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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**The Search for
Happiness**



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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The Search for Happiness

A FEW years ago, people in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States were asked, "What does it take to be happy?" Of those interviewed, 89 percent said that it takes good health; 79 percent mentioned a satisfying marriage or partnership; 62 percent pointed to the rewards of parenthood; and 51 percent thought a successful career was needed for happiness. And even though conventional wisdom cautions that money does not ensure happiness, 47 percent of those questioned were convinced that it does. What do the facts show?

First, look at the supposed link between money and happiness. A survey of the one hundred richest people in the United States showed that they were no happier than people in general. Furthermore, while many in the United States have almost doubled their material possessions in the past three decades, they are not any happier than they used to be, according to mental-health experts. In fact, one report comments: "Over the same period, depression rates have soared. Teen suicide has tripled. Divorce rates have doubled." In some 50 different countries, researchers who studied the link between money and happiness reached the conclusion that money cannot buy happiness.

Next, how important for happiness are such factors as good health, a satisfying marriage, and a successful career? Well, if these factors were absolutely needed to be happy, what about the millions of people



Many think that money, a satisfying family life, or a successful career is the key to happiness. Do you agree?

who do not enjoy good health and all those who do not have a satisfying marriage? What about married couples without children and all the men and women without a successful career? Are all such individuals doomed to a life of unhappiness? And would the assumed happiness of those who presently enjoy good health and a satisfying marriage vanish if their situation changed?

Are We Searching in the Right Places?

Everyone wants to be happy. This is not surprising because man's Creator is described as "the happy God," and man was made in God's image. (1 Timothy 1:11; Genesis 1:26, 27) Hence, it is only natural for humans to search for happiness. However,

many find that holding on to happiness is like holding on to grains of sand—both slip away easily.

Could it be, though, that some are trying too hard to find happiness? Social philosopher Eric Hoffer thought so. He observed: "The search for happiness is one of the chief sources of unhappiness." That is certainly true if we seek happiness in the wrong places. In that case, we are sure to meet with disappointment and frustration. Trying to become rich; striving for fame or recognition; pursuing political, social, or economic goals; or simply living for self and instant

gratification all fail to deliver happiness. No wonder some have adopted the ironic view expressed by one author who noted: "If only we'd stop trying to be happy we could have a pretty good time"!

Significantly, the poll mentioned at the outset of this article also showed that 4 out of 10 people felt that happiness results from doing good and helping others. And 1 out of every 4 stressed that faith and religious conviction play a major role in being happy. Clearly, we need to take a closer look at what it takes to be truly happy. The following article will help us do so.

What It Really Takes to Be Happy

JEOVAH, "the happy God," and Jesus Christ, "the happy and only Potentate," know best of all what it takes to be happy. (1 Timothy 1:11; 6:15) Thus, it comes as no surprise that the key to happiness is found in God's Word, the Bible.—Revelation 1:3; 22:7.

In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes what it takes to be happy. He states: "Happy are those" who (1) are conscious of their spiritual need, (2) mourn, (3) are mild-tempered, (4) hunger and thirst for righteousness, (5) are merciful, (6) are pure in heart, (7) are peaceable, (8) are persecuted for righteousness' sake, and (9) are reproached and persecuted for his sake.—Matthew 5:3-11.*

* Each of these nine beatitudes, as they are commonly called, is introduced by the Greek word *ma·ka'ri·oi*. Instead of rendering this with "blessed," as some translations do, the *New World Translation* and some other translations, such as *The Jerusalem Bible* and *Today's English Version*, use the more accurate term "happy."



Are Jesus' Statements Accurate?

The truthfulness of some of Jesus' statements needs little explanation. Who will deny that a *mild-tempered*, *merciful*, and *peaceable* person motivated by a *pure heart* will be happier than the angry, belligerent, merciless person will be?

We might wonder, however, how people who *hunger and thirst for righteousness* or

who *mourn* could be called happy. Such individuals have a realistic view of world conditions. They 'sigh and groan over all the detestable things that are being done' in our day. (Ezekiel 9:4) That in itself does not make them happy. However, when they learn of God's purpose to bring righteous conditions to the earth and justice to the downtrodden, their joy knows no bounds.—Isaiah 11:4.

Love for righteousness also causes individuals to mourn over their own frequent failures to do what is right. They are thus *conscious of their spiritual need*. Such people are willing to look to God for guidance because they realize that he alone can help people to overcome their weaknesses.—Proverbs 16:3, 9; 20:24.

People who mourn, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and who are conscious of their spiritual need are aware of the importance of having a good relationship with the Creator. A good relationship with humans contributes to happiness, but even more so does a good relationship with God. Yes, serious-minded lovers of what is right, who are willing to accept divine guidance, can truly be called happy.

However, you may find it hard to believe that someone who is *persecuted* and *reproached* could be happy. Yet, it must be true, since Jesus himself said so. Hence, how should his words be understood?

Persecuted but Happy —How Can That Be?

Note that Jesus did not say that reproach and persecution in themselves lead to happiness. He stipulated: "Happy are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, . . . when people reproach you and persecute you . . . for my sake." (Matthew 5:10, 11) So happiness results only if a person suffers reproach because of being a follower of

Christ and because of patterning his life after the righteous principles that Jesus taught.

This is illustrated by what happened to the early Christians. Members of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court, "summoned the apostles, flogged them, and ordered them to stop speaking upon the basis of Jesus' name, and let them go." How did the apostles react? "These, therefore, went their way from before the Sanhedrin, *rejoicing* because they had been counted worthy to be dishonored in behalf of his name. And every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus."—Acts 5:40-42; 13:50-52.

The apostle Peter shed additional light on the connection between reproach and happiness. He wrote: "If you are being reproached for the name of Christ, you are happy, because the spirit of glory, even the spirit of God, is resting upon you." (1 Peter 4:14) Yes, suffering as a Christian for doing what is right, even though such suffering is unpleasant, brings the happiness that comes from knowing that one receives God's holy spirit. How is God's spirit linked to happiness?

Works of the Flesh or Fruitage of the Spirit?

God's holy spirit rests only upon those who obey God as ruler. (Acts 5:32) Jehovah does not give his spirit to those who practice "the works of the flesh." Those works are "fornication, uncleanness, loose conduct, idolatry, practice of spiritism, enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, contentions, divisions, sects, envies, drunken bouts, revelries, and things like these." (Galatians 5:19-21) True, in today's world "the works of the flesh" are much in evidence. Yet, those who practice them do not enjoy genuine and permanent happiness. Rather, doing those things ruins one's good relationship

with relatives, friends, and acquaintances. Moreover, God's Word states that those who "practice such things will not inherit God's kingdom."

In contrast, God gives his spirit to those who cultivate "the fruitage of the spirit." The qualities that make up this fruitage are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22, 23) When we display these qualities, we create the conditions for having peaceful relationships with others and with God, which result in true happiness. (See box.) More important, by showing love, kindness, goodness, and other godly qualities, we please Jehovah and have the happy hope of everlasting life in God's new world of righteousness.

Happiness Is a Choice

When Wolfgang and Brigitte, a couple living in Germany, began studying the Bible in earnest, they possessed many of the material things that people feel are needed to be happy. They were young and healthy. They wore

expensive clothes, lived in an attractively decorated home, and had a successful business. Much of their time was spent in the pursuit of more material things, but that did not give them genuine happiness. In time, though, Wolfgang and Brigitte made a crucial choice. They began to devote more time and effort to the pursuit of spiritual values and looked for ways to draw closer to Jehovah. Their choice soon led to a change in their attitude, which, in turn, moved them to simplify their life and to serve as pioneers, or full-time Kingdom evangelizers. Today, they serve as volunteers at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany. In addition, they are learning an Asian language in order to assist foreigners to learn the truth found in God's Word, the Bible.

Did this couple find true happiness? Wolfgang says: "Ever since we became more involved in pursuing spiritual things, we have been happier and have experienced more satisfaction. Serving Jehovah wholeheartedly has also strengthened our marriage. We had a happy marriage before, but we had ob-



Factors That Contribute to Happiness

Love moves others to love you in return.

Joy gives you the strength to cope with challenges.

Peace helps you to keep your relationships free of strife.

Long-suffering enables you to stay happy even when you are under trial.

Kindness draws others to you.

Goodness on your part makes others respond when you need help.

Faith will assure you of God's loving direction.

Mildness will bring you calmness of heart, mind, and body.

Self-control means that your mistakes will be fewer.

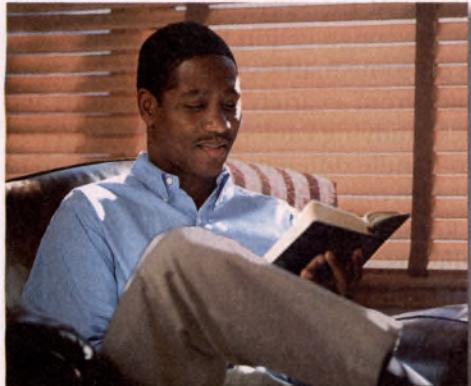
ligations and interests that pulled us in different directions. Now we are unitedly pursuing the same goal."

What Does It Take to Be Happy?

In a nutshell: Avoid "the works of the flesh," and cultivate "the fruitage of [God's] spirit." To be happy, one needs to yearn to have a close relationship with God. A person who strives to attain this will fit Jesus' description of a happy person.

Therefore, do not mistakenly conclude that happiness is beyond your reach. Granted, at present you may be lacking good health or you may even have problems in

your marriage. Perhaps the rewards of parenthood have passed you by, or you may be struggling to find a successful career. Maybe your wallet is not so full as it used to be. Nevertheless, take courage; you have no reason to despair! God's Kingdom rule will solve these problems and hundreds more. Indeed, soon Jehovah God will make good on his promise expressed by the psalmist: "Your kingship is a kingship for all times indefinite . . . You are opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145: 13, 16) As millions of servants of Jehovah around the world can testify, keeping in mind this reassuring promise of Jehovah will greatly contribute to your happiness today.—Revelation 21:3.



To attain happiness, you need to satisfy your spiritual needs



GLORIFY GOD “WITH ONE MOUTH”

“With one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

—ROMANS 15:6.

NOT all Christians make the same choices nor have the same preferences. Yet, all Christians must walk arm in arm on the road to life. Is that possible? Yes, if we do not make major issues of minor differences. That is a lesson that the apostle Paul shared with fellow believers in the first century. How did he explain this important point? And how can we apply his inspired counsel today?

The Importance of Christian Unity

² Paul knew that Christian unity is vital, and he gave fine counsel to help Christians put up with one another in love. (Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 3:12-14) Nevertheless, after establishing many congregations and visiting others over a period of more than 20 years, he knew that maintaining unity could be a challenge. (1 Corinthians 1:11-13; Galatians 2:11-14) Thus, he urged fellow believers living in Rome: “May the God who supplies endurance and comfort grant . . . that with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 15:5, 6) Today, we likewise must glorify Jehovah God “with one mouth” as a united group of his people. How are we doing in this regard?

³ Many Christians in Rome were personal

1. What lesson about handling differing viewpoints did Paul share with fellow believers?
2. How did Paul stress the need for unity?
- 3, 4. (a) What differing backgrounds did the Christians in Rome have? (b) How would Christians in Rome be able to serve Jehovah “with one mouth”?

friends of Paul. (Romans 16:3-16) Although their backgrounds were different, Paul accepted all his brothers as “God’s beloved ones.” He wrote: “I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ concerning all of you, because your faith is talked about throughout the whole world.” Clearly, the Romans were exemplary in many ways. (Romans 1:7, 8; 15:14) At the same time, certain members of the congregation had different viewpoints on some matters. Since Christians today come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, studying Paul’s inspired counsel on how to handle differences can help them to speak “with one mouth.”

⁴ In Rome there were both Jewish and Gentile believers. (Romans 4:1; 11:13) Some Jewish Christians apparently could not bring themselves to stop practicing certain customs they had observed under the Mosaic Law, even though they should have realized that such practices were not essential for salvation. On the other hand, a number of Jewish Christians accepted that Christ’s sacrifice freed them from restrictions they had observed before becoming Christians. As a result, they changed some of their personal habits and practices. (Galatians 4:8-11) Still, as Paul pointed out, all were “God’s beloved ones.” All could praise God “with one mouth” if they maintained the proper mental attitude toward one another. We today may also have varying viewpoints on certain matters, so we do well to consider carefully how Paul explains that important principle.
—Romans 15:4.

"Welcome One Another"

⁵ In his letter to the Romans, Paul speaks of a situation about which opinions varied. He writes: "One man has faith to eat everything, but the man who is weak eats vegetables." Why was that? Well, under the Mosaic Law, pork was not an acceptable food. (Romans 14:2; Leviticus 11:7) However, that Law was no longer binding after Jesus died. (Ephesians 2:15) Then, three and a half years after Jesus' death, an angel told the apostle Peter that from God's standpoint no food should be viewed as defiled. (Acts 11:7-12) With these factors in mind, some Jewish Christians may have felt that they could eat pork—or enjoy some other food that had been prohibited under the Law.

⁶ However, the very thought of eating those formerly unclean foods would likely have been repulsive to other Jewish Christians. Such sensitive ones might have felt in-

5, 6. Why were there differences in viewpoint in the Rome congregation?

Paul's counsel on unity was vital for the congregation

stinctively offended at seeing their Jewish brothers in Christ eating such food. Moreover, certain Gentile Christians, whose religious background likely never included dietary prohibitions, may have been puzzled that anyone would make an issue over food. Of course, it was not wrong for someone to abstain from certain foods, as long as he did not insist that such abstinence was necessary to gain salvation. Still, the different viewpoints could easily have fueled controversy in the congregation. The Christians in Rome would need to be careful that such differences did not prevent them from glorifying God "with one mouth."

⁷ Paul gives a second example: "One man judges one day as above another; another man judges one day as all others." (Romans 14:5a) Under the Mosaic Law, no work was to be done on the Sabbath. Even travel was severely restricted on that day. (Exodus 20:8-10; Matthew 24:20; Acts 1:12) When the Law was set aside, however, those prohibitions became obsolete. Still,

7. What different viewpoints existed on the matter of observing a special day each week?





Christians are united despite their differing backgrounds

some Jewish Christians may have felt uneasy about performing any kind of work or about traveling a long distance on a day that they had previously viewed as sacred. Even after becoming Christians, they may have set the seventh day aside exclusively for spiritual purposes, even though from God's standpoint the Sabbath was no longer in force. Were they wrong to do so? No, provided that they did not insist that the Sabbath observance was required by God. Hence, out of consideration for the conscience of his Christian brothers, Paul wrote: "Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind."—Romans 14:5b.

⁸ Nevertheless, while warmly encouraging his brothers to be patient with those who were struggling with matters of conscience, Paul strongly condemned those who tried to force fellow believers to sub-

8. While they could show consideration for the conscience of others, what were the Christians in Rome not to do?

mit to the Mosaic Law as a condition for obtaining salvation. For example, about 61 C.E., Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, a powerful letter to Jewish Christians explaining very clearly that submitting to the Mosaic Law was of no value because Christians had a superior hope based on Jesus' ransom sacrifice.
—Galatians 5:1-12; Titus 1:10, 11; Hebrews 10:1-17.

⁹ As we have seen, Paul argues that making different choices need not be a threat to unity as long as no clear violation of Christian principles is involved. Hence, Paul asks Christians with a weaker conscience: "Why do you judge your brother?" And he asks the stronger ones (perhaps those whose conscience allows them to eat certain foods that had been forbidden under the Law or to perform secular work on the Sabbath): "Why do you also look down on your brother?" (Romans 14:10) According to Paul, Christians with a weaker conscience must refrain from condemning their brothers who have a broader viewpoint. At the same time, Christians who are strong must not look down on those whose conscience is still weak in certain areas. All should respect the proper motives of others and not "think more of [themselves] than it is necessary to think."—Romans 12:3, 18.

¹⁰ Paul explained the balanced viewpoint this way: "Let the one eating not look down on the one not eating, and let the one not eating not judge the one eating, for God has welcomed that one." Further, he states:

9, 10. What should Christians refrain from doing? Explain.

"Christ also welcomed us, with glory to God in view." Since both the strong and the weak are acceptable to God and Christ, we should have a similarly largehearted attitude and "welcome one another." (Romans 14:3; 15:7) Who could rightly disagree with that?

Brotherly Love Produces Unity Today

¹¹ In his letter to the Romans, Paul was addressing a unique situation. Jehovah had recently abolished one covenant and established a new one. Some were having difficulty in adjusting. That precise situation does not exist today, but similar issues may arise at times.

¹² For example, a Christian woman may once have belonged to a religion that emphasized plainness of dress and appearance. When she accepts the truth, she may find it hard to adjust to the idea that it is not forbidden to wear modest, colorful clothing on appropriate occasions or to make tasteful use of makeup. Since no Bible principle is involved, it would not be proper for anyone to try to persuade that Christian woman to violate her conscience. At the same time, she realizes that she should not criticize Christian women whose conscience allows them to make use of such things.

¹³ Consider another example. A Christian man may have been brought up in an environment where the use of alcohol was frowned upon. After coming to a knowledge of the truth, he learns the Bible's view that wine is a gift from God and may be used in moderation. (Psalm 104:15) He accepts that view. Still, because of his background, he prefers to abstain entirely from alcoholic beverages, but he does not criticize those

11. What unique situation existed in Paul's day?
- 12, 13. What are some situations in which Christians today can show consideration for the conscience of their brothers?

who make moderate use of them. Thus he applies Paul's words: "Let us pursue the things making for peace and the things that are upbuilding to one another."—Romans 14:19.

¹⁴ Other situations arise that call for the application of the spirit of Paul's counsel to the Romans. The Christian congregation is made up of many individuals, and they have different tastes. Hence, they might make different choices—for example, in the matter of dress and grooming. Of course, the Bible lays down clear principles that all sincere Christians observe. None of us should wear clothing or hairstyles that are eccentric or immodest or that identify us with undesirable elements of the world. (1 John 2:15-17) Christians remember that at all times, even when they are relaxing, they are ministers representing the Universal Sovereign. (Isaiah 43:10; John 17:16; 1 Timothy 2:9, 10) However, in many areas there is a wide range of acceptable choices for Christians.*

Avoid Stumbling Others

¹⁵ There is a final important principle that Paul brings to our attention in his counsel to the Christians in Rome. At times, a Christian with a well-trained conscience might decide not to make a choice that is open to him. Why? Because he realizes that his pursuing a certain course might harm others. In that case, what should we do? Paul says: "It is well not to eat flesh or to drink wine or do anything over which your brother stumbles." (Romans 14:14, 20, 21) Thus, "we . . . who are strong ought to bear the

* Underage children are guided by their parents' desires in the matter of clothing.

14. In what situations can Christians apply the spirit of Paul's counsel to the Romans?
15. When might a Christian, for the benefit of his brothers, refrain from exercising his rights?

weaknesses of those not strong, and not to be pleasing ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor in what is good for his upbuilding." (Romans 15:1, 2) When the conscience of a fellow Christian could be offended by what we do, brotherly love will move us to be considerate and restrict our choices. An example of this might be the use of alcoholic beverages. A Christian is permitted to drink wine in moderation. But if doing so might stumble his companion, he will not insist on his rights.

¹⁶ This principle could also be applied to our dealings outside the Christian congregation. For example, we may live in an area where the prevailing religion leads its adherents to view one day of the week as a day of rest. For that reason, so as not to stumble our neighbors and create obstacles for the preaching work, we will avoid as far as possible doing anything on that day that will offend our neighbors. In another situation, a wealthy Christian may move to serve where

16. How could we show consideration for those in our territory?

How Would You Answer?

- Why would having different views on personal matters be no threat to unity?
- Why should we as Christians show warm consideration for one another?
- What are some ways that we can apply Paul's counsel on unity today, and what will motivate us to do so?



What should this driver do now?

the need is greater among people who are of little means. He might choose to show consideration for his new neighbors by dressing very simply or by otherwise living more modestly than his finances permit.

¹⁷ Is it reasonable to expect those "who are strong" to make such adjustments? Well, think of this illustration: While driving on a highway, we see ahead of us some children walking dangerously close to the road. Do we continue driving at the maximum speed allowed just because we have the legal right to do so? No, we slow down to avoid possible danger to the children. At times, a similar willingness to slow down, or yield, is called for in our relationship with our fellow believers or others. We may be doing something that we have a perfect right to do. No Bible principles are being violated. Nevertheless, if we could offend others or harm those with a weaker conscience, Christian love will move us to act with caution. (Romans 14:13, 15) Maintaining uni-

17. Why is it reasonable to consider others in the choices we make?

ty and promoting Kingdom interests are more important than exercising our personal rights.

¹⁸ When we act in this way, we follow the very finest example. Paul says: “Even the Christ did not please himself; but just as it is written: ‘The reproaches of those who were reproaching you have fallen upon me.’” Jesus was willing to sacrifice his life for us. Surely we are willing to sacrifice some of our rights if that will enable “those not strong” to glorify God in unity with us. Truly, displaying an accommodating and gen-

18, 19. (a) In showing consideration for others, how do we follow Jesus’ example? (b) In what do we all act in complete unison, and what will be discussed in the following article?

ous disposition toward Christians having a weaker conscience—or voluntarily restricting our choices and not insisting upon our rights—demonstrates “the same mental attitude that Christ Jesus had.”—Romans 15:1-5.

¹⁹ Although our views on matters where Scriptural principles are not involved may vary somewhat, in matters of worship, we act in complete unison. (1 Corinthians 1:10) Such unity is evident, for instance, in our reaction to those who oppose true worship. God’s Word calls such opposers strangers and warns us to beware of “the voice of strangers.” (John 10:5) How can we identify such strangers? How should we react to them? These questions will be considered in the following article.

BEWARE OF “THE VOICE OF STRANGERS”

“A stranger they will by no means follow but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”—JOHN 10:5.

THE resurrected Jesus observes the woman standing near his empty tomb. He knows her well. It is Mary Magdalene. Nearly two years earlier, he had cured her of demon possession. Since then she has accompanied him and his apostles, caring for their daily needs. (Luke 8:1-3) Today, though, Mary is weeping, overcome by grief because she saw Jesus die, and now even his body has disappeared! So Jesus asks her: “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you

1, 2. (a) How does Mary react when Jesus calls her by name, and what earlier statement of Jesus is illustrated by this event? (b) What enables us to stay close to Jesus?

looking for?” Thinking he is the gardener, she answers: “Sir, if you have carried him off, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Then Jesus says: “Mary!” Immediately, she recognizes the familiar way he speaks to her. “Teacher!” she joyfully exclaims. And she embraces him.—John 20:11-18.

² This account illustrates in a touching way what Jesus stated some time earlier. Comparing himself to a shepherd and his followers to sheep, he says that the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and they know his voice. (John 10:3, 4, 14, 27, 28) Indeed, as a sheep recognizes its shepherd, so Mary recognized

her Shepherd, Christ. This also holds true for Jesus' followers today. (John 10:16) Just as a sheep's discerning ear enables it to stay close to its shepherd, so our spiritual discernment enables us to walk closely in the footsteps of our Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ.—John 13:15; 1 John 2:6; 5:20.

³ However, according to that same illustration, a sheep's ability to recognize human voices enables it to know not only its friend but also its foe. That is of vital importance because we have devious opposers. Who are they? How do they operate? How can we protect ourselves? To find out, let us see what else Jesus says in his illustration of the sheepfold.

'He That Does Not Enter Through the Door'

⁴ Jesus states: "He that enters through the door is shepherd of the sheep. The doorkeeper opens to this one, and the sheep listen to his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has got all his own out, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. A stranger they will by no means follow but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers." (John 10:2-5) Notice, Jesus uses the word "voice" three times. Two times he speaks about the voice of a shepherd, but the third time, he refers to "the voice of strangers." What kind of stranger is Jesus referring to?

⁵ Jesus is not discussing the type of stranger to whom we want to extend hospitality—a word that in the original Bible language

3. What are some questions that Jesus' illustration of the sheepfold brings to mind?
4. According to the illustration of the shepherd, whom do the sheep follow, and whom do they not follow?
5. Why do we not extend hospitality to the type of stranger mentioned in John chapter 10?

means "love of strangers." (Hebrews 13:2) In Jesus' illustration, the stranger is not an invited guest. He "does not enter into the sheepfold through the door but climbs up some other place." He is "a thief and a plunderer." (John 10:1) Who is the first individual mentioned in God's Word who became a thief and a plunderer? Satan the Devil. We find the evidence in the book of Genesis.

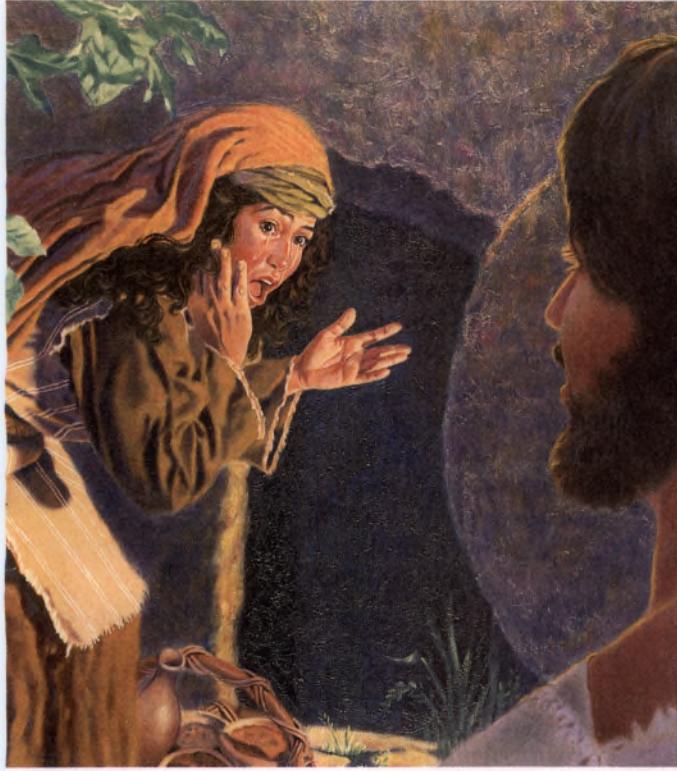
When the Voice of a Stranger Was First Heard

⁶ Genesis 3:1-5 describes how the voice of a stranger was heard on earth for the first time. The account relates that Satan approached the first woman, Eve, through a serpent and spoke to her in a misleading way. Granted, in this account Satan is not literally termed "a stranger." Nevertheless, his actions show that in many ways he was like the stranger described in Jesus' illustration recorded in John chapter 10. Consider some similarities.

⁷ Jesus states that the stranger approaches his victims in the sheepfold in a roundabout way. Likewise, Satan approached his victim indirectly, using a serpent. This sly approach exposed Satan for what he really is—a devious intruder. Further, the stranger in the sheepfold sets out to rob the rightful owner of his sheep. In fact, he is worse than a thief, for his aim is also to "slay and destroy." (John 10:10) Similarly, Satan was a thief. Deceiving Eve, he stole her allegiance from God. Moreover, Satan also brought death to humans. Hence, he is a murderer.

⁸ Satan's dishonesty was evident in the way he twisted Jehovah's words and motives. "Is it *really* so that God said you must not eat from every tree?" he asked Eve. Satan

- 6, 7. Why can Satan rightly be called a stranger and a thief?
8. How did Satan distort Jehovah's words and motives?



Mary recognized Christ

pretended to be shocked, as if he were saying: 'How could God be so unreasonable?' He added: "God knows that in the very day of your eating from it your eyes are bound to be opened." Note his words: "God knows." Satan said, as it were: 'I know what God knows. I know his motives, and they are bad.' (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:1, 5) Sadly, Eve and Adam did not turn away from the voice of this stranger. Instead, they heeded it and brought woe to themselves and their offspring.—Romans 5:12, 14.

⁹ Satan uses similar methods to mislead God's people today. (Revelation 12:9) He is "the father of the lie," and those who, like him, try to mislead God's servants are his children. (John 8:44) Let us note some ways in which the voice of these strangers is being heard today.

9. Why should we expect the voice of strangers to be heard today?

How the Voice of Strangers Is Heard Today

¹⁰ *Deceptive reasonings.* The apostle Paul states: "Do not be carried away with various and strange teachings." (Hebrews 13:9) What sort of teachings? Since they can 'carry us away,' it is clear that Paul refers to teachings that undermine our spiritual balance. Who are voicing such strange teachings? Paul told a group of Christian elders: "From among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Acts 20:30) Indeed, today as in Paul's day, some individuals who were once part of the Christian congregation now attempt to mislead the sheep by speaking "twisted things"—half-truths and outright lies. As the apostle Peter puts it, they use "counterfeit words"—words that resemble truth but that are actually as worthless as counterfeit money.—2 Peter 2:3.

¹¹ Peter further exposes the methods of apostates by stating that they "will quietly bring in destructive sects."

(2 Peter 2:1, 3) Just as the thief in Jesus' illustration of the sheepfold does not enter "through the door but climbs up some other place," so apostates approach us in stealthy ways. (Galatians 2:4; Jude 4) What is their aim? Peter adds: "They will exploit you." Indeed, no matter what apostates may say to the contrary, the real aim of intruders is "to steal and slay and destroy." (John 10:10) Beware of such strangers!



10. What is one way in which the voice of strangers is being heard?

11. How do the words found at 2 Peter 2:1, 3 expose the method and aim of apostates?

¹² *Harmful associates.* The voice of strangers may be heard through those with whom we associate. Harmful associations especially endanger youths. (1 Corinthians 15:33) Remember, Satan singled out Eve—the younger and less experienced of the first human pair. He convinced her that Jehovah had unduly restricted her freedom, when in reality the opposite was true. Jehovah loved his human creation and cared for their welfare. (Isaiah 48:17) Similarly today, strangers try to persuade you youths that your Christian parents unduly restrict your freedom.



How may such strangers affect you? One Christian girl admits: "For a while my faith was weakened to a certain extent by my classmates. They kept saying that my religion was restrictive and unreasonable." Yet, the truth is that your parents love you. So when schoolmates try to persuade you to distrust your parents, do not be misled as Eve was.

¹³ Regarding harmful associations, the psalmist David states: "I have not sat with men of untruth; and with those who hide what they are I do not come in." (Psalm 26:4) Again, do you note the trait typical of strangers? They hide who they are—just as Satan hid his identity by using a serpent. Today, some immoral people hide their identity and true intentions by using the Internet. In chat rooms, perverse adults may even pose as youths to lure you into a trap. Young ones, please be extremely cautious lest you be harmed spiritually.—Psalm 119:101; Proverbs 22:3.

12. (a) How can our associations expose us to the voice of strangers? (b) What similarity is there between Satan's tactics and those of strangers today?
13. What wise course did David adopt, and what is one way that we can imitate him?

¹⁴ *False accusations.* Although some news reports about Jehovah's Witnesses are fair, at times the media let themselves be used to broadcast the biased voice of strangers. For instance, in one country a news report falsely stated that the Witnesses supported Hitler's regime during World War II. In another one, a report accused Witnesses of vandalizing churches. In several countries the media accused Witnesses of refusing to give medical treatment to their children and also of deliberately condoning serious sins committed by fellow believers. (Matthew 10:22) Even so, sincere people who know us personally recognize that such accusations are false.

¹⁵ What should we do if we are confronted with accusations spread by the voice of

14. How do the media, at times, publish the voice of strangers?
15. Why is it unwise to believe everything presented in the media?

The stranger does not approach the sheep straightforwardly



such strangers? We do well to take to heart the counsel of Proverbs 14:15: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps." It is unwise to believe everything presented as truth in the media. While we certainly do not distrust all secular information, we do recognize that "the *whole* world is lying in the power of the wicked one."

—1 John 5:19.



"Test the Inspired Expressions"

¹⁶ How, though, do we know for sure whether we are dealing with a friend or a foe? Well, Jesus says that the sheep follow the shepherd "because they know his voice." (John 10:4) It is not the literal shepherd's appearance that moves the sheep to follow him; it is his voice. A book on Bible lands relates that a visitor once claimed that sheep recognize their shepherd by his dress, not his voice. A shepherd answered that it was the voice they knew. To prove this, he exchanged clothing with the stranger. Dressed in the shepherd's garb, the stranger called the sheep, but they did not respond. They did not know his voice. Yet, when the shepherd called them, though he was disguised, the sheep came at once. Thus, someone may look like a shepherd, but for sheep, that does not prove that he really is one. The sheep, in effect, test the caller's voice, comparing it with the shepherd's voice. God's Word tells us to do the same—"test the inspired expressions to see whether they originate with God." (1 John 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:13) What will help us to do so?

16. (a) How does the behavior of literal sheep illustrate the truthfulness of Jesus' words found at John 10:4? (b) What does the Bible encourage us to do?

¹⁷ Understandably, the better we know Jehovah's voice, or message, the better we can detect the voice of a stranger. The Bible points out how we develop such knowledge. It states: "Your own ears will hear a word behind you saying: 'This is the way. Walk in it, you people.'" (Isaiah 30:21) That "word" behind us comes from the Word of God. Every time we read God's Word, we hear, as it were, the voice of our Great Shepherd, Jehovah. (Psalm 23:1) Hence, the more we study the Bible, the more familiar we become with God's voice. That intimate knowledge in turn enables us to detect instantly the voice of strangers.—Galatians 1:8.

¹⁸ What does knowing Jehovah's voice further involve? Besides hearing, it involves obeying. Note again Isaiah 30:21. God's Word declares: "This is the way." Yes, through a study of the Bible, we hear Jehovah's directions. Next, he commands: "Walk in it." Jehovah wants us to act on what we hear. Thus, by applying what we learn, we show that we have not simply heard Jehovah's voice but also listened to it. (Deuteronomy 28:1) Obeying Jehovah's voice also means obeying Jesus' voice, for Jehovah himself told us to do so. (Matthew 17:5) What does Jesus, the Fine Shepherd, tell us to do? He teaches us to make disciples and to trust "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45; 28:18-20)



17. (a) How do we become familiar with the voice of Jehovah? (b) Knowledge of Jehovah enables us to do what?

18. (a) What does knowing Jehovah's voice involve? (b) According to Matthew 17:5, why should we obey Jesus' voice?

Obeying his voice means our eternal life.—Acts 3:23.

'They Will Flee From Him'

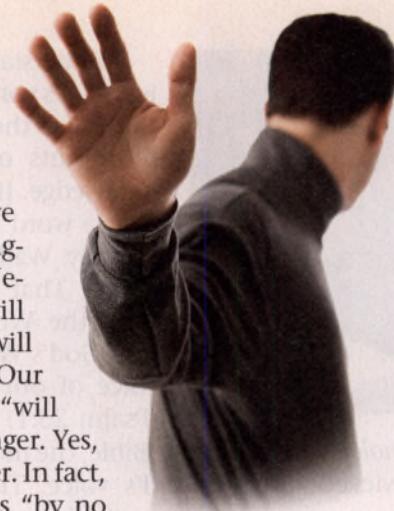
¹⁹ How, then, should we react to the voice of strangers? In the way sheep do. Jesus says: "A stranger they will by no means follow but will flee from him." (John 10:5) Our reaction is twofold. First, we "will by no means follow" a stranger. Yes, we resolutely reject a stranger. In fact, in Biblical Greek, the words "by no means" translate the strongest way to express rejection in that language. (Matthew 24:35; Hebrews 13:5) Second, we "will flee from him," or turn away from him. That is the only right way to react to those whose teachings are out of harmony with the voice of the Fine Shepherd.

²⁰ Therefore, when confronted with those who voice apostate ideas, we want to do what God's Word states: "Keep your eye on those who cause divisions and occasions for

19. What should be our reaction to the voice of strangers?
20. How will we react when we are confronted with (a) deceitful apostates, (b) harmful associates, (c) biased media reports?

Do You Remember?

- How does Satan fit the description of the stranger mentioned in Jesus' illustration about the sheepfold?
- How is the voice of strangers heard today?
- How can we recognize the voice of strangers?
- What should be our reaction to the voice of strangers?



How do we react to the voice of strangers?

stumbling contrary to the teaching that you have learned, and *avoid them.*" (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10)

Likewise, Christian youths facing the dangers of harmful associates want to apply Paul's counsel given to young Timothy: "*Flee from the desires incidental to youth.*" And when confronted with false accusations in the media, we will remember Paul's further advice to Timothy: "*They [those who listen to the voice of strangers] will be turned aside to false stories. You, though, keep your senses in all things.*" (2 Timothy 2:22; 4:3-5) No matter how smooth the voice of strangers may seem, we flee from all that would subvert our faith.—Psalm 26:5; Proverbs 7:5, 21; Revelation 18:2, 4.

²¹ By repudiating the voice of strangers, spirit-anointed Christians respond to the Fine Shepherd's words found at Luke 12:32. There Jesus says to them: "Have no fear, little flock, because your Father has approved of giving you the kingdom." Likewise, the "other sheep" eagerly anticipate hearing Jesus' words: "Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world." (John 10:16; Matthew 25:34) What a heartwarming reward awaits us if we reject "the voice of strangers"!

21. What reward awaits those who reject the voice of strangers?



A RICH AND HAPPY LIFE OF WILLING SACRIFICE

AS TOLD BY
MARIAN AND ROSA SZUMIGA

"In willingness I will sacrifice to you," declares Psalm 54:6. This statement has been the theme in the lives of Marian Szumiga and his wife, Rosa, who live in France. They recently sat down to relate some of the highlights of their long, rich life in Jehovah's service.

MARIAN: My parents were Roman Catholic immigrants from Poland. Father was a humble man. He never had the chance to go to school. However, during the first world war, he learned to read and write while spending time in the trenches. Father was a God-fearing man, but the church often disappointed him.

One incident in particular stuck in his memory. One day during the war, a chaplain visited Father's unit. When a shell exploded nearby, the chaplain fled in panic, striking his horse with a crucifix to urge it on. Father was shocked that a "representa-

tive" of God used a "holy" object to hasten his flight. Despite such experiences and the horrors of war that he witnessed, Father's faith in God did not weaken. He often credited God with his safe return from war.

"Little Poland"

In 1911, my father married a girl from a neighboring village. Her name was Anna Cisowski. Shortly after the war, in 1919, Father and Mother emigrated from Poland to France, where Father found work as a coal miner. I was born in March 1926 in Cagnac-les-Mines, southwest France. Thereafter,



François and Anna Szumiga and their children, Stéphanie, Stéphane, Mélanie, and Marian about 1930. Marian is standing on the stool

my parents settled in a Polish community in Loos-en-Gohelle, near Lens in northern France. The baker was Polish, the butcher was Polish, and the parish priest was Polish. Not surprisingly, this area was called Little Poland. My parents were involved in community activities. Father often organized shows, which would include a play, music, and singing. He also had regular discussions with the priest, but he was not satisfied when the priest usually answered, "There are many mysteries."

One day in 1930, two women knocked on our door. They were Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called. My father obtained a Bible from them, a book he for years had wanted to read. He and Mother also eagerly read the Bible-based publica-

tions that the women left. My parents were deeply touched by what they read in these publications. Despite their busy life, my parents began attending meetings arranged by the Bible Students. Discussions with the priest became ever stormier until he one day threatened that if my parents continued to associate with the Bible Students, my sister Stéphanie would be expelled from catechism. "Don't trouble yourself," replied Father. "From now on, my daughter and the other children will come with us to the Bible Students' meetings." Father withdrew from the church, and early in 1932, my parents were baptized. At the time, there were only some 800 Kingdom publishers in France.

Rosa: My parents were from Hungary and, like Marian's family, had settled in the north of France to work in the coal mines. I was born in 1925. In 1937, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, Auguste Beugin, or Papa Auguste as we called him, began to bring my parents *The Watchtower* in Hungarian. They found the magazines interesting, but neither of them became one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Although I was young, my heart was touched by what I read in *The Watchtower*, and Papa Auguste's daughter-in-law, Suzanne Beugin, took me under her wing. My parents allowed her to take me to meetings. Later, when I started working, my meeting attendance on Sundays annoyed my father. Although he was generally good-natured, he complained, "You're not here during the week, and on Sundays you go to your meetings!" However, I kept going. So one day my father said, "Pack your bag and go!" It was late in the evening. I was just 17 years of age, and I had no idea where to go. I ended up at Suzanne's house, crying my eyes out. I stayed with Suzanne for about a week before Father sent my sister to bring me home. I was shy by nature, but the thought ex-

pressed at 1 John 4:18 helped me to stand firm. That scripture states that "perfect love throws fear outside." In 1942, I was baptized.

A Precious Spiritual Heritage

Marian: I was baptized in 1942, along with my sisters Stéphanie and Mélanie and my brother Stéphane. At home, family life centered on the Word of God. As we all sat around the table, Father would read the Bible to us in Polish. Our evenings were often spent listening to our parents as they related their experiences in the Kingdom-preaching work. These spiritually rich moments taught us to love Jehovah and trust in him more and more. Ill health forced my father to stop working, but he continued looking after us spiritually and materially.

Since Father now had spare time, once a week he conducted a Bible study in Polish with the youths of the congregation. There I learned to read Polish. Father also encouraged the youngsters in other ways. Once when Brother Gustave Zopfer, who at the time supervised the work of Jehovah's Witnesses in France, visited our congregation, Father organized a choir and a costumed Bible drama based on King Belshazzar's feast and the handwriting on the wall. (Daniel 5: 1-31) The role of Daniel was played by Louis Piéchota, who later took a firm stand against the Nazis.* This was the kind of atmosphere in which we children were raised. We observed that our parents were always busy with spiritual matters. Today, I realize what a precious heritage my parents left us.

When World War II broke out in 1939, the preaching activity of Jehovah's Witnesses was banned in France. On one occasion, our village was subjected to a search. All the

* Louis Piéchota's life story, "I Survived the 'Death March,'" was published in *The Watchtower* of August 15, 1980.

houses were surrounded by German soldiers. Father had made a false floor in the bottom of a wardrobe, and we hid various Bible publications under that floor. However, several copies of the booklet *Fascism or Freedom* were in a buffet drawer. Father quickly hid them in the pocket of a jacket hanging in the corridor. Two soldiers and a French policeman searched our house. We held our breath. One of the soldiers began searching the clothes hanging in the corridor, and soon thereafter he entered the kitchen, where we were, with the booklets in his hand. He stared at us, placed the booklets on the table, and continued his search elsewhere. I quickly picked up the booklets and put them in a drawer that the soldiers had already searched. The soldier never asked for the booklets—it was as if he had completely forgotten about them!

Entering Full-Time Service

In 1948, I decided to make myself available to serve Jehovah full-time in the pioneer service. A few days later, I received a letter from the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in France. The letter contained an assignment for me to serve as a pioneer in the congregation of Sedan, near Belgium. My parents were delighted to see me embrace Jehovah's service in that way. Father, nevertheless, pointed out that pioneering was no vacation. It would be hard work. However, he said that his house would always be open to me and that I could count on him if I had problems. Although my parents did not have much money, they bought me a new bicycle. I still have the receipt for that bike, and when I look at it, tears well up in my eyes. Father and Mother died in 1961, but Father's wise words still ring in my ears; they have encouraged and comforted me throughout my years of service.



Above: Presenting Bible publications at a market stall in Armentières, northern France, in 1950

Left: Stefan Behunick with Marian in 1950



Another source of encouragement was a 75-year-old Christian sister in the congregation of Sedan by the name of Elise Motte. During the summer, I rode my bike to the outlying villages to preach, and Elise joined me by train. However, one day the train engineers were on strike, and Elise could not get home. The only solution I could think of was to put her on the luggage rack of my bicycle and take her home—not a comfortable way to ride. The next morning, I brought along a cushion and picked Elise up at her home. She stopped taking the train, and with the fare money saved, she was able to buy us a hot drink at lunchtime. Who would have thought that my bicycle would serve as public transport?

More Responsibilities

In 1950, I was asked to serve as a circuit overseer for the whole of northern France. Since I was only 23 years of age, my first reaction was one of fear. I thought that the

branch office had made a mistake! Questions ran through my head: 'Am I up to the job both spiritually and physically? How can I cope with different accommodations every week?' What is more, since the age of six, I have suffered from an eye ailment called divergent strabismus. This condition causes one of my eyes to be turned outward. I have always been very self-conscious because of this, worrying about how others would react. Thankfully, on that occasion I received much help from Stefan Behunick, a graduate of the missionary school of Gilead. Brother Behunick had been expelled from Poland because of his preaching activity and was reassigned to France. His courage really impressed me. He had deep respect for Jehovah and the truth. Some thought that he was hard on me, but I learned so much from him. His boldness helped me to grow in confidence.

Circuit work allowed me to enjoy some wonderful field service experiences. In 1953, I was asked to call on a certain Mr. Paoli, who lived south of Paris and subscribed to *The Watchtower*. We met, and I learned that he had retired from the army and that he found *The Watchtower* fascinating. He told me that after he read an article about the Memorial of Christ's death in a recent issue, he commemorated the Memorial on his own and spent the rest of the evening reading the Psalms. Our discussion lasted a good part of the afternoon. Before I left, we also spoke briefly about baptism. I later sent him an invitation to attend our circuit assembly, to be held early in 1954. He came, and among the 26 persons who were baptized at that assembly was Brother Paoli. Experiences like that are still a source of joy to me.

Rosa: In October 1948, I began to serve as a pioneer. After serving in Anor, near Belgium, I was assigned to Paris, along with an-

Marian and Rosa the day before their wedding

Rosa (far left) with her pioneer partner Irène (fourth from the left), advertising an assembly in 1951



other pioneer, Irène Kolanski (now Leroy). We lived in a tiny room in Saint-Germain-des-Près in the heart of the city. Being a country girl, I was overawed by the Parisians. I imagined that all of them were sophisticated and very intelligent. But I soon learned from preaching to them that they were no different from other people. Often we were chased away by the concierge, and starting Bible studies was difficult. Even so, some people accepted our message.

During a circuit assembly in 1951, Irène and I were interviewed about our pioneer service. Guess who was the interviewer? A young circuit overseer by the name of Marian Szumiga. We had met once before, but after that assembly, we started corresponding. Marian and I had much in common, including the fact that we were baptized the same year and became pioneers the same year. Most important, though, we both wanted to stay in the full-time service. So after prayerful consideration, we were married on July 31, 1956. With that step, a totally new way of life began for me. I had to get used not only to being a wife but also to accompanying Marian in the circuit work, which



meant a different bed every week. At first, it was far from easy, but great joys were in store.

A Rich Life

Marian: Over the years, we have had the privilege of helping in preparing several conventions. I especially have fond memories of one held in 1966, in Bordeaux. At the time, the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in Portugal were banned. So the assembly program was also presented in Portuguese for the benefit of those Witnesses who could make the journey to France. Hundreds of our Christian brothers and sisters from

Transportation during circuit visits was mainly by bicycle



Portugal arrived, but the challenge was where to accommodate them. Since the Witnesses in Bordeaux did not have enough room in their homes, we rented an empty movie theater for use as a dormitory. We removed all seats, and a curtain from the stage was used to turn the hall into two dormitories, one for the brothers and one for the sisters. We also installed showers and washbasins, put hay on the concrete floor, and covered it with canvas sheets. Everybody was satisfied with this arrangement.

After the convention sessions, we visited our brothers and sisters at the dormitory. There was a wonderful atmosphere. How encouraged we were by the experiences they had despite enduring years of opposition! When they left at the end of the assembly, we all had tears in our eyes.

Another privilege had come two years earlier, in 1964, when I was asked to serve as district overseer. Once again I wondered if I was up to the task. But I said to myself that if those with responsibilities asked me to accept the assignment, they obviously thought that I was capable of handling it. It was a fine experience to serve in close contact with other traveling overseers. I learned much from them. Many of them are real examples of patience and perseverance, qualities that are vital in Jehovah's eyes. I have come to understand that if we learn to wait, Jehovah knows where to find us.

In 1982 the branch office asked us also to take care of a small group of 12 Polish publishers in Boulogne-Billancourt, on the outskirts of Paris. That was a surprise. I knew theocratic terms in Polish, but I had difficul-



ty constructing sentences. Yet, the kindness and willing cooperation of those brothers helped me greatly. Today, there are some 170 publishers in that congregation, including nearly 60 pioneers. Later, Rosa and I also visited Polish groups and congregations in Austria, Denmark, and Germany.

Changing Circumstances

Visiting different congregations was our life, but my failing health required that we stop our traveling ministry in 2001. We found an apartment in the town of Pithiviers, where my sister Ruth lives. The branch office kindly appointed us as special pioneers with an hour requirement adapted to our circumstances.

Rosa: The first year after we stopped the circuit work was very difficult for me. The change was so drastic that I felt useless. Then I reminded myself, 'You can still use your time and available strength well by serving as a pioneer.' Today, I am happy to work along with the other pioneers in our congregation.

Jehovah Has Always Cared for Us

Marian: I am very grateful to Jehovah that Rosa has been my companion for the past 48 years. Through all those years in the traveling work, she has been a great support to me. Not once did I hear her say, 'I wish we could settle down and have our own home.'

Rosa: Sometimes someone would say to me, "It's not a normal life that you lead. You always live with others." But what really is a "normal life"? Often we surround ourselves with a host of things that may become obstacles to our pursuing spiritual activities. All

we really need is a good bed, a table, and a few other basics. As pioneers we had very little materially, yet we had everything that we needed to do Jehovah's will. Sometimes I was asked, "What will you do when you are old with no home of your own and no pension." Then I would quote the words of Psalm 34:10: "As for those seeking Jehovah, they will not lack anything good." Jehovah has always cared for us.

Marian: Indeed! In fact, Jehovah has given us much more than what is necessary. For instance, in 1958, I was chosen to represent our circuit at the international convention in New York. However, we did not have the funds to buy a ticket for Rosa. One evening

a brother handed us an envelope with "New York" written on it. The enclosed gift enabled Rosa to travel with me!

Rosa and I have absolutely no regrets about our years in Jehovah's service. We lost nothing but gained everything—a rich and happy life in full-time service. Jehovah is such a wonderful God. We have learned to trust in him completely, and our love for him has deepened. Some of our Christian brothers have paid for their faithfulness with their lives. However, I believe that over the years, a person can also sacrifice his life little by little. That is what Rosa and I have striven to do up until now, and that is what we are determined to do in the future.

What Inheritance Do You Owe Your Children?



PAVLOS, a family man from southern Europe, is rarely at home to spend time with his wife and children—two daughters, aged 13 and 11, and a 7-year-old son. Seven days a week Pavlos works two long shifts, attempting to earn enough money to make his dream come true. He wants to buy an apartment for each of his daughters, and he wants to start a small business for his son. His wife, Sofia, labors to accumulate linens, kitchenware, chinaware, and silverware for these additional households. When asked why they work so hard, they answer in unison, "For the sake of our children!"

Like Pavlos and Sofia, many parents throughout the world do their best to give

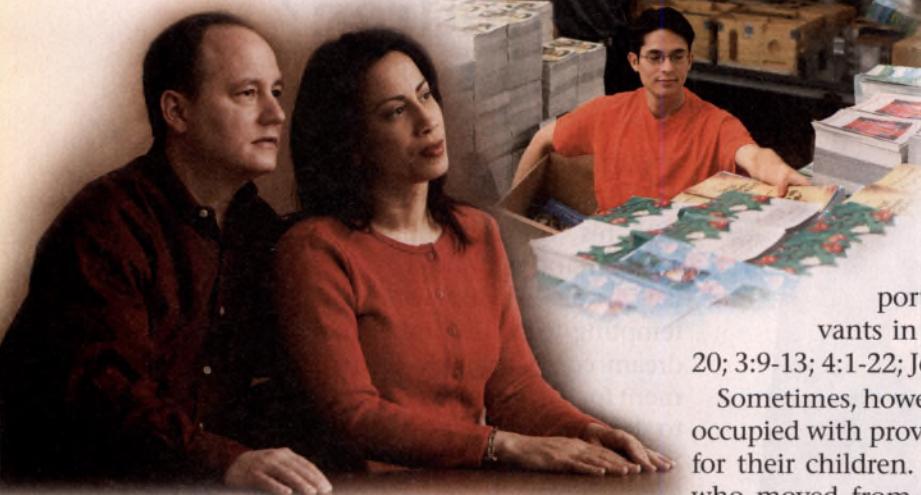
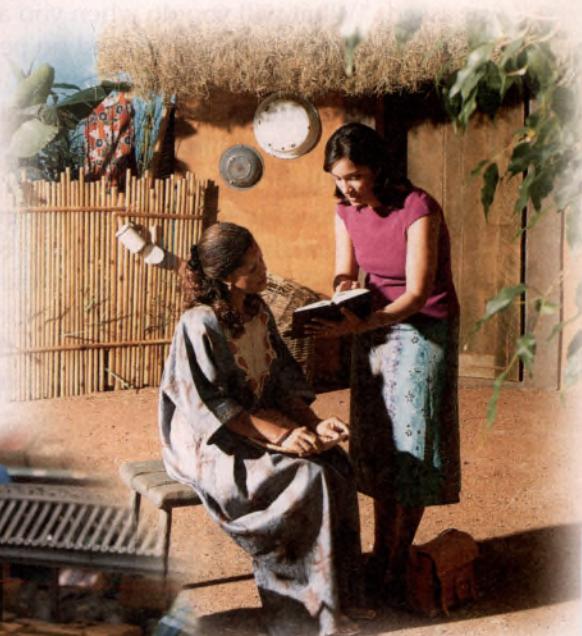
their children a good start in life. Some set aside money for the children's future use. Others make sure that their offspring get adequate education and learn skills that will be useful later in life. Although most parents view such gifts as a legacy of love, making such provisions often puts parents under great pressure to live up to the expectations of relatives, friends, and the community in which they live. Therefore, concerned parents rightly ask, 'How much do we owe our children?'

Making Provisions for the Future

It is not only natural but also Scriptural for Christian parents to make provisions for their children. The apostle Paul told Christians in his day: "Parents should make provision for their children, not children for their parents."

(2 Corinthians 12:14, *The*

especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith." (1 Timothy 5:8) Numerous Bible accounts



What future do you have in mind for your children?

illustrate that matters of inheritance were important among God's servants in Bible times.—Ruth 2:19, 20; 3:9-13; 4:1-22; Job 42:15.

Sometimes, however, parents become preoccupied with providing a large inheritance for their children. Why? Manolis, a father who moved from southern Europe to the United States, points to one reason: "Parents who suffered the ravages of World War II, famine and poverty, are determined to improve their children's lot." He adds: "Because of their exaggerated sense of responsi-

New English Bible) Paul further stated that providing parental care is a serious obligation. He wrote: "Certainly if anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and

bility and a desire to give their children the best possible start in life, parents sometimes cause harm to themselves." Indeed, some parents deprive themselves of life's necessities or lead an austere life in order to lay up material possessions for their offspring. But is it wise for parents to pursue such a course?

"Vanity and a Big Calamity"

King Solomon of ancient Israel had a word of caution regarding inheritances. He wrote: "I, even I, hated all my hard work at which I was working

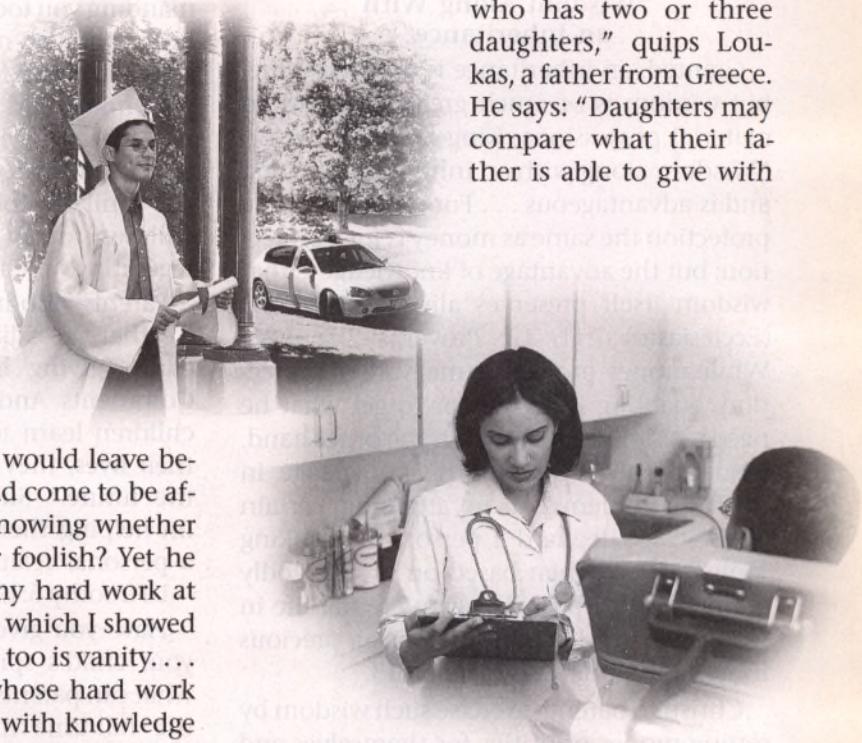
hard under the sun, that I would leave behind for the man who would come to be after me. And who is there knowing whether he will prove to be wise or foolish? Yet he will take control over all my hard work at which I worked hard and at which I showed wisdom under the sun. This too is vanity. . . . For there exists the man whose hard work has been with wisdom and with knowledge and with proficiency, but to a man that has not worked hard at such a thing will be given the portion of that one. This too is vanity and a big calamity."—Ecclesiastes 2:18-21.

As Solomon explains, those receiving an inheritance may not appreciate its full value because they themselves did not work hard for it. Consequently, heirs may treat foolishly what the parents strove to accumulate for them. They may even squander such hard-earned possessions. (Luke 15:11-16) What "vanity and a big calamity" that would be!

Inheritance and Greed

There is something else that parents need to consider. In cultures that are deeply con-

cerned with hereditary possessions and marriage endowments, children may become greedy, demanding an estate, or a dowry, above what the parents can reasonably provide. "Alas for the father who has two or three daughters," quips Loukas, a father from Greece. He says: "Daughters may compare what their father is able to give with



what other parents 'generously' pile up for their children. They may point out that their prospects for marriage will diminish if they cannot bring along a satisfactory dowry."

Manolis, mentioned before, states: "A young man may prolong the courtship until the father of the prospective bride promises him something for her, usually real estate or a considerable amount of money. It can become a sort of blackmail."

The Bible warns against all forms of greed. Solomon wrote: "An inheritance is being got by greed at first, but its own future will not

be blessed.” (Proverbs 20:21) The apostle Paul stressed: “The love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things.”—1 Timothy 6:10; Ephesians 5:5.

“Wisdom Along With an Inheritance”

Granted, an inheritance is of some value, but wisdom is of much greater value than material possessions. King Solomon wrote: “Wisdom along with an inheritance is good and is advantageous . . . For wisdom is for a protection the same as money is for a protection; but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom itself preserves alive its owners.” (Ecclesiastes 7:11, 12; Proverbs 2:7; 3:21) While money provides a measure of protection, enabling its possessor to get what he needs, it can still be lost. On the other hand, wisdom—the ability to use knowledge in solving problems or in attaining certain goals—can safeguard a person from taking foolish risks. When based on proper godly fear, it may help him to gain eternal life in God’s new world soon to come—a precious inheritance indeed!—2 Peter 3:13.

Christian parents exercise such wisdom by setting proper priorities for themselves and their children. (Philippians 1:10) Material things accumulated for use by the children should not take priority over spiritual matters. Jesus encouraged his followers: “Keep on, then, seeking first [God’s] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33) Parents who set spiritual goals for their Christian family can expect to be richly rewarded. Wise King Solomon wrote: “The father of a righteous one will without fail be joyful; the one becoming father to a wise one will also rejoice in him. Your father and your mother will rejoice, and she that gave birth to you will be joyful.”—Proverbs 23:24, 25.

A Lasting Inheritance

For the Israelites of old, matters of hereditary possession were very important. (1 Kings 21:2-6) However, Jehovah admonished them: “These words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart; and you must inculcate them in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) Christian parents are similarly told: “Go on bringing [your children] up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah.”—Ephesians 6:4.

Parents who have a spiritual outlook realize that providing for their household includes giving instruction from the Bible. Comments Andreas, a father of three: “If children learn to apply godly principles in their lives, they will be better equipped for the future.” Such a heritage also focuses on helping them to establish and cultivate a personal relationship with their Creator.—1 Timothy 6:19.

Have you given thought to providing for your child’s spiritual future? For example, what can parents do if their child is pursuing the full-time ministry? While a full-time minister should neither demand nor expect financial support, loving parents may decide to ‘share with him according to his needs’ in order to help him remain in full-time service. (Romans 12:13; 1 Samuel 2:18, 19; Philippians 4:14-18) Such a supportive attitude would certainly be pleasing to Jehovah.

So, then, what do parents owe their children? Besides providing for their material needs, Christian parents will make sure that their children receive a rich spiritual heritage that will benefit them forever. In that way, the words found at Psalm 37:18 will come true: “Jehovah is aware of the days of the faultless ones, and their very inheritance will continue even to time indefinite.”

"Forgotten Victims" Are Remembered

IN EARLY 2001, Haykaz, a 15-year-old Witness of Jehovah, visited "Forgotten Victims," an exhibit in Bern, Switzerland, that dealt with the Nazi persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses. At the end of his visit, Haykaz said: "I had heard of the inhuman treatment and suffering experienced by Jehovah's Witnesses under the Nazi regime, but this was the first time I had seen authentic documents and photographs of that time. The displays, the reports of eyewitnesses, and the comments of historians at the exhibit left a deep impression on my mind and heart."

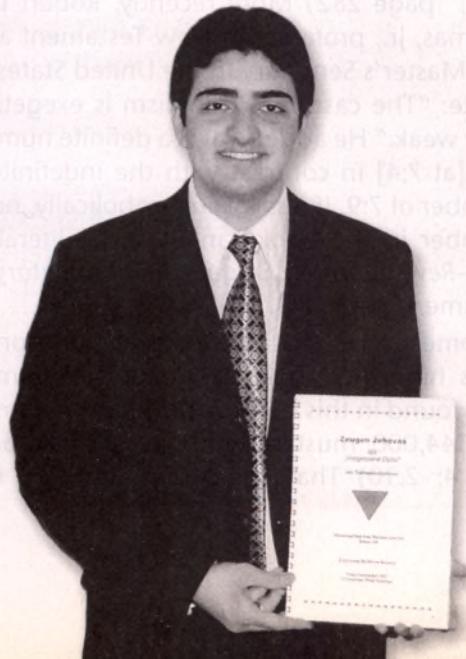
Some time later, when Haykaz was assigned to write a report for his senior class in high school, he chose the subject "Jehovah's Witnesses—The Forgotten Victims of Nazism." His teacher approved the subject but told Haykaz that he needed to include secular literature in his sources. Hay-

kaz gladly agreed. "I wrote a summary of some books about Jehovah's Witnesses during the Nazi era that I reviewed. I also described my personal impressions of the 'Forgotten Victims' exhibition. The 43-page report included illustrations and photographs."

In November 2002, Haykaz presented his report to schoolmates, teachers, family, and friends. Afterward, there was a question-and-answer session, which gave him an opportunity to explain his Bible-based beliefs. When a girl in the audience asked why he had chosen this topic, Haykaz explained that many history books do not mention Jehovah's Witnesses and that he wanted people to know how courageously the Witnesses had defended their Christian faith. The result of his presentation?

"My schoolmates were amazed," said Haykaz. "They were not aware that Jehovah's Witnesses as a group had been viciously persecuted. Also, many did not know that the Witnesses held in Nazi concentration camps wore a special identification—a purple triangle."

Following his presentation, Haykaz had more opportunities to speak to his classmates and to discuss the Bible-based position of the Witnesses on blood transfusion, alcohol, and morals. "None of my schoolmates mocked or derided me," noted Haykaz. Moreover, his report is now kept in the school library. That will help to ensure that the courageous stand of Jehovah's Witnesses will not be forgotten.



Questions From Readers

Why do Jehovah's Witnesses take the number 144,000 mentioned in the book of Revelation literally and not symbolically?

The apostle John wrote: "I heard the number of those who were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand." (Revelation 7:4) In the Bible, the phrase "those who were sealed" refers to a group of individuals who are chosen from among mankind to rule with Christ in heaven over the coming Paradise earth. (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Revelation 5:9, 10; 20:6) Their number, 144,000, is understood literally for several reasons. One is found in the immediate context of Revelation 7:4.

After the apostle John was told in vision about this group of 144,000 individuals, he was shown another group. John describes this second group as "a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." This great crowd refers to those who will survive the coming "great tribulation," which will destroy the present wicked world.—Revelation 7:9, 14.

Note, however, the contrast that John draws between verses 4 and 9 of Revelation chapter 7. He states that the first group, "those who were sealed," has a definite number. However, the second group, "a great crowd," is without a definite number. With that in mind, it is logical to take the number 144,000 to be literal. If the number 144,000 were symbolic and referred to a group that is actually numberless, the force of the contrast between those two verses would be lost. Thus, the context strongly indicates that the number 144,000 must be taken literally.

Various Bible scholars, past and present, reached the same conclusion—that is, the number is literal. For instance, in commenting on Revelation 7:4, 9, British lexicographer Dr. Ethelbert W. Bullinger observed some 100 years ago: "It is the simple statement of fact: a definite number in contrast with the indefinite number in this very chapter." (*The Apocalypse or "The Day of the Lord,"* page 282) More recently, Robert L. Thomas, Jr., professor of New Testament at The Master's Seminary in the United States, wrote: "The case for symbolism is exegetically weak." He added: "It is a definite number [at 7:4] in contrast with the indefinite number of 7:9. If it is taken symbolically, no number in the book can be taken literally."—*Revelation: An Exegetical Commentary*, Volume 1, page 474.

Some argue that since Revelation contains highly symbolic language, all numbers found in this book, including the number 144,000, must be symbolic. (Revelation 1:1, 4; 2:10) That conclusion, though, is

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

What Does the Lord's Prayer Mean to You?

"Go On Acquiring Power in the Lord"

Jehovah's Word Is Alive—Highlights From the Book of Deuteronomy

clearly not correct. Granted, Revelation contains numerous symbolic numbers, but it also includes literal numbers. For instance, John speaks of "the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (Revelation 21:14) Clearly, the number 12 mentioned in this verse is literal, not symbolic. Further, the apostle John writes about "the thousand years" of Christ's reign. That number is

also to be taken literally, as a careful consideration of the Bible shows.* (Revelation 20: 3, 5-7) Hence, whether a number in Revelation is to be taken literally or symbolically depends on its background and setting.

The conclusion that the number 144,000 is literal and refers to a limited number of individuals, a relatively small group when compared with the "great crowd," also harmonizes with other Bible passages. For instance, later in the vision that the apostle

The number of heavenly heirs is limited to 144,000



The "great crowd" is unnumbered

John receives, the 144,000 are described as those who "were bought from among mankind as *firstfruits*." (Revelation 14:1, 4) The expression "firstfruits" refers to a small representative selection. Also, while Jesus was on earth, he spoke about those who will rule with him in his heavenly Kingdom and called them a "*little flock*." (Luke 12:32; 22: 29) Indeed, those from among mankind who will rule in heaven are few in comparison with those of mankind who will inhabit the coming Paradise earth.

Hence, the context of Revelation 7:4 and related statements found elsewhere in the Bible bear out that the number 144,000 is to be taken literally. It refers to those who will rule in heaven with Christ over a paradise earth, which will be filled with a large and undetermined number of happy people who worship Jehovah God.—Psalm 37:29.

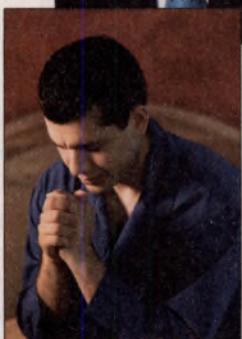
* For more information on the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, see *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* pages 289-90, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

How to Cope With Discouragement

ARE you discouraged? In this age of uncertainty and strife, many people are. Some are discouraged because they are unemployed. Others are coping with the aftermath of an accident. Still others are struggling with family problems, a serious illness, or feelings of loneliness.

If you are discouraged, where can you turn to for help? Millions worldwide have found comfort by reading God's Word, the Bible. They are reassured by the words of the apostle Paul, who said: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation." (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) Why not read this and other Bible passages in your own Bible? Doing so will 'comfort your heart and make you firm.'—2 Thessalonians 2:17.

Help to cope with discouragement can also be found through association with those who serve Jehovah. Proverbs 12:25 says: "Anxious care in the heart of a man is what will cause it to bow down, but the good word is what makes it rejoice."



When we attend Christian meetings, we hear that "good word," which is "sweet to the soul and a healing to the bones." (Proverbs 16:24) Why not attend a meeting at a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses to experience for yourself what a strengthening effect such a gathering can have on you?

You can also benefit from the power of prayer. If you feel overwhelmed by life's anxieties, share your deepest feelings with the "Hearer of prayer." (Psalm 65:2) Our Creator, Jehovah God, understands us better than we understand ourselves. We can count on his help. His Word promises us: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter." (Psalm 55:22) Yes, "those who are hoping in Jehovah will regain power."—Isaiah 40:31.

Jehovah God has given us powerful provisions that can help us to cope successfully with discouragement. Will you use them?