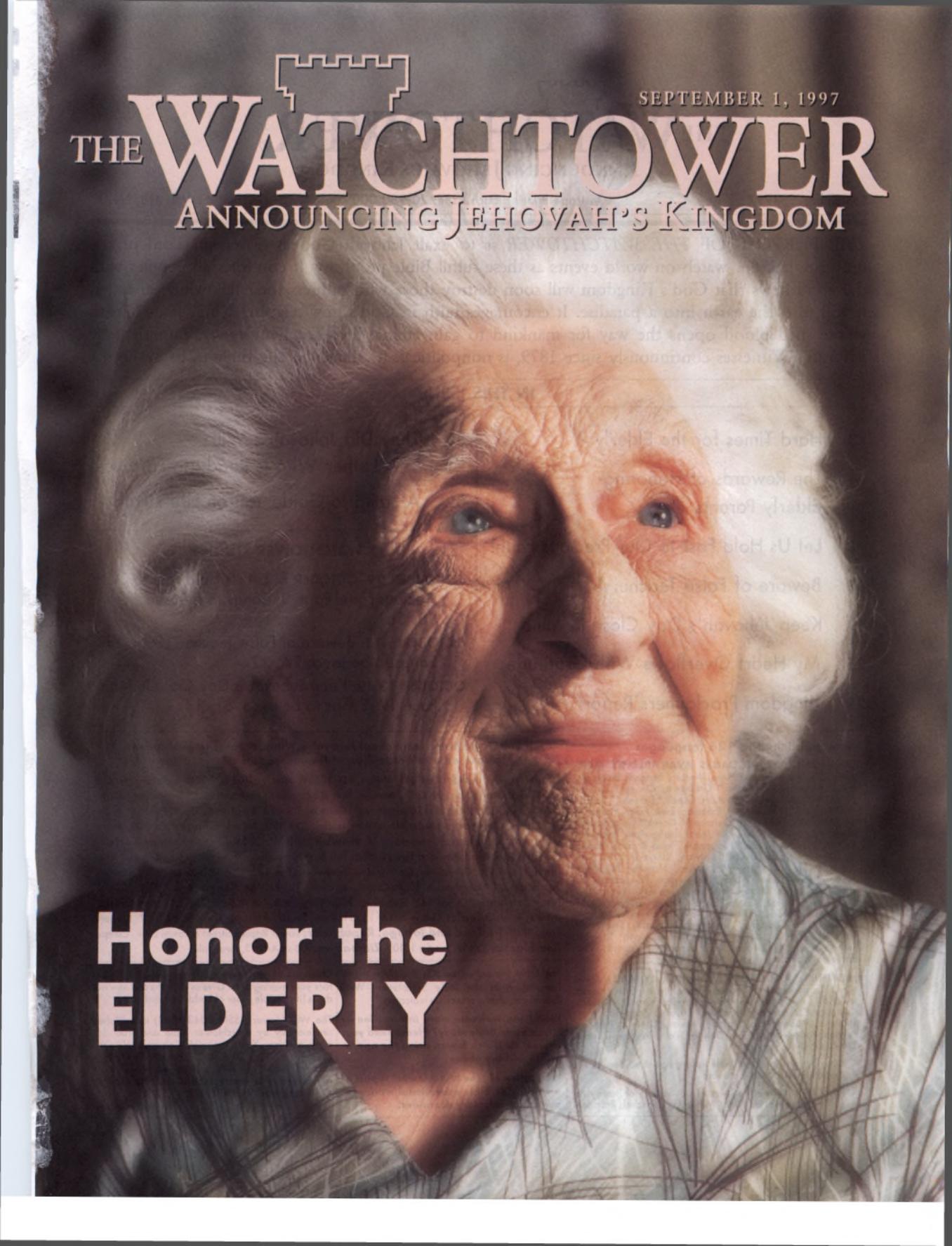


SEPTEMBER 1, 1997

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Honor the
ELDERLY

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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Hard Times for the Elderly

MAMA ONIYAN, who is 68 years old, lives in a major West African city. When she was younger, she dreamed of enjoying her twilight years in quiet retirement, surrounded by her children and grandchildren. Instead she spends her days selling cold drinking water under the tropical sun. The little she earns helps her to survive. Her two sons live in another country far away. It has been a long time since they sent her any money.

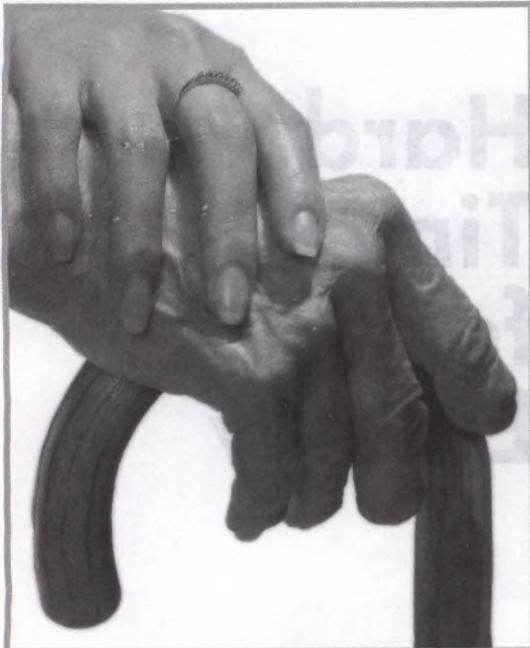
In times past, the elderly in Africa were highly esteemed. They were respected for their experience and knowledge, along with the wisdom and judgment these often bring. They helped rear grandchildren. Younger ones sought their advice and their approval. People lived according to the Biblical counsel: "Before gray hair you should rise up, and you must show consideration for the person of an old man [or, woman]."—Leviticus 19:32.

Times have changed. Poverty, inflation,

unemployment, and mass migration to the cities have left many of the elderly to fend for themselves. Director of HelpAge Kenya, Camillus Were, says: "The tradition of supporting and caring for the elderly has become weaker and weaker."

Of course, the weakening of family ties is not unique to African countries. Speaking of Japan, the *Guardian Weekly* reports: "Filial devotion used to be the keystone of a Japanese system of values bequeathed by Confucianism, but it has not survived urbanisation and the loosening of family ties: today, 85 per cent of Japanese die in hospitals or old people's homes."

Whatever the situation, those who genuinely want to please God strive to honor their parents. They heed the Bible's counsel: "Honor your father and your mother . . . that it may go well with you and you may endure a long time on the earth." (Ephesians 6:2, 3) Though it is not always easy to honor and care for elderly parents, it can bring rich rewards.



The Rewards of Honoring Elderly Parents

GENUINE worshipers of God respect, honor, and care for their elderly parents because they love them. It is part of their worship. The Bible states: "Let [children or grandchildren] learn first to practice godly devotion in their own household and to keep paying a *due compensation* to their parents and grandparents, for this is acceptable in God's sight." (1 Timothy 5:4) Whether we are young or old, it is fitting that we offer "*due compensation*" to our parents and grandparents. In this way we show appreciation for their love, their hard work, and their caring for us over so many years. Why, we owe our very life to our parents!

Notice that paying *due compensation* to parents and grandparents is "acceptable in God's sight." It is linked to our "godly devotion." Thus, by carrying out this counsel, we are rewarded, knowing that we are doing what is pleasing to God. That brings us joy.

There is joy in giving to others, especial-

ly when we give to those who have generously given to us. (Acts 20:35) What a reward there is, then, in acting in harmony with the Bible principle: "Give your father and your mother cause for delight, let her who bore you rejoice!"—Proverbs 23:25, *The New English Bible*.

How can we render *due compensation* to our parents and grandparents? In three ways: materially, emotionally, and spiritually. Each brings its rewards.

Giving Materially

Those who serve God know that it is important to provide materially for close family members. The apostle Paul admonished: "If anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith."—1 Timothy 5:8.

Tunji and Joy live in West Africa. Though hard-pressed financially, they invited Joy's



elderly parents to move in with them. The father was ill and eventually died. Tunji reflects: "When Papa died, Mama hugged my wife and said: 'You did all that was humanly possible. In no way should you feel any guilt for Papa's death.' Though we miss Papa, we know we bought the best medicine for him and always tried to make him feel wanted and needed; we did our best to meet our God-given responsibility. That satisfaction is there."

Of course, not everyone is in a position to help others materially. Said a man who lives in Nigeria: "If a man cannot fend for himself, how then can he fend for another person?" In many lands the situation may even worsen in the years to come. According to a United Nations forecast, soon half the population of sub-Saharan Africa will be living in absolute poverty.

If you find yourself in poor economic circumstances, you may take comfort from the

true story of a needy widow. When Jesus was on earth, he observed a widow make a small donation to the temple treasury. She gave only "two small coins of very little value." Still, knowing her situation, Jesus said: "I tell you truthfully, This widow, although poor, dropped in more than they all did. For all these dropped in gifts out of their surplus, but this woman out of her want dropped in all the means of living she had."—Luke 21:1-4.

Similarly, if we do our best in caring for our parents or grandparents materially, though it may be little, Jehovah observes and appreciates that. He does not expect us to do beyond what we are able to do. Probably our parents or grandparents will feel likewise.

Giving Emotionally

Providing for our parents and grandparents involves more than simply caring for

Godly Advice for Those Who Receive Care and for Those Who Give It

Be Encouraging: "Let each of us please his neighbor in what is good for his upbuilding." —Romans 15:2.

Be Steadfast: "Let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out." —Galatians 6:9.

Be Humble: 'Do nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism, but with lowliness of mind consider that the others are superior to you.' —Philippians 2:3.

Be a Doer of Good: "Let each one keep seeking, not his own advantage, but that of the other person." —1 Corinthians 10:24.

Be Reasonable: "Let your reasonableness become known to all men." —Philippians 4:5.

Be Compassionate: "Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another." —Ephesians 4:32.

their material needs. All of us have emotional needs. Everyone, including older ones, has a desire to be loved, to feel needed and wanted, and to be a valued member of the family.

Mary, who lives in Kenya, has cared for her elderly mother-in-law for three years. Mary says: "Apart from providing for her material needs, we always talk with her. Mother is not able to do much around the house, but we talk and have become close friends. Sometimes we talk about God, sometimes about the people back home. Although she is over 90 years old, her memory is very good. She remembers and talks about life when she was a little girl, in the days before 1914."

Mary continues: "It is not easy to care for an old person, but having her with us has brought rich rewards. We have peace and harmony in the family. My giving to her has stimulated a spirit of giving in others in the family. My husband has more respect for me. And if Mother hears anyone speak harshly to me, she quickly speaks up to defend me.

No one can say a sharp word to me with her around!"

Giving Spiritually

Just as material and emotional giving brings rewards to the one who gives, so it is with spiritual matters. The apostle Paul wrote to the Christian congregation in Rome: "I am longing to see you, that I may impart some spiritual gift to you in order for you to be made firm; or, rather, that there may be an interchange of encouragement among you, by each one through the other's faith, both yours and mine." —Romans 1:11, 12.

In the same way, when it comes to giving spiritually to elderly ones who serve God, encouragement is often mutual. Osondu, who lives in Nigeria, relates: "What interests me most about my grandparents is the opportunity they give me to get a glimpse of the past. My grandfather, with his eyes beaming, will tell about the territory he worked as a full-time minister in the '50's and '60's. He compares the present congrega-



gational structure with how it was when he became a Witness. These experiences help me in my service as a pioneer.”

Others in the Christian congregation can also help in giving to older ones. Tunji, mentioned earlier, explained what happened in his congregation: “A young pioneer brother who was assigned to give a public talk brought the outline to Papa so that they could prepare it together. The *Watchtower* Study conductor came and said to Papa: ‘You are experienced. What can you say to help me improve.’ Papa was able to give that elder some sound advice. The brothers mentioned Papa’s name in congregation prayers several times. All of this made him feel wanted.”

Fine Conduct Draws People to God

Sometimes, as we show honor and love to our parents and grandparents, we draw people to God. The apostle Peter wrote: “Maintain your conduct fine among the nations, that, in the thing in which they are speaking against you as evildoers, they may as a

Younger elders can benefit from the experience of older ones

result of your fine works of which they are eyewitnesses glorify God.”—1 Peter 2:12.

Andrew, a Christian elder in West Africa, traveled 60 miles twice a week to care for his sick father, who was not a believer. He relates: “When I became one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, my father was strongly opposed. But when he observed how I was taking care of him while he was sick, he kept urging my younger brothers and sisters, ‘You have to join your brother’s religion!’ That stirred them, and now my father’s nine children are all Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

Honoring and caring for our elderly parents can be a challenge, especially in hard economic times. But as Christians strive to do this, they reap many rewards. Above all, they experience the joy of giving, along with the satisfaction of knowing that they are pleasing Jehovah God, who is himself the “Father of all persons.”—Ephesians 4:6.

LET US HOLD FAST TO OUR PRECIOUS FAITH!

*"To those who have obtained a faith,
held in equal privilege with ours." —2 PETER 1:1.*

ON THE evening before Jesus' death, he said that all his apostles would abandon him. One of them, Peter, boasted: "Although *all the others* are stumbled in connection with you, never will I be stumbled!" (Matthew 26:33) But Jesus knew otherwise. That is why he told Peter on that same occasion: "I have made supplication for you that your faith may not give out; and you, when once you have returned, strengthen your brothers." —Luke 22:32.

² Peter, who had become overconfident regarding his faith, disowned Jesus that very night. Three times he denied that he even knew Christ! (Matthew 26:69-75) When he "returned," his Master's words, "strengthen your brothers," must have rung in his ears loud and clear. The rest of Peter's life was deeply affected by that admonition, as is evidenced by the two letters he wrote, which are preserved in the Bible.

Why Peter Wrote His Letters

³ About 30 years after Jesus' death, Peter wrote his first letter, addressing it to his brothers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappado-

1. What did Jesus say in warning to his apostles, yet what was Peter's boast?
2. Despite Peter's overconfidence, what actions of his betrayed that his faith was weak?
3. Why did Peter write his first letter?

cia, Asia, and Bithynia, areas that now make up central, northern, and western Turkey. (1 Peter 1:1) Jews, some of whom may have become Christians at Pentecost 33 C.E., were no doubt included among those to whom Peter wrote. (Acts 2:1, 7-9) Many were Gentiles who were undergoing fiery trials at the hands of opposers. (1 Peter 1:6, 7; 2:12, 19, 20; 3:13-17; 4:12-14) So Peter wrote to these brothers to encourage them. His aim was to help them receive "the end of [their] faith, the salvation of [their] souls." Thus, in his parting admonition, he urged: "Take your stand against [the Devil], solid in the faith." —1 Peter 1:9; 5:8-10.

⁴ Later, Peter wrote a second letter to these Christians. (2 Peter 3:1) Why? Because an even greater threat existed. Immoral individuals would try to promote their defiling conduct among believers and would mislead some! (2 Peter 2:1-3) Moreover, Peter warned of ridiculers. He had written in his first letter that "the end of all things has drawn close," and now some were apparently scoffing at such an idea. (1 Peter 4:7; 2 Peter 3:3, 4) Let us examine Peter's second letter and see how it strengthened the brothers to remain steadfast in the faith. In this first article, we will consider 2 Peter chapter 1.

4. Why did Peter write his second letter?

The Purpose of Chapter 1

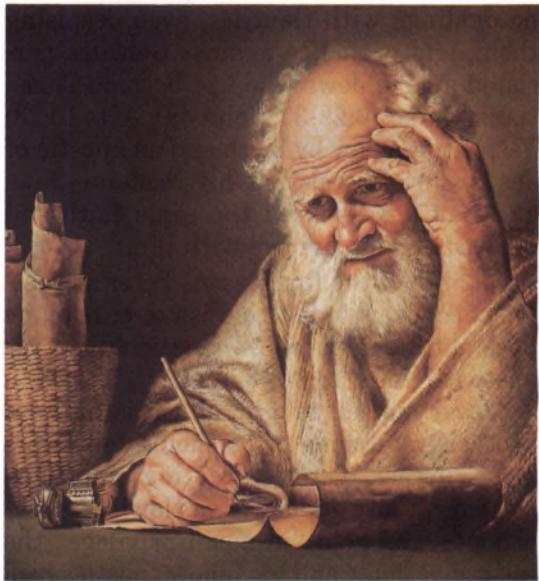
⁵ Peter does not immediately address the serious problems. Rather, he prepares the way for the discussion of these problems by building up his readers' appreciation for what they received when they became Christians. He reminds them of the wonderful promises of God and of the reliability of Bible prophecies. He does this by telling about the transfiguration, the vision he personally had of Christ in Kingdom power.—Matthew 17:1-8; 2 Peter 1:3, 4, 11, 16-21.

⁶ Can we learn a lesson from Peter's introduction? Is not counsel more acceptable if we first review with listeners features of the grand Kingdom hope that we treasure in common? And what about using a personal experience? Likely, after Jesus' death, Peter often told about seeing that vision of Christ in Kingdom glory.—Matthew 17:9.

⁷ Remember, too, that in all probability, by the time Peter wrote his second letter, Matthew's Gospel and the apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians had been widely distributed. So Peter's human failings as well as his record of faith may have been well-known among his contemporaries. (Matthew 16:21-23; Galatians 2:11-14) This did not, however, take away his freeness of speech. Indeed, it may have made his letter more appealing to those who were conscious of their own weaknesses. Therefore, when helping those who have problems, might it not be effective to admit that we too are prone to error?—Romans 3:23; Galatians 6:1.

5. How does Peter prepare his readers for a discussion of problems?

6, 7. (a) What lesson can we learn from the introduction to Peter's letter? (b) If we give counsel, what kind of admission might it sometimes be helpful to make?



Peter's shortcomings did not cause him to abandon his faith

A Strengthening Greeting

⁸ Consider now Peter's greeting. He immediately touches on the subject of faith, addressing his readers as "those who have obtained a faith, held in equal privilege with ours." (2 Peter 1:1) Here the expression "a faith" likely means "firm persuasion" and refers to the body of Christian beliefs or teachings, which in the Scriptures is sometimes called "the truth." (Galatians 5:7; 2 Peter 2:2; 2 John 1) The word "faith" is often used in this sense rather than in the general sense of trust or confidence placed in a person or thing.—Acts 6:7; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 4:5; Jude 3.

⁹ Peter's greeting must have sounded especially warm to Gentile readers. Jews had

8. In what sense did Peter likely use the word "faith"?

9. Why must Peter's greeting have sounded especially warm to Gentiles?

no dealings with Gentiles, even despising them, and prejudice against Gentiles persisted among Jews who had become Christians. (Luke 10:29-37; John 4:9; Acts 10:28) Yet, Peter, a Jew by birth and an apostle of Jesus Christ, said that his readers—Jews and Gentiles—shared the same faith and enjoyed equal privilege with him.

¹⁰ Think of the fine lessons Peter's greeting teaches us today. God is not partial; he does not favor one race or nationality over another. (Acts 10:34, 35; 11:1, 17; 15:3-9) As Jesus himself taught, all Christians are brothers, and none of us should feel superior. Further, Peter's greeting emphasizes that we are indeed a worldwide brotherhood, who hold "in equal privilege" the faith that Peter and his fellow apostles had.

—Matthew 23:8; 1 Peter 5:9.

Knowledge and God's Promises

¹¹ Following his greeting, Peter writes: "May undeserved kindness and peace be increased to you." How are undeserved kindness and peace to be increased to us? "By an accurate knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord," answers Peter. Then he says: "Divine power has given us freely all the things that concern life and godly devotion." But how do we receive these vital things? "Through the accurate knowledge of the one who called us through glory and virtue." Thus Peter twice emphasizes that an accurate knowledge of God and his Son is essential.—2 Peter 1:2, 3; John 17:3.

¹² The "false teachers" about whom Peter warns in chapter 2 use "counterfeit words" to deceive Christians. In this way they try

10. What lessons can we learn from Peter's greeting?
11. Following his greeting, what vital things does Peter emphasize?
12. (a) Why does Peter stress the importance of accurate knowledge? (b) To enjoy God's promises, what must we first have done?

to seduce them back into the immorality from which they were delivered. The results to any who have been saved through "an accurate knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" and who later succumb to such deception are disastrous. (2 Peter 2:1-3, 20) Evidently in anticipation of discussing this problem later, Peter stresses at the very outset of his letter the role of accurate knowledge in maintaining a clean standing with God. Peter observes that God "has freely given us the precious and very grand promises, that through these you may become sharers in divine nature." Yet, to enjoy these promises, which are an integral part of our faith, says Peter, we must first have "escaped from the corruption that is in the world through lust." —2 Peter 1:4.

¹³ How do you view God's promises? In the way the remnant of anointed Christians do? In 1991, Frederick Franz, then president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, who had pursued the full-time ministry for over 75 years, summed up the feelings of those who hope to reign with Christ: "We are holding fast down to this very hour, and we are going to hold fast until God has actually proved that he is true to his 'precious and very grand promises.'" Brother Franz remained confident in God's promise of a heavenly resurrection, and he held fast to the faith until his death at age 99. (1 Corinthians 15:42-44; Philippians 3:13, 14; 2 Timothy 2:10-12) Similarly, millions are holding fast to the faith, keeping their focus on God's promise of an earthly paradise in which people will live forever in happiness. Are you one of these?—Luke 23:43; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:3, 4.

13. To what are both anointed Christians and "other sheep" determined to hold fast?

Response to God's Promises

¹⁴ Are we grateful to God for what he has promised? If so, Peter argues, we should show it. "Yes, for this very reason" (because God has given us very precious promises), we should make a real effort to act. We cannot be content with merely being in the faith or with merely being acquainted with Bible truth. That is not enough! Perhaps in Peter's day some in the congregations talked a lot about faith but got involved in immoral conduct. Their behavior needed to be virtuous, so Peter urges: "Supply to your faith virtue."—2 Peter 1:5; James 2:14-17.

¹⁵ After mentioning virtue, Peter lists six more qualities that must be supplied, or added, to our faith. Each of these is needed if we are to "stand firm in the faith." (1 Corinthians 16:13) Because apostates were 'twisting the Scriptures' and propagating "deceptive teachings," Peter next lists knowledge as vital, saying: "To your virtue [supply] knowledge." Then he continues: "To your knowledge [add] self-control, to your self-control endurance, to your endurance godly devotion, to your godly devotion brotherly affection, to your brotherly affection love."—2 Peter 1:5-7; 2:12, 13; 3:16.

¹⁶ What will happen if these seven things are supplied to our faith? "If these things exist in you and overflow," Peter answers, "they will prevent you from being either inactive or unfruitful regarding the accurate knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:8) On the other hand, Peter

14. Why does Peter list virtue as the first quality to be supplied to faith?

15. (a) Why is knowledge listed after virtue as a quality to be supplied to faith? (b) What other qualities will equip us to hold fast to the faith?

16. What will happen if the qualities Peter lists are supplied to faith, but what will happen if they are not?

says: "If these things are not present in anyone, he is blind, shutting his eyes to the light, and has become forgetful of his cleansing from his sins of long ago." (2 Peter 1:9) Notice that Peter changes from the use of "you" and "our" to "anyone," "he," and "his." Although, sadly, some are blind, forgetful, and unclean, Peter kindly does not imply that the reader is one of these.—2 Peter 2:2.

Strengthening His Brothers

¹⁷ Perhaps recognizing that new ones in particular can easily be deceived, Peter tenderly encourages them: "Brothers, all the more do your utmost to make the calling and choosing of you sure for yourselves; for if you keep on doing these things you will by no means ever fail." (2 Peter 1:10; 2:18) Anointed Christians who supply to their faith these seven things will enjoy a grand reward, as Peter says: "There will be richly supplied to you the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:11) The "other sheep" will receive an everlasting inheritance in the earthly realm of God's Kingdom.—John 10:16; Matthew 25:33, 34.

¹⁸ Peter sincerely wants such a grand reward for his brothers. "For this reason," he writes, "I shall be disposed always to remind you of these things, although you know them and are firmly set in the truth." (2 Peter 1:12) Peter uses the Greek word *ste·ri'zo*, here translated "are firmly set" but rendered "strengthen" in Jesus' earlier admonition to Peter: "Strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:32) The use of that word may suggest that Peter remembers

17. What may have prompted Peter's tender appeal to practice "these things"?

18. Why is Peter disposed "always to remind" his brothers?

the powerful admonition he received from his Lord. Peter now says: "I consider it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle [human body], to rouse you up by way of reminding you, knowing as I do that the putting off of my tabernacle is soon to be." —2 Peter 1:13, 14.

¹⁹ Although Peter kindly says that his readers are "firmly set in the truth," he realizes that their faith could experience shipwreck. (1 Timothy 1:19) Since he knows that he is soon to die, he strengthens his brothers by mentioning things that they can later call to mind to keep themselves spiritually strong. (2 Peter 1:15; 3:12, 13) Similarly, we today need constant reminders to remain firm in the faith. Regardless of who we are or how long we have been in the truth, we cannot neglect regular Bible reading, personal study, and attendance at congregation meetings. Some make excuses for not attending, saying that they are too tired or that the meetings are repetitive or not well presented, but Peter knew how fast any one of us can lose faith if we become overconfident.—Mark 14:66-72; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Hebrews 10:25.

19. What helps do we need today?

Do You Remember?

- Why does Peter emphasize the importance of accurate knowledge?
- What may be the reason that virtue is listed as the first quality to be added to faith?
- Why is Peter disposed always to give his brothers reminders?
- What firm basis does Peter provide for our faith?

Firm Basis for Our Faith

²⁰ Is our faith simply based on cleverly invented myths? "No," Peter responds emphatically, "it was not by following artfully contrived false stories that we acquainted you with the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, but it was by having become eyewitnesses of his magnificence." Peter, James, and John were present with Jesus when they saw a vision of him in Kingdom power. Peter explains: "He received from God the Father honor and glory, when words such as these were borne to him by the magnificent glory: 'This is my son, my beloved, whom I myself have approved.' Yes, these words we heard borne from heaven while we were with him in the holy mountain." —2 Peter 1:16-18.

²¹ When Peter, James, and John saw that vision, the Kingdom certainly became real to them! "Consequently," Peter observes, "we have the prophetic word made more sure; and you are doing well in paying attention to it." Yes, readers of Peter's letter, including us today, have powerful reason to pay attention to prophecies about God's Kingdom. In what way do we need to pay attention? Peter answers: "As to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and a daystar rises, in your hearts." —2 Peter 1:19; Daniel 7:13, 14; Isaiah 9:6, 7.

²² Our hearts would be dark without the illumination of the prophetic word. But by paying attention to it, the hearts of Christians have kept alert to the dawn of the day when the "daystar," Jesus Christ, arises in Kingdom glory. (Revelation 22:16) How do we today pay attention to the pro-

20, 21. How did the transfiguration strengthen the faith of Peter and readers of his letters, including us today?

22. (a) To what do our hearts need to be kept alert? (b) How do we pay attention to the prophetic word?

phetic word? By Bible study, by preparation for and participation in meetings, and by ‘pondering over these things, and being absorbed in them.’ (1 Timothy 4:15) If the prophetic word is to be as a lamp shining in a “dark place” (our hearts), we must allow it to affect us deeply—our desires, emotions, motivations, and goals. We need to be Bible students, for Peter concludes chapter 1: “No prophecy of Scripture springs from any private interpretation. For prophecy was at no time brought by man’s will, but men spoke from God.”

as they were borne along by holy spirit.”—2 Peter 1:20, 21.

²³ In the opening chapter of his second letter, Peter provided powerful motivation for us to hold fast to our precious faith. We are now prepared for a consideration of the serious matters that follow. The next article will discuss chapter 2 of 2 Peter, where the apostle deals with the challenge of immoral influences that had infiltrated the congregations.

23. For what has the first chapter of 2 Peter prepared readers?

BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS!

“There will also be false teachers among you.”—2 PETER 2:1.

WHAT a shocking thing! False teachers in the first-century Christian congregation! (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:29, 30) Jesus’ half brother Jude was aware of this development. He said that he had intended to write fellow believers “about the salvation we hold in common,” but he explained: “I found it necessary to write you to exhort you to put up a hard fight for the faith.” Why did Jude change his subject matter? Because, he said, “certain men have slipped in[to the congregations] . . . turning the undeserved kindness of our God into an excuse for loose conduct.”—Jude 3, 4.

1. What had Jude intended to write about, and why did he change his subject?

² Apparently, Jude wrote shortly after Peter penned his second letter. Jude no doubt was familiar with this letter. Certainly, he expressed many comparable thoughts in his own powerful letter of exhortation. Therefore, as we examine 2 Peter chapter 2, we will note how similar it is to Jude’s letter.

Consequences of False Teachings

³ After Peter has urged his brothers to pay attention to prophecy, he says: “However, there also came to be false prophets [in ancient Israel], as there will also be

2. Why are 2 Peter chapter 2 and Jude so similar?
3. What occurred in the past that Peter says would occur again?

false teachers among you." (2 Peter 1:14-2:1) God's people in ancient times received true prophecy, but they also had to contend with the corrupt teachings of false prophets. (Jeremiah 6:13, 14; 28:1-3, 15) "In the prophets of Jerusalem," wrote Jeremiah, "I have seen horrible things, committing adultery and walking in falsehood."—Jeremiah 23:14.

⁴ Describing what false teachers would do in the Christian congregation, Peter says: "These very ones will quietly bring in destructive sects and will disown even the owner [Jesus Christ] that bought them, bringing speedy destruction upon themselves." (2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4) The final result of such first-century sectarianism is Christendom as we know it today. Peter shows why false teachers richly deserve destruction: "Many will follow their acts of loose conduct, and on account of these the way of the truth will be spoken of abusively."—2 Peter 2:2.

⁵ Think of this! Because of the influence of false teachers, *many* in the congregations would become involved in loose conduct. The Greek word translated "loose conduct" denotes licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness, shameless conduct. Peter said earlier that Christians had "escaped from the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:4) But some were going to return to that corruption, and false teachers in the congregations would be largely responsible! Thus the way of the truth would suffer disrepute. How sad! Surely, this is a matter to which all of Jehovah's Witnesses today should pay close attention. We should never forget that, depending on our conduct, we can bring either praise to Jehovah God and his people or

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4. Why do false teachers deserve destruction?
 5. For what were false teachers responsible?

reproach upon them.—Proverbs 27:11; Romans 2:24.

Introducing False Teachings

⁶ Wisely, we take note of how false teachers introduce their corrupt thinking. Peter first says that they do it quietly, or in an unobtrusive, subtle way. He adds: "With covetousness they will exploit you with counterfeit words." Selfish desire motivates false teachers, as is emphasized by the rendering in *The Jerusalem Bible*: "They will eagerly try to buy you for themselves with insidious speeches." Similarly, James Moffatt's translation here says: "In their lust they will exploit you with cunning arguments." (2 Peter 2:1, 3) The mouthings of false teachers may seem plausible to one who is not spiritually alert, but their words are carefully designed "to buy" people, seducing them into serving the deceivers' selfish purposes.

⁷ No doubt, first-century false teachers were influenced by the then current worldly thinking. About the time of Peter's writing, a philosophy called Gnosticism was becoming popular. Gnostics believed that all matter is evil and only that which pertains to the spirit is good. Thus, some of them said that it does not matter what a man does with his physical body. In time, they argued, man would not have this body. Therefore, they concluded, bodily—including sexual—sins are not important. Apparently, such views began to influence some who professed Christianity.

⁸ One Bible scholar noted that "there

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6. What motivates false teachers, and how do they seek to get what they want?
 7. What philosophy became popular in the first century?
 - 8, 9. (a) What twisted reasoning affected some early Christians? (b) According to Jude, what were some in the congregations doing?

were those in the Church who perverted the doctrine of grace," or "undeserved kindness." (Ephesians 1:5-7) According to him, the argument of some went like this: "Do you say that God's [undeserved kindness] is wide enough to cover every sin? . . . Then let us go on sinning, for God's [undeserved kindness] can wipe out every sin. In fact the more we sin the more chances God's [undeserved kindness] will get to operate." Have you ever heard more twisted reasoning than that?

⁹ The apostle Paul countered wrong thinking about God's mercy when he asked: "Shall we continue in sin, that undeserved kindness may abound?" He also inquired: "Shall we commit a sin because we are not under law but under undeserved kindness?" To each question Paul answered emphatically: "Never may that happen!" (Romans 6:1, 2, 15) Clearly, as Jude observes, certain ones were "turning the undeserved kindness of our God into an excuse for loose conduct." However, Peter notes that for such ones 'destruction is not slumbering.'—Jude 4; 2 Peter 2:3.

Warning Examples

¹⁰ To emphasize that God will take action against willful wrongdoers, Peter provides from the Scriptures three warning examples. First, he writes: "God did not hold back from punishing the angels that sinned." These, Jude says, "did not keep their original position but forsook their own proper dwelling place" in heaven. They came to earth before the Flood and took on fleshly bodies so as to engage in sexual relations with the daughters of men. As punishment for their improper, unnatural conduct, they were thrown into "Tartarus," or as Jude's account says, they were

10, 11. What three warning examples does Peter provide?

"reserved with eternal bonds under dense darkness for the judgment of the great day."—2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Genesis 6:1-3.

¹¹ Next, Peter refers to the people of Noah's day. (Genesis 7:17-24) He says that in Noah's time God "did not hold back from punishing an ancient world . . . when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly people." Finally, Peter writes that God set "a pattern for ungodly persons of things to come" by "reducing the cities Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes." Jude gives the additional information that those individuals "committed fornication excessively and [went] out after flesh for unnatural use." (2 Peter 2:5, 6; Jude 7) Men not only had illicit sexual relations with women but lusted for the flesh of other men, possibly even for the flesh of brute beasts.—Genesis 19:4, 5; Leviticus 18:22-25.

¹² Yet, at the same time, Peter notes that Jehovah is a rewarder of those who faithfully serve him. For example, he relates how God "kept Noah, a preacher of righteousness, safe with seven others" when He brought the Deluge. He also tells of Jehovah's deliverance of "righteous Lot" in the time of Sodom, concluding: "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off."—2 Peter 2:5, 7-9.

Deeds Meriting Punishment

¹³ Peter singles out ones who are especially reserved for God's judgment, namely, "those who go on after flesh with the desire to defile it and who look down on lordship." We can almost feel Peter's indignation as he says: "Daring, self-willed, they

12. According to Peter, how is righteous conduct rewarded?

13. Who especially are reserved for judgment, and in what dreams do they apparently indulge?

do not tremble at glorious ones but speak abusively." Jude writes that "these men, . . . indulging in dreams, are defiling the flesh . . . and speaking abusively of glorious ones." (2 Peter 2:10; Jude 8) Their dreams may involve impure sexual fantasies that encourage their pursuit of immoral sexual gratification. In what sense, though, do they "look down on lordship" and speak "abusively of glorious ones"?

¹⁴ They do so in that they despise divinely constituted authority. Christian elders represent the glorious Jehovah God and his Son and, as a result, have certain glory conferred upon them. True, they make mistakes, as did Peter himself, but the Scriptures urge members of the congregation to be submissive to such glorious ones. (Hebrews 13:17) Their shortcomings are no reason to speak abusively of them. Peter says that angels do not "bring against [false teachers] an accusation in abusive terms," although it would be richly deserved. "But these men," Peter continues, "like unreasoning animals born naturally to be caught and destroyed, will, in the things of which they are ignorant and speak abusively, even suffer destruction."—2 Peter 2:10-13.

"While Feasting . . . With You"

¹⁵ Although these corrupt men "consider luxurious living in the daytime a pleasure" and "are spots and blemishes," they are also devious. They act "quietly," using "counterfeit words," as Peter noted earlier. (2 Peter 2:1, 3, 13) Thus they may not overtly challenge the elders' attempts to uphold God's moral standards or openly pur-

14. In what sense do false teachers "look down on lordship" and speak "abusively of glorious ones"?

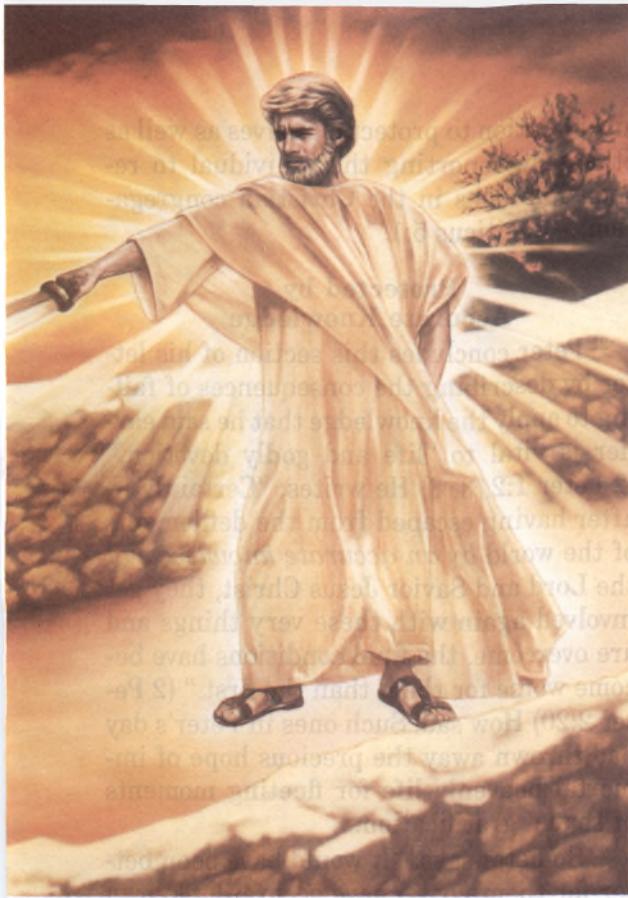
15. What are the methods of false teachers, and where do they pursue their seductions?



sue their own sexual gratification. Rather, Peter says that they indulge "with unrestrained delight in their deceptive teachings while feasting together with you." And Jude writes: "These are the rocks hidden below water in your love feasts." (Jude 12) Yes, just as jagged rocks beneath water may rip the bottom out of a boat, causing unwary sailors to drown, false teachers were corrupting unwary ones for whom they hypocritically feigned love during "love feasts."

¹⁶ These "love feasts" apparently were social occasions when first-century Christians got together to enjoy food and as-

16. (a) What were "love feasts," and in what comparable settings may immoral ones operate today? (b) Upon whom do false teachers focus their attentions, so what must such ones do?



Balaam serves as a warning example

sociation. Jehovah's Witnesses today also sometimes get together socially, perhaps at wedding receptions, on picnics, or for an evening of association. How could corrupt individuals use such events to seduce victims? Peter writes: "They have eyes full of adultery . . . , and they entice unsteady souls." They focus their "heart trained in covetousness" on the spiritually unsteady ones who have failed to make the truth fully their own. So be forewarned by what happened in Peter's day, and be on guard! Resist any impure advances, and do not be fooled by the charm or physical attractiveness of someone making immoral advances! —2 Peter 2:14.

"The Path of Balaam"

¹⁷ These "accursed" ones have known the truth for some time. They may still appear to be active in the congregation. But Peter says: "Abandoning the straight path, they have been misled. They have followed the path of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the reward of wrongdoing." (2 Peter 2:14, 15) The prophet Balaam's path was to counsel a course of immoral seduction for his own personal gain. He told Moabite King Balak that God would curse Israel if the people could be enticed to commit fornication. As a result, many of God's people were seduced by Moabite women, and 24,000 were put to death for their immoral conduct.—Numbers 25:1-9; 31:15, 16; Revelation 2:14.

¹⁸ Peter notes that Balaam was hindered when his donkey spoke to him, yet Balaam "loved the reward of wrongdoing" so much that even when that happened, he did not discontinue his "mad course." (2 Peter 2:15, 16) How wicked! Woe to any like Balaam who try to corrupt God's people by tempting them to commit immorality! Balaam died for his badness, a preview of what will happen to all who follow his path.—Numbers 31:8.

Their Devilish Seductions

¹⁹ Describing Balaamlike ones, Peter writes: "These are fountains [or, wells] without water, and mists [or, clouds] driven by a violent storm." For a thirsty traveler

17. What was "the path of Balaam," and how did it affect 24,000 Israelites?
18. How persistent was Balaam, and what does the outcome portend for false teachers?
- 19, 20. (a) To what are Balaamlike ones compared, and why? (b) Whom do they entice, and how? (c) Why can we say that their seductions are devilish, and how can we protect ourselves and others from them?

in a desert, a dry well may mean death. No wonder "the blackness of darkness has been reserved" for those who resemble such things! "For they utter swelling expressions of no profit," Peter continues, "and by the desires of the flesh and by loose habits they entice those who are just escaping from people who conduct themselves in error." They seduce the inexperienced by "promising them freedom," Peter says, while "they themselves are existing as slaves of corruption."—2 Peter 2:17-19; Galatians 5:13.

²⁰ The seductions of such corrupt teachers are devilish. They may say, for example: 'God knows we are weak and subject to passion. So if we indulge ourselves and satisfy our sexual desires, God will be merciful. If we confess our sin, he will forgive us just as he did when we first came into the truth.' Recall that the Devil used a somewhat comparable approach with Eve, promising her that she could sin with impunity. In Eve's case, he claimed that sin against God would give her enlightenment and freedom. (Genesis 3:4, 5) If we should happen to encounter such a corrupt person associating with the congregation, we have

Do You Recall?

- What three warning examples does Peter cite?
- How do false teachers "look down on lordship"?
- What is the path of Balaam, and how may those following it try to seduce others?
- What are the consequences of failing to apply accurate knowledge?

an obligation to protect ourselves as well as others by reporting the individual to responsible ones in the Christian congregation.—Leviticus 5:1.

Protected by Accurate Knowledge

²¹ Peter concludes this section of his letter by describing the consequences of failing to apply the knowledge that he said earlier is vital to "life and godly devotion." (2 Peter 1:2, 3, 8) He writes: "Certainly if, after having escaped from the defilements of the world by *an accurate knowledge* of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they get involved again with these very things and are overcome, the final conditions have become worse for them than the first." (2 Peter 2:20) How sad! Such ones in Peter's day had thrown away the precious hope of immortal heavenly life for fleeting moments of sexual gratification.

²² So Peter says: "It would have been better for them not to have accurately known the path of righteousness than after knowing it accurately to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. The saying of the true proverb has happened to them: 'The dog has returned to its own vomit, and the sow that was bathed to rolling in the mire.'"—2 Peter 2:21, 22; Proverbs 26:11.

²³ Another problem that had evidently begun to affect early Christians was similar to one that affects some today. Back then, some were evidently complaining about the seeming nonarrival of Christ's promised presence. Let us examine how Peter addresses this matter.

21-23. (a) What are the consequences of failing to apply accurate knowledge? (b) What further problem does Peter discuss that will be considered next?

KEEP JEHOVAH'S DAY CLOSE IN MIND

"In the last days there will come ridiculers."—2 PETER 3:3.

A FULL-TIME minister for more than 66 years wrote: "I have always felt a keen sense of urgency. Armageddon has always been, in my thinking, the day after tomorrow. (Revelation 16:14, 16) Like my father, and his father before him, I have lived my life as the apostle [Peter] urged, 'keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah.' I have always viewed the promised new world as a 'reality though not beheld.'”—2 Peter 3:11, 12; Hebrews 11:1; Isaiah 11:6-9; Revelation 21:3, 4.

² Peter's expression "keeping close in mind" in reference to Jehovah's day means that we do not put it off in our minds. We should not forget that the day when Jehovah will destroy this system of things as a preliminary to establishing his promised new world is very near. It should be so real to us that we see it clearly, as being immediately ahead of us. That was how real it was to God's prophets of old, and they often spoke of it as being near.—Isaiah 13:6; Joel 1:15; 2:1; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14.

³ Why did Peter urge us to view the day of Jehovah as though it could come, so to speak, "the day after tomorrow"? Be-

1. What sense of urgency did one modern-day Christian have?
2. What does it mean to keep close in mind Jehovah's day?
3. What evidently prompted Peter's counsel regarding Jehovah's day?

cause some had evidently begun to ridicule the idea of Christ's promised presence during which wrongdoers would be punished. (2 Peter 3:3, 4) So in chapter 3 of his second letter, which we will now consider, Peter answers the charges of these ridiculers.

Warm Appeal to Remember

⁴ Peter's affection for his brothers is shown by his repeatedly addressing them in this chapter as "beloved ones." Warmly appealing to them not to forget what they had been taught, Peter begins: "Beloved ones, . . . I am arousing your clear thinking faculties by way of a reminder, that you should remember the sayings previously spoken by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles."—2 Peter 3:1, 2, 8, 14, 17; Jude 17.

⁵ What "sayings previously spoken by the holy prophets" does Peter urge readers to remember? Why, those about the presence of Christ in Kingdom power and about the judgment of the ungodly. Peter had earlier drawn attention to these sayings. (2 Peter 1:16-19; 2:3-10) Jude refers to Enoch, who was the first recorded prophet to warn about the adverse judgment of God upon evildoers. (Jude 14, 15) Other prophets followed Enoch, and Peter does not want us to

4. What does Peter want us to remember?
5. What did some prophets say about Jehovah's day?

forget what they wrote.—Isaiah 66:15, 16; Zephaniah 1:15-18; Zechariah 14:6-9.

⁶ In addition, Peter tells his readers to remember “the commandment of the Lord and Savior.” Jesus’ commandment includes the exhortation: “Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down . . . and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare.” “Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is.” (Luke 21:34-36; Mark 13:33) Peter also urges us to heed the sayings of the apostles. The apostle Paul, for example, wrote: “Jehovah’s day is coming exactly as a thief in the night. So, then, let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses.”—1 Thessalonians 5:2, 6.

The Desires of Ridiculers

⁷ As noted before, the reason for Peter’s admonition is that some had begun to scoff at such warnings, even as Israelites of earlier times had mocked Jehovah’s prophets. (2 Chronicles 36:16) Peter explains: “For you know this first, that in the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their *own desires*.” (2 Peter 3:3) Jude says that the desires of these ridiculers are “*for ungodly things*.” He calls them “*animalistic men, not having spirituality*.”—Jude 17-19.

⁸ The false teachers who Peter said “go on after flesh with the desire to defile it” are likely among these ridiculers who are without spirituality. (2 Peter 2:1, 10, 14) They mockingly ask faithful Christians: “Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell

6. What sayings of Christ and his apostles enlighten us about Jehovah’s day?

7, 8. (a) What kind of men are those who ridicule God’s warning messages? (b) What do the ridiculers claim?

asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation’s beginning.”—2 Peter 3:4.

⁹ Why this ridicule? Why suggest that Christ’s presence may never occur, that God has never intervened in human affairs and never will? Well, by undermining the sense of urgency that permeates the Word of God, these animalistic ridiculers seek to lull others into a state of spiritual apathy and thus make them easy prey to selfish seductions. What powerful encouragement for us today to remain spiritually awake! May we keep close in mind Jehovah’s day and always remember that his eyes are upon us! Thus we will be moved to serve Jehovah with zeal and maintain our moral purity.—Psalm 11:4; Isaiah 29:15; Ezekiel 8:12; 12:27; Zephaniah 1:12.

Willful and Despicable

¹⁰ Such ridiculers ignore a vital fact. They deliberately ignore it and try to cause others to forget it. Why? In order more easily to seduce the people. “For, according to their wish,” Peter writes, “this fact escapes their notice.” What fact? “That there were heavens from of old and an earth standing compactly out of water and in the midst of water by the word of God; and by those means the world of that time suffered destruction when it was deluged with water.” (2 Peter 3:5, 6) Yes, Jehovah did rid the earth of wickedness during the Flood in Noah’s day, a fact that Jesus also emphasized. (Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:26, 27; 2 Peter 2:5) So, contrary to what ridiculers say, all things have *not* continued “exactly as from creation’s beginning.”

9. (a) Why do ridiculers try to undermine the sense of urgency that permeates the Word of God? (b) How is keeping close in mind Jehovah’s day a protection for us?

10. How does Peter prove that the ridiculers are wrong?

¹¹ Ridiculers may well have mocked faithful Christians because these had as yet unrealized expectations. Shortly before Jesus died, his disciples “were imagining that the kingdom of God was going to display itself instantly.” Then, after his resurrection they asked whether the Kingdom would be set up right away. Also, about ten years before Peter wrote his second letter, some were “excited” by “a verbal message” or “a letter,” reputedly from the apostle Paul or his companions, “to the effect that the day of Jehovah is here.” (Luke 19:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; Acts 1:6) Such expectations of Jesus’ disciples, however, were not false, only premature. Jehovah’s day would come!

God’s Word Is Dependable

¹² As noted earlier, pre-Christian prophets often warned that Jehovah’s day of vengeance was near. A miniature “day of Jehovah” came in 607 B.C.E. when Jehovah executed vengeance upon his wayward people. (Zephaniah 1:14-18) Later, other nations, including Babylon and Egypt, suffered such a “day of Jehovah.” (Isaiah 13:6-9; Jeremiah 46:1-10; Obadiah 15) The end of the first-century Jewish system of things was also foretold, and it occurred when Roman armies devastated Judea in 70 C.E. (Luke 19:41-44; 1 Peter 4:7) But Peter points to a future “day of Jehovah,” one that will dwarf even the global Flood in magnitude!

¹³ Peter introduces his description of that coming destruction, saying: “But by the same word.” He had just said that “by the word of God,” the pre-Flood earth

11. What premature expectations of the early Christians led some to ridicule them?
12. How has God’s Word proved dependable in its prophecies about “the day of Jehovah”?
13. What historical example demonstrates the certainty of the end of this system of things?

stood “out of water and in the midst of water.” This situation, described in the Bible’s creation account, made possible the Deluge when the waters poured down at God’s direction, or word. Peter continues: “By the same word [of God] the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3:5-7; Genesis 1:6-8) We have Jehovah’s dependable word for it! He will bring an end to “the heavens and the earth”—this system of things—in the fiery wrath of his great day! (Zephaniah 3:8) But when?

Eagerness for the End to Come

¹⁴ Jesus’ disciples wanted to know when the end would come, so they asked him: “What will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?” They evidently were asking about when the Jewish system would end, but Jesus’ answer focused primarily on when the present ‘heavens and earth’ would suffer destruction. Jesus foretold such things as great wars, food shortages, earthquakes, disease, and crime. (Matthew 24:3-14; Luke 21:5-36) Since the year 1914, we have seen the sign being fulfilled that Jesus gave for “the conclusion of the system of things” as well as the things the apostle Paul mentioned would identify “the last days.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Truly, the evidence is overwhelming that we are living in the time of the end of this system of things!

¹⁵ Jehovah’s Witnesses have been eager to know when the day of Jehovah will occur. In their eagerness they have at times made attempts to estimate when it might

14. Why can we be confident that we are now living in “the last days”?
15. What have Christians tended to do despite Jesus’ caution?

come. But by so doing, they have failed, as did Jesus' early disciples, to heed their Master's caution that we "do not know when the appointed time is." (Mark 13:32, 33) Ridiculers have mocked faithful Christians for their premature expectations. (2 Peter 3:3, 4) Nevertheless, Jehovah's day *will* come, Peter affirms, according to *His* timetable.

Need to Have Jehovah's View

¹⁶ We need to have Jehovah's view of time, as Peter now reminds us: "However, let this one fact not be escaping your notice, beloved ones, that one day is with Jehovah as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." How short by comparison is our life span of 70 or 80 years! (2 Peter 3:8; Psalm 90:4, 10) So if the fulfillment of God's promises seems to delay, we need to accept the admonition of God's prophet: "Even if [the appointed time] should delay, *keep in expectation of it*; for it will without fail come true. It will not be late."—Habakkuk 2:3.

¹⁷ Why have the last days of this system

16. What admonition do we wisely heed?
17. Although the last days have continued longer than many expected, of what can we be confident?

How Would You Respond?

- What does "keeping close in mind" Jehovah's day mean?
- What do ridiculers deliberately ignore, and why?
- For what reason have ridiculers mocked faithful Christians?
- What point of view do we need to maintain?

continued longer than many expected? For a fine reason, as Peter next explains: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Jehovah takes into consideration what is in the best interests of all humankind. His concern is with the lives of people, as he says: "I take delight, not in the death of the wicked one, but in that someone wicked turns back from his way and actually keeps living." (Ezekiel 33:11) So we can be confident that the end will come at just the right time to fulfill the purpose of our all-wise, loving Creator!

What Will Pass Away?

¹⁸ Because Jehovah truly loves those who serve him, he will wipe out all those who cause them distress. (Psalm 37:9-11, 29) Noting, as did Paul earlier, that this destruction would come at an unexpected time, Peter writes: "Jehovah's day will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a hissing noise, but the elements being intensely hot will be dissolved, and earth and the works in it will be discovered." (2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:2) The literal heavens and earth did not perish in the Deluge, neither will they during Jehovah's day. What, then, will "pass away," or be destroyed?

¹⁹ Human governments that have dominated mankind like "heavens" will end and so will the "earth," or human ungodly society. The "hissing noise" perhaps in-

^{18, 19. (a)} Why is Jehovah determined to destroy this system of things? (b) How does Peter describe the end of this system, and what will actually be destroyed?



Keep close in mind Jehovah's day . . .

dicates the rapid passage of the heavens. "The elements" that make up today's decadent human society will be "dissolved," or destroyed. And the "earth," including "the works in it," will be "discovered." Jehovah will thoroughly expose the wicked acts of men as he brings an entire world system to its well-deserved end.

Keep Focused on Your Hope

²⁰ Since these dramatic events are at hand, Peter says that we ought to be involved "in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah." There can be no doubt about it! "The heavens being on fire will be dissolved and the elements being intensely hot will

20. How should our lives be affected by our knowledge of the events that lie ahead?

melt!" (2 Peter 3:11, 12) The fact that these dramatic events *could* begin to occur tomorrow should affect everything we do or plan to do.

²¹ Peter now tells us what will replace the old system, saying: "But there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 65:17) Ah, what grand relief! Christ and his 144,000 rulers will compose a "new" governmental "heavens," and people who survive the end of this world will make up the "new earth."—1 John 2:17; Revelation 5:9, 10; 14:1, 3.

Maintain Urgency and Moral Purity

²² "Hence, beloved ones," Peter continues, "since you are awaiting these things,

21. What will replace the present heavens and earth?

22. (a) What will help us avoid any spiritual spot or blemish? (b) What danger does Peter warn about?



... and the new world to follow

do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace. Furthermore, consider the patience of our Lord as salvation.” Waiting with eager anticipation and viewing any seeming delay of Jehovah’s day as an expression of divine patience will help us avoid any spiritual spot or blemish. Yet, there is danger! Peter warns that in the writings of “our beloved brother Paul . . . are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unsteady are twisting, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”—2 Peter 3:14-16.

²³ False teachers evidently twisted Paul’s writings about God’s undeserved kindness, using them as an excuse for loose conduct. Perhaps Peter has this in mind when he

23. What is Peter’s concluding admonition?

writes his parting admonition: “You, therefore, beloved ones, having this advance knowledge, be on your guard that you may not be led away with them by the error of the law-defying people and fall from your own steadfastness.” He then concludes his letter, urging: “Go on growing in the undeserved kindness and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”—2 Peter 3:17, 18.

²⁴ Clearly, Peter wants to strengthen his brothers. He desires all to have the attitude expressed by the faithful 82-year-old Witness quoted at the outset: “I have lived my life as the apostle urged, ‘keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah.’ I have always viewed the promised new world as a ‘reality though not beheld.’” May we all live our life in the same way.

24. What attitude should all of Jehovah’s servants embrace?

MY HEART OVERFLOWS WITH GRATITUDE

AS TOLD BY JOHN WYNN



How often I rebelled at going to the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses! I would feign a stomachache or a headache—anything to avoid attending. But the firmness of my mother always caused such ailments to disappear quickly, and I would find myself walking with her the two miles to the Kingdom Hall, listening as she discussed God's Word with an older companion.

THIS taught me a valuable lesson: Parents should never stop being firm, in a loving way, for what is right in God's eyes. (Proverbs 29:15, 17) They should never forget the divine injunction 'not to forsake the gathering of ourselves together.' (Hebrews 10:25) As I look back on my life, how grateful I am that my mother made me do what was best for me!

Grateful for Fine Examples

Although my father was an unbeliever, he was tolerant of Mother's beliefs when she became a Bible Student, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known. In 1913 she went

to hear the talk "Beyond the Grave," given by Charles T. Russell, the first president of the Watch Tower Society. However, she was late arriving, and all seats were taken. So she was invited to sit with other latecomers around the platform, right next to Pastor Russell. That talk deeply impressed her. It was published the following day in the local newspaper, and she kept a copy of it and read it repeatedly.

After the meeting, Mother handed in a piece of paper with her name, and she was soon contacted by a Bible Student. In time, she began to deliver Bible tracts from door to door in our hometown of Gloucester,

England. From the time that my two sisters and I were very young, we shared with Mother in the preaching work.

When Harry Francis, a zealous Bible Student, moved to Gloucester, Mother gave him a warm welcome. Soon, he took a personal interest in me, and his encouragement was a major factor in my later becoming a pioneer, as full-time ministers are called. The example of Brother Francis taught me an important lesson: Older ones should always look for ways to encourage younger ones.

When my mother became a Bible Student, others in Gloucester did the same. However, some elders in the congregation began thinking too much of themselves, and members of the class—as the congregation was then called—began to follow individuals. At one meeting, some kept poking Mother in the back, urging her to put her hand up in support of certain elders. But Mother knew they were not setting a proper example, and she refused to be intimidated. At that time, in the late 1920's, many fell away and no longer walked in the way of the truth. (2 Peter 2:2) Yet, Mother never deviated from loyally supporting the organization, thus setting a fine example for me.

My Stand for the Truth

Eventually, in June 1939, when I was 18 years old, I was baptized in the River Severn. That year I was also appointed sound servant. In those days we used a large transcription machine that blasted out in public places the message "Religion Is a Snare and a Racket." The emphasis at that time was on exposing the hypocrisy and false teachings of Christendom.

Once I was at the front of a procession carrying a banner that proclaimed on one side "Religion Is a Snare and a Racket" and on the other "Serve God and Christ the King." Following along was a pony that had large



With my wife, Etty

posters on either side of its back that advertised the public lecture. What a sight that procession must have been in the very religious city of Gloucester!

Despite financial difficulties at home, Mother encouraged me to become a pioneer. Thus, in September 1939, at the start of World War II, I arrived at my first pioneer assignment in Leamington, a small town in Warwickshire. The town was the home of a number of retired clergymen.

We used a lightweight phonograph in our house-to-house ministry, playing lectures of Joseph F. Rutherford, then president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. On the other hand, our transcription machine (which could be used for larger audiences) was much heavier, and we carried it in a pram, or baby carriage. Sometimes clergymen, irate at the message exposing false religion, marched us off their premises. But we were not downhearted. Jehovah blessed our work, and today a congregation of over a hundred Witnesses can be found in Leamington.

In 1941, as World War II raged, I moved

to Wales, where I pioneered in the towns of Haverfordwest, Carmarthen, and Wrexham. As a full-time minister, I was exempted from military service, but people did not appreciate our neutral position. Thus, my partner and I were denounced as spies or fifth columnists. One night, police surrounded our trailer. My partner, who had just returned from his work of shoveling coal, popped his head out to see who was there. His face was covered with coal dust, and to the police he looked as though he were ready for a commando raid. That needed some explaining!

We were richly blessed in our assignments. Once, while we were in Carmarthen, John Barr from the branch office in London (now a member of the Governing Body) paid us an encouraging visit. At the time, there were only a couple of publishers in Carmarthen; at present, there are more than a hundred. Wrexham currently has three congregations, and I recently had the privilege of dedicating a fine Kingdom Hall in Haverfordwest.—1 Corinthians 3:6.

Grateful for My Ministry

While we were in Swansea, South Wales, my partner, Don Rendell, was not granted military exemption. He was put in prison despite explaining that he could not conscientiously go to war against fellow Christians in other lands. (Isaiah 2:2-4; John 13:34, 35) To encourage him, as well as to give a witness to the neighbors, I placed the transcription machine nearby and played Bible lectures.

However, local women did not like this and passed the hat and collected money to pay soldiers to beat up my companion and me. We took off, running as fast as we could—I was also pushing the pram with the transcription machine—seeking the protection of the Kingdom Hall. But when we got

there, it was locked! Only the timely intervention of the police saved us from a severe beating.

The incident evidently became well-known. When I was preaching in the country near Swansea some time later, a man told me approvingly: “Christianity is what you stand up for, like the young man in Swansea who boldly proclaimed what he believed and had to run for protection.” How surprised he was to learn that I was that young man!

Pioneering was not easy in those war years. We did not have much in the way of worldly goods, but what we had, we appreciated and enjoyed. We always received regular supplies of spiritual food, and we never missed a meeting, except when we were sick. I purchased an old bicycle, and we had large baskets put on it to carry a phonograph as well as Bible literature. Sometimes I traveled 50 miles a day on the bike! I pioneered for some seven years and fondly remember those days.

In 1946, after World War II had ended, I was invited to work at Bethel, as the principal facilities of Jehovah's Witnesses are called in their respective countries. Our Bethel was then located at 34 Craven Terrace, next-door to the London Tabernacle. I enjoyed association with older ones there, such as Alice Hart, whose father, Tom Hart, is believed to have been the first Witness in England.

Gaining a Faithful Companion

In 1956, I left Bethel to marry Etty, a pioneer I had become acquainted with when she came from the Netherlands to visit her sister who then lived in London. Toward the end of the war, Etty taught typing and shorthand at a commercial college in Tilburg, southern Netherlands. One day another teacher offered to cycle home with

her to make sure she arrived safely. He was a Roman Catholic. When they arrived, a discussion followed with Etty's Protestant parents. A friendship developed, and the teacher became a frequent visitor to their home.

Soon after the end of the war, this teacher came to Etty's home, shouting, "I've found the truth!"

"I thought you said that you had the truth when you were a Roman Catholic!" Etty's father responded.

"No!" he replied excitedly. "It's Jehovah's Witnesses who have the truth!"

That evening and many following ones were spent in intense Bible discussion. Soon afterward Etty became a pioneer. In her ministry she also encountered bitter opposition, which in the Netherlands came from the Roman Catholic Church. Children, egged on by the priests, would disrupt her conversations when she was going from house to house, and on one occasion they wrecked her bicycle. She took her bike to a repairman who had previously accepted a booklet from her. "Look what the children have done!" she said tearfully.

"Now, don't you give up," the man kindly replied. "You're doing a fine work. I'll repair your bike for nothing." And he did.

Etty found that the priests took little interest in their flocks until she started to study the Bible with them. Then the priests and nuns would come around to undermine the people's faith in both the Bible and Jehovah. Despite this, she enjoyed many fruitful Bible studies.

Grateful for Our Life Together

Following our wedding, Etty and I were assigned to the traveling work in England, and for nearly five years, we visited congregations to strengthen them spiritually. Then I received an invitation to attend the

36th class of Gilead, held at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. The ten-month course, which was completed in November 1961, was particularly designed to train men to handle work in branch offices of Jehovah's Witnesses. While I was away, Etty remained in England at London Bethel. Upon my graduation, we were assigned there together.

For the next 16 years, I worked at the service desk, handling matters pertaining to congregation activities. Then, in 1978, when the Bethel Home overseer, Pryce Hughes, died, I was appointed in his place. Being responsible for the well-being of the members of our growing Bethel family—we have over 260 in our family now—has been a rewarding assignment over these many years.

In 1971 my dear mother died at age 85. Etty and I returned to Gloucester for the funeral, where a brother nicely outlined the heavenly hope that Mother entertained. (Philippians 3:14) I am grateful for the loving care that my sisters, Doris and Grace, provided Mother in her old age, thus enabling Etty and me to continue in the full-time ministry.

Etty and I often think of our parents and how they reared us in such a loving, firm way. What an immeasurable debt we owe them! My mother especially set a wonderful example for me and my sisters, building appreciation in us for Jehovah and his organization.

Indeed, our hearts overflow with gratitude as we contemplate each new day of service to our heavenly Father, Jehovah. What a wonderful, loving God he is! The Bible psalmist expressed our sentiments when he wrote: "I will exalt you, O my God the King, and I will bless your name to time indefinite, even forever. All day long I will bless you, and I will praise your name to time indefinite, even forever."—Psalm 145:1, 2.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

The Cleansing Power of God's Word



IT IS reported that most drug addicts return to their habits following release from rehabilitation centers. But God's Word can accomplish what clinics usually fail to do. (Hebrews 4:12) Many have been helped by God's Word and spirit to overcome drug addiction and apply the counsel: "Let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear." —2 Corinthians 7:1.

This is exemplified by an experience from Myanmar. A man who struggled with drug addiction for many years relates: "I became a drug addict while in my teens. Many times I tried to break free, but I could not. In order to support my drug habit, I turned to stealing. As a result, in 1988, I was sent to prison for one year.

"Following my release from prison, I resumed contact with former friends. Soon thereafter I returned to the drug habit. This self-destructive course led family members to cut off all association with me. Additionally, my rebellious attitude caused many in the community to be afraid of me, and they too began to avoid me.

"Then one day the inevitable happened—I suffered a drug overdose. I was sent back to prison, this time for three years. Although life in prison was very harsh, somehow I managed to survive.

"After returning home from prison, I asked my family for forgiveness for past mistakes. They gra-

ciously accepted me back, but once again, friends induced me to return to my former ways.

"Finally, my grandmother recommended to a local pastor that I attend a certain Bible school. The pastor agreed. However, before I started attending, my aunt, who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses, said that if I really wanted to learn the Bible, I should study with the Witnesses.

"I went to the Kingdom Hall and was introduced to a man who agreed to study the Bible with me. Many in attendance greeted me warmly and made me feel welcome.

"After I began to study the Bible and attend Christian meetings, the craving for drugs was replaced by a desire to draw close to God. One year later I had progressed to the point of dedicating my life to Jehovah God, and I symbolized that dedication by water baptism.

"Recently, while going from house to house, I met one of my former drug associates. He could not comprehend my dramatic turnaround. This opened the door for a witness, and I was able to speak to him about the Kingdom hope.

"At last I have found true purpose and meaning in life. Thanks to God's help and counsel from his Word, I am now able to help others rid themselves of the demoralizing habit of drug abuse."

In Our Next Issue

Poor yet Rich—How Can It Be?

Will You Be Faithful Like Elijah?

How to Maintain Joy
in Full-Time Service

A Father Who Is Ready to Forgive

IT HAS been called the greatest short story ever written—with good reason. Jesus' parable of a father's love for his lost son is like a window through which we obtain a magnificent view of God's compassion for repentant sinners.

Lost and Found

A man had two sons. The younger one said to him: 'I want my inheritance now, instead of waiting until you die.' The father complied, likely giving him a third of all that he owned—the legal share for the younger of two sons. (Deuteronomy 21:17) The youth hastily gathered his possessions and traveled to a distant land where he spent all his money pursuing a life of debauchery.—Luke 15:11-13.

Then a severe famine occurred. In desperation, the young man accepted work as a swineherd—a despicable occupation to a Jew. (Leviticus 11:7, 8) Food was so scarce that he began craving the carob pods that served as food for the pigs! Finally, the young man came to his senses. 'My father's servants are better fed than I am!' he thought to himself. 'I will go back home, confess my sins, and beg to become as one of my father's hired men.'*—Luke 15:14-19.

The young man trudged back home. No doubt his appearance had changed considerably. Still, his father recognized him "while he was yet a long way off." Moved with pity, he ran to his son, embraced him, and "tenderly kissed him."—Luke 15:20.

This warm reception made it easier for the young man to unburden himself. "Father," he

* While a slave was viewed as being part of the household, a hired servant was a day laborer who could be dismissed at any time. The young man reasoned that he would be willing to accept even the lowliest place in his father's household.

said, "I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Make me as one of your hired men." The father summoned his slaves. "Quick!" he commanded. "Bring out a robe, the best one, and clothe him with it, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fattened young bull, slaughter it and let us eat and enjoy ourselves, because this my son was dead and came to life again; he was lost and was found."—Luke 15:21-24.

An elaborate feast got under way, including music and dancing. The older son heard the commotion while returning from the field. When he learned that his brother had come home and that this was the cause of the festivity, he became indignant. 'I slaved for you for many years, and I never disobeyed you, yet you never gave me a young goat to enjoy myself with my friends,' he complained to his father. 'But now as soon as your son who wasted your wealth returns, you put on a feast for him.' 'Child,' his father tenderly replied, 'you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we just had to rejoice because your brother was dead and came to life. He was lost and then was found.'—Luke 15:25-32.

Lessons for Us

The father in Jesus' parable represents our merciful God, Jehovah. Like the lost son, some people for a time leave the security of God's household but later return. How does Jehovah view such ones? Those who return to Jehovah with sincere repentance can be assured that "he will not for all time keep finding fault, neither will he to time indefinite keep resentful." (Psalm 103:9) In the parable, the father ran to welcome



back his son. Likewise, Jehovah is not only willing but eager to forgive repentant sinners. He is "ready to forgive," and he does so "in a large way."—Psalm 86:5; Isaiah 55:7; Zechariah 1:3.

In Jesus' parable, the father's genuine love made it easier for the son to summon the courage to return. But consider: What would have happened if the father had disowned the boy or in an angry outburst told him never to come back? Such an attitude likely would permanently have estranged the lad.—Compare 2 Corinthians 2:6, 7.

In a sense, then, the father laid the groundwork for his son's return at the time he departed. At times, Christian elders today must remove unrepentant sinners from the congregation. (1 Corinthians 5:11, 13) In doing so, they can begin paving the way for the sinner's return by lovingly pointing out the steps that he can take for future reinstatement. The memory of such heartfelt entreaty has later moved many spiritually lost

ones to repentance and has prompted them to return to God's household.—2 Timothy 4:2.

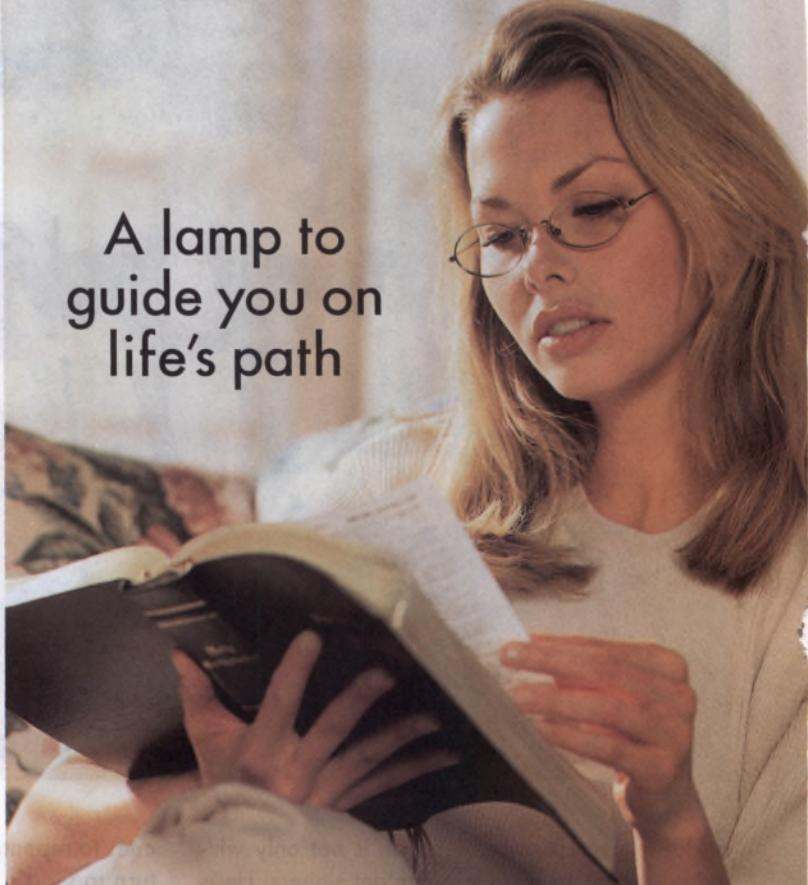
The father also showed compassion when his son returned. It did not take long for him to sense the boy's sincere repentance. Then, instead of insisting on extracting every detail of his son's transgressions, he went about the business of welcoming him back, and he expressed great pleasure in doing so. Christians can imitate this example. They should rejoice that a lost one has been found.—Luke 15:10.

The father's conduct leaves no doubt that he had long anticipated the return of his wayward son. Of course, that is only a shadow of the yearning Jehovah has for all who have left his household. He "does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Those who repent of their sins can therefore be assured that they will be blessed with "seasons of refreshing . . . from the person of Jehovah."—Acts 3:19.

"WELL know, O Jehovah, that to earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step." (Jeremiah 10:23) With these words the prophet Jeremiah showed that humans cannot successfully negotiate life's path without help. Where can such help be found? The psalmist answers in his prayer to Jehovah God: "Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway." —Psalm 119:105.

Those who undertake a study of God's Word, the Holy Bible, and apply what it says will be like someone who starts a journey early in the morning. At first, he cannot see much because it is dark. But as the sun begins to rise, he sees more and more. Finally, the sun shines directly overhead. He sees everything in clear detail. Such an illustration calls to mind a Bible proverb: "The path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established." —Proverbs 4:18.

A lamp to guide you on life's path



What about those who reject God's guidance? The Bible says: "The way of the wicked ones is like the gloom; they have not known at what they keep stumbling." (Proverbs 4:19) Yes, the wicked are like the man who stumbles in the dark. Even their seeming successes are at best temporary, for "there is no wisdom, nor any discernment, nor any counsel in

opposition to Jehovah." —Proverbs 21:30.

Therefore, follow the guidance of God's Word, the Bible. If you do, you will find the words of Proverbs 3:5, 6 to be true: "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."