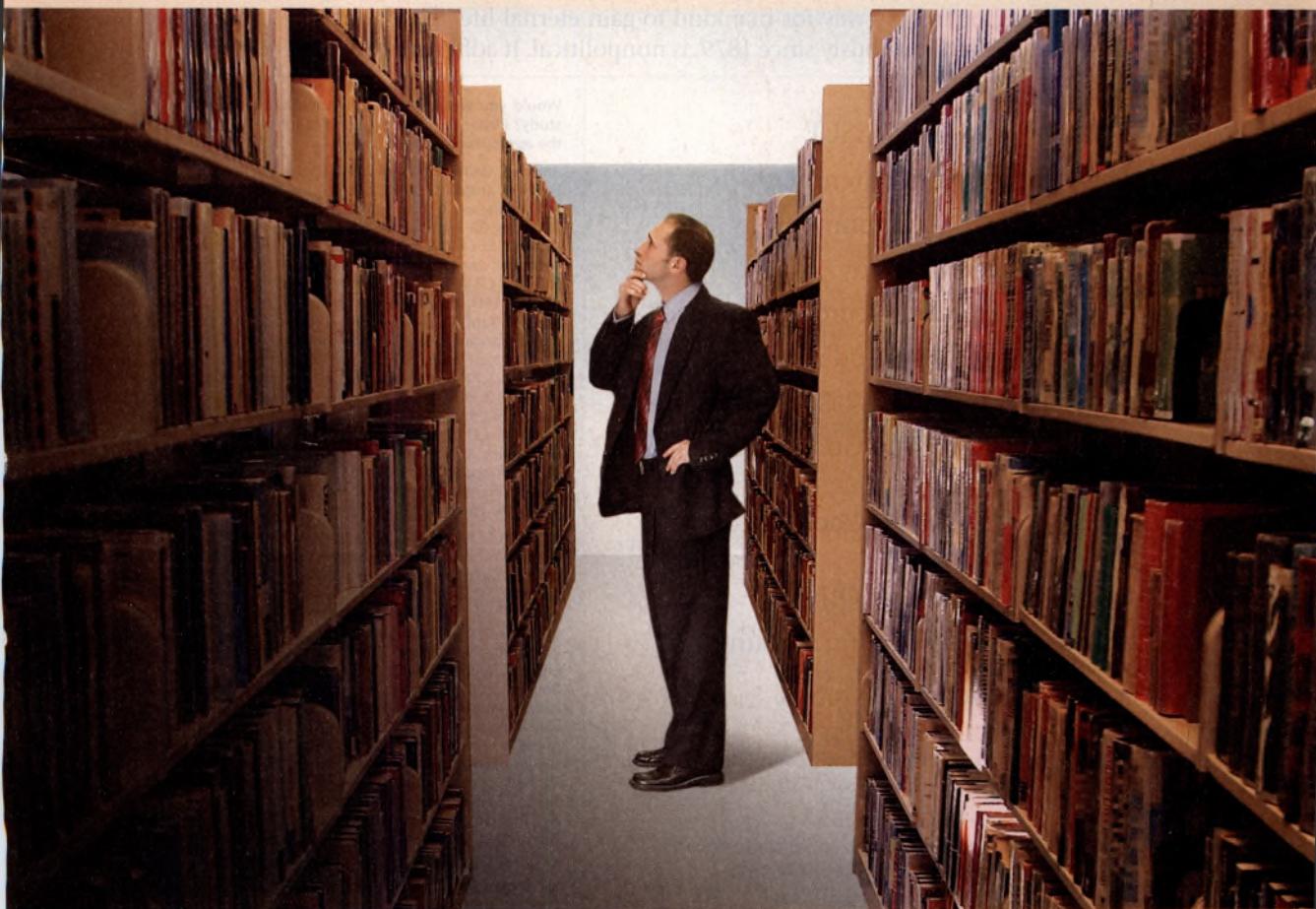


THE WATCHTOWER

JULY 1, 2006

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**TRUE
ENLIGHTENMENT
Where Can You Find It?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

July 1, 2006

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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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ENGLISH

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The Search for Enlightenment

"GNORANCE is never better than knowledge," stated Laura Fermi, wife of the renowned physicist Enrico Fermi. Some may disagree, arguing that what you don't know will never hurt you. For most, however, the observation holds true, not just in the field of scientific research but also in other areas of life. Ignorance, in the sense of being unaware of the truth, has left many people stumbling around in intellectual, moral, and spiritual darkness for centuries.—Ephesians 4:18.

That is why thinking people search for enlightenment. They want to know why we are here and where we are going. Their search has led them down many different paths. Let us briefly consider some of them.

Through a Religious Path?

According to Buddhist tradition, Siddhārtha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was deeply disturbed by human suffering and death. He asked Hindu religious teachers to help him find "the way of truth." Some recommended yoga and extreme self-denial. Gautama ultimately chose a process of intense personal meditation as the way to true enlightenment.

Others have used mind-altering



Gautama (Buddha), Rousseau, and Voltaire took different paths in search of enlightenment

drugs in their search for enlightenment. Today, for example, members of the Native American Church describe peyote—a cactus that contains a hallucinogenic substance—as a "revealer of hidden knowledge."

Eighteenth-century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that any sincere inquirer can receive a personal spiritual revelation from God. How? By listening to "what God says to the heart." Then, how you *feel* about things—what your emotions and conscience tell you—will become "a more assured guide in this immense labyrinth of human opinions," said Rousseau.—*History of Western Philosophy*.

Through the Power of Reason?

Many of Rousseau's contemporaries vehemently disagreed with that kind of religious approach. Fellow Frenchman Voltaire, for example, felt that religion, far from enlightening people, had been the prime factor in plunging Europe into centuries of ignorance, superstition, and intolerance during the period that some historians call the Dark Ages.

Voltaire became part of a European rationalist movement known as the Enlightenment. Its followers

returned to the ideas of the ancient Greeks—namely, that human reason and scientific investigation are the keys to true enlightenment. Another member of the rationalist movement, Bernard de Fontenelle, felt that human reason on its own would lead mankind to “a century which will become more enlightened day by day, so that all previous

centuries will be lost in darkness by comparison.”—*Encyclopædia Britannica*.

These are just some of the many conflicting ideas about how to gain enlightenment. Is there really any “assured guide” that we can turn to in our search for truth? Consider what the following article has to say about the trustworthy source of enlightenment.

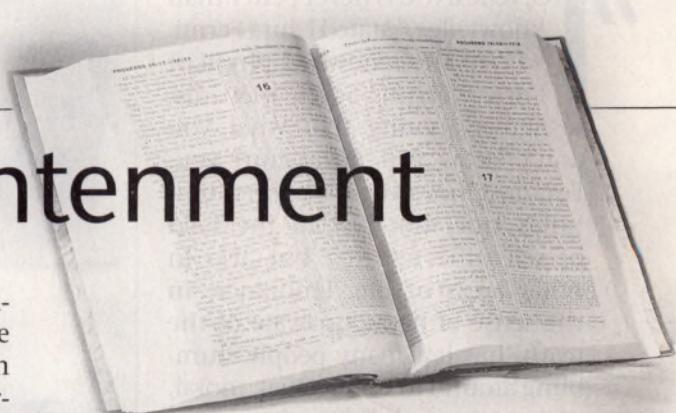
Finding True Enlightenment

IT WAS December 18, 1810. Night was falling. In stormy seas somewhere off the southeast coast of Scotland, the British Navy frigate HMS *Pallas* had lost its bearings. Growing darkness and driving snow were making it more and more difficult for the crew to locate the beacons they needed to guide their ship to safety. Imagine their relief when they finally saw lights and steered their ship toward them! Sadly, though, these were not the guiding lights they needed. They were, in fact, workmen’s fires burning near the coast. The *Pallas* was driven onto the rocks and completely wrecked. Eleven sailors drowned. What a tragedy!

In the case of the *Pallas*, an error led to the disaster. At other times, however, sailors faced an even greater danger—false beacon lights. Such lights were put up to lure ships onto rocky shores so that the wrecks could be plundered, according to the book *Wrecks, Wreckers and Rescuers*.

‘Sacred Writings That Can Lead You to Salvation’

In your search for enlightenment, you face dangers that are similar to the ones en-



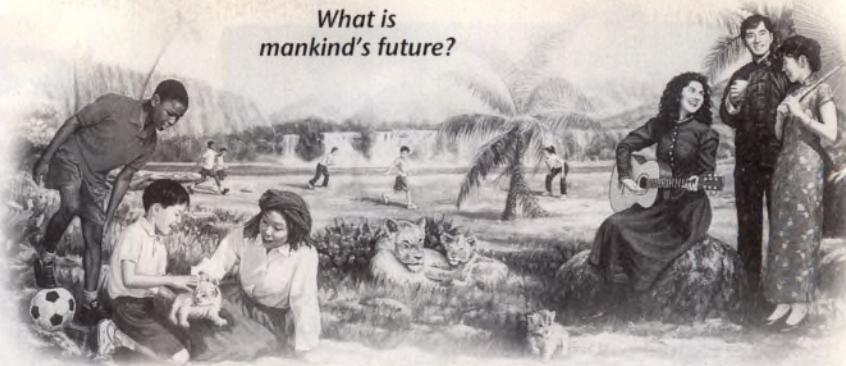
God's Word is like a lamp

countered by those sailors. You might follow misleading information, or you might even become a victim of deliberate deception. Either path can lead to tragedy. What can you do to protect yourself? Make sure that your source of enlightenment is genuine and trustworthy. For more than 125 years, this magazine has championed God’s inspired Word, the Bible, as the most dependable source of enlightenment because it contains “sacred writings which have power to make you wise and lead you to salvation.”—2 Timothy 3:15-17, *New English Bible*.

Of course, for you to have confidence in the Bible as a trustworthy guiding light, it is reasonable that you check its credentials. (Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 14:15) Feel free to write to the publishers of this magazine to obtain information that has helped con-

What is God's name?

יהוה



vince millions that the Bible truly is inspired by God. Read, for example, the brochure entitled *A Book for All People*.* It presents much information that shows that the Bible is accurate, authentic, and inspired.

Fundamental Truths

What, then, are some of the fundamental truths that these "sacred writings" contain? Consider the following examples.

There is one Almighty God and Creator who made all things. (Genesis 1:1) We exist only "because [God] created all things" and gave us life. (Revelation 4:11) That is why he alone deserves our worship. The Creator is the ultimate Source of all enlightenment. (Psalm 36:9; Isaiah 30:20, 21; 48:17, 18) He has a personal name that he wants us to use. (Exodus 3:15) That name, written in Hebrew characters and transliterated YHWH, appears some 7,000 times in the Bible. For centuries, it has been used in English in the form "Jehovah."—Psalm 83:18.

Jehovah made men and women to live forever in Paradise conditions right here on earth. He endowed humans with spiritual qualities that mirrored his own. He gave them talents and abilities that would allow them to enjoy endless, satisfying human life on earth. (Genesis 1:26-28) He never purposed for the earth to be some kind of testing ground for men and women—a

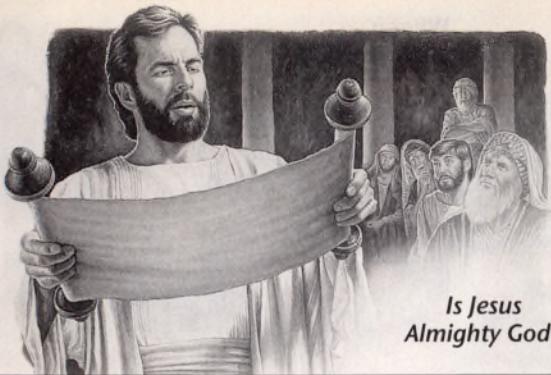
stepping-stone to a spirit life in heaven, as if only there could they enjoy a relationship with God.

There was nothing evil in God's human creation. Evil came about only when some of God's creations—both human and spirit—misused their freedom of choice and rebelled against God. (Deuteronomy 32:5) Our original parents assumed the right to determine for themselves what was good and what was bad. (Genesis 2:17; 3:1-5) That brought death to the human family. (Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12) To settle the issues raised by the rebellion, Jehovah decided on a temporary toleration of wickedness. But his purpose for the earth and for the human family has remained unchanged. (Isaiah 45:18) Men and women will yet live forever in Paradise conditions on a cleansed earth.—Matthew 6:10; Revelation 21:1-5.

Jesus Christ is, not Almighty God, but the Son of God. Jesus Christ himself taught his followers to pray: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified." (Matthew 6:9) He never claimed equality with God. Rather, he said: "The Father is greater than I am."—John 14:28.

Jesus plays a vital part in the outworking of God's purpose. God sent him "as a light into the world, in order that everyone putting faith in [him] may not remain in the darkness." (John 12:46) According to the apostle Peter, "there is no salvation in anyone else." (Acts 4:12) This is true because our

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



*Is Jesus
Almighty God?*



*Where
are the dead?*

salvation depends on the precious blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18, 19) Jesus Christ gave his life as a ransom sacrifice to redeem mankind from the sin that our original parents, Adam and Eve, introduced into the human family. (Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6) Also, Jesus was used by God to reveal His will and purpose.—John 8:12, 32, 46, 47; 14:6; Acts 26:23.

God has set up a heavenly Kingdom, or government, made up of Jesus Christ and those chosen from among mankind. This recurring theme is found throughout the Bible. God has entrusted this government with the task of making sure that his will is done on earth as in heaven. (Matthew 6:10) It was not part of God's original purpose for any from among mankind to go to heaven. Their home was to be the earth. But following man's fall into sin, God purposed something new. He arranged to choose people "out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation . . . to rule as kings" with Christ in

a heavenly government. (Revelation 5:9, 10) That Kingdom government will soon "crush and put an end" to all forms of human rulership, which have brought so much misery and pain to the human family.—Daniel 2:44.

The soul is mortal. This fundamental Bible truth clarifies much about man and his life prospects. It also removes the misunderstanding and misinformation that have confused people about the condition of the dead.

The very first book of the Bible tells us: "Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man *came to be* a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) Do you see what that means? The soul is not a shadowy entity that exists within the human frame. Man does not *have* a soul. He *is* a soul—a combination of elements found in the "dust from the ground" and a life force that comes from God. The soul is not immortal. When man dies, the soul dies.—Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10.

Those who have died can be restored to life through a resurrection. When the time that God has temporarily permitted wickedness is over, "all those in the memorial tombs will hear [Jesus'] voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) The resurrection will restore people to human life on a paradise earth, to the

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

What Is God's Kingdom?

'Keep Free From Murmurings'

Jehovah Delivers the Afflicted One

kind of life that God originally purposed for his human family.

Carefully Examine the Scriptures Daily

Do you see how a knowledge of such fundamental truths can help you? In these critical, stormy times, such knowledge can protect you from "the falsely called 'knowledge'" propagated by Satan the Devil. He pretends to be "an angel of light," and his agents pose as "ministers of righteousness." (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15) Accurate Bible knowledge can protect you from so-called enlightenment based on the philosophies of worldly "wise and intellectual ones," who "have rejected the very word of Jehovah."—Matthew 11:25; Jeremiah 8:9.

Because there were so many misleading teachings and philosophies in his day, the apostle John warned first-century Christians: "Do *not* believe every inspired expression." He said: "Test the inspired expressions

to see whether they originate with God." (1 John 4:1) Think of it this way. If you received a message that could have a profound effect on your life, would you accept it at face value simply because it appeared to come from a good source? Of course not. You would check its source and test out its contents before you acted on it.

By providing an inspired written record that contains fundamental truths, God has made it possible for you to do just that—to "make sure" that the guiding lights, or beacons, that you follow are genuine. (1 Thessalonians 5:21) Noble-minded people in the first century were commended for "carefully examining the Scriptures daily" to make sure that what they learned really was the truth. (Acts 17:11) You can do the same. Let the Bible, like "a lamp shining in a dark place," guide you to safety. (2 Peter 1:19-21) If you do, "you will find the very knowledge of God," which brings true enlightenment.
—Proverbs 2:5.



The resurrection of the dead is one of the fundamental truths taught in the Bible



PERSEVERANCE BRINGS JOY

AS TOLD BY
MÁRIO ROCHA DE SOUZA

"It is unlikely that Mr. Rocha will survive an operation."

Despite this gloomy forecast by a doctor, today some 20 years later,
I am still alive, serving as a full-time preacher of Jehovah's Witnesses.

What has helped me to persevere all these years?

MY CHILDHOOD was spent on a farm near Santo Estêvão, a village in the state of Bahia, northeastern Brazil. When I was seven, I began to help Father with farm-work. Each day after school, he assigned me a task. In time, whenever Father went on business to Salvador, the state capital, he left me in charge of the farm.

We had no electricity, running water, or conveniences common today, yet we were happy. I would fly a kite or play with the wooden toy cars my friends and I made. I also played the clarinet in religious processions. I served as a choirboy at the local church, and it was there that I

saw a book called *História Sagrada* (Sacred History), which aroused my curiosity in the Bible.

In 1932, when I was 20, the northeast of Brazil was hit by a severe, prolonged drought. Our cattle died and the crops failed, so I moved to Salvador, where I found work as a tram driver. Later, I rented a house and brought my family to live with me. In 1944, Father died, leaving me to care for Mother and my eight sisters and three brothers.

From Tram Driver to Evangelizer

One of the first things I did when I arrived in Salvador was to buy a Bible. After attend-

ing the Baptist church for some years, I struck up a friendship with Durval, a fellow tram driver. Durval and I often had long discussions about the Bible. One day he gave me a booklet entitled *Where Are the Dead?** Although I believed that man has an immortal soul, I was curious enough to check the Bible texts quoted in the booklet. To my surprise, the Bible confirmed that the soul that sins will die.—Ezekiel 18:4.

Noting my interest, Durval asked Antônio Andrade, a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses, to visit me at home. After his third visit, Antônio invited me to accompany him in sharing Bible teachings with others. After he spoke at the first two doors, he said, "Now it is your turn." I was petrified, but to my joy, one family listened attentively and accepted the two books I offered. To this day, I experience a similar rush of joy when I meet somebody who is interested in Bible truth.

On April 19, 1943, the anniversary of Christ's death that year, I was baptized in the Atlantic Ocean off Salvador. Because of the lack of experienced Christian men, I was appointed to assist the group of Witnesses who met in Brother Andrade's home on one of the narrow streets that connects the upper and lower section of the city of Salvador.

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses but now out of print.

Early Opposition

Our Christian activity was unpopular during the years of World War II (1939-45). Some officials suspected that we were North American spies because most of our publications came from the United States. As a result, arrests and interrogations were common. When a Witness did not return from the field ministry, we concluded that he had been detained, and we would go to the police station to seek his release.

In August 1943, Adolphe Messmer, a German Witness, arrived in Salvador to help organize our first assembly. After permission was obtained from the authorities to hold the assembly, advertisements for the public talk "Freedom in the New World" were placed in local papers, and posters were displayed in shop windows and on the sides of the trams. But on the second day of the assembly, a policeman informed us that our license to meet had been canceled. The archbishop of Salvador had pressured the chief of police to stop our assembly. The following April, however, we were finally granted permission to hold the advertised public talk.

A Goal to Pursue

In 1946, I received an invitation to attend the Glad Nations Theocratic Assembly in the city of São Paulo. The captain of a cargo vessel in Salvador allowed a group of us to travel



Witnesses advertising the public talk at the first assembly in the city of Salvador, 1943

on his ship if we would sleep on deck. Despite encountering a storm during which we all suffered from seasickness, after four days at sea we docked safely at Rio de Janeiro. Witnesses in Rio welcomed us into their homes to rest for a couple of days before we continued our trip by train. A small crowd bearing banners with the message "Welcome Jehovah's Witnesses" greeted us when our train arrived in São Paulo.

Shortly after returning to Salvador, I spoke to Harry Black, a missionary from the United States, about my desire to become a pioneer, as full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses are called. Harry reminded me that I had family responsibilities to care for and advised me to be patient. Finally, by June 1952, my brothers and sisters had become financially independent, and I was assigned to serve as a pioneer in a small congregation in Ilhéus, 130 miles down the coast from Salvador.

A Generous Provision

The following year, I was assigned to Jequié, a large town in the interior where there were no Witnesses. The first person I visited was the local priest. He explained that the town belonged to him and forbade me to preach there. He warned parishioners about the arrival of a "false prophet" and posted spies around town to monitor my activities. Nevertheless, that day I placed over 90 pieces of Bible literature and started four Bible studies. Two years later, Jequié had its own Kingdom Hall, with 36 Witnesses! Today, there are eight congregations and about 700 Witnesses in Jequié.

During my first months in Jequié, I lived in a small rented room on the outskirts of town. Then I met Miguel Vaz de Oliveira, the owner of Hotel Sudoeste, one of the best hotels in Jequié. Miguel accepted a Bible study and insisted that I move into a room at his



Witnesses arriving at São Paulo for the Glad Nations Assembly, 1946

hotel. Miguel and his wife later became Witnesses.

Another fond memory of my days in Jequié involves Luiz Cotrim, a high-school teacher with whom I studied the Bible. Luiz offered to help me improve my knowledge of Portuguese and math. I had barely completed elementary school, so I readily accepted his invitation. Those lessons after Luiz' Bible study every week helped to prepare me for the additional privileges I soon received from Jehovah's organization.

Facing a New Challenge

In 1956, I received a letter inviting me to our branch office, then in Rio de Janeiro, to receive training to be a circuit overseer, as traveling ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses are called. The training course, which eight others also attended, lasted just over a month. As it drew to a close, I was assigned to São Paulo, which caused me to have reservations. I asked myself: 'What am I, a black man, going to do there among all those Italians? Will they accept me?'*

At the first congregation I visited in the district of Santo Amaro, I was encouraged to

* Almost 1,000,000 Italian immigrants settled in São Paulo between 1870 and 1920.



*In the traveling work
during the late 1950's*

see that the Kingdom Hall was filled with fellow Witnesses and interested people. What convinced me that my fears were unfounded was that all 97 in the congregation shared in the ministry with me that weekend. 'They really *are* my brothers,' I thought to myself. It was the warmth of those dear brothers and sisters that gave me the courage to persevere in the traveling ministry.

Donkeys, Horses, and Anteaters

One of the greatest challenges that traveling overseers faced in the early days were the long journeys to reach congregations and smaller groups of Witnesses in rural areas. In those places, public transportation was precarious or nonexistent, and most of the roads were narrow dirt tracks.

Some circuits solved this problem by purchasing a donkey or a horse for the circuit overseer to use. Many a Monday, I saddled up, strapped down my belongings, and rode up to 12 hours to the next congregation. At Santa Fé do Sul, the Witnesses owned a donkey called Dourado (Goldie) that could find its way to the study groups in the rural area. Dourado would stop at farm gates and wait patiently for me to open them. After the visit, Dourado and I would continue on to the next group.

The lack of a reliable means of communication also made the circuit work challenging. For example, in order to visit a small group of Witnesses who met on a farm in Mato Grosso State, I had to cross the Arauáia River by boat and ride about 15 miles through the forest. On one occasion, I wrote to inform this group of my visit, but the letter evidently went astray, for nobody was waiting for me when I crossed the river. It was late in the afternoon, so I asked the owner of a small bar to look after my luggage, and I set off on foot with just my briefcase.

Soon night fell. As I was stumbling along in the darkness, an anteater snorted. I had heard that an anteater can rise up and kill a man with its powerful forearms. So whenever anything made a noise in the undergrowth, I cautiously stepped forward holding my briefcase in front of me as a protection. After walking for hours, I reached a small stream. Unfortunately, in the darkness I did not notice that there was a barbed-wire fence on the opposite bank. I managed to clear the stream in one bound, only to land on the fence, cutting myself!

I finally arrived at the farm and was greeted by the noise of barking dogs. It was common then for sheep rustlers to attack at night, so as the door opened, I hurriedly identified myself. I must have been a sorry

sight in my torn, blood-stained clothes, but the brothers were happy to see me.

Despite the hardships, those were happy days. I enjoyed the long journeys on horseback and on foot, at times resting in the shade of the trees, listening to the birds sing, and watching the foxes cross my path on those deserted roads. Another source of joy was the knowledge that my visits really helped people. Many wrote to me to express their gratitude. Others thanked me personally when we met at assemblies. What pleasure it gave me to see people overcome personal problems and make spiritual progress!

A Helper, at Last

During those years in the traveling work, I was often on my own, and that taught me to rely on Jehovah as "my crag and my stronghold." (Psalm 18:2) Additionally, I appreciated that being single allowed me to give my undivided attention to Kingdom interests.

In 1978, however, I met a pioneer sister named

Júlia Takahashi. She had given up a secure job as a nurse in a large hospital in São Paulo in order to serve where the need for Kingdom publishers was greater. The Christian elders who knew her spoke highly of her spiritual qualities and abilities as a pioneer. As you can imagine, my decision to marry after so many years came as a surprise to some. One good friend could not believe it, and he promised me a 600-pound bull if I really did get married. We barbecued that bull at our wedding reception on July 1, 1978.



Persevering Despite Poor Health

Júlia joined me in the traveling work, and together we visited congregations in the south and southeast of Brazil for the next eight years. That is when I developed heart problems. Twice I passed out while speaking to householders in the preaching work. In view of my limitations, we accepted an assignment as special pioneers in Birigüi, São Paulo State.

At this point, the Witnesses in Birigüi offered to take me by car to consult a doctor in Goiânia, some 300 miles away. Once my condition had stabilized, I had an operation to implant a pacemaker. That was some 20 years ago. Despite undergoing two additional heart operations, I am still active in the disciple-making work. Like so many other loyal Christian wives, Júlia has been a constant source of strength and encouragement.

While health problems have limited my activity and on occasion cause me discouragement, I am still able to pioneer. I remind myself that Jehovah never promised us that life in this old system would be a bed of roses. If the apostle Paul and other faithful Christians of old had to persevere, why should things be any different for us?—Acts 14:22.

Recently, I came across the first Bible that I obtained in the 1930's. On the inside cover, I had written 350—the number of Kingdom proclaimers in Brazil when I began to attend Christian meetings in 1943. It seems unbelievable that there are now well over 600,000 Witnesses in Brazil. What a privilege it has been to have had a small part in this growth! Jehovah has certainly rewarded me for persevering. Like the psalmist, I can say: "Jehovah has done a great thing in what he has done with us. We have become joyful."—Psalm 126:3.

"ANYONE REGARDING REPROOF IS SHREWD"

"DO BRING your heart to discipline and your ear to the sayings of knowledge," states Proverbs 23:12. In this use, "discipline," or moral training, includes both self-discipline and reproof we receive from others. Such discipline calls for knowledge of what correction is needed and of how to administer it. Hence, "the sayings of knowledge" from a reliable source are essential to discipline.

The Bible book of Proverbs is an excellent source of wise sayings. The proverbs recorded in it are "for one to know wisdom and discipline, . . . to receive the discipline that gives insight, righteousness and judgment and uprightness." (Proverbs 1:1-3) We are wise to 'bring our ear' to them. Proverbs chapter 15 gives sound guidance on managing anger, using the tongue, and dispensing knowledge. Let us consider some verses from that chapter.

What "Turns Away Rage"?

Describing how spoken words affect anger or rage, King Solomon of ancient Israel states: "*An answer, when*

mild, turns away rage, but a word causing pain makes anger to come up." (Proverbs 15:1) "Anger" is a term used to describe a strong emotion or reaction of displeasure. "Rage" is defined as "a feeling of extremely strong anger that is very difficult to control." How can this proverb help us to deal with another person's anger as well as manage our own?

Harsh words that cause pain can make an unpleasant situation worse. On the other hand, a mild reply often has a calming effect. Yet, giving a mild answer to an angry person is not always easy. It helps, though,

if we try to understand what has made him angry. "The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger," says the Bible, "and it is beauty on his part to pass over transgression." (Proverbs 19:11) Could it be that an individual is angry because he is insecure or wants attention? The real reason may have nothing to do with what we might have said or done. When we encounter an angry response in the Christian ministry, does this not often happen because the household-er is misinformed about our

*"An answer, when mild,
turns away rage"*



beliefs or blinded by some misconception? Should we take it personally and reply harshly? Even when the cause of someone's anger is not readily discernible, responding with words causing pain would indicate a lack of self-discipline on our part. Such a response should be avoided.

The advice to give a mild reply is also priceless when it comes to managing our own anger. We can apply such counsel by learning to express our emotions in ways that are not offensive to the hearer. When dealing with family members, instead of speaking harshly or engaging in derogatory name-calling, we can endeavor to express our feelings calmly. Verbal aggression generally provokes retaliation. Gently telling a person our feelings is less accusatory and may move him to make amends.

"The Tongue of Wise Ones Does Good"

Self-discipline affects our manner of speech as well as what we say. "*The tongue of wise ones does good with knowledge*," says Solomon, "*but the mouth of the stupid ones bubbles forth with foolishness*." (Proverbs 15:2) When we develop a desire to help others and we talk to them about God's purpose and his wonderful provisions, are we not 'doing good with knowledge'? A stupid person fails to do this because he lacks knowledge.

Before giving further guidance on the use of the tongue, Solomon presents a thought-provoking contrast. "*The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch upon the bad ones and the good ones*." (Proverbs 15:3) We can rejoice in this because we are assured: "As regards Jehovah, his eyes are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him." (2 Chronicles 16:9) God knows if we are doing what is good. He

also takes note of those practicing what is bad and holds them accountable.

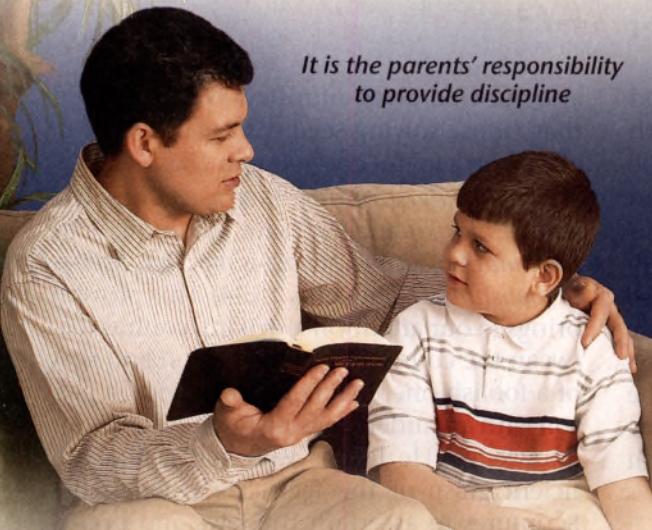
Solomon further stresses the value of a gentle tongue, saying: "*The calmness of the tongue is a tree of life, but distortion in it means a breaking down in the spirit*." (Proverbs 15:4) The expression "tree of life" suggests healing and nourishing properties. (Revelation 22:2) A wise person's calm speech refreshes the spirit of those hearing it. It appeals to their good qualities. On the contrary, a deceitful or perverse tongue causes the hearers' spirit to be crushed.

Receiving Discipline and "Scattering Knowledge"

"Anyone foolish disrespects the discipline of his father," continues the wise king, *"but anyone regarding reproof is shrewd."* (Proverbs 15:5) How could anyone 'regard reproof' unless it is first given? Does this scripture not imply that corrective discipline must be administered when needed? In a family, it is the responsibility of the parents—particularly the father—to provide discipline, and it is the child's duty to accept it. (Ephesians 6:1-3) However, all of Jehovah's servants receive discipline in one way or another. "*Whom Jehovah loves he disciplines*," says Hebrews 12:6, "*in fact, he scourges every one whom he receives as a son*." Our response to discipline reveals whether we are wise or foolish.

Presenting yet another contrast, Solomon says: "*The lips of the wise ones keep scattering knowledge about, but the heart of the stupid ones is not like that*." (Proverbs 15:7) Dispensing knowledge is like scattering seed. In ancient times, a farmer did not sow all his seed in one spot. Rather, he scattered a few seeds at a time over the entire field. So it is with dispensing knowledge. For instance, when we meet someone in the ministry, it would not be wise to pour out all we know about the Bible at one time. Instead, the wise

*It is the parents' responsibility
to provide discipline*



*"The lips of the wise ones keep
scattering knowledge about"*

individual is disciplined in speech. He ‘scatters’ knowledge as he gradually highlights just one Bible truth at a time and builds on it, taking into consideration the response of his hearer. Our Exemplar, Jesus Christ, did this when talking to a Samaritan woman.—John 4:7-26.

Imparting knowledge involves saying something instructive and beneficial. It takes thought to speak words that inform and encourage. Hence, “the heart of the righteous one meditates so as to answer.” (Proverbs 15:28) How vital it is that our words be like a gentle rain that soaks the ground and is beneficial, not like an unwelcome torrent that sweeps away everything in its path!

‘Holy in Conduct’

Scattering knowledge about Jehovah and his purpose and offering him “the fruit of lips” as “a sacrifice of praise” is certainly the course of wisdom. (Hebrews 13:15) However, for such a sacrifice to be acceptable to Jehovah, we must be ‘holy in all our conduct.’ (1 Peter 1:14-16) Using two contrasting proverbs, Solomon forcefully brings this vital truth to our attention. He says: *“The sacrifice of the wicked ones is something detestable to Jehovah, but the prayer of the upright ones*

is a pleasure to him. The way of the wicked one is something detestable to Jehovah, but the one pursuing righteousness he loves.”—Proverbs 15:8, 9.

How do those leaving the road to life view reproof, and what awaits them? (Matthew 7:13, 14) *“Discipline is bad to the one leaving the path; anyone hating reproof will die.”* (Proverbs 15:10) Instead of accepting corrective counsel from responsible ones in the Christian congregation and genuinely repenting, some who are following a wrong course choose to leave the path of righteousness. How foolish! According to *An American Translation*, this proverb says: “Stern discipline awaits the man who leaves the right way; he who hates admonition will die.”

What if someone puts on an appearance of accepting reproof while really hating it? This too is unwise. *“Sheol and the place of destruction are in front of Jehovah,”* says Israel’s king. *“How much more so the hearts of the sons of mankind!”* (Proverbs 15:11) Nothing could be figuratively farther away from the living God than Sheol, the place of the dead. Still, it is in front of him. He knows the identity and personality of all who are there and is able to resurrect them. (Psalm 139:8; John 5:28, 29) How easy it is for Jehovah to know what is in

the hearts of men! "All things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of him with whom we have an accounting," wrote the apostle Paul. (Hebrews 4:13) Pretense can fool humans but not God.

A person rejecting discipline not only hates reproof but also has contempt for those giving it. "*The ridiculer does not love the one reproofing him*," says Solomon. Bringing in a parallel thought to enlarge upon the idea, he adds: "*To the wise ones he will not go*." (Proverbs 15:12) What little hope there is that such a person will make his path straight!

Positive in Outlook

Reference to the word "heart" connects the next three proverbs of Solomon. Describing the effect of our emotions on our countenance, the wise king says: "*A joyful heart has a good effect on the countenance, but because of the pain of the heart there is a stricken spirit*."—Proverbs 15:13.

What can cause pain of heart? "Anxious care in the heart of a man is what will cause it to bow down [with sadness]," states the Bible. (Proverbs 12:25) How can we prevent negative aspects of life from crushing our spirit? Rather than constantly dwelling on circumstances over which we may have very little control, we can reflect on the rich spiritual blessings that Jehovah has bestowed upon us now and on what he will do for us in the future. This will bring us closer to him. Yes, drawing near to "the happy God" is bound to bring joy to our sad heart.—1 Timothy 1:11.

Moreover, the message of the Bible is an excellent source of comfort and delight. The psalmist pronounced happy the man whose "delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night." (Psalm 1:1, 2) Even when we experience pain of heart, reading the Bible and pondering over what it says will encourage us. There is

also our God-given ministry. We are assured that "those sowing seed with tears will reap even with a joyful cry."—Psalm 126:5.

"*The understanding heart is one that searches for knowledge*," says Solomon, "*but the mouth of stupid people is one that aspires to foolishness*." (Proverbs 15:14) This proverb brings to our attention a striking contrast between the counsel of a wise person and that of a foolish one. Before giving advice, a person with an understanding heart searches for knowledge. He listens well and gets a sufficient grasp of the facts. He searches the Scriptures to ascertain the laws and principles that apply to the situation. His counsel is solidly based on God's Word. However, a foolish person does not bother to find out the facts of the situation and blurts out what comes to his mind. When we seek advice, then, it is wise to go to knowledgeable, mature ones rather than to those who may be inclined to tell us what we want to hear. How good it is to have "gifts in men" in the Christian congregation, who 'search for knowledge' before giving counsel!—Ephesians 4:8.

The next proverb states an excellent benefit of having a positive outlook. The king of Israel says: "*All the days of the afflicted one are bad; but the one that is good at heart has a feast constantly*." (Proverbs 15:15) Life has its blessings and calamities, joys and tears. If we dwell only on the negative, sorrow will take over our thoughts, and all our days will be gloomy. However, if we allow personal blessings and our God-given hope to dominate our thinking, the affliction-causing aspects of life will fade into the background and we will experience inner joy. A positive outlook makes it possible for us to enjoy "a feast constantly."

By all means, then, let us have high regard for discipline. May we let it affect not only our emotions, speech, and actions but also our outlook.

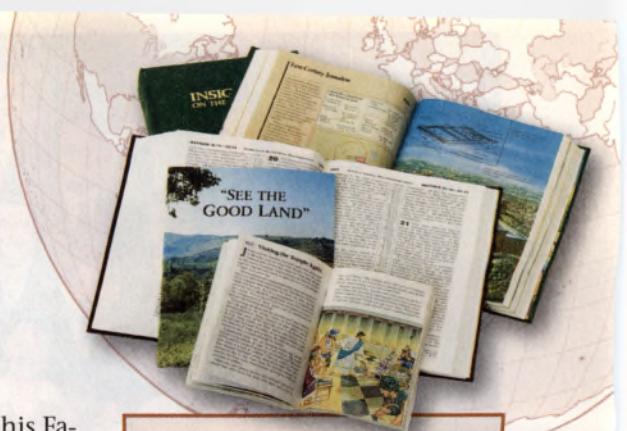
They Delight to Do God's Will

JESUS set a pattern for all Christians by praying to his Father: "Let, not my will, but yours take place." (Luke 22:42) That humble expression of submission to Jehovah is echoed today by millions of God's servants. Among them are the 52 students of the 120th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. On March 11, 2006, the graduating class was delighted with the prospect of doing God's will in various lands, even in the face of challenging circumstances.

What motivates these graduates to let Jehovah's will direct their lives? Chris and Leslie, a couple assigned to serve as missionaries in Bolivia, put it this way: "Since we have disowned ourselves, we want to make ourselves available to do anything in association with Jehovah's organization." (Mark 8:34) Jason and Chere, assigned to Albania, add: "Every assignment that we have received from Jehovah's organization has had its challenges. However, we have found Jehovah to be deserving of our complete trust."

Encouragement to Submit to Jehovah's Will

George Smith, a member of the Bethel family who serves in the Art Department, opened the graduation program with prayer. Stephen Lett, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses and the chairman of the graduation program, welcomed all in attendance. Guests from 23 lands had traveled to the Watchtower Educational Center in Patterson, New York, to be present on this joyful occasion. Brother Lett told the graduating class that they are going to accomplish "something very powerful." He drew attention to "strongly entrenched things"—such as false doctrines—that the new missionaries will be able to overturn by the power of the Scriptures. (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5) He concluded: "What joy it will bring you to be used by Jehovah to overturn strongly entrenched things in the honesthearted people in your assignments!"



CLASS STATISTICS

Number of countries represented: 6

Number of countries assigned to: 20

Total number of students: 52

Average age: 35.7

Average years in truth: 18.3

Average years in full-time ministry: 14.5

Harold Jackson, a member of the headquarters staff, spoke on the theme "A Few Things to Remember." He noted that the new missionaries should never forget to 'seek first the kingdom and God's righteousness.' (Matthew 6:33) They should remember that "love builds up" and is an unfailing key to success. (1 Corinthians 8:1) He said: "Let love be the guiding influence in your dealings with others."

Next, Geoffrey Jackson, a member of the Governing Body who served as a missionary from 1979 until 2003, asked the graduates, "Are You Responsible?" He stressed the need for having a balanced view of



120th Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back, and names are listed from left to right in each row.

- (1) Wright, S.; Suárez, B.; Croisant, B.; Davenport, L. (2) Johnson, A.; Ali, C.; Cady, K.; Guerrero, P.; Ases, A.
(3) Ortiz, L.; Lyall, K.; Uzeta, M.; Perez, R.; Backus, K.; Caterina, C. (4) Palmer, B.; Loving, D.; Macdonough, J.; Bostock, D.; Benetatos, L. (5) Jasicki, M.; Sarafianos, E.; Stelter, C.; Vaira, R.; Woon, J.; Prentice, K.
(6) Davenport, H.; Croisant, H.; Perez, M.; Vaira, E.; Suárez, A.; Caterina, I.; Wright, C. (7) Cady, K.; Macdonough, J.; Ortiz, M.; Woon, J.; Ali, J.; Ases, M. (8) Sarafianos, G.; Lyall, D.; Uzeta, C.; Stelter, P.; Prentice, G.; Johnson, A.; Benetatos, C. (9) Palmer, J.; Jasicki, W.; Backus, J.; Bostock, S.; Guerrero, J. M.; Loving, S.

oneself and the ministry. Christians are responsible to work hard at planting and watering seeds of truth. However, giving spiritual growth is Jehovah's responsibility, since it is "God who makes it grow." (1 Corinthians 3:6-9) Brother Jackson added: "Jehovah holds you responsible to keep strong spiritually. But what is your greatest responsibility? To love Jehovah and to love the people you are going to serve."

Gilead instructor Lawrence Bowen considered the theme "Know How You Ought to Conduct Yourself." He reminded the students that Jehovah miraculously guided and protected the Israelites through the wilderness. (Exodus 13:21, 22) He guides and protects us today, in part by means of the anointed Christian congregation, "a pillar and support of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:14, 15) The new missionaries are to uphold the

truth, which gives guidance and protection to humble ones.

Wallace Liverance, another Gilead instructor, exhorted the graduates not to forget the word of God that is "behind" them. God's word is behind us in the sense that the Bible was completed centuries ago. Like a shepherd calling out from behind a flock of sheep, Jehovah is behind his people, giving them direction through "the faithful and discreet slave." (Isaiah 30:21; Matthew 24:45-47) Gilead School helped the graduates to grow in appreciation for that slave class. The "slave" even provided the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. The speaker encouraged the graduates: "Take this stored treasure of information, and use it to teach others."—Matthew 13:52.

Doing Jehovah's Will in the Field Ministry

In the program part "Eager to Declare the Good News," Gilead instructor Mark Noumair highlighted some of the experiences the graduates enjoyed in the public ministry while attending Gilead School. (Romans 1:15) Interviews with graduates revealed that they had indeed shown outstanding eagerness to preach on every occasion.

The graduates received additional encouragement through an interview conducted by Kenneth Flodin with three traveling overseers who now serve in the United States. Richard Keller and Alejandro Lacayo, who in the past served in South and Central America, explained how they had coped with various trials and related some of the blessings they received while serving as missionaries. Moacir Felisbino recounted the training he had received while working closely with missionaries in Brazil, where he grew up.

Three experienced missionaries, Robert Jones, Woodworth Mills, and Christopher Slay, were interviewed by David Schafer. The three brothers related how they learned to act with confidence in Jehovah when expe-

riencing hardships. They assured the class that the training they had received from Jehovah's organization had prepared them well for their missionary assignments. Brother Mills summed it up this way: "It was not the intellectual part of Gilead that helped me the most, but it was what the school taught me about humility and love."

Governing Body member Guy Pierce presented the principal talk, entitled "Jehovah Will Never Fail." Adam failed, but did that mean failure on God's part? Did God fail to create Adam perfectly, as some people say? Not at all, for "the true God made mankind upright." (Ecclesiastes 7:29) Jesus' course of integrity under the greatest test on earth proved that "Adam had no excuse, no reason to fail," noted the speaker. Adam's test of obedience in the garden of Eden was much less difficult than the test that Jesus faced successfully. Yet, Adam failed. Nevertheless, Jehovah will never fail. His purpose will be realized. (Isaiah 55:11) Brother Pierce told the new missionaries: "You have the privilege of honoring Jehovah with your self-sacrificing spirit. May Jehovah be with each of you wherever you serve him as missionaries."

After conveying greetings from various branch offices of Jehovah's Witnesses, the chairman, Brother Lett, presented the graduates with their diplomas and assignments. Vernon Wisegarver, a longtime member of the Bethel family, represented the audience in a closing prayer.

The 6,872 in attendance felt that the graduation program had renewed their zeal to do God's will. (Psalm 40:8) Graduates Andrew and Anna said: "We dedicated our life to Jehovah. We made a promise to Jehovah to do *anything* he asks of us. It just so happens that Jehovah has asked us to go to Cameroon, Africa." They and the other members of the graduating class are eager to embark on a career that will give them fulfillment and satisfaction. Yes, they delight to do God's will.

"The Best Conclusion I Could Imagine"

A HIGH-SCHOOL teacher in Spain wrote: "For more than a hundred years, Jehovah's Witnesses have demonstrated true solidarity, irreproachable honesty and, above all, indestructible faith." What moved this teacher—a self-styled atheist—to make such a statement?

It all began when Noemí, a high school student and one of Jehovah's Witnesses, was assigned to write an essay as part of the final examination of her school studies. She decided to develop the theme "The Purple Triangles Under Nazi Rule."

Why did she choose that theme? Noemí explains: "Since a teacher would oversee my work, I thought I could take advantage of this opportunity to give him a witness. The story of how Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany remained true to their principles had touched my heart. I believed that it would impress others as well."

Noemí's work had an impact on many more people than she could possibly have imagined. On October 5, 2002, her essay received a prize in a national competition for research on science and the humanities. The prizes for that competition are awarded by a jury made up of 20 academics from prominent Spanish universities.

Noemí received her award from Pilar del Castillo, the Spanish minister of education. Noemí seized the opportunity to give the minister a copy of the videocassette *Jehovah's Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault*. The minister readily accepted the gift.

Back in Noemí's hometown of Manresa, the local newspaper highlighted her academ-



ic achievement and reviewed the content of her essay. Meanwhile, the headmaster of her school asked for a copy of her work in order to include it in a program to commemorate the high school's 75th anniversary.

"This is the best conclusion I could imagine for my high school studies," Noemí says. "I was overjoyed when I read the words that my teacher, Mr. Jorge Tomás Calot, wrote as part of his introduction to my report:

"I am an atheist, but I would like to be totally convinced of the existence of this Supreme Being, who inspires in his worshippers the most genuine 'love of neighbor.'"

THEY WERE BORN INTO GOD'S CHOSEN NATION

"It is you Jehovah your God has chosen to become his people."

—DEUTERONOMY 7:6.

IN 1513 B.C.E., Jehovah brought his servants on earth into a new relationship with him. That year, he humiliated a world power and delivered the Israelites from slavery. In so doing, he became their Savior and Owner. Before acting, God told Moses: "Say to the sons of Israel, 'I am Jehovah, and I shall certainly bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from their slavery, and I shall indeed reclaim you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. And I shall certainly take you as my people, and I shall indeed prove to be your God.'"—Exodus 6:6, 7, footnotes; 15:1-7, 11.

² Shortly after their Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites entered into a covenant relationship with their God, Jehovah. Rather than dealing with individuals, families, or clans, henceforth Jehovah would have an organized people, a nation, on earth. (Exodus 19:5, 6; 24:7) He provided his people with laws that governed their social order and, more important, their worship. Moses said to them: "What great nation is there that has gods near to it the way Jehovah our God is in all our calling upon him? And what great nation is there that has righteous regulations and judicial decisions like all this law that I am putting before you today?"—Deuteronomy 4:7, 8.

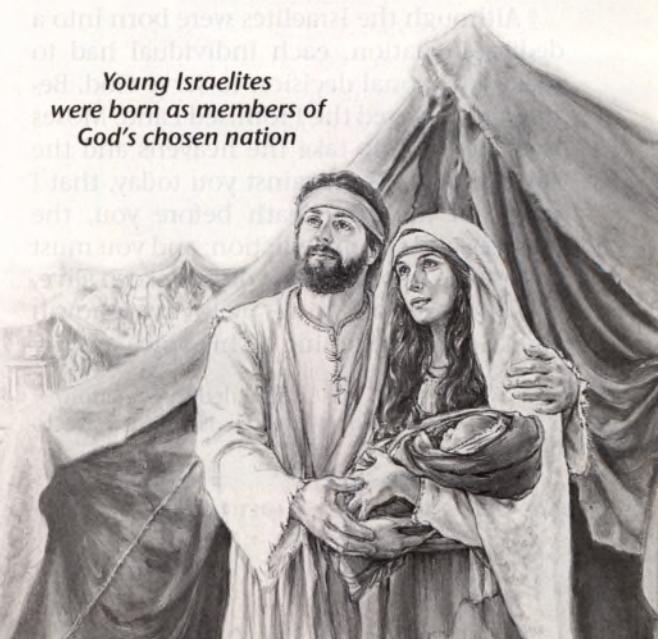
1, 2. What mighty acts did Jehovah perform in behalf of his people, and what relationship did the Israelites enter into with God?

Born Into a Nation of Witnesses

³ Centuries later, Jehovah reminded the Israelites, through his prophet Isaiah, of an important reason for their existence as a nation. Isaiah said: "This is what Jehovah has said, your Creator, O Jacob, and your Former, O Israel: 'Do not be afraid, for I have repurchased you. I have called you by your name. You are mine. For I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel your Savior. . . . Bring my sons from far off, and my daughters from the extremity of the earth, everyone that is called by my name and that I have created for my own glory, that I have formed, yes, that I have made. You are my witnesses,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'even my servant whom I have chosen, . . . the people whom I have formed for myself, that

3, 4. What was an important reason for Israel's existence as a nation?

*Young Israelites
were born as members of
God's chosen nation*



they should recount the praise of me.'”—Isaiah 43:1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 21.

⁴ As a people called by Jehovah's name, the Israelites would serve as witnesses to his sovereignty before the nations. They were to be a people 'created for Jehovah's glory.' They were to 'recount the praise of Jehovah,' relate his wondrous acts of deliverance and thus glorify his holy name. In short, they were to be a nation of witnesses for Jehovah.

⁵ In the 11th century B.C.E., King Solomon indicated that Jehovah had made Israel a separated nation. In prayer to Jehovah, he stated: "You yourself separated them as your inheritance out of all the peoples of the earth." (1 Kings 8:53) Individual Israelites also had a special relationship with Jehovah. Earlier, Moses had told them: "Sons you are of Jehovah your God. . . . For you are a holy people to Jehovah your God." (Deuteronomy 14:1, 2) Young Israelites, therefore, did not need to dedicate their lives to Jehovah. They were born as members of God's dedicated people. (Psalm 79:13; 95:7) Each new generation was instructed in the laws of Jehovah and was obligated to keep them by virtue of the covenant that bound Israel to Jehovah.—Deuteronomy 11:18, 19.

Free to Choose

⁶ Although the Israelites were born into a dedicated nation, each individual had to make a personal decision to serve God. Before they entered the Promised Land, Moses told them: "I do take the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you today, that I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring, by loving Jehovah your God, by listening to his voice and by

5. In what respects was Israel a dedicated nation?
6. What choice did individual Israelites have to make?

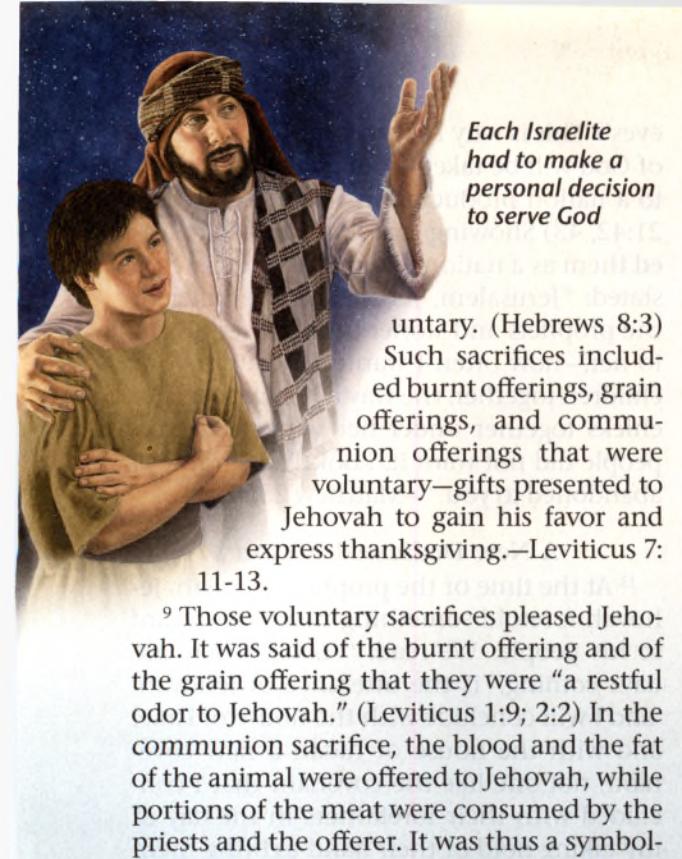
sticking to him; for he is your life and the length of your days, that you may dwell upon the ground that Jehovah swore to your forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give to them." (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20) Hence, the Israelites individually had to choose to love Jehovah, to listen to his voice, and to stick to him. Since the Israelites had free will, they would have to bear the consequences of their choice.—Deuteronomy 30:16-18.

⁷ The period of the Judges provides a good illustration of the consequences of faithfulness and of unfaithfulness. Just before that period began, the Israelites followed the good example of Joshua and were blessed. "The people continued to serve Jehovah all the days of Joshua and all the days of the older men who extended their days after Joshua and who had seen all of Jehovah's great work that he did for Israel." However, some time after Joshua's death, "another generation began to rise after them that did not know Jehovah or the work that he had done for Israel. And the sons of Israel fell to doing what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah." (Judges 2:7, 10, 11) Apparently, the upcoming, inexperienced generation did not prize their heritage as members of a dedicated people, in whose behalf their God, Jehovah, had accomplished mighty acts in the past.—Psalm 78:3-7, 10, 11.

Living Up to Their Dedication

⁸ Jehovah provided his people with opportunities to live up to the national dedication. For instance, his Law provided for a system of sacrifices, or offerings, some of which were compulsory, while others were vol-

7. What happened after the death of Joshua's generation?
- 8, 9. (a) What arrangement allowed the Israelites to demonstrate their dedication to Jehovah? (b) What did those who made voluntary offerings gain for themselves?



Each Israelite had to make a personal decision to serve God

untary. (Hebrews 8:3) Such sacrifices included burnt offerings, grain offerings, and communion offerings that were voluntary—gifts presented to Jehovah to gain his favor and express thanksgiving.—Leviticus 7: 11-13.

⁹ Those voluntary sacrifices pleased Jehovah. It was said of the burnt offering and of the grain offering that they were “a restful odor to Jehovah.” (Leviticus 1:9; 2:2) In the communion sacrifice, the blood and the fat of the animal were offered to Jehovah, while portions of the meat were consumed by the priests and the offerer. It was thus a symbolic meal signifying a peaceful relationship with Jehovah. The Law stated: “Now in case you should sacrifice a communion sacrifice to Jehovah, you should sacrifice it to gain approval for yourselves.” (Leviticus 19:5) While all Israelites were dedicated to Jeho-

vah by reason of birth, those who made their dedication meaningful by making voluntary offerings ‘gained approval for themselves’ and were richly blessed.—Malachi 3:10.

¹⁰ Frequently, however, the dedicated nation of Israel proved unfaithful to Jehovah. Through his prophet Isaiah, Jehovah said to them: “You have not brought me the sheep of your whole burnt offerings, and with your sacrifices you have not glorified me. I have not compelled you to serve me with a gift.” (Isaiah 43:23) In addition, offerings that were not made willingly and out of love had no value in Jehovah’s eyes. For instance, three centuries after Isaiah, in the days of the prophet Malachi, the Israelites offered blemished animals. Hence, Malachi told them: “‘No delight do I have in you,’ Jehovah of armies has said, ‘and in the gift offering from your hand I take no pleasure.’ . . . ‘You have brought something torn away, and the lame one, and the sick one; yes, you have brought it as a gift. Can I take pleasure in it at your hand?’ Jehovah has said.”—Malachi 1:10, 13; Amos 5:22.

10. How did Jehovah express his displeasure in the days of Isaiah and of Malachi?

Voluntary offerings gave Israelites the opportunity to demonstrate their love for Jehovah



Rejected as a Dedicated Nation

¹¹ At the time the Israelites became a nation dedicated to Jehovah, he promised them: "If you will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant, then you will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples, because the whole earth belongs to me. And you yourselves will become to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:5, 6) The promised Messiah would appear in their midst and give them the first opportunity to become members of God's Kingdom government. (Genesis 22:17, 18; 49:10; 2 Samuel 7:12, 16; Luke 1: 31-33; Romans 9:4, 5) But the great majority of the Israelite nation proved false to their dedication. (Matthew 22:14) They rejected the Messiah and eventually killed him.—Acts 7:51-53.

¹² A few days before his death, Jesus told the Jewish religious leaders: "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone that the builders rejected is the one that has become the chief cornerstone. From Jehovah this has come to be, and it is marvelous in our

11. What opportunity was given to Israel?
12. What statements by Jesus show that Israel was rejected as Jehovah's dedicated nation?

By Way of Review

- Why did young Israelites not have to make a personal dedication to Jehovah?
- How could the Israelites demonstrate that they lived up to their dedication?
- Why did Jehovah reject Israel as his dedicated nation, and how was it replaced?
- From Pentecost 33 C.E. on, what did both Jews and Gentiles have to do to become members of spiritual Israel?

eyes'? This is why I say to you, 'The kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits.' " (Matthew 21:42, 43) Showing that Jehovah had rejected them as a nation dedicated to Him, Jesus stated: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her,—how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings! But you people did not want it. Look! Your house is abandoned to you."—Matthew 23:37, 38.

A New Dedicated Nation

¹³ At the time of the prophet Jeremiah, Jehovah foretold something new with regard to his people. We read: "'Look! There are days coming,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and I will conclude with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant; not one like the covenant that I concluded with their forefathers in the day of my taking hold of their hand to bring them forth out of the land of Egypt, 'which covenant of mine they themselves broke, although I myself had husbandly ownership of them,' is the utterance of Jehovah. 'For this is the covenant that I shall conclude with the house of Israel after those days,' is the utterance of Jehovah. 'I will put my law within them, and in their heart I shall write it. And I will become their God, and they themselves will become my people!'"—Jeremiah 31:31-33.

¹⁴ The basis for this new covenant was laid when Jesus died and later presented the value of his shed blood to his Father, in 33 C.E. (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:15, 24-26) However, with the outpouring of the holy spirit at

13. What prophetic statement did Jehovah make in the days of Jeremiah?
14. When and on what basis did Jehovah's new dedicated nation come into being? Identify that new nation.

Pentecost 33 C.E. and the birth of a new nation, "the Israel of God," the new covenant went into operation. (Galatians 6:16; Romans 2:28, 29; 9:6; 11:25, 26) Writing to anointed Christians, the apostle Peter declared: "You are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies' of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. For you were once not a people, but are now God's people." (1 Peter 2:9, 10) The special relationship between Jehovah and fleshly Israel had ended. In 33 C.E., Jehovah's favor had been transferred from earthly Israel to spiritual Israel, the Christian congregation, 'a nation producing the fruits' of the Messianic Kingdom.—Matthew 21:43.

Individual Dedication

¹⁵ After Pentecost 33 C.E., every individual, Jew or Gentile, had to make a personal dedication to God and be baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit."* (Matthew 28:19) At Pentecost, the apostle Peter told receptive Jews and proselytes: "Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the free gift of the holy spirit." (Acts 2: 38) Such Jews and proselytes had to signify by their baptism not only that they had dedicated their lives to Jehovah but also that they had accepted Jesus as the means whereby Jehovah would forgive their sins. They had to acknowledge him as Jehovah's High Priest and as their Leader, the Head of the Christian congregation.—Colossians 1: 13, 14, 18.

* See *The Watchtower*, May 15, 2003, pages 30-1.

15. On the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., what baptism did Peter urge his listeners to undergo?

After Pentecost 33 C.E., Christ's followers had to make a personal dedication to God and symbolize this by baptism

¹⁶ Years later, the apostle Paul stated: "Both to those in Damascus first and to those in Jerusalem, and over all the country of Judea, and to the nations I went bringing the message that they should repent and turn to God by doing works that befit repentance." (Acts 26:20) After convincing people—Jews and Gentiles—that Jesus was Christ, the Messiah, Paul helped them to dedication and baptism. (Acts 16:14, 15, 31-33; 17:3, 4; 18:8) By turning to God, such new disciples became members of spiritual Israel.

¹⁷ Today, the final sealing of the remaining spiritual Israelites is near. When it is completed, the "four angels" holding back the winds of destruction of "the great tribulation" will be authorized to release them. In the meantime, the ingathering of the "great crowd," who hope to live forever on earth, is going on apace. These "other sheep" freely choose to exercise faith in "the blood of the Lamb" and get baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah. (Revelation 7:1-4, 9-15; 22:17; John 10:16; Matthew 28:19, 20) Among them are many young ones who have been raised by Christian parents. If you are such a young person, you will be interested in reading the following article.

16. In Paul's day, how did rightly disposed ones—Jews and Gentiles—become part of spiritual Israel?
17. What sealing work is nearing its end, and what other work is going on apace?



YOUTHS, MAKE IT YOUR CHOICE TO SERVE JEHOVAH

"Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve."—JOSHUA 24:15.

LE^T [children] become Christians when they have become able to know Christ." A writer named Tertullian penned those words at the close of the second century C.E. He was protesting infant baptism, a practice that was taking root in the apostate Christianity of his day. In disagreement with Tertullian and the Bible, Church Father Augustine claimed that baptism removes the stain of original sin and that infants who die unbaptized are damned. That belief promoted the practice of baptizing babies as quickly as possible after they were born.

² Many mainstream churches of Christendom still baptize newborn babies. More-

^{1, 2}. What wrong kinds of baptism have been practiced in Christendom?

over, throughout history, compulsory baptism of conquered "pagans" was practiced by rulers and religious leaders of so-called Christian nations. But infant baptism and forced baptisms of adults have no foundation in the Bible.

No Automatic Dedication Today

³ The Bible shows that God considers young children to be holy even if only one of their parents is a faithful Christian. (1 Corinthians 7:14) Does that make such children dedicated servants of Jehovah? No. However, children who are raised by parents who are dedicated to Jehovah receive training that can lead those children to make a voluntary dedication to Jehovah. Wise King Solomon wrote: "Observe, O my son,

^{3, 4}. What can help children of dedicated parents to make a voluntary dedication?

To whom will you listen?



the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother. . . . When you walk about, it will lead you; when you lie down, it will stand guard over you; and when you have waked up, it itself will make you its concern. For the commandment is a lamp, and a light the law is, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life."—Proverbs 6:20-23.

⁴ The guidance of Christian parents can be a protection for youngsters, provided they are willing to follow it. Solomon also stated: "A wise son is the one that makes a father rejoice, and a stupid son is the grief of his mother." "You, O my son, hear and become wise, and lead your heart on in the way." (Proverbs 10:1; 23:19) Yes, to benefit from parental training, you young ones must willingly accept advice, counsel, and discipline. You are not born wise, but you can "become wise" and voluntarily follow "the way of life."

What Is Mental-Regulating?

⁵ The apostle Paul wrote: "Children, be obedient to your parents in union with the Lord, for this is righteous: 'Honor your father and your mother'; which is the first command with a promise: 'That it may go well with you and you may endure a long time on the earth.' And you, fathers, do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah."—Ephesians 6:1-4.

⁶ Are Christian parents unfairly influencing their children when they raise them in "the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah"? No. Who can criticize parents for

5. What counsel did Paul give to children and to fathers?

6, 7. What is involved in bringing up children in the "mental-regulating of Jehovah," and why does this not mean that parents are unfairly influencing their children?

teaching their children what they consider to be right and morally beneficial? Atheists are not criticized for teaching their children that God does not exist. Roman Catholics feel duty-bound to bring up their children in the Catholic faith, and they are rarely criticized for endeavoring to do so. Similarly, Jehovah's Witnesses should not be accused of manipulating the minds of their children when they raise them to adopt Jehovah's thinking on basic truths and moral principles.

⁷ According to the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, the original Greek word translated "mental-regulating" at Ephesians 6:4 refers to a process that "seeks to correct the mind, to put right what is wrong, to improve the spiritual attitude." What if a young person resists parental training because of peer pressure, the desire to go along with the crowd? Who can be said to exert harmful pressure—the parents or the young person's peers? If the latter are pressuring the youngster to take drugs, drink heavily, or engage in immoral conduct, should the parents be criticized for trying to adjust their child's thinking and help him or her realize the consequences of such dangerous conduct?

⁸ The apostle Paul wrote to the young man Timothy: "Continue in the things that you learned and were persuaded to believe, knowing from what persons you learned them and that from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through the faith in connection with Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:14, 15) From Timothy's early childhood, his mother and grandmother had firmly grounded his faith in God on knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. (Acts 16:1;

8. What was involved in Timothy's being "persuaded to believe"?

2 Timothy 1:5) Later, when they became Christians, they did not force Timothy to believe but “persuaded” him by means of sound reasoning based on Scriptural knowledge.

Jehovah Invites You to Choose

⁹ Jehovah could have made his creatures robots, programmed to do his will and unable to do otherwise. Instead, he dignified them with free will. Our God desires willing subjects. He takes delight in seeing his creatures, old and young, serve him out of love. The finest example of loving submission to God's will is his only-begotten Son, of whom Jehovah stated: “This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.” (Matthew 3:17) This firstborn Son said to his Father: “To do your will, O my God, I have delighted, and your law is within my inward parts.”—Psalm 40:8; Hebrews 10:9, 10.

¹⁰ Jehovah expects those who serve him under the direction of his Son to show the same willing submission to His will. Prophetically, the psalmist sang: “Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day of your military force. In the splendors of holiness, from the womb of the dawn, you have your company of young men just like dew-drops.” (Psalm 110:3) Jehovah's entire organization, both the heavenly and the earthly parts, functions on the basis of loving submission to God's will.

9. (a) How did Jehovah dignify his creatures, and for what reason? (b) How did God's only-begotten Son exercise his free will?

10. What is the basis for serving Jehovah acceptably?



*How can dedication
and baptism serve
as a protection
for you?*

¹¹ So you young ones should understand that neither your parents nor the Christian elders in the congregation are going to force you to get baptized. The desire to serve Jehovah must come from you. Joshua of old told the Israelites: “Serve [Jehovah] in faultlessness and in truth . . . Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve.” (Joshua 24:14-22) Similarly, it must be of your own accord that you choose to dedicate yourselves to Jehovah and devote your lives to doing his will.

Facing Up to Your Responsibility

¹² The time comes when you young people are no longer protected by the faithfulness of your parents. (1 Corinthians 7:14) The disciple James wrote: “If one knows how to do what is right and yet does not do it, it is a sin for him.” (James 4:17) Parents cannot serve God for their children any more than children can serve God for their parents.

(Ezekiel 18:20) Have you learned about Jehovah and his purposes? Are you old enough to understand what you have learned and to begin to have a personal relationship with him? Would it not then be reasonable to think that God considers you capable of deciding to serve him?

¹³ Are you an unbaptized young person who is being raised by godly parents, attending Christian meetings, and even sharing in

11. What choice is placed before young ones raised by dedicated parents?

12. (a) While parents can train their children, what can they not do for them? (b) When does a young person become responsible before Jehovah for the choices he makes?

13. What questions would unbaptized adolescents do well to ask themselves?

the preaching of the Kingdom good news? If so, ask yourself honestly: 'Why am I doing this? Do I attend meetings and share in the preaching work because my parents expect me to do so or because I want to please Jehovah?' Have you proved to yourself "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God"?—Romans 12:2.

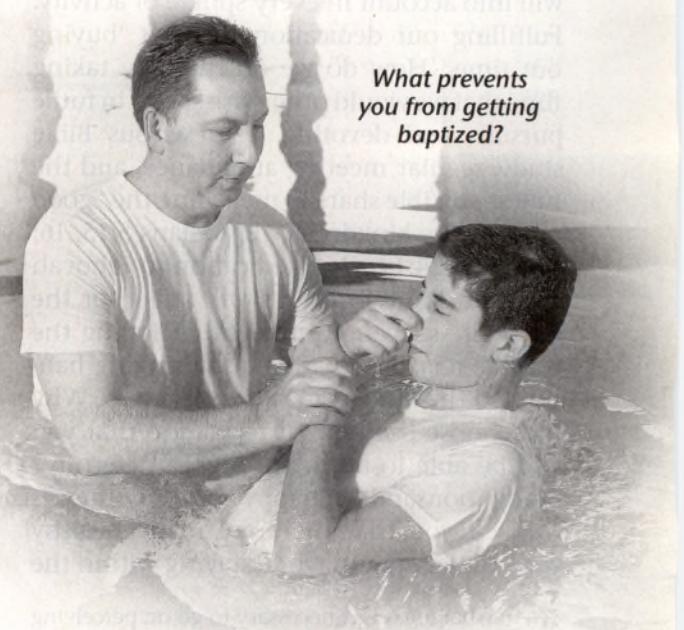
Why Put Off Getting Baptized?

¹⁴ "What prevents me from getting baptized?" The Ethiopian man who put that question to the evangelizer Philip had just learned that Jesus was the Messiah. But the Ethiopian had sufficient knowledge of the Scriptures to realize that he should not delay in openly testifying that from then on he would serve Jehovah as part of the Christian congregation, and that brought him much joy. (Acts 8:26-39) Similarly, a woman named Lydia, whose heart was opened "wide to pay attention to the things being spoken by Paul," immediately "got baptized," she and her household. (Acts 16:14, 15) Likewise, the jailer in Philippi listened to Paul and Silas as they "spoke the word of Jehovah to him," and "he and his were baptized without delay." (Acts 16:25-34) Therefore, if you have a basic knowledge of Jehovah and his purposes, a sincere desire to do his will, and a good reputation in the congregation and you are faithfully attending meetings and sharing in preaching the good news of the Kingdom, why would you put off getting baptized?—Matthew 28:19, 20.

¹⁵ Could it be that you hesitate to take this important step for fear of being held ac-

countable should you fall into wrong conduct? If so, think of this: Would you refuse to apply for a driver's license simply because you were afraid that some day you might have an accident? Of course not! Neither should you hesitate to get baptized if you qualify. Indeed, you will be strongly motivated to do your utmost to resist wrongdoing if you have dedicated your life to

*What prevents
you from getting
baptized?*



Jehovah and have agreed to do his will. (Philippians 4:13) Young ones, please do not imagine that by postponing baptism, you avoid accountability. When you have reached the age of responsibility, you are answerable to Jehovah for the way you act whether you are baptized or not.—Romans 14:11, 12.

¹⁶ Numerous Witnesses around the world feel that their decision to get baptized when they were young helped them greatly. Take as an example a 23-year-old Witness in Western Europe. He recalls that getting baptized

14. What Biblical examples show that baptism should not be unduly delayed?

15, 16. (a) What incorrect reasoning may hold some young ones back from getting baptized? (b) How can dedication and baptism serve as a protection for young ones?

at the age of 13 motivated him to be careful not to be swept away by "the desires incidental to youth." (2 Timothy 2:22) Early on, he set his sights on serving as a full-time minister. Today, he serves happily at a branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses. Rich blessings await all youths, including you, who choose to serve Jehovah.

¹⁷ Dedication and baptism mark the beginning of a life wherein we take Jehovah's will into account in every sphere of activity. Fulfilling our dedication involves 'buying out time.' How do we do that? By taking time that we would otherwise spend in futile pursuits and devoting it to serious Bible study, regular meeting attendance, and the fullest possible share in preaching the "good news of the kingdom." (Ephesians 5:15, 16; Matthew 24:14) Our dedication to Jehovah and our desire to do his will affect for the good all aspects of our lives, including the way we relax, our eating and drinking habits, and the kind of music we listen to. Why not choose the type of relaxation that you will be able to enjoy throughout eternity? Many thousands of happy young Witnesses will tell you that there are many healthy ways of having fun while staying within the

17. In what areas is it necessary to go on perceiving what "the will of Jehovah" is?

By Way of Review

- What is involved in mental-regulating?
- What kind of service is acceptable to Jehovah?
- What choice is placed before all young ones raised by dedicated parents?
- Why should baptism not be unduly postponed?

bounds of "the will of Jehovah."—Ephesians 5:17-19.

"We Will Go With You"

¹⁸ From 1513 B.C.E. to Pentecost 33 C.E., Jehovah had on earth an organized people whom he had chosen to practice his worship and be his witnesses. (Isaiah 43:12) Young Israelites were born into that nation. Since Pentecost, Jehovah has a new "nation" on earth, spiritual Israel, "a people for his name." (1 Peter 2:9, 10; Acts 15:14; Galatians 6:16) The apostle Paul states that Christ has cleansed for himself "a people peculiarly his own, zealous for fine works." (Titus 2:14) You young people are free to determine for yourselves where that people is to be found. Who today make up "the righteous nation that is keeping faithful conduct," living in harmony with Bible principles, acting as faithful Witnesses for Jehovah, and proclaiming his Kingdom as the only hope for humanity? (Isaiah 26:2-4) Look at the churches of Christendom and other religions, and compare their conduct with what the Bible requires of the true servants of God.

¹⁹ Millions of people throughout the world, including many young ones, have become convinced that the anointed remnant of Jehovah's Witnesses constitute that "righteous nation." They say to these spiritual Israelites: "We will go with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people." (Zechariah 8:23) We truly hope and pray that you young ones will decide to take your place among God's people and thus "choose life"—life everlasting in Jehovah's new world.—Deuteronomy 30:15-20; 2 Peter 3:11-13.

18. What question should young ones ask themselves?

19. Of what have millions of people throughout the earth become convinced?

Her Faith Encourages Others

WHEN Silvia was born in December 1992, she seemed to be a completely healthy little girl. But at the age of two, Silvia was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, an incurable disease that causes increasingly severe respiratory and digestive problems. To cope with her illness, Silvia takes 36 pills every day, uses inhalers, and receives physical therapy. Since her pulmonary capacity is only 25 percent of normal, she must remain attached to an oxygen tank, even when she goes out.

"It is amazing, though, how Silvia copes with this illness," says Teresa, her mother. "Thanks to her knowledge of the Scriptures, she has strong faith. This faith helps her to deal with her grief and discomfort. She always remembers Jehovah's promise of a new world, where all sick ones will be healed." (Revelation 21:4) At times when her family feels down, Silvia's confident smile buoys them up. She tells her parents and her brother: "Life in the new world will make up for all our present suffering."

Silvia regularly shares the good news of God's Word with others, and the people she

talks to notice that her face radiates happiness and joy. The members of the Christian congregation where she attends meetings in the Canary Islands also greatly appreciate listening to her comments and seeing her participate. And after each meeting, Silvia likes to stay behind to talk with her Christian brothers and sisters. Her outgoing and cheerful personality has moved everyone in the congregation to love her.

"Silvia teaches us a very important lesson," observes her father, Antonio. "Even when we have problems, life is a gift from God, and we should appreciate it." Like Silvia, all of God's servants—young and old—eagerly await the time when "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'"—Isaiah 33:24.

Silvia shares a Bible verse while her mother holds the oxygen tank



A Visit That Caused a Turnaround

"I COULDN'T wait to tell my family about the two 'angels' God sent to me." So wrote a gentleman who was visited by two young women who are Jehovah's Witnesses. A few weeks before their visit, he had lost in death his wife of 45 years. He was devastated. His adult children had provided him comfort, but they lived far away. No friends and neighbors had come to visit him.

"God and I are not on speaking terms," said the man to the young women when they visited him. However, they were sympathetic and left with him a small Bible-based tract entitled *What Hope for Dead Loved Ones?* He read it that evening and found solace.

A short time later, the two Christian women returned. They had recalled how sad he had been on the previous visit and came to see how he was doing. "I was stunned," the man later wrote, "that two total strangers cared about me and were concerned about my well-being." He was encouraged by the thoughts they shared with him from the Bible. The women said that they would call again. The gentleman was delighted and was moved to write the above-mentioned comments in a letter that he sent to the local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Before moving to a location nearer to one of his children, this man attended a Christian meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses and had a meal with the family of one of the young women. He wrote: "I am leaving the area, but those young people and your church will always have a place in my heart and in my prayers. Yes, I do pray now—a lot. I have made a complete turnaround. Those young folks played a major part in that, and I will be forever grateful to them."

