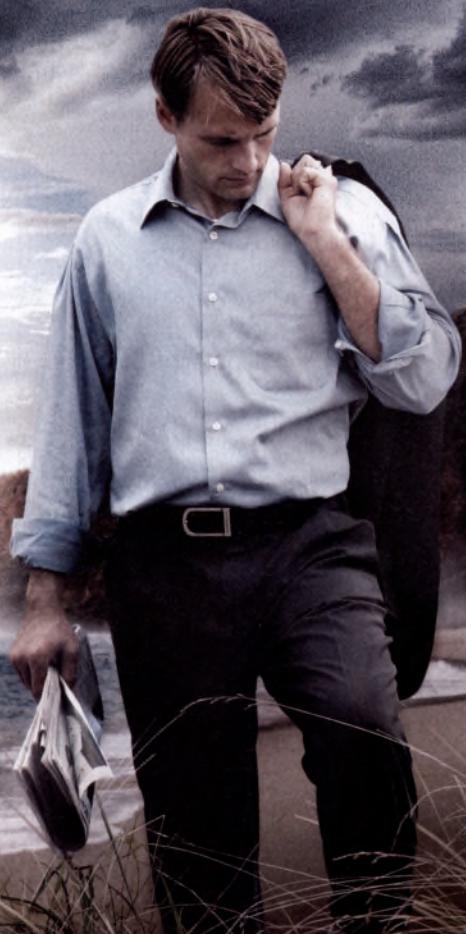


FEBRUARY 1, 2008

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

How Can
You Find Real
Peace of
Mind?



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

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ENGLISH

The Quest for Answers

"Having solved the question of 'how' to make a living, having surrounded ourselves with once unthinkable luxuries—air-conditioned comfort, CD quality sound, and fresh fruit year round—we are left to wonder 'why' we live.

Why run this rat race? What's the point?"

—David G. Myers, professor of psychology at Hope College, Holland, Michigan, U.S.A.



HOW would you answer the questions raised by this professor? Some may wonder if it is even worth spending time searching for the answers. However, trying to ignore such questions is like trying to ignore a pebble in your shoe—you can continue walking, but your journey will be an unhappy one.

If you have ever wondered whether there is more to life, you are not alone. According to the World Values Survey, one of the largest studies of human values ever conducted, a growing number of people in

many countries are thinking about the "meaning and purpose of life."

If you are to gain genuine peace of mind, you need to find the answers to three big questions.

Where did we come from?

What is the purpose of life?

What does the future hold?

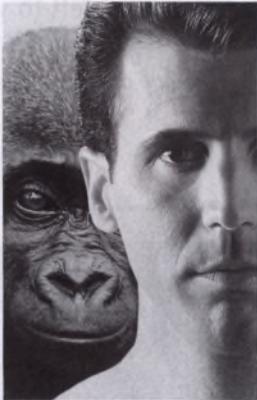
Where can you find reliable answers to these important questions? Rather than offering speculation or philosophy, the following pages will present the answers found in God's Word, the Bible. We invite you to open your copy of the Bible and find out for yourself what it says.

Where Did We Come From?

WHY DOES THE ANSWER MATTER? Many people are taught that life on earth emerged by accident. They are told that through a series of unlikely, random events, evolution produced the human race with all its emotional, intellectual, and spiritual capacities.

But consider: If we really are the product of evolution and there is no Creator, the human race would, in a sense, be an orphan. Mankind would have no source of superior wisdom to consult—no one to help us solve our problems. We would have to rely on human wisdom to avert environmental disaster, to solve political conflicts, and to guide us through our personal crises.

Do these prospects bring you peace of mind? If not, contemplate the alternative. Not only is it more appealing but it also makes more sense.



**Did the
human race
evolve?**

What the Bible Says

The Bible teaches that mankind is a direct creation of God. We are not the product of uncaring, mindless evolution. Rather, we are the children of a loving, intelligent Father. Note these clear statements made in the Bible.

Genesis 1:27. “God proceeded to create the man in his image, in God’s image he created him; male and female he created them.”

Psalm 139:14. “I shall laud you because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, as my soul is very well aware.”

Matthew 19:4-6. “Did you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife, and the two will be one flesh?’ So that they are no longer two, but

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[#] Audiocassettes also available.

⁺ CD also available.

⁺ MP3 CD-ROM also available.

one flesh. Therefore, what God has yoked together let no man put apart."

Acts 17:24, 25. "The God that made the world and all the things in it, being, as this One is, Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in handmade temples, neither is he attended to by human hands as if he needed anything, because he himself gives to all persons life and breath and all things."

Revelation 4:11. "You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created."

How the Bible's Answer Brings Real Peace of Mind

Knowing that "every family . . . on earth owes its name" to God alters the way we view other people. (Ephesians 3:15) Having such knowledge also influences how we view ourselves and our problems. Our thinking will be affected in the following ways.

When faced with difficult decisions, we will not become unduly worried about man's conflicting opinions. Instead, we will confidently rely on the Bible's counsel. Why? Because "all Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work."—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

True, applying the Bible's counsel involves effort and self-discipline. Sometimes its guidance may even require that we act in ways that seem contrary to our inclinations. (Genesis 8:21) However, if we accept that we were created by a loving heavenly Father, it is only logical to conclude that he knows the best course for us to take. (Isaiah 55:9) His Word thus assures us: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice

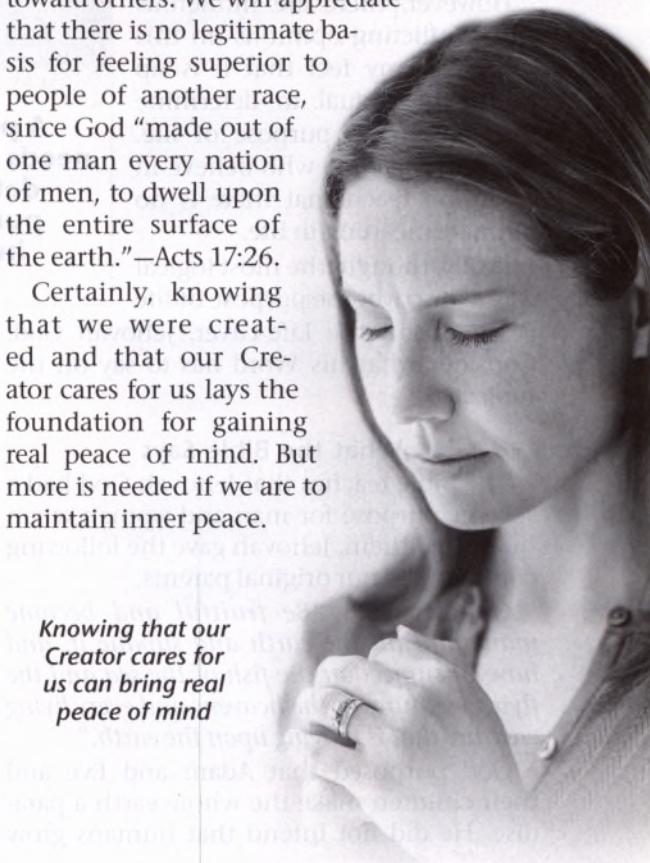
of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5, 6) If we apply that counsel, much of the anxiety we experience when facing challenges and decisions will be removed.

When confronted by prejudice, we will not be burdened by feelings of inferiority, thinking that we are somehow less valuable than people of a different race or another cultural background. Instead, we will develop a healthy sense of self-respect. Why? Because our Father, Jehovah God, "is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him."—Acts 10:34, 35.

This realization will also prevent us from allowing prejudice to warp our attitude toward others. We will appreciate that there is no legitimate basis for feeling superior to people of another race, since God "made out of one man every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth."—Acts 17:26.

Certainly, knowing that we were created and that our Creator cares for us lays the foundation for gaining real peace of mind. But more is needed if we are to maintain inner peace.

Knowing that our Creator cares for us can bring real peace of mind



What Is the Purpose of Life?

WHY DOES THE ANSWER MATTER? Few things are more distressing to the human spirit than the thought that life has no meaning, no purpose. On the other hand, a person who has a clearly defined purpose in life is resilient. Viktor E. Frankl, a neurologist and a Holocaust survivor, wrote: "There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions, as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one's life."

However, there are numerous and conflicting opinions on this subject. Many feel that it is up to the individual to determine for himself the purpose of life. By contrast, some who believe in evolution teach that there is no ultimate meaning in life.

Really, though, the most logical way to discover the purpose of life is to consult the Life-Giver, Jehovah God. Consider what his Word has to say on the subject.

What the Bible Says

The Bible teaches that Jehovah God had a specific purpose for man and woman when he created them. Jehovah gave the following command to our original parents.

Genesis 1:28. "*Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and every living creature that is moving upon the earth.*"

God purposed that Adam and Eve and their children make the whole earth a paradise. He did not intend that humans grow

old and die; nor did he want mankind to harm the environment. However, because of the poor choices made by our first parents, we have inherited sin and death. (Genesis 3:

2-6; Romans 5:12) Even so, Jehovah's purpose has not changed. Soon the earth will be a paradise. —Isaiah 55:10, 11.

Jehovah created us with both the physical and the intellectual capacity to fulfill his purpose. He did not create us to live independently of him. Note how God's purpose for us is defined in the following Bible passages.

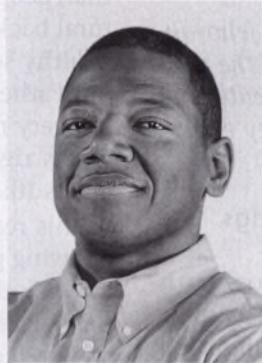
Ecclesiastes 12:13. "*The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man.*"

Micah 6:8. "*What is Jehovah asking back from you but to exercise justice and to love kindness and to be modest in walking with your God?*"

Matthew 22:37-39. "*You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. The second, like it, is this, 'You must love your neighbor as yourself.'*"

How the Bible's Answer Brings Real Peace of Mind

For any complex piece of machinery to work properly, it must be used for the purpose and in the manner that its maker intended. Likewise, if we are to avoid damaging ourselves—be it spiritually, mentally, emotionally, or physically—we need to use our



A person needs a clearly defined purpose in life

life in the way that our Maker intended. Consider how our knowing God's purpose can bring us peace of mind in the following areas of life.

When establishing priorities, many today devote their lives to accumulating wealth. However, "those who are determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires," warns the Bible.—1 Timothy 6:9, 10.

On the other hand, those who learn to love God rather than money discover the secret of contentment. (1 Timothy 6:7, 8) They appreciate the value of hard work and know that they have an obligation to provide for their own physical needs. (Ephesians 4:28) But they also take seriously Jesus' words of caution: "No one can slave for two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stick to the one and despise the other. You cannot slave for God and for Riches."—Matthew 6:24.

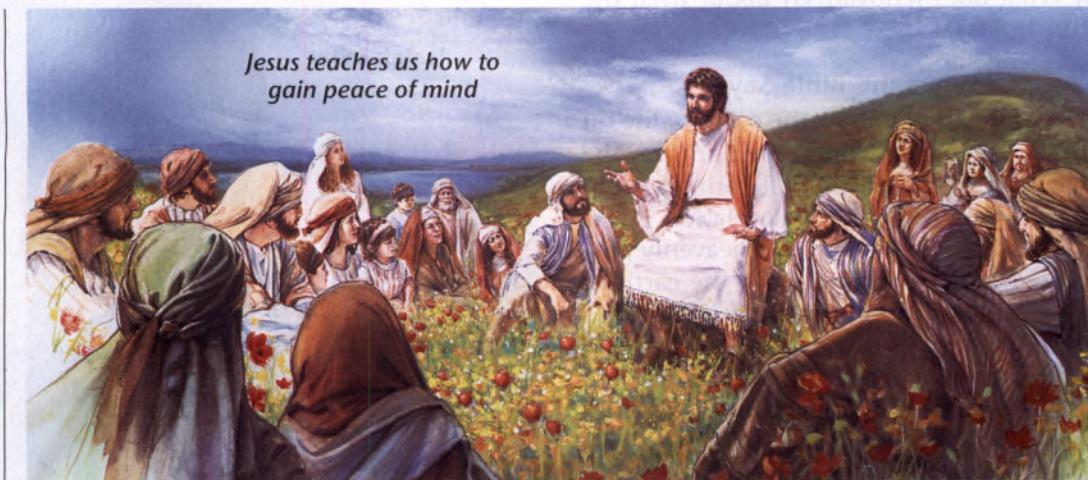
Therefore, instead of making secular work or the pursuit of wealth their top priority, those who love God make the doing of his will their primary concern in life. They know that if their life revolves around the doing of God's will, then Jehovah God will take care of them. In fact, Jehovah considers himself honor-bound to do so.—Matthew 6:25-33.

When dealing with people, many put themselves first. Today, the world lacks peace, in large measure because so many people have become "lovers of themselves, . . . having no natural affection." (2 Timothy 3:2, 3) When someone disappoints them or disagrees with their viewpoint, they give vent to "anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech." (Ephesians 4:31) Rather than bringing peace of mind, such a lack of self-control only "stirs up contention." —Proverbs 15:18.

By contrast, those who obey God's command to love their neighbor as themselves are "kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another." (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13) Even when others do not treat them kindly, they endeavor to imitate Jesus, who when being reviled "did not go reviling in return." (1 Peter 2:23) Like Jesus, they appreciate that it brings true fulfillment to serve others, even those who may not appreciate what is being done for them. (Matthew 20:25-28; John 13:14, 15; Acts 20:35) Jehovah God gives his spirit to those who imitate his Son, and this spirit produces in their life a genuine sense of peace.—Galatians 5:22.

How, though, can your view of the future affect your peace of mind?

Jesus teaches us how to gain peace of mind



What Does the Future Hold?

WHY DOES THE ANSWER MATTER? A person's prospects for tomorrow affect the way he acts today. For example, those with little hope for the future may adopt the attitude: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die." (1 Corinthians 15:32) Such an attitude often leads to overeating, heavy drinking, and anxiety—not to genuine peace of mind.

Granted, if the future were left entirely in human hands, our prospects would be bleak. The earth's air, water, and land are being polluted on an unprecedented scale. The threat of nuclear war and terrorist attacks is mounting. Disease and poverty affect billions worldwide. Yet, there are sound reasons for hope.

While humans cannot accurately predict the future, Jehovah God describes himself as "the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done." (Isaiah 46:

10) What does Jehovah say about what the future holds?

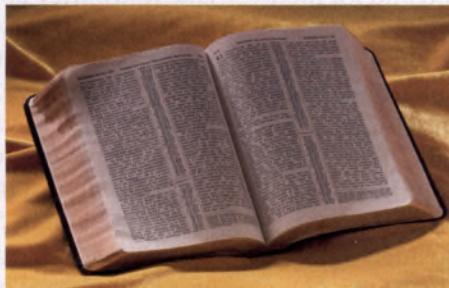
What the Bible Says

Jehovah will not allow the earth or life on it to be damaged beyond repair. In fact, the Bible promises that God will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." (Revelation 11:18) By means of his Kingdom, or heavenly government, Jehovah will cleanse the earth of wickedness and bring about the conditions he originally purposed. (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:8, 9; Matthew 6:9, 10) The following Bible verses open a window on the future, describ-

ing events that will soon affect every individual on earth.

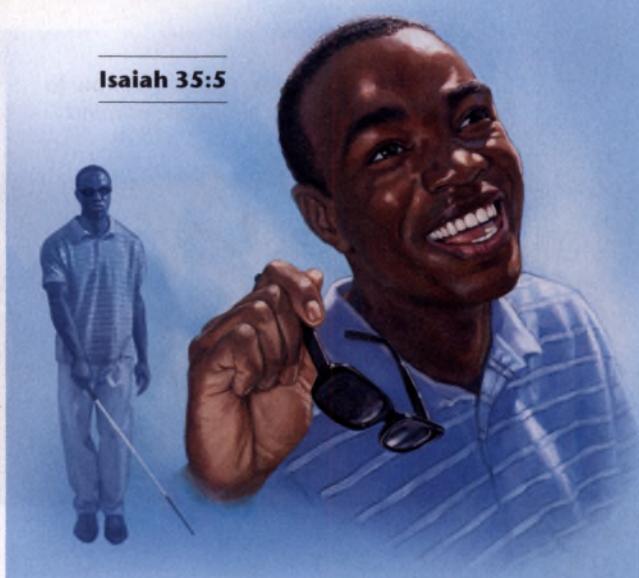
Psalm 46:8, 9. "*Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth. The bow he breaks apart and does cut the spear in pieces; the wagons he burns in the fire.*"

Isaiah 35:5, 6. "*At that time the eyes of the blind ones will be opened, and the very ears of the deaf ones will be unstopped. At that time the lame one will climb up just as a stag does, and the tongue of the speechless one will cry out in gladness. For in the wilderness waters will have burst out, and torrents in the desert plain.*"



**What does
God's Word say
about the
future?**

Isaiah 35:5



Isaiah 65:21, 22. "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating."

Daniel 2:44. "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite."

John 5:28, 29. "The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear [Jesus'] voice and come out."

Revelation 21:3, 4. "God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, nei-

ther will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."

How the Bible's Answer Brings Real Peace of Mind

At first, the conditions described above may sound too good to be true. But these promises are made by God, not by men. And Jehovah God "cannot lie."—Titus 1:2.

If you learn to trust in God's promises and live by his laws, you will retain your peace of mind despite the most trying of circumstances. War, poverty, sickness, and even the trials of old age or the prospect of death—none of these things will permanently rob you of your peace. Why? Because you will be convinced that God's Kingdom will reverse the effects of all these maladies.

How can you gain that kind of hope for the future? You must make "your mind over" and prove to yourself "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) You will likely need further proof that the Bible's promises are trustworthy. Such an investigation is worth the effort. Few things that you do in life will bring you greater peace of mind.

Isaiah 35:6



John 5:28, 29

A Shepherd Who Cares

Matthew 18:12-14

'D'oes God care about me?' If you have ever asked yourself that question, you are not alone. Many of us have faced hardships and challenges, and at times we may wonder whether the Creator of this vast universe takes notice of us. We need to know, Does Jehovah God care about us as individuals? When on earth, Jesus, who knows Jehovah best, gave an illustration that reveals the heartwarming answer.

Drawing on the realities of pastoral life, Jesus said: "If a certain man comes to have a hundred sheep and one of them gets strayed, will he not leave the ninety-nine upon the mountains and set out on a search for the one that is straying? And if he happens to find it, I certainly tell you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that have not strayed. Likewise it is not a desirable thing with my Father who is in heaven for one of these little ones to perish." (Matthew 18:12-14)

Let us see how Jesus here paints a portrait of Jehovah's tender concern for each of His worshippers.

The shepherd felt a sense of responsibility toward each of his sheep. If a sheep strayed, he would know which one was missing. He knew each sheep by the name he had given it. (John 10:3) The caring shepherd would not rest until the wanderer was back in the flock. By going out to look for the stray, he would not be

endangering the 99 left behind. Shepherds often stayed together, allowing their flocks to mingle.* So the shepherd who set off in search of a stray could temporarily leave his remaining sheep in the care of his fellow shepherds. Upon finding the lost sheep unharmed, the shepherd would have reason to rejoice. Putting the frightened creature on his shoulder, he would carry it back to the safety and security of the flock.—Luke 15:5, 6.

Applying the illustration, Jesus said that God does not want "one of these little ones to perish." Earlier, Jesus had warned his disciples against stumbling "one of these little ones who put faith in [him]." (Matthew 18:6) What, then, does Jesus' illustration teach us about Jehovah? He is a Shepherd who deeply cares about each of his sheep, including the "little ones"—those who may seem of little importance from the world's standpoint. Yes, in God's eyes, each of his worshippers is distinct and precious.

If you long to be reassured that you matter to God, why not learn more about the Great Shepherd, Jehovah God, and how you can draw closer to him? By so doing, you may come to have confidence like that of the apostle Peter, who no doubt heard firsthand Jesus' illustration of the lost sheep. Peter later wrote: "Throw all your anxiety upon [God], because he cares for you."—1 Peter 5:7.



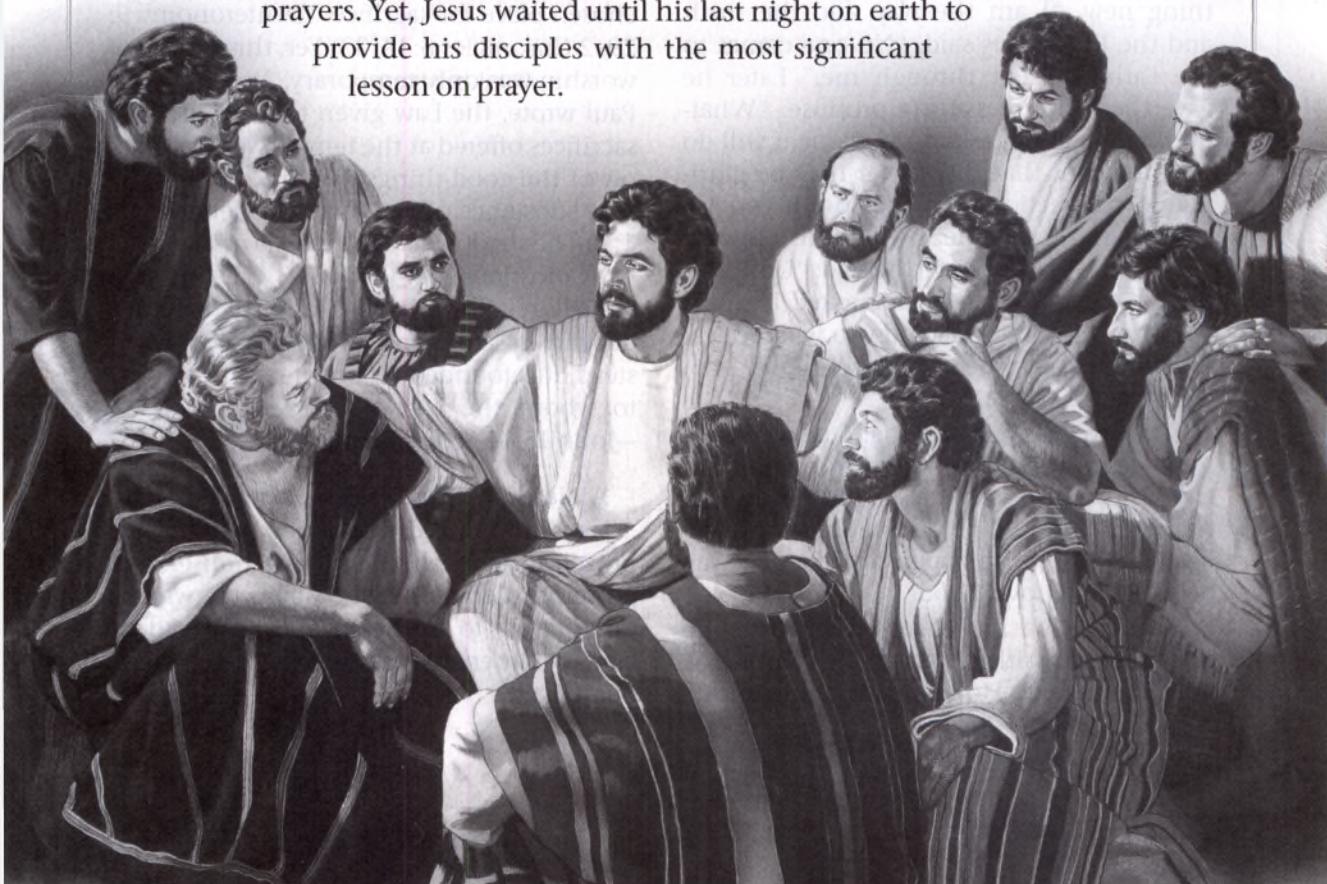
* Separating the flocks was not a problem, since each sheep responded to the distinctive call of its own shepherd.—John 10:4.

WHY PRAY IN JESUS' NAME?

JESUS often taught about prayer. In his day, Jewish religious leaders prayed "on the corners of the broad ways." Why? "To be visible to men." Obviously, they wanted to be admired for their piety. Many uttered long, repetitive invocations, as though the "use of many words" was necessary for a prayer to be heard. (Matthew 6:5-8) Jesus exposed such practices as futile, thus helping sincere individuals to know what to avoid when praying. However, he did more than teach how *not* to pray.

Jesus taught that our prayers should express our desire to see God's name sanctified, His Kingdom come, and His will be done. Jesus also taught that it is appropriate to ask God to help us with personal matters. (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4) Using illustrations, Jesus showed that we need persistence, faith, and humility if our prayers are to be heard. (Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-14) And he reinforced his teaching through his own example.—Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35.

This instruction no doubt helped Jesus' disciples to improve their prayers. Yet, Jesus waited until his last night on earth to provide his disciples with the most significant lesson on prayer.





"The Turning-Point in the History of Prayer"

Jesus spent most of his final night giving encouragement to his faithful apostles. It was the appropriate time to reveal something new. "I am the way and the truth and the life," Jesus said. "No one comes to the Father except through me." Later he gave them the reassuring promise: "Whatever it is that you ask in my name, I will do this, in order that the Father may be glorified in connection with the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." Toward the end of his discussion, he said: "Until this present time you have not asked a single thing in my name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be made full."—John 14:6, 13, 14; 16:24.

These words were striking. One reference work describes this as "the turning-point in the history of prayer." Jesus did not intend that prayer should be diverted from God to him. Instead, he was opening up a new way of access to Jehovah God.

Granted, God has always listened to the prayers of his faithful servants. (1 Samuel 1:9-19; Psalm 65:2) However, from the time Is-

rael became God's covenant people, those who wanted their prayers to be heard had to acknowledge that Israel was God's chosen nation. And later, from the time of Solomon, they had to recognize the temple as God's chosen place for sacrifice. (Deuteronomy 9:29; 2 Chronicles 6:32, 33) Yet, this system of worship was only temporary. As the apostle Paul wrote, the Law given to Israel and the sacrifices offered at the temple were "a shadow of the good things to come, but not the very substance of the things." (Hebrews 10:1, 2) The shadow had to give way to the reality. (Colossians 2:17) Since 33 C.E., an individual's relationship with Jehovah no longer depends on adherence to the Mosaic Law. Instead, it is founded on obedience to the one to whom the Law pointed—Christ Jesus.—John 15:14-16; Galatians 3:24, 25.

A Name "Above Every Other Name"

Jesus introduced a superior basis for approach to Jehovah, identifying himself as a powerful friend, one who opens the way for our prayers to be heard and answered by God. What enables Jesus to act this way in our behalf?

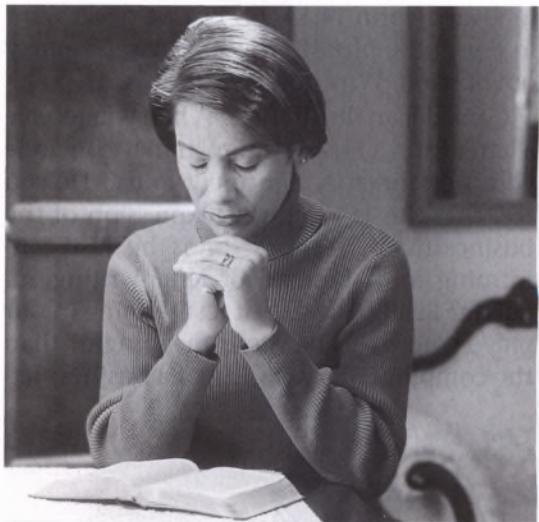
Since we are all born in sin, no works we perform or sacrifices we offer can cleanse us of this stain or earn us the right to have a relationship with our holy God, Jehovah. (Romans 3:20, 24; Hebrews 1:3, 4) However, Jesus offered up his perfect human life and paid for the sins of redeemable mankind. (Romans 5:12, 18, 19) Now all who want to do so have the opportunity to achieve a clean standing before Jehovah and to enjoy "freedom of speech" toward God—but only if they exercise faith in Jesus' sacrifice and pray in his name.—Ephesians 3:11, 12.

When we pray in Jesus' name, we are expressing faith in at least three facets of his

We should pray with our "whole heart," not in a mechanical manner

role in the outworking of God's purpose: (1) He is "the Lamb of God," whose sacrifice provides the basis for forgiveness of sin. (2) He was resurrected by Jehovah and now acts as "high priest" in administering the benefits of the ransom. (3) He alone is "the way" of approach to Jehovah in prayer.

—John 1:29; 14:6; Hebrews 4:14, 15.



Praying in Jesus' name honors Jesus. Such honor is appropriate, for Jehovah's will is that "in the name of Jesus every knee should bend . . . , and every tongue should openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10, 11) More important, though, praying in Jesus' name glorifies Jehovah, the one who gave his Son for our benefit.—John 3:16.

So that we can grasp the magnitude of Jesus' position, the Bible uses various titles and names to describe him. These help us comprehend the many benefits that flow to us based on what Jesus has done, is doing, and will yet do in our behalf. (See the box "Jesus' Vital Role," on page 14.) Indeed, Jesus has been given "the name that is above every other name."* All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him.—Philippians 2:9; Matthew 28:18.

More Than Just a Habit

Yes, we must offer our prayers in Jesus' name if we want them to be heard by

* According to Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, the Greek word translated "name" can refer to "all that a name implies, of authority, character, rank, majesty, power, [and] excellence."



Jehovah. (John 14:13, 14) But we never want to repeat the phrase “in Jesus’ name” purely out of habit. Why not?

Consider an illustration. When you receive a letter from a businessman, it may conclude with a perfunctory “sincerely yours.” Do you feel that this is a genuine expression of the businessman’s feelings, or is he just conforming to a standard of letter-writing etiquette? Really, the use of Jesus’ name in our prayers needs to be more meaningful than the complimentary closing of a business let-

ter. Though we are to “pray incessantly,” we are to do so with our “whole heart,” not in a mechanical manner.—1 Thessalonians 5:17; Psalm 119:145.

How can you avoid using the phrase “in Jesus’ name” as a mere token expression? Why not meditate on the heartwarming qualities of Jesus? Think about what he has already done and is willing to do for you. In prayer, thank Jehovah and praise him for the wonderful way he has used his Son. As you do, you will become more confident of Jesus’ promise: “If you ask the Father for anything he will give it to you in my name.”—John 16:23.

JESUS’ VITAL ROLE

To grasp fully Jesus’ role, consider some of the titles, descriptions, and names applied to him.



Amen.—2 Corinthians 1:19, 20;
Revelation 3:14.

Apostle.—Hebrews 3:1.

Chief Agent of Life.—Acts 3:15.

Christ/Messiah.—Matthew 16:
16; John 1:41.

Eternal Father.—Isaiah 9:6.

Faithful Witness.—Revelation
1:5.

Fine Shepherd.—John 10:11.

Head of the Congregation.
—Ephesians 5:23.

High Priest.—Hebrews 4:
14, 15.

Immanuel.—Matthew 1:23.

Judge.—Acts 10:42.

King.—Revelation 11:15.

Lamb of God.—John 1:29.

Last Adam.—1 Corinthians
15:45.

Leader.—Matthew 23:10.

Lord.—John 13:13.

Mediator.—1 Timothy 2:5.

Michael the Archangel.

—1 Thessalonians 4:16; Jude 9.

Mighty God.—Isaiah 9:6.

Prince of Peace.—Isaiah 9:6.

Savior.—Luke 2:11.

Son of God.—John 1:34.

Son of Man.—Matthew 8:20.

Teacher.—John 13:13.

The Word.—John 1:1.

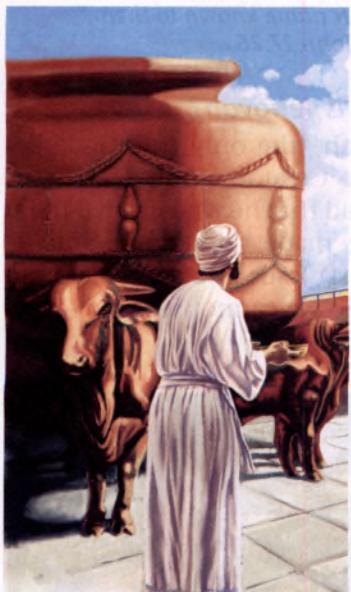
Wonderful Counselor.—Isaiah
9:6.

Did You Know?

What was the size of the molten sea at Solomon's temple?

The account at 1 Kings 7:26 refers to the sea as containing "two thousand bath measures" of water used by the priests, whereas the parallel account at 2 Chronicles 4:5 speaks of it as containing "three thousand bath measures." This has led to the claim that the difference is the result of a scribal error in the Chronicles account.

However, the *New World Translation* helps us understand how these two texts can be harmonized. First Kings 7:26 reads: "Two thousand



bath measures were what it *would contain*." Notice that 2 Chronicles 4:5 says: "As a receptacle, three thousand bath measures were what it *could contain*." So 2 Chronicles 4:5 refers to the maximum capacity of the temple basin, what it *could contain*, whereas 1 Kings 7:26 states the quantity of water that was usually put into the temple basin. In other words, it was never filled to maximum capacity. It appears that it was customarily filled to only two thirds of its capacity.

Why did Jesus and Peter pay the temple tax with just one coin?

In Jesus' day, every Jewish male over 20 years of age was required to pay a yearly temple tax of two drachmas, or a didrachma. This was the equivalent of about two days' wages. When a question arose about paying this tax, Jesus instructed Peter: "Go to the sea, cast a fishhook, and take the first fish coming up and, when you open its mouth, you will find a stater coin. Take that and give it to them for me and you."—Matthew 17:24-27.

Many scholars believe that the stater coin mentioned

here was, in fact, the tetradrachma. This coin was worth four drachmas, or the equivalent of the temple tax for two persons. The tetradrachma was far more common and more readily available than the didrachma. *The New Bible Dictionary* thus comments: "It would appear that Jews frequently united to pay the Temple tax in pairs."

Additionally, any individual who wanted to pay the tax for just one person was liable for an agio, a fee for



ENLARGEMENT OF A TETRADRACHMA

changing money. This charge could be as high as 8 percent. However, those who paid for two people at the same time were exempt from this charge. So even in this minor detail, the account recorded by Matthew agrees with what is known about common practices in Jesus' time.

About the True God

Does God have a name?

Jesus taught that God has a name. Jesus said: "You must pray, then, this way: 'Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified.'" (Matthew 6:9) The Bible reveals that God's name is Jehovah. (Psalm 83:18) Speaking about his disciples, Jesus said in prayer to his Father: "I have made your name known to them."—John 17:26.

We can learn about Jehovah from creation and from the Bible



"I have made your name known to them."
—John 17:26

Who is Jehovah?

Jesus called Jehovah "the only true God" because Jehovah is the Creator. (John 17:3) Jesus said: "Did you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?" (Matthew 19:4) Jesus also said: "God is a Spirit." (John 4:24) So we cannot see God.—Exodus 33:17-20.



**For more information,
see chapter 1 of the book
*What Does the Bible
Really Teach?****

What does God expect of us?

When someone asked Jesus which is the greatest commandment, he replied: "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah, and you must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind and with your whole strength.' The second is this, 'You must love your neighbor as yourself.'"—Mark 12:28-31.

How can we show that we love God?

Jesus said: "I love the Father." How did he show his love? "Even as the Father has given me commandment to do," he said, "so I am doing." (John 14:31) He also stated: "I always do the things pleasing to him." (John 8:29) We can please God by learning about him. While praying for his disciples, Jesus said: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God."—John 17:3; 1 Timothy 2:4.

How can we learn about God?

One way of getting to know God is by observing the things he has made. For example, Jesus said: "Observe intently the birds of heaven, because they do not sow seed or reap or gather into storehouses; still your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they are?" Jesus' point? We should not allow anxiety about our physical needs to stop us from serving God.—Matthew 6:26-33.

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



The best way to come to know Jehovah is by studying his Word, the Bible. Jesus called the Scriptures "the word of God." (Luke 8:21) Jesus said to God: "Your word is truth."—John 17:17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

Jesus helped people learn the truth about Jehovah. Regarding Jesus, one of his disciples said: "Were not our hearts burning as he was speaking to us on the road, as he was fully opening up the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32) To learn about God, we must be humble, willing to be taught. Jesus said: "Unless you turn around and become as young children, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens."—Matthew 18:3.

**Why does knowledge of God
bring happiness?**

God satisfies our need to understand the purpose of life. Jesus said: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) Jehovah teaches us the best way of life. "Happy are those hearing the word of God and keeping it!" said Jesus.—Luke 11:28; Isaiah 11:9.

Managing Conflicts

He says: "After we were married, Sarah* and I lived with my family at my parents' house. One day, my brother's girlfriend asked me for a ride home in our car. I obliged and took my young son along. But when I returned home, Sarah was furious. We started arguing, and right in front of my family, she called me a womanizer. I lost my temper and started saying things that irritated her even more."

She says: "Our son has a serious health problem, and at the time, we had financial trouble. So when Fernando left in the car with his brother's girlfriend and our son, I was upset for several reasons. When he came home, I let him know how I felt. We had a huge argument and called each other names. I felt terrible afterward."

If a couple argue, does this mean that they no longer love each other? No! Fernando and Sarah, quoted above, love each other dearly. Yet, even in the best of marriages, there will occasionally be some conflict.

Why do conflicts arise, and what can you do to prevent them from ruining your marriage? Since marriage is an arrangement designed by God, it makes sense to examine what his Word, the Bible, has to say on this subject.—Genesis 2:21, 22; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

Understanding the Challenges

Most married couples want to treat each other in a loving and kind manner. However, the Bible realistically notes that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) So when disagreements arise, emotions may be difficult to control. And if an argument starts, some may find it a real

struggle to resist bad habits, such as screaming and abusive speech. (Romans 7:21; Ephesians 4:31) What other factors might cause tension?

A husband and a wife often have different communication styles. "When we were first married," says Michiko, "I discovered that we had very different attitudes about discussing matters. I like to talk about not only *what* happened but also *why* and *how* it happened. My husband seems to be interested in just the end result."

Michiko's dilemma is not unique. In many marriages, one partner may want to discuss a disagreement at length, while the other dislikes confrontation and wants to avoid the subject. Sometimes, the more one partner pursues the matter, the more the other tries to avoid it. Have you noticed this pattern emerging in your marriage? Does one of you always seem to play the part of the discusser, and the other, the part of the avoider?

* Names have been changed.

Another factor to consider is that an individual's family background may influence his or her perception of how married couples should communicate. Justin, who has been married for five years, says: "I come from a quiet family and find it difficult to talk openly about my feelings. This frustrates my wife. Her family is very expressive, and she has no problem letting me know how she feels."

Why Work to Resolve Problems?

Researchers have found that the most reliable indicator of how happy a marriage will be is not how often the couple say that they love each other. Sexual compatibility and financial security are not the most important factors either. Instead, the most dependable indicator of marital success is *how well husband and wife manage any conflicts that arise*.

In addition, Jesus said that when a couple marry, it is not man but God who yokes them together. (Matthew 19:4-6) Therefore, a good marriage honors God. On the other hand, if a husband fails to show love and consideration for his wife, Jehovah God may ignore the man's prayers. (1 Peter 3:7) If a wife does not respect her husband, she is really disrespecting Jehovah, who appointed the husband as head of the family.—1 Corinthians 11:3.

Keys to Success—Avoid Damaging Patterns of Speech

No matter what your communication style or family background, there are some damaging patterns of speech that must be avoided if you are to apply Bible principles and manage conflicts effectively. Ask yourself the following questions:

■ **'Do I resist the urge to retaliate?'** "The squeezing of the nose is what brings forth blood, and the squeezing out of anger is what brings forth quarreling," states a wise proverb. (Proverbs 30:33) What does that mean? Consider this example. What starts out as a

difference over how to balance the family budget ("we need to control credit-card spending") may quickly mutate into an attack on each other's character ("you are so irresponsible"). True, if your mate 'squeezes your nose' by launching into an attack on your character, you may feel the urge to 'squeeze' right back. However, retaliation only leads to anger and an escalation of the disagreement.

The Bible writer James warned: "Look! How little a fire it takes to set so great a woodland on fire! Well, the tongue is a fire." (James 3:5, 6) When marriage mates fail to control their tongue, small disagreements can quickly flare into raging conflicts. And marriages that are repeatedly ravaged by such emotional firestorms do not provide an environment in which love can grow.

Instead of retaliating, can you imitate Jesus, who when being reviled "did not go reviling in return"? (1 Peter 2:23) The quickest way to take the heat out of a quarrel is to acknowledge your mate's viewpoint and to apologize for your part in the conflict.

TRY THIS: The next time a dispute arises, ask yourself: 'What would it cost me to acknowledge my mate's concerns? What have I done that contributed to this problem? What prevents me from apologizing for my mistakes?'

■ **'Do I minimize or belittle my spouse's feelings?'** "All of you be like-minded, showing fellow feeling," commands God's Word. (1 Peter 3:8) Consider two of the reasons why you might fail to apply this advice. One is that you may lack insight into the mind, or the feelings, of your mate. For example, if your spouse is more distraught over some issue than you are, you might tend to say, "You're just overreacting." Your intention may be to help your mate see the problem in

perspective. However, few people are comforted by such comments. Both wives and husbands need to know that the people whom they love understand and empathize with them.

Having undue pride might also prompt a person to belittle a mate's feelings. A proud individual attempts to elevate himself by constantly putting others down. He might do so by means of name-calling or negative comparisons. Consider the example of the Pharisees and scribes of Jesus' day. When anyone—even a fellow Pharisee—expressed an opinion that differed from that of these proud individuals, they resorted to name-calling and derogatory remarks. (John 7:45-52) Jesus was different. He empathized with others when they expressed themselves to him.—Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 5:25-34.

Think about how you react when your mate expresses his or her concerns. Do your words, tone of voice, and facial expressions convey empathy? Or do you tend quickly to dismiss your mate's feelings?

TRY THIS: Over the coming weeks, notice how you speak to your spouse. If you are dismissive or say something demeaning, apologize immediately.

■ 'Do I often assume that my partner's motives are selfish?' "Is it for nothing that Job has feared God? Have not you yourself put up a hedge about him and about his house and about everything that he has all

ASK YOURSELF . . .

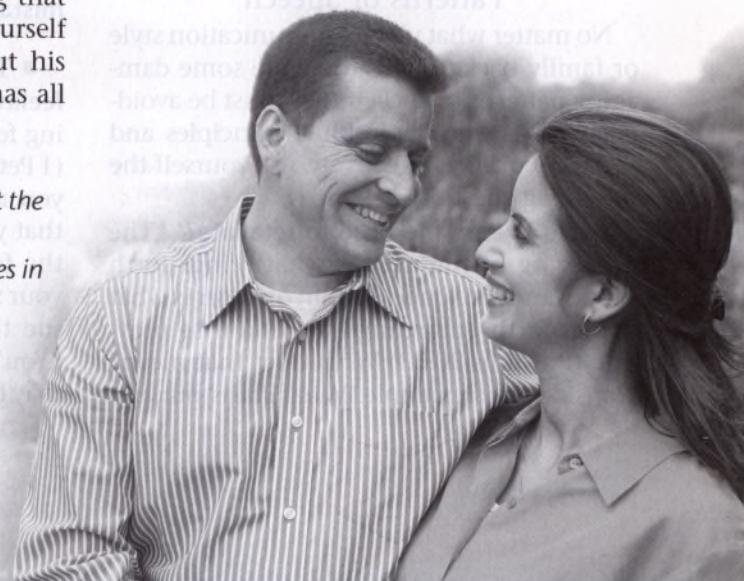
- What mistakes did the couple quoted at the beginning of the article make?
- How can I avoid making similar mistakes in my marriage?
- Which of the points mentioned in the article do I need to work on most?

around?" (Job 1:9, 10) With those words, Satan called into question the motives of the faithful man Job.

If marriage mates are not careful, they may fall into a similar pattern. For example, if your mate does something nice for you, do you wonder what he or she wants or is covering up? If your mate makes a mistake, do you view this failing as confirmation that he or she is selfish and uncaring? Do you immediately recall similar mistakes from the past and add this one to the list?

TRY THIS: Make a list of the positive things that your mate has done for you and the good motives that could have prompted these actions.

The apostle Paul wrote: "Love . . . does not keep account of the injury." (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5) Real love is not blind. But neither does it keep score. Paul also stated that love "believes all things." (1 Corinthians 13:7) Not that this kind of love is gullible, but it is open to trust. It is not cynical, suspicious. The type of love that the Bible encourages is ready to forgive and is willing to give others the benefit of the doubt. (Psalm 86:5; Ephesians 4:32) When mates display this kind of love for each other, they will enjoy a happy marriage.





Building to Jehovah's Praise

"I can't believe my eyes. I never imagined we would have a place as beautiful as this in which to meet and to praise Jehovah. There is no way you could buy the joy I feel!"—MARIA, MEXICO.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES love to gather together to learn about God's Word, the Bible. (Psalm 27:4; Hebrews 10:23-25) And they especially enjoy doing so when they can meet together in dignified places of worship. In recent years they have built thousands of new places of worship—known as Kingdom Halls—in dozens of countries worldwide.

What has prompted all this construction activity? Who provides the labor? And what effect does this building work have on the people involved? To get answers to these questions, consider what has been taking place in Mexico and Belize.

Thousands of New Kingdom Halls Needed!

In the past, Jehovah's Witnesses in Mexico gathered for worship in whatever space was available—backyards, the homes of Witnesses, warehouses, garages, or rented halls. During this time, these loyal Witnesses often thought how good it would be if they could build their own Kingdom Halls.

By 1994 there were 388,000 Witnesses in Mexico. A survey conducted that year re-

vealed that if all of them were to have access to their own places of worship, 3,300 new Kingdom Halls would have to be built. What an overwhelming task!

Local congregations were already building their own Kingdom Halls when they could. But over the next five years, it became obvious that to keep pace with the demand, we would have to build more halls—and build them more quickly. How is this need being met?

Traveling Groups of Skilled Volunteers

In 1999 a new building program was born. Kingdom Hall Construction Groups began to be formed throughout Mexico. Jehovah's Witnesses from all over the country—many of whom had construction skills—volunteered to take part in this exciting program. At present, Mexico has 35 such groups, and one group has been formed in Belize.

These Kingdom Hall Construction Groups usually consist of about eight volunteers, both men and women, who work full-time without charge. This happy band of volunteers moves from one area to another within

the country to take the lead in the building projects. Each volunteer works eight hours a day Monday through Friday as well as every other Saturday. The day starts at 7:00 a.m. with a discussion of a Bible text, after which breakfast is served. All are eager to do whatever they are asked. Women, for instance, work alongside men at such tasks as plastering, tile setting, and painting.

The local congregation helps out by providing accommodations, washing clothes, and preparing meals for the traveling volunteers. In addition to working together on the hall construction, the volunteers and local Witnesses enjoy one another's company at Christian meetings and while engaging in the door-to-door preaching activity.

The Rewards of Becoming a Volunteer

How do these volunteers feel about the work they do? "It is true that we labor in the heat and the cold, eat food we are not used to, move frequently, live far from family, and often are without many modern conveniences," states Daniel, who has worked as a volunteer for more than three years. "But the difficulties are insignificant when compared with the blessings we receive," he continues.

What are some of these blessings? Many of the volunteers learn new construction skills. But a volunteer named Carlos, who oversees

one of the larger groups, identifies what he feels is a more important benefit. "We have become like a family of 20 members," he says. "We eat together, work together, study together, pray together. We have formed very close bonds of friendship."

The construction groups also forge strong bonds of friendship with the local congregations that they help. José, who has participated in more than 100 projects, says: "The tears of joy and smiles of appreciation when the local Witnesses see their dream of having a new Kingdom Hall come true are just wonderful." He adds: "We have the joy of knowing that the faith of others is strengthened even by the small part we play in the successful building of another house of pure worship."

An Astounding Accomplishment!

These places of worship are not ornate or ostentatious. Instead, the designs for the Kingdom Halls are simple, making it possible to build them quickly and inexpensively. Local building materials and methods are used whenever feasible. In this way, a new hall can be built in as little as six weeks!

As of 2007, all the congregations in Belize had new Kingdom Halls—a total of 17. In Mexico, more than 1,400 halls have been built just since 1999!

"What They Say, They Do"

The local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses are not the only ones whose lives can be affected by the Kingdom Hall building work. For example, during the construction of a Kingdom Hall in Belize, a man whose wife belongs to the Pentecostal religion told her that when Jehovah's Witnesses finished building their "church," he wanted to attend with them. What prompted this desire? "I can see that God is with them," he said. "They do not fight when they work together. And what they say, they do."



**Kingdom Hall in Orange Walk,
Belize**

While much good work has been accomplished, there is still plenty to do. (Matthew 9:37) The number of Witnesses in Mexico has now swelled to over 600,000—all of whom meet three times a week to be instructed from God's Word. Therefore, almost 2,000 new halls are still needed. If this volunteer construction work were dependent on purely human efforts, such a goal would be impossible to reach. But as the results show, with Jehovah God's backing, "all things are possible."—Matthew 19:26.

Kingdom Hall in Tlaxcala, Mexico



A Global Effort

Kingdom Hall Construction Groups have been organized in 120 countries. Just a few of the countries where volunteers happily expend themselves in this work are listed below:

Angola, Bolivia, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Moldova, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Tuvalu, Ukraine, Venezuela, Zambia.

▼ Kingdom Hall in Acapulco, Mexico



Members of a Kingdom Hall Construction Group in Mexico

Mark Did Not Give Up

MARK wrote one of the four Bible books about the life of Jesus. It is the shortest and easiest one to read. Who was Mark? Do you think he knew Jesus?—* Let's see what hard tests Mark faced and learn why Mark never gave up being a Christian.

Mark is first mentioned by name in the Bible after King Herod Agrippa threw the apostle Peter in prison. One night an angel freed Peter, and he immediately went to the home of Mark's mother, Mary, who lived in Jerusalem. Peter's release from prison occurred about ten years after Jesus was killed at Passover 33 C.E.—Acts 12:1-5, 11-17.

Do you know why Peter went to Mary's home?— Probably because he knew members of her family and was aware that Jesus' disciples held meetings in her home. Mark's cousin Barnabas had long been a disciple, at least since the Festival of Pentecost 33 C.E. His generosity at that time in behalf of new disciples is mentioned in the Bible. So Jesus may have known Barnabas, as well as his aunt Mary and her son Mark.—Acts 4:36, 37; Colossians 4:10.

In his Gospel, Mark wrote that on the night Jesus was arrested, a youth wearing only a garment “over his naked body” was present. When enemies grabbed Jesus, Mark wrote that the youth escaped. Who do you think that youth could have been?— Yes, it was probably Mark! So when Jesus and his apostles left late that night, Mark apparently threw on a garment and followed.—Mark 14:51, 52.

Mark indeed had a rich spiritual background. He was likely present when holy spirit was poured out at Pentecost 33 C.E., and he had close association with faithful servants of God, such as Peter. But he also accompanied his cousin Barnabas, who helped Saul by introducing him to Peter some three years after Jesus had appeared to Saul in a vision. Years later, Barnabas went to Tarsus in order to find Saul there.—Acts 9:1-15, 27; 11:22-26; 12:25; Galatians 1:18, 19.

* If you are reading with a child, the dash provides a reminder to pause and encourage the child to express himself.

In 47 C.E., Barnabas and Saul were selected to do missionary work. They took Mark along, but for some unexplained reason, Mark later left them and returned home to Jerusalem. Saul, who came to be known by his Roman name Paul, was angry. And he did not ignore what he considered a serious failure on Mark's part.—Acts 13:1-3, 9, 13.

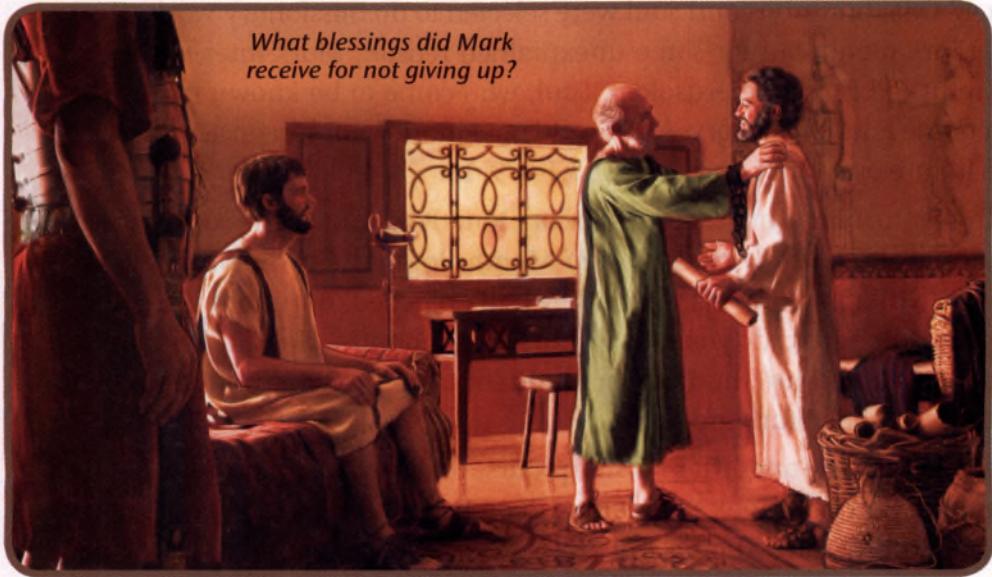
When returning from their missionary tour, Paul and Barnabas reported wonderful successes. (Acts 14:24-28) Months later, the two planned to return and visit new converts where they had preached. Barnabas wanted to take Mark along, but do you know what Paul thought?—He “did not think it proper” because Mark had earlier left them to go home. What happened next surely made Mark sad!

Tempers flared, and after “a sharp burst of anger,” Paul and Barnabas separated. Barnabas took Mark along to preach in Cyprus, and Paul selected Silas and revisited the new disciples, as previously planned. How hurt Mark must have been for causing the trouble between Paul and Barnabas! —Acts 15:36-41.

We don't know why Mark earlier left to go home. He likely had what he felt was a good reason. In any case, Barnabas was evidently convinced that it would not happen again. And he was right. Mark did not give up! Later he

Who might this youth be? What is happening to him, and why?





What blessings did Mark receive for not giving up?

did missionary work with Peter in far-off Babylon. From there, Peter sent greetings, adding: “And so does *Mark* my son.”—1 Peter 5:13.

What a close spiritual relationship Peter and Mark had! This is also evident when we read Mark’s Gospel. Therein Mark reflects Peter’s perceptive firsthand observations. As an example, compare the accounts of a storm on the Sea of Galilee. Mark adds details about where Jesus was sleeping in the boat and what he was sleeping on, things that a fisherman like Peter would notice. Why don’t we see this for ourselves by reading together and comparing these Bible accounts at Matthew 8:24; Mark 4:37, 38; and Luke 8:23?

Later, when Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he commended Mark for his loyal support. (Colossians 4:10, 11) And when Paul was imprisoned there again, he wrote to Timothy and asked him to bring Mark, explaining: “He is useful to me for ministering.” (2 Timothy 4:11) Indeed, what grand privileges of service Mark enjoyed because he did not give up!

Questions:

- Where did Mark live, and why can you say that he may have known Jesus?
- Who, in particular, helped and supported Mark?
- What could have caused Mark to give up?
- How do we know that Mark eventually won the apostle Paul’s approval?

Our Readers Ask

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING?

God is not the cause of human suffering. "Far be it from the true God to act wickedly!" states the Bible. (Job 34:10) Who, then, is the prime instigator of misery?

Jesus called Satan "the ruler of the world." (John 14:30) True, Jehovah is the Universal Sovereign. That position he will never relinquish. However, for a time, God has allowed Satan to rule most of mankind.—1 John 5:19.

What kind of ruler has Satan been? Ever since his first contact with humans, Satan has been a murderer and a deceiver. Satan wreaks havoc on human society in profound ways. Jesus indicted him with these words: "That one was a manslayer when he began, and he did not stand fast in the truth, because truth is not in him. When he speaks the lie, he speaks according to his own disposition, because he is a liar and the father of the lie." (John 8:44) Jesus also said that the men seeking to kill him were children of the first murderer. They made themselves his children by acting like him. Like father, like son, the adage states.

Satan still fosters murderous attitudes in the hearts of mankind. For example, R. J. Rummel, emeritus professor at the University of Hawaii, U.S.A., estimates that from 1900 to 1987, various governments murdered 169,198,000 people during political purges, genocides, and indiscriminate acts of violence. That death toll is in addition to the tens of millions killed on the battlefield during the same period.

If God does not cause suffering, why does he allow it? Because universal issues, moral ones, raised a long time ago still need to be settled. Let us look at just one of them.

At the beginning of human history, Adam and Eve sided with Satan. They rejected God's rule and chose self-rule, which was really rule by the Devil.—Genesis 3:1-6; Revelation 12:9.

Jehovah's sense of justice required that time be allowed for evidence to accumulate. What is the inescapable conclusion? Human rule under Satan's influence leads only to suffering. Really, in the long run, God's allowance of time has been for man's benefit. How so? Those who study the evidence and believe it have the opportunity to demonstrate their willingness to be ruled by God. Those who learn of God's standards and live by them have the prospect of living forever.—John 17:3; 1 John 2:17.

True, for now, Satan has the world in his evil grip. But not for much longer. Soon Jehovah will use his Son to "break up the works of the Devil." (1 John 3:8) Under God's direction, Jesus will mend broken hearts and restore shattered lives. He will resurrect back to life on earth billions of humans who have suffered and died over the centuries.—John 11:25.

The resurrection of Jesus is an example of God's victory over the works of the Devil—a token of what is to come for humans who choose God's rule. (Acts 17:31) The Bible directs our thoughts to that time to come with these comforting words: "God himself will be with [mankind]. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:3, 4.

THROUGHOUT the world today, the majority of women work outside the home. In industrialized nations, nearly as many women as men are in paid employment. In developing countries, women often toil for many hours in agricultural work to help provide for their families.

Many women are torn between the need to earn a living and the desire to care for their family and home. These women not only provide money to pay for food, clothing, and shelter but also cook the food, wash the clothes, and clean the home.

In addition, Christian mothers endeavor to inculcate spiritual values in their children. "Frankly, balancing work and family responsibilities is very hard, especially when you have young children," admits Cristina, a mother of two young girls. "It's not easy to give the children all the attention they need."

What drives mothers to join the workforce? What challenges do they face? And is it necessary for a mother to work secularly to find fulfillment?

Why Mothers Work

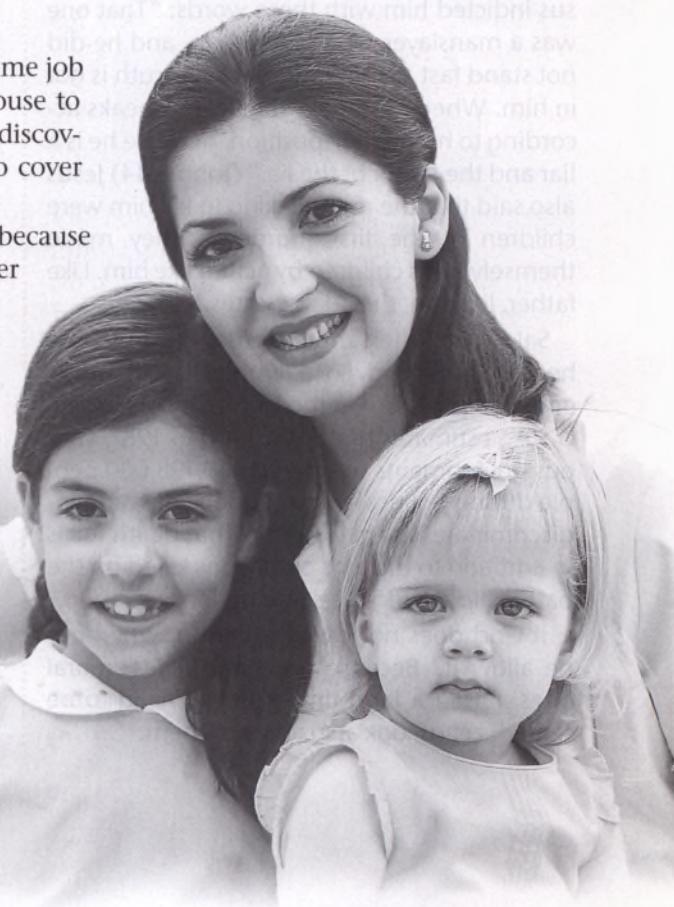
For many mothers, holding down a full-time job is an absolute necessity. Some have no spouse to share the economic burden. Other couples discover that one wage is simply not sufficient to cover the basic needs of the family.

True, not all mothers work full-time because of economic necessity. A significant number work outside the home to boost their sense of self-worth. Some may work to gain a measure of financial independence or to pay for luxuries. Many are good at their job and enjoy it.

Peer pressure might be another reason why some mothers feel compelled to work secularly. Even though most people acknowledge that working mothers constantly battle stress and exhaustion, those who choose not to take a secular job are often misunderstood—even ridiculed.

"It is not easy to explain to

Finding Fulfillment as a Mother



others that you are ‘just a housewife,’” confessed one woman. “Some people imply by their words or their expressions that you are wasting your life,” she says. Rebeca, the mother of a two-year-old daughter, says: “Although the society in which we live recognizes that women should care for their children, I feel that it views mothers who do no secular work as somehow inferior.”

Myth Versus Reality

In some areas of the world, the media portrays the “ideal woman” as successful in her chosen career—highly paid, immaculately dressed, and totally self-assured. When she gets home, she has the energy to solve her children’s problems, correct her husband’s mistakes, and handle any domestic crisis. Understandably, few real women can live up to this illusion.

In practice, many secular jobs that women obtain are monotonous and relatively low paying. To their chagrin, working mothers may find that their job does not enable them to use their natural abilities to the full. The book *Social Psychology* points out: “Despite progress toward equality, men continue to occupy better paid and higher powered jobs. Women who build their identities around their work are therefore at a distinct disadvantage.” The Spanish newspaper *El País* states: “In the case of women, it is calculated that they have a three times greater probability of suffering stress-related anxiety than men have, since the vast majority have a double shift—one at work and one at home.”

How Husbands Can Help

Of course, whether a Christian mother should work secularly or not is a personal decision. However, if married, she and her husband should make such a decision only after discussing the matter

and carefully weighing all the factors involved.—Proverbs 14:15.

What if a couple decide that out of sheer economic necessity, both of them have to work full-time? In that case, a wise husband will pay particular attention to the Bible’s admonition: “You husbands must show understanding in your married life: treat your wives with respect, not only because they are physically weaker, but also because God’s gift of life is something you share together.” (1 Peter 3:7, *The Revised English Bible*) A husband shows respect for his wife by being sensitive to her physical and emotional limitations. Whenever possible, he will help his wife with domestic chores. Like Jesus, a husband will be willing to carry out menial tasks humbly, not shunning such work as somehow being beneath his dignity. (John 13:12-15) Instead, he will view these chores as an opportunity to show his love for his hard-working wife. She will greatly appreciate such help.—Ephesians 5:25, 28, 29.

Without a doubt, if both spouses must work secularly, cooperation at home is vital. That fact is underscored by a report in *ABC*, a newspaper in Spain. Commenting on a study conducted by the Institute of Family Matters, the article blamed the high divorce rate in Spain not only on “the loss of religious and moral standards” but also on the combination of two other factors—“the entry of women into the workforce and the failure of men to help with household chores.”

A Christian Mother’s Vital Role

While Jehovah assigns to fathers the primary responsibility of training their children, Christian mothers know that they too are entrusted with a vital role—especially during the child’s infancy. (Proverbs 1:8; Ephesians 6:4) Jehovah addressed both mothers and fathers when he instructed the

Israelites to inculcate his Law in their children. He knew that this process would take time and patience, particularly during the child's formative years. For this reason, God told parents that they should train their children at home, on the road, when getting up, and when lying down.—Deuteronomy 6: 4-7.

God's Word emphasizes the important and dignified role of mothers when it commands children: "Do not forsake the *law* of your mother." (Proverbs 6:20) Of course, a married woman would consult with her husband before laying down any laws for the children. Yet, as that verse indicates, mothers have the right to make laws. And children who take to heart the spiritual and moral laws taught by a God-fearing mother will benefit greatly. (Proverbs 6:21, 22) Teresa, a mother with two young boys, explained why she does not seek secular employment. She said: "Bringing up my children to serve God is the most important task I have. I want to do this job in the best possible way."

Mothers Who Made a Difference

Israelite King Lemuel certainly profited from the conscientious efforts of his mother. "The weighty message" that she gave him "in correction" has even been included as part of God's inspired Word. (Proverbs 31:1; 2 Timothy 3:16) This mother's description of a capable wife still helps sons to make a wise choice of a marriage mate. And her warnings about immorality and excessive drinking are as relevant today as they were when first recorded.—Proverbs 31:3-5, 10-31.

In the first century, the apostle Paul praised the fine work that a mother named Eunice accomplished in teaching her son Timothy. Since her unbelieving husband probably worshipped Greek gods, Eunice needed to persuade Timothy to put faith in "the holy writings." When did Eunice begin

to teach Timothy the Scriptures? The inspired record states that it was "from infancy"—in other words, from the time Timothy was a baby. (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14, 15) Her own faith and example, as well as her teaching, obviously prepared Timothy for his future missionary service.—Philippians 2:19-22.

The Bible also refers to mothers whose hospitality toward loyal servants of God enabled their children to have contact with excellent role models. For instance, a Shunamite woman regularly received the prophet Elisha into her home. Her son was later raised from the dead by Elisha. (2 Kings 4:8-10, 32-37) Consider also the example of Mary, the mother of the Bible writer Mark. She apparently offered her home in Jerusalem as a meeting place for the early disciples. (Acts 12:12) Mark surely benefited from the companionship of the apostles and other Christians who regularly came to his home.

Clearly, Jehovah highly values the labor of faithful women who instill his principles in their children. He loves these women for their loyalty and their efforts to create a spiritual environment in the home.—2 Samuel 22:26; Proverbs 14:1.

The Most Fulfilling Choice

As the preceding Scriptural examples show, caring well for the family's physical, spiritual, and emotional needs brings unique rewards. But doing so is no easy task. A mother's job at home often seems more demanding than any high-powered executive position.

True, if a mother, after seeking her husband's direction, chooses to limit her secular employment, the family may have to reduce their standard of living and she may have to endure some ridicule from those who do not understand her thinking. But the rewards can more than compensate for the sacrifice.

Paqui has three children and needs to work part-time. She says: "I like to be there when the children come home from school so that they have someone to talk to." How do her children benefit? "I help them with their homework, and if problems come up, I can handle them right away," she says. "The time we spend together every day helps to keep the lines of communication open. I value this time with my children so much that I turned down an offer of full-time work."

Many Christian mothers have discovered that if they are able to reduce the time they spend doing secular work, all in the family benefit. "When I stopped working secularly, it seemed that the family began to function much more smoothly," explains Cristina, mentioned earlier. "I had time to talk to my children and to help my husband in many practical ways. I began to enjoy teaching my girls, seeing them learn and progress." One particular incident stands out in Cristina's mind. "My eldest child first learned to walk at a child-care center," she recalls, "but I taught my second child to walk at home. She took her first steps and fell right into my arms. That moment brought me so much satisfaction!"

Another factor to consider is that the economic sacrifices involved in reducing a mother's secular work may be less than expected. "The expenses of child care and transportation actually ate up a consider-

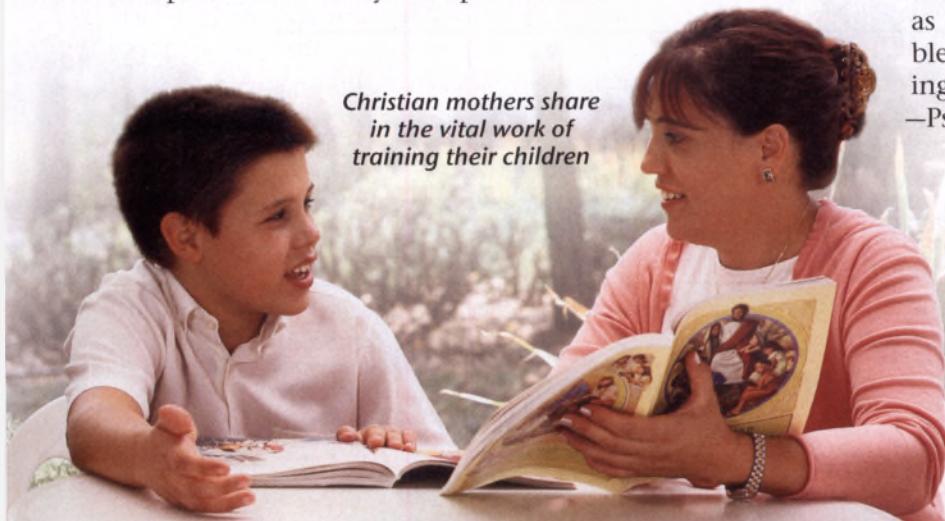
able part of my salary," explains Cristina. "When we carefully analyzed our situation, we realized that my job was not bringing that much extra money into the home."

After taking stock of their situation, some couples decide that the advantages of having the wife care full-time for the family outweigh any monetary sacrifice that must be made. "I am delighted that my wife is able to stay at home to care for our two young children," says Cristina's husband, Paul. "It was much more stressful for both of us when my wife was working outside the home." What effect has this decision had on the couple's two girls? "Not only do they feel more secure," says Paul, "but they are being shielded to a large extent from bad influences during their early years." Why does this couple feel that it is so important for them to spend as much time as possible with their daughters? Paul answers: "I am convinced that if we parents don't write on our children's hearts, so to speak, someone else will."

Clearly, each couple have to analyze their own situation, and nobody should criticize the decisions that others may make. (Romans 14:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:11) Nevertheless, it is worth considering the many benefits the family derives when a mother does not take on full-time employment. Summing up her feelings on this matter, Teresa, quoted earlier, says: "Nothing brings more fulfillment than spending as much time as possible caring for and teaching your own children."

—Psalm 127:3.

*Christian mothers share
in the vital work of
training their children*



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