might spoil the planet beyond recovery? Absolutely not! Unlike human manufacturers, Jehovah is "able to do all things." (Job 42:2) That is why he can confidently guarantee: "My word that goes forth from my mouth will . . . have certain success." (Isaiah 55:11) We can be sure that "our Maker" will not allow anything to stop him from carrying out his purpose for the earth. (Psalm 95:6) What is that purpose, and how will God fulfill it?

God's Kingdom Will Carry Out His Purpose

In addition to guaranteeing that the earth will never expire, God's Word also tells us that he "formed it even to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18) Although our earth has been inhabited for thousands of years, that in itself has not fulfilled God's purpose.

Jehovah is a "happy God" and "a lover of justice." (1 Timothy 1:11; Psalm 37:28) His purpose is for all humans to live happily and free from injustice. In order to carry out his

purpose, God foretold that he would set up one Kingdom in the heavens that will rule over the entire earth. (Daniel 2:44) While on earth, Jesus regularly spoke about God's Kingdom government. He encouraged his disciples to pray for it because he knew of all the blessings that were in store for the earth under the reign of that Kingdom. (Matthew 6:9, 10; 24:14) What are some of those blessings?

- *Peace and security will prevail because God promises to end all wars.*
—Psalm 46:9.
- *There will be ample food for all.*
—Psalm 72:16.
- *Health care will not be an issue because "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'"*—Isaiah 33:24.
- *Grieving will not be necessary, for "death will be no more."*—Revelation 21:4.
- *God promises that his people will build their own houses, live in security, and "be joyful forever."*
—Isaiah 65:17-24.

No doubt you long to enjoy conditions like those outlined above. Jehovah has a fiery zeal—a burning desire—to carry out all that he has foretold. (Isaiah 9:6, 7) Yet, you may wonder: 'It has been thousands of years since God's promises were recorded in the Bible. Why have they not yet been fulfilled?'

God's Patience Leads to Our Salvation

Rest assured that "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise." The Bible explains that God has been lovingly demonstrating patience with us. Thus, we are encouraged to "consider the patience of our Lord as salvation." (2 Peter 3:9, 15) But why has God's patience been necessary for salvation?

First of all, God knows that before he can provide righteous humans with a secure and prosperous home, he will have to "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." (Revelation 11:18) However, because he loves humans, Jehovah "does not desire any to be destroyed." Consequently, our heavenly Father has been patiently trying "to warn the wicked one from his wicked way." To that end, Jehovah is having the message about his Kingdom preached worldwide.* (Ezekiel 3:17, 18) All who respond favorably to God's warning and bring their life into harmony with his righteous principles will be granted salvation and enjoy everlasting life on a paradise earth.

Turn to God and Be Saved

For a certainty, the Bible has "good news" for us. (Matthew 24:14) It gives us God's unfailing word that our earth will never come to an end! Moreover, according to Bible prophecies, we can have faith that "just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more." Soon, only those righteous in God's eyes "will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:9-11, 29; Matthew 5:5; Revelation 21:3, 4) Until then, God will continue to call out patiently: "Turn to me and be saved, all you at the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 45:22) How will you respond?

Why not make it your determination to turn to God? Psalm 37:34 exhorts us: "Hope in Jehovah and keep his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth." Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to assist you in learning more about God's eternal purpose for the earth and how you can live to see that purpose become a reality.

* In obedience to Jesus' command at Matthew 28:19, 20, over seven million of Jehovah's Witnesses in 236 lands spend about one and a half billion hours each year teaching people about God's grand purpose for this earth.



IMITATE THEIR FAITH

He Was Loyal in the Face of Tests

PETER gazed anxiously around at the faces of Jesus' audience. They were in the synagogue in Capernaum. Peter's home was in this town; his fishing business was here, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee; many of his friends, relatives, and business acquaintances lived here. No doubt Peter was eager for his townsmen to see Jesus as he did, to share the thrill of learning about God's Kingdom from the greatest of all teachers. No such outcome seemed likely today.

Many had stopped listening. Some were murmuring audibly, objecting to the thrust of Jesus' message. Most troubling to Peter, though, was the reaction of some of Jesus' own disciples. Their faces no longer bore that happy expression of enlightenment, the thrill of discovery, the joy of learning the truth. Now, they looked upset, even bitter. Some spoke up, calling Jesus' speech shocking. Refusing to listen anymore, they left the synagogue—and left off following Jesus as well.

It was a difficult time for Peter and for his fellow apostles. Peter did not fully grasp what Jesus said that day. No doubt he could see why Jesus' words if taken at face value might seem offensive. What, though, would Peter do? It was not the first time that his loyalty to his Master was tested, nor would it be the last. Let us see how Peter's faith helped him to rise to such challenges and remain loyal.

Loyal When Others Turned Disloyal

Peter often found himself surprised by Jesus. Again and again, his Master acted and spoke in a way that was contrary to what people expected of Him. Just a day earlier, Je-

sus had miraculously fed a crowd of thousands. In response, they had attempted to make him king. Yet, he surprised many by withdrawing and compelling his disciples to board a boat and sail toward Capernaum. As the disciples made their way over water during the night, Jesus surprised them again by walking across the stormy Sea of Galilee, giving Peter an important lesson in faith.*

In the morning, they soon found that those crowds had followed them around the lake. Evidently, though, the people were driven by a desire to see Jesus produce food miraculously again, not by any hunger for spiritual truths. Jesus rebuked them for their materialistic spirit. That discussion contin-

* See the article "Imitate Their Faith—He Fought Against Fear and Doubt," in the October 1, 2009, issue of *The Watchtower*.



ued in the synagogue in Capernaum, where Jesus again went against expectations in an effort to teach a vital but difficult truth.

Jesus wanted those people to see him, not as a source of mere physical food, but as a spiritual provision from God, as the one whose life and death as a man would make eternal life possible for others. So he gave an illustration, comparing himself to manna, the bread that came down from heaven in Moses' day. When some objected, he used a vivid illustration, explaining that it was necessary to partake of his flesh and his blood in order to attain life. It was at this point that the objections became insistent. Some said: "This speech is shocking; who can listen to it?" Many of Jesus' own disciples decided to quit following him.*—John 6:48-60, 66.

What would Peter do? He too must have been baffled by Jesus' words. He did not yet grasp that Jesus must die in order to carry out God's will. Yet, was Peter tempted to slink off like those fickle disciples who left Jesus that day? No; something important set Peter apart from those men. What was it?

* The inconstancy of the crowd at the synagogue is evident when we compare their reactions to Jesus' speech here with their expressions just the day before when they enthusiastically proclaimed him a prophet of God.—John 6:14.

Jesus turned to his apostles and said: "You do not want to go also, do you?" (John 6:67) He addressed the 12, but it was Peter who spoke up. It was often so. Peter may have been the oldest of them. In any case, he was certainly the most outspoken of the group; rarely, it seems, did Peter hesitate to say what was on his mind. In this case, what was on his mind was this beautiful and memorable statement: "Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life." —John 6:68.

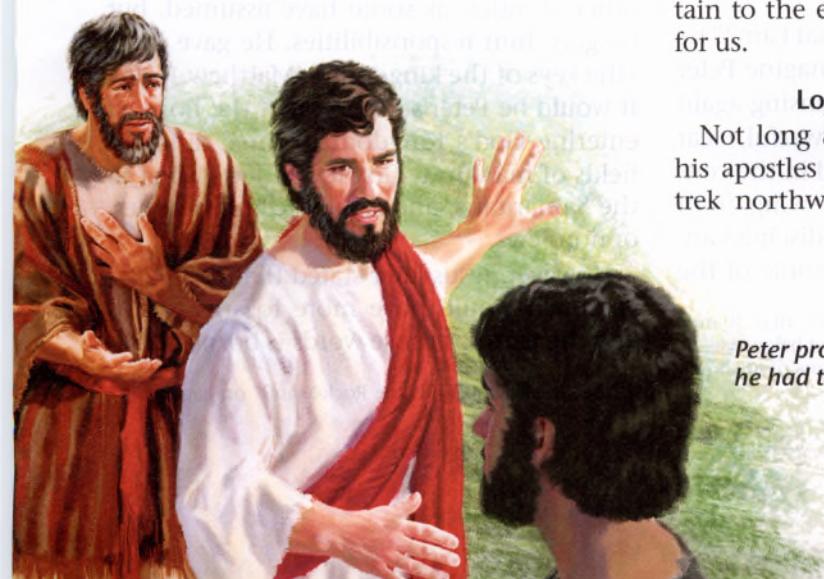
Do not those words touch your heart? Peter's faith in Jesus had helped him to build a sterling quality—loyalty. Peter saw clearly that there was no Savior other than Jesus and that Jesus saved by means of his sayings—his teachings about the Kingdom of God. Peter knew that even if there were some things that puzzled him, there was nowhere else to go if he wanted God's favor and the blessing of everlasting life.

Is that how you feel? Sadly, many in today's world claim to love Jesus but fail the test of loyalty. Genuine loyalty to Christ requires that we share Peter's view of Jesus' teachings. We need to learn them, to grasp their meaning, and to live by them—even when they surprise us by running contrary to our expectations or personal preferences. Only by proving loyal can we hope to attain to the everlasting life that Jesus wants for us.

Loyal When Corrected

Not long after that busy time, Jesus led his apostles and some disciples on a long trek northward. The snowcapped peak of

Peter proved loyal even when he had to be corrected





Peter's loyalty was rewarded
with a thrilling vision

popular misconceptions surrounding Jesus' identity. But Jesus wanted to know more. Were his closest followers making the same mistakes? "You, though, who do you say I am?" he asked.—Luke 9:18-22.

Again, Peter was quick to respond. He put into clear, bold words the conclusion that had formed in the hearts of many there. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," he said. We can imagine Jesus giving Peter a smile of approval as he commended him warmly. Jesus reminded Peter that it was Jehovah God—no man—who had made this vital truth so plain to those with genuine faith. Peter had been enabled to discern one of the greatest truths Jehovah had yet revealed—the identity of the long-promised Messiah, or Christ!—Matthew 16:16, 17.

This Christ was the one called in ancient prophecy a stone that the builders would reject. (Psalm 118:22; Luke 20:17) With such prophecies in mind, Jesus revealed that Jehovah would establish a congregation on the very stone, or rock-mass, that Peter had just identified.* Then he bestowed on Peter some very important privileges in that congregation. He did not give Peter primacy over the other apostles, as some have assumed, but he gave him responsibilities. He gave Peter "the keys of the kingdom." (Matthew 16:19) It would be Peter's job to open the hope of entering God's Kingdom to three different fields of mankind—first to the Jews, then to the Samaritans, and finally to the Gentiles, or non-Jews.

However, Jesus later stated that those given much would have more to answer for, and the truth of those words is borne out in

Mount Hermon, at the northernmost limit of the Promised Land, was at times visible even from the blue waters of the Sea of Galilee. Gradually, that mountain loomed higher as the group approached, following the rising terrain up to the villages near Caesarea Philippi.* In this lovely setting, with a perspective over much of the Promised Land to the south, Jesus asked his followers an important question.

"Who are the crowds saying that I am?" he wanted to know. We can just imagine Peter looking into Jesus' keen eyes, sensing again his Master's kindness and his powerful, clear intelligence. Jesus was interested in the conclusions his audiences were drawing from what they saw and heard. Jesus' disciples answered the question, repeating some of the

* From the shores of the Sea of Galilee, that 30-mile journey took the group from about 700 feet below sea level to some 1,150 feet above, through regions of great natural beauty.

* See the box "Who Is the Rock-Mass?" on page 28.

Peter's case. (Luke 12:48) Jesus continued to reveal vital truths about the Messiah, including the certainty of his own impending suffering and death at Jerusalem. Peter was disturbed to hear such things. He took Jesus aside and rebuked him, saying: "Be kind to yourself, Lord; you will not have this destiny at all."—Matthew 16:21, 22.

Peter surely meant well, so Jesus' reply must have come as a surprise. He turned his back on Peter, looked at the rest of the disciples—who had likely been thinking something similar—and said: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you think, not God's thoughts, but those of men." (Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:32, 33) Jesus' words contain practical counsel for us all. It is only too easy to allow human thinking to take priority over godly thinking. If we do so, even when we mean to help, we may inadvertently become proponents of Satan's purpose rather than God's. How, though, did Peter respond?

He surely knew that Jesus was not calling him Satan the Devil in any literal sense. After all, Jesus did not speak to Peter as he had to Satan. To Satan, Jesus had said: "Go away"; to Peter, he said: "Get behind me." (Matthew 4: 10) Jesus did not cast off this apostle in whom he saw a great deal of good, but He simply corrected his wrong thinking in this matter. It is not hard to see that Peter needed to stop getting in front of his Master as a stumbling block and get back behind him as a supportive follower.

Did Peter argue, get angry, or sulk? No; he humbly accepted correction. He thus demonstrated loyalty again. All those who follow Christ will need correction at times. Only if we humbly accept discipline and learn from it can we continue to grow closer to Jesus Christ and his Father, Jehovah God.—Proverbs 4:13.

Loyalty Rewarded

Jesus soon made another startling statement: "Truly I say to you that there are some of those standing here that will not taste death at all until first they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matthew 16: 28) No doubt those words filled Peter with curiosity. What could Jesus possibly mean? Perhaps Peter wondered if the strong correction he had just received meant that no such special privileges would be coming his way.

About a week later, however, Jesus took James, John, and Peter up into "a lofty mountain"—perhaps Mount Hermon, which was just a few miles distant. It was likely nighttime, since the three men were combating sleepiness. But as Jesus prayed, something happened that drove away any drowsiness.—Matthew 17:1; Luke 9:28, 29, 32.

Jesus began to change before their eyes. His face started to shine, to glow, until it became as brilliant as the sun. His clothes too were glistening white. Then two figures appeared with Jesus, one representing Moses and the other, Elijah. They conversed with him about "his departure that he was destined to fulfill at Jerusalem"—evidently his death and resurrection. How clear it was that Peter had been wrong to deny that Jesus had such a painful experience ahead of him!—Luke 9:30, 31.

Peter felt compelled to participate somehow in this extraordinary vision. It looked as if Moses and Elijah were parting from Jesus. So Peter spoke up: "Instructor, it is fine for us to be here, so let us erect three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." Of course, these visionary representations of two of Jehovah's long-dead servants did not need tents. Peter really did not know what he was saying. Are you not drawn to the man, though, for his enthusiastic and warm spirit?—Luke 9:33.

He and James and John received another reward that night. A cloud formed and loomed over them on the mountain. From it came a voice—the voice of Jehovah God! He said: “This is my Son, the one that has been chosen. Listen to him.” Then the vision was over, and they were alone with Jesus on the mountain.—Luke 9:34-36.

What a gift that vision was for Peter—and for us! Decades later he wrote of the privilege he had that night of being one of the

“eyewitnesses of his magnificence,” actually seeing a preview of Jesus as a glorious heavenly King. That vision confirmed many prophecies of God’s Word and strengthened Peter’s faith for the trials he had yet to face. (2 Peter 1:16-19) It can do the same for us if, like Peter, we remain loyal to the Master whom Jehovah has appointed over us, learning from him, accepting his discipline and correction, and humbly following him day by day.

Who Is the Rock-Mass?

“I say to you, You are Peter, and on this rock-mass I will build my congregation.” (Matthew 16:18) Those words, which Jesus spoke to his apostle Peter, have often been taken to mean that Peter would be the foundation of the Christian congregation. The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus was giving Peter primacy over the other apostles, making him, in effect, the first pope. Thus, in Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome, Jesus’ words are emblazoned in Latin on the inside of the dome, in letters taller than a man.

Did Jesus mean that Peter was the rock-mass upon which Jesus would build his congregation? No. Consider three reasons why we may be certain on this point. First, the other apostles were present, and they drew no such meaning from Jesus’ words. If Jesus gave Peter primacy in front of them all, then why did they later argue repeatedly over which one of them seemed to be greatest? (Mark 9: 33-35; Luke 22:24-26) Second, the apostle Paul later showed that the rock-mass was, not Peter, but Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3: 11; 10:4) Third, decades later Peter himself showed that he did not think that he was the rock-mass. Rather, he wrote that Jesus was the



long-foretold “foundation cornerstone” chosen by God himself.—1 Peter 2:4-8.

Still, some insist that since Peter’s name means “Rock,” Jesus was identifying him as the rock-mass. In fact, though, Peter’s name is not a synonym for the word “rock-mass” used in the same verse. Peter’s name means “A Piece of Rock,” and it is a masculine noun; the word rendered “rock-mass” is a feminine noun. How, then, are Jesus’ words to be understood? In effect, he was saying to Peter: “You, the one I called Peter, or Rock, have discerned the true identity of the ‘rock-mass,’ the Christ, who will serve as the foundation of the Christian congregation.” What a privilege Peter had in helping to reveal such an important truth!

OUR READERS ASK . . .

Why does God offer humans the gift of everlasting life?

■ The Bible says that God holds out to us the opportunity to obtain “everlasting life.” (John 6:40) What, though, motivates him to offer such a prospect? Is it simply a matter of justice?

Justice involves treating people according to what is fair and right. Do we really deserve life? No. The Bible says: “There is no man righteous in the earth that keeps doing good and does not sin.” (Ecclesiastes 7:20) Sin carries a penalty. God warned the first man, Adam, that in the day he sinned he would positively die. (Genesis 2:17) Later, the apostle Paul was inspired to write: “The wages sin pays is death.” (Romans 6:23) So if all descendants of Adam justly deserve death, why does God offer the possibility of endless life?

The offer of everlasting life is “a free gift.” It is an expression of the greatness and expansiveness of God’s love and undeserved kindness. The Bible says: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and it is as a free gift that they are being declared righteous by his undeserved kindness through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus.”—Romans 3:23, 24.

Though we all deserve to die, God chooses to give everlasting life to those who love him. Is that unfair? The Bible says: “What shall we say, then? Is there injustice with God? Never may that become so! For he says to Moses: ‘I will have mercy upon whomever I do have mercy, and I will show compassion to whomever I do show compassion.’ . . . Who, then, really are you to be answering back to God?”—Romans 9:14-20.

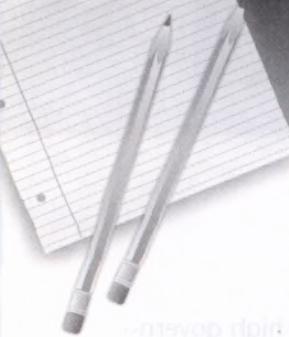
In some areas of the world, a high government official or judge can pardon a criminal who is serving a severe sentence. If the criminal willingly conforms to punitive orders and exhibits changes in his attitude and behavior, a judge or president may choose to pardon him by lessening his sentence or totally forgiving his sentence. This action may well be an expression of undeserved kindness.

It is primarily an expression of undeserved kindness, an act of superlative love

In a similar manner, Jehovah can choose not to demand of all sinners the punishment they deserve. Rather, motivated by love, he can grant everlasting life to those who love him and conform to his standards. The Bible says: “God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.”—Acts 10:34, 35.

Jehovah’s greatest act of love in our behalf was his sending his Son to suffer and die for us. Jesus said of his Father: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16.

All those who do come to love Jehovah and do his will are equally acceptable to God, whatever their background. Thus, the hope of everlasting life is primarily an expression of undeserved kindness, an act of superlative love on God’s part.



FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A Man of Humility and Courage

JONAH—PART 1

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.

❶ ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ JONAH 1:1-17; 2:10-3:5.

How do you imagine the sounds and sights of the storm?

What type of emotion do you sense in the voices of Jonah and the ship's crew?

Describe what may have been Jonah's thoughts when he was sinking in the ocean and after he was swallowed by the big fish. (Read Jonah 2:1-9.)

❷ DIG DEEPER.

What type of people lived in Nineveh, and why might Jonah initially have been hesitant about approaching them? (Nahum 3:1)

In what way do you think Nineveh was "a city great to God"? (Jonah 3:3; 2 Peter 3:9)

What does Jonah's frankness in talking about both his error and his God reveal about him? (Reread Jonah 1:9, 10.)

How might Jonah have learned what occurred aboard the ship after he was thrown overboard? (Reread Jonah 1:15, 16.)

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

Fear.

Humility.

Courage.

Jehovah's view of people, even those who may seem wicked to us.

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

For further research, see *The Watchtower*, January 1, 2009, pages 25-28.



How might Jesus have sensed water containing
spiritual life spirit after he was thrown over
possessing (see page 13, 16)



What practical steps can you take to avoid drinking
too much? SEE PAGES 6-9.



Why can you believe in God's promises? SEE PAGE 12.



Why did God command ancient Israel to war
against the Canaanites? SEE PAGES 13-15.



What kinds of houses did the first-century Christians
live in? SEE PAGES 16-18.



Are the dead alive somewhere? SEE PAGES 19-21.