

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

May 15, 1990

ARMAGEDDON WHEN?

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THE PURPOSE OF THE WATCHTOWER is to exalt Jehovah God as the Sovereign of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as they 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 the 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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and the Lord's Day, 1990
"We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the
Lord." With those words, former U.S. president

W Theodore Roosevelt applied the term "Armageddon" to a political battle in which he was involved. So, should we search for Armageddon in the political arena?

A few years ago, the Canadian magazine *Business Life* carried an article entitled "Economic Armageddon." A subtitle asked: "Could Third World default on debt trigger our economic collapse?" But should we think of Armageddon as a financial disaster?

According to the journal *Newsweek*, the world's end became a campaign issue during a 1984 presidential debate. On that occasion, then U.S. president Ronald Reagan "was asked if he truly believes that the

world is headed for a 'nuclear Armageddon.' Reagan acknowledged 'philosophical discussions' about the coincidence between current events and Biblical signs portending the last days, but the commander in chief insisted that he has never said that 'we must plan according to Armageddon.'" Yet, should our search for the meaning of Armageddon focus on military action that threatens nuclear holocaust?

Many religious people say that Armageddon is a battle. But early in the 19th century, Bible scholar Adam Clarke wrote: "How ridiculous have been the conjectures of men relative to this point! Within the last twenty years this battle has been fought at various places, according to our purblind seers and self-inspired prophets! At one time it was *Austerlitz*, at another *Moscow*, at another *Leipsic*, and now *Waterloo*! And thus they have gone on, and will go on, confounding and being confounded."

Searching for the meaning of Armageddon clearly raises some vital questions. What is Armageddon? If it is a battle, who will be the participants? Why will it be fought? Where will it take place? And when will Armageddon occur?

ARMAGEDDON WHEN?

What Is Armageddon?

The term "Armageddon" is derived from a word found in the Bible book of Revelation, known for symbolic language. Therein the apostle John wrote: "I saw three unclean inspired expressions that looked like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the wild beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are, in fact, expressions inspired by demons and perform signs, and they go forth to the kings of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty. . . . And they gathered them together to the place that is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon."—Revelation 16:13-16.

Armageddon, or Har-Magedon, is a transliteration of the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew expression *Har Meghid-dohn'* meaning "Mountain of Megiddo," or "Mountain of Assembly of Troops." It is linked with "the war of the great day of God the Almighty." So Armageddon is not a political skirmish, an economic disaster, a nuclear holocaust, or a human conflict. Rather, Armageddon is God's war.

Who Will Be the Participants?

The three unclean froglike inspired expressions come out of the mouths of the dragon (Satan the Devil), the wild beast (his earthly political setup), and the Anglo-American false prophet. These expressions inspired by demons, or wicked angels, gather the earthly kings, or rulers, to Har-

Magedon.—See chapter 32 of the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

On Jehovah's side in the war of Armageddon is a vast army of invisible spirit forces led by the King Jesus Christ. The apostle John reported: "I saw the heaven opened, and, look! a white horse. And the one seated upon it is called Faithful and True, and he [Jesus] judges and carries on war in righteousness. . . . Also, the armies that were in heaven were following

him. . . . And out of his mouth there protrudes a sharp long sword, that he may strike the nations with it, and he will shepherd them with a rod



of iron. He treads too the winepress of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty. And upon his outer garment, even upon his thigh, he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.” (Revelation 19:11-16) The sharp long sword represents Christ’s authority to order the execution of all who refuse to support God’s Kingdom. (Revelation 1:16; 2:16) Huge invisible forces are available for the war of Armageddon.

In opposition are Satan, his demon hosts, and the kings of the entire inhabited earth. But we should not think only of world rulers in the visible realm, for the people they govern are also involved. It was foretold: “Jehovah has indignation against all the nations, and rage against all their army.”—Isaiah 34:2.

Why Will It Be Fought?

Armageddon will be fought because God is righteous and will no longer tolerate evil. (Psalm 11:7) Satan the Devil’s organization, comprising both demons and rebellious humans, responsible for millenniums of wickedness and woe, must therefore be destroyed. (Compare Genesis 3:15.) Jehovah’s universal sovereignty will be upheld at Armageddon, and that war will clear his name of the reproach heaped upon it for centuries. As God declared through his prophet Ezekiel: “I shall no more let my holy name be profaned; and the nations will have to know that I am Jehovah.”—Ezekiel 39:7.

God’s war of Armageddon will actually prevent the destruction of all mankind. Jehovah created the earth to be inhabited, not destroyed in a thermonuclear war

among humans or otherwise rendered unfit for life. (Isaiah 45:18) He will “bring to ruin those ruining the earth.” (Revelation 11:18) But the psalmist declared: “Jehovah himself has become king. The productive land [Hebrew, *tevel’*; the earth, as fertile and inhabited, the habitable globe] also becomes firmly established so that it cannot be made to totter.”—Psalm 96:10.

What God does at Armageddon will be in complete harmony with his principal attributes

of justice, wisdom, power, and love. (Deuteronomy 32:4; Job 12:13; Isaiah 40:26; 1 John 4:8) He will act against “ungodly sinners,” not against the upright. (Jude 14, 15) Only ‘the wicked ones will be given to the sword.’ (Jeremiah 25:31) This will pave the way for the restoration of Paradise, fulfilling the divine purpose for the earth and humankind.—Luke 23:43.

Where Will It Take Place?

Since the term “Armageddon” comes from a Hebrew expression meaning “Mountain of Megiddo,” some may conclude that this war will be fought on a lofty eminence bearing that name. However, there never was a *mountain* named Megiddo. Some 60 miles northwest of Jerusalem there was a hill town, or city, called Megiddo, but only a mound about 70 feet high now marks its site.—Joshua 17:11.

That ancient city overlooked “the valley plain of Megiddo.” (2 Chronicles 35:22) Associating Armageddon (or Har-Magedon) with that vicinity is apropos because it was the location of decisive battles. For instance, there God enabled

**God’s war of
Armageddon will prevent
the destruction
of all mankind**

Judge Barak to inflict a crushing blow upon Canaanite king Jabin and his military forces commanded by Sisera. (Judges 4:12-24; 5:19, 20) In that vicinity Gideon and his small band routed the Midianites. (Judges 7:1-8:35) There too Kings Ahaziah and Josiah were killed.

—2 Kings 9:27; 23:29, 30.

It is noteworthy, however, that this valley plain, also called the Plain of Esdraelon, is only 20 miles long and 18 miles wide at its eastern end. The kings of the entire inhabited earth and their military forces could never fit into such a small area. Besides that, neither a mound (the tell of Megiddo) nor a plain is a *mountain*. Clearly, then, Armageddon will not be confined to some mountainous location in the Middle East. Rather, Armageddon (or Har-Magedon) is symbolic of a worldwide situation, although it draws some of its significance from Megiddo and what took place in that area.

When Will Armageddon Occur?

Since Megiddo was in the land of God's ancient people, what happens at Armageddon relates to Jehovah's Witnesses in this "time of the end." (Daniel 12:4) Har-Magedon applies to "the place" to which the earth's political rulers are gathered in opposition to Jehovah and his Kingdom by Jesus Christ. (Revelation 16:14, 16) But that "place" (Greek, *to'pos*) denotes a world situation. Armageddon will occur when a certain situation develops that affects Jehovah's Witnesses around the earth.

The spiritual prosperity of Jehovah's Witnesses infuriates Satan the Devil, who will soon launch an all-out attack against

these seemingly defenseless Christians. This worldwide assault by Satan, or Gog, is described in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. Under the Devil's influence, the nations will march against Jehovah's peace-loving people gathered out of all nations. Yes,

satanic opposition will be manifested by global action against Jehovah's earthly servants, the visible representatives and proclaimers of God's Kingdom.

A battle is often

known by the place where it is fought. Thus, God's mighty defense of his people can be called the battle, or war, of Armageddon. When Jehovah rises up to defend his servants against Gog's attack, Armageddon will be in progress! Human governments will collapse. Flooding cloudbursts, devastating hailstones, streaking fire and sulfur, raging pestilences—truly acts of God—will cause world panic outside the ranks of Jehovah's Witnesses. Their human foes will turn their weapons against their own ranks. And those whom this suicidal warfare does not kill off, Jehovah will annihilate.—Ezekiel 38:18-23; Daniel 2:44.

In terror, every man's hand will be turned against his neighbor in a frenzied but futile struggle for survival. (Zechariah 14:12, 13) "Those slain by Jehovah will certainly come to be in that day from one end of the earth clear to the other end of the earth. They will not be bewailed, neither will they be gathered up or be buried. As manure on the surface of the ground they will become." (Jeremiah 25:33) Any attempt to remain neutral in God's war will cost you your life at Armageddon! And as so often proved Scripturally in this jour-

*Any attempt to remain
neutral in God's war will
cost you your life at
Armageddon!*



nal, the present generation will not pass away before Armageddon occurs!—Matthew 24:21, 34.

What Armageddon Will Accomplish

Armageddon will remove the last vestige of Satan's earthly organization. Moreover, the Devil and his demons will be abyssed. (Revelation 20:1-3) What blessings will then flow to Jehovah's people, the joyful survivors of his great war of Armageddon! They will happily proceed with reconstruc-

tion that will transform the entire earth into a paradise, free from pollution, pain, mourning, tears, and death. (Revelation 11:15, 18; 21:3, 4) And you can be there if you take to heart the psalmist's words: "Hope in Jehovah and keep his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it." (Psalm 37:34) Indeed, you may live to see the war of the great day of God the Almighty and become a happy survivor when Armageddon strikes!

"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah."

—2 Peter 3:11, 12

When Christ Arrives in Kingdom Power

JESUS is still with his apostles on the Mount of Olives. In answer to their request for a sign of his presence and the conclusion of the system of things, he now tells them the last in a series of three illustrations. "When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him," Jesus begins, "then he will sit down on his glorious throne."

Humans cannot see angels in their heavenly glory. So the arrival of the Son of man, Jesus Christ, with the angels must be invisible to human eyes. The arrival occurs in the year 1914. But for what purpose? Jesus explains: "And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."

rates the sheep from the goats. And he will put the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left."

Describing what will happen to those separated to the favored side, Jesus says: "Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world.'" The sheep will not rule with Christ in heaven but will inherit the Kingdom in the sense of being its earthly subjects. "The founding of the world" took place when Adam and Eve first produced children who could benefit from God's provision to redeem mankind.

But why are the sheep separated to the King's favored right hand? "For I became hungry," the king replies, "and you gave me something



to eat; I got thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you received me hospitably; naked, and you clothed me. I fell sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to me."

Since the sheep are on earth, they want to know how they could have done such fine deeds for their heavenly King. "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you," they ask, "or thirsty, and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and receive you hospitably, or naked, and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to you?"

"Truly I say to you," the King replies, "to the extent that you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." Christ's brothers are the remaining ones on earth of the 144,000 who will rule with him in heaven. And doing good to them, Jesus says, is the same as doing good to him.

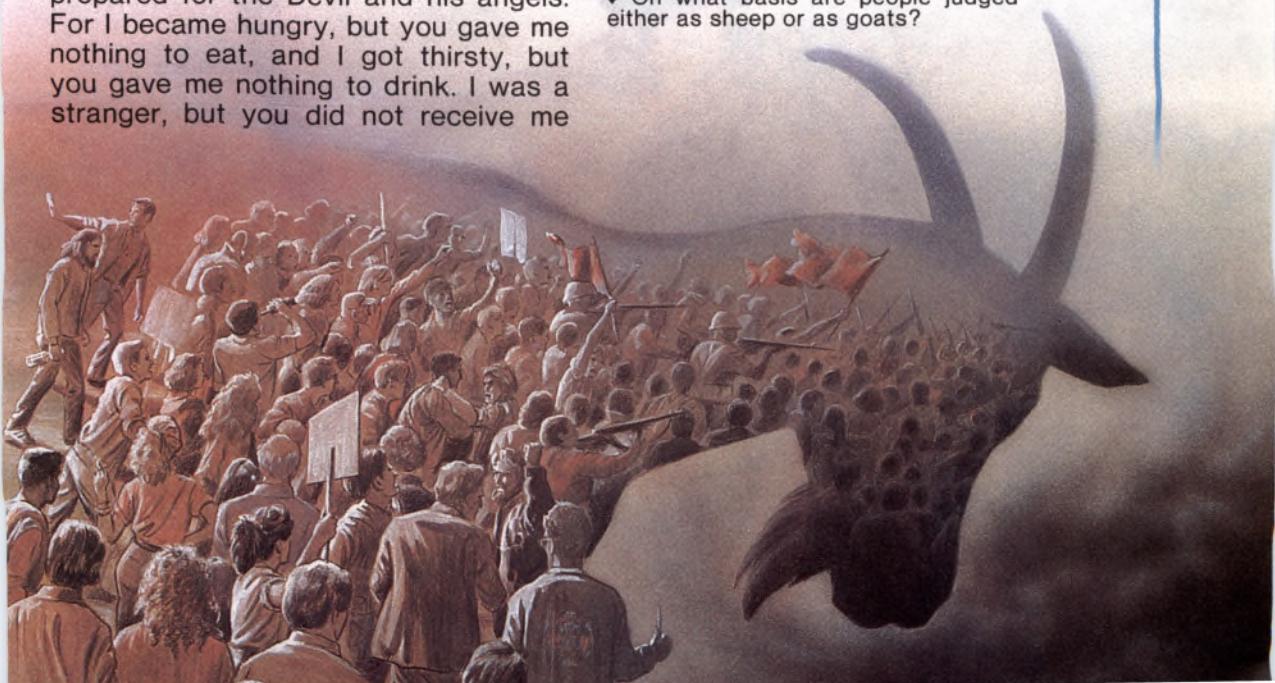
Next, the King addresses the goats. "Be on your way from me, you who have been cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. For I became hungry, but you gave me nothing to eat, and I got thirsty, but you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, but you did not receive me

hospitably; naked, but you did not clothe me; sick and in prison, but you did not look after me."

The goats, however, complain: "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you?" The goats are judged adversely on the same basis that the sheep are judged favorably. "To the extent that you did not do it to one of these least ones [of my brothers]," Jesus answers, "you did not do it to me."

So Christ's presence in Kingdom power, just prior to the end of this wicked system of things in the great tribulation, will be a time of judgment. The goats "will depart into everlasting cutting-off, but the righteous ones [the sheep] into everlasting life." **Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 14:1-3.**

- ♦ Why must Christ's presence be invisible, and what work does he do at that time?
- ♦ In what sense do the sheep inherit the Kingdom?
- ♦ When did "the founding of the world" take place, and why then?
- ♦ On what basis are people judged either as sheep or as goats?



FEAR JEHOVAH, THE HEARER OF PRAYER

"O Hearer of prayer, even to you people of all flesh will come."—PSALM 65:2.

JEHOVAH GOD is the “King of eternity.” He is also the “Hearer of prayer,” to whom “people of all flesh will come.” (Revelation 15:3; Psalm 65:2) But how should they come to him? Earthly kings regulate such things as the dress and the manner of those allowed into their presence. Surely, then, we should expect the King Eternal to have requirements that must be met by anyone wishing to come

1. Why should we expect Jehovah to have requirements for those desiring to approach him in prayer?

before him with supplication and thanksgiving.—Philippians 4:6, 7.

² What does the King Eternal require of those approaching him in prayer? Who can pray and be heard? And about what can they pray?

Approaching the King Eternal

- 3 Before he became a sinner, Adam, a
2. What questions arise on the subject of prayer?
3. What examples can you give of prayers offered by early servants of God, and did they approach him through an intermediary?



"son of God," evidently communed with the King of eternity. (Luke 3:38; Genesis 1:26-28) When Adam's son Abel presented "some firstlings of his flock" to God, undoubtedly this offering was accompanied by expressions of supplication and praise. (Genesis 4:2-4) Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob built altars and approached Jehovah prayerfully with their offerings. (Genesis 8:18-22; 12:7, 8; 13:3, 4, 18; 22:9-14; 26:23-25; 33:18-20; 35:1, 3, 7) And the prayers of Solomon, Ezra, and divinely inspired psalmists indicate that the Israelites approached God without any intermediary.—1 Kings 8:22-24; Ezra 9:5, 6; Psalm 6:1, 2; 43:1; 55:1; 61:1; 72:1; 80:1; 143:1.

⁴ A new approach to God in prayer was instituted in the first century of our Common Era. It was through his Son, Jesus Christ, who had special love for mankind. In his prehuman existence, Jesus served joyfully as "a master worker," fond of things associated with humankind. (Proverbs 8:30, 31) As a man on earth, Jesus lovingly helped imperfect humans spiritually, cured the ailing, and even raised the dead. (Matthew 9:35-38; Luke 8:1-3, 49-56) Above all, Jesus 'gave his soul a ransom for many.' (Matthew 20:28) How appropriate, then, that those availing themselves of the ransom should approach God through this one who loves mankind so much! This is now the only avenue of approach to the King Eternal, for Jesus himself said: "No one comes to the Father except through me" and, "If you ask the Father for anything he will give it to you in my name." (John 14:6; 16:23) Asking for things in Jesus' name means recognizing him as the way to approach the Hearer of prayer.

4. (a) What new approach to God in prayer was instituted in the first century? (b) Why is it especially appropriate that prayer be offered in Jesus' name?

⁵ Especially should we appreciate the love Jehovah showed by providing the ransom. Jesus said: "God loved the world [of mankind] so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) The depth of God's love is well-expressed in the psalmist's words: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, his loving-kindness is superior toward those fearing him. As far off as the sunrise is from the sunset, so far off from us he has put our transgressions. As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him. For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust." (Psalm 103:11-14) How heartening to know that the prayers of Jehovah's dedicated Witnesses ascend to such a loving Father through his Son!

A Restricted Privilege

⁶ Human kings do not allow just anyone to enter into the royal palace unannounced. An audience with a king is a restricted privilege. So is prayer to the King of eternity. Of course, those approaching him through Jesus Christ with proper appreciation of God's glorious majesty can expect to be heard. The King Eternal must be approached with a reverent, worshipful attitude. And those desiring to be heard must display "the fear of Jehovah."—Proverbs 1:7.

⁷ What is "the fear of Jehovah"? It is profound reverence for God, coupled with a wholesome dread of displeasing him. This awe stems from deep gratitude for his loving-kindness and goodness. (Psalm 106:1) It involves acknowledging him as

5. What is God's attitude toward the world of mankind, and what bearing does this have on prayer?

6. With what attitude must Jehovah be approached in prayer?

7. What is "the fear of Jehovah"?

the King of eternity, who has the right and the power to bring punishment, including death, upon anyone disobeying him. Persons manifesting the fear of Jehovah may pray to him with the expectation of being heard.

⁸ Naturally, God does not answer the prayers of wicked, unfaithful, and self-righteous people. (Proverbs 15:29; Isaiah 1:15; Luke 18:9-14) But those who fear Jehovah are heard because they have conformed to his righteous standards. Yet, they have done more. Fearers of Jehovah have made a dedication to God in prayer and symbolized this by undergoing water baptism. They thus have an unrestricted privilege of prayer.

⁹ To be heard by God, a person must express prayerful sentiments that are in harmony with the divine will. Yes, he must be sincere, but more is required. "Without faith it is impossible to please [God] well," wrote the apostle Paul, "for he that approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Hebrews 11:6) Well, then, can unbaptized persons be encouraged to pray with the hope of being heard?

¹⁰ Aware that prayer is a restricted privilege, King Solomon asked that Jehovah hear only foreigners who prayed toward God's temple in Jerusalem. (1 Kings 8:41-43) Centuries later, the Gentile foreigner Cornelius "made supplication to God continually" as a devout man. Upon gaining accurate knowledge, Cornelius dedicated himself to God, who then gave him the holy spirit. Following this, Cornelius and other Gentiles were baptized. (Acts 10:1-44) Like Cornelius, anyone today progressing toward dedication may be encour-

8. Why does God hear the prayers of those fearing him?

9, 10. Can unbaptized persons pray with the hope of being heard?

aged to pray. But an individual who is insincere about studying the Scriptures, does not know the divine requirements for prayer, and has not yet displayed an attitude pleasing to God cannot be said to fear Jehovah, have faith, or be earnestly seeking him. Such a person is not in position to offer prayers acceptable to God.

¹¹ Some who were at one time progressing toward dedication later may seem to be holding back. If they do not have enough love for God in their heart to make an unreserved dedication to him, they ought to ask themselves whether they still have the wonderful privilege of prayer. Apparently not, because those approaching God must be earnestly seeking him and also righteousness and meekness. (Zephaniah 2:3) Everyone who really fears Jehovah is a believer who makes a dedication to God and symbolizes it by getting baptized. (Acts 8:13; 18:8) And only baptized believers have an unrestricted privilege of approaching the King Eternal in prayer.

"Praying With Holy Spirit"

¹² After a person makes a dedication to God and symbolizes it by being baptized, he is in position to 'pray with holy spirit.' Concerning this, Jude wrote: "But you, beloved ones, by building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying with holy spirit, keep yourselves in God's love, while you are waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ with everlasting life in view." (Jude 20, 21) A person prays with holy spirit when praying under the influence of God's spirit, or active force, and in harmony with the things said in His Word. The Scriptures, written under inspiration of Jehovah's spirit, show us how to pray

11. What has happened to some who were progressing toward dedication, and what should they ask themselves?

12. When can it be said that a person is "praying with holy spirit"?

and what to request in prayer. For example, we can confidently pray that God give us his holy spirit. (Luke 11:13) When we pray with holy spirit, our prayers reveal a heart condition that Jehovah loves.

¹³ When we pray with holy spirit, our prayers are not filled with high-sounding words. They do not consist of formulas repeated by rote. No, they do not contain virtually meaningless doxologies, insincere expressions of praise. Prayers of that sort abound in Christendom and the rest of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. But true Christians heed Jesus' counsel: "When you pray you are not to be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and at the corners of the main streets, so that they may be visible to men . . . And in praying do not parrot off words like the heathen; for they [erroneously] think they will get themselves listened to by the quantity of what they say. So do not be like them."—Matthew 6:5-8, *Byington*.

¹⁴ In addition to Jesus and Bible writers, others have made perceptive statements regarding prayer. For instance, the English writer John Bunyan (1628-88) said: "Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, for such things as God has promised." Puritan minister Thomas Brooks (1608-80) observed: "God looks not at the oratory of your prayers, how elegant they may be; nor at the geometry of your prayers, how long they may be; nor at the arithmetic of your prayers, how many they may be; not at logic of your prayers, how methodical they may be; but the sincerity of them he looks at." To these comments may be added Bunyan's remark:

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13. If we pray with holy spirit, what will we avoid, and what counsel of Jesus will we apply?
 14. What perceptive statements have some made regarding prayer?

"In prayer it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart." But if we are sincere and do meet divine requirements, how can we be sure that the King of eternity will hear our prayers?

Never Turned Away

¹⁵ Jehovah God never turns a deaf ear to the prayers of his dedicated servants. This was made clear in Jesus' heartwarming words when his disciples requested instruction on prayer. In part he said: "Who of you will have a friend and will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, loan me three loaves, because a friend of mine has just come to me on a journey and I have nothing to set before him?' And that one from inside says in reply, 'Quit making me trouble. The door is already locked, and my young children are with me in bed; I cannot rise up and give you anything.' I tell you, Although he will not rise up and give him anything because of being his friend, certainly because of his bold persistence he will get up and give him what things he needs." (Luke 11:1, 5-8) What was the point of this illustration?

¹⁶ Jesus certainly did not mean that Jehovah is unwilling to help us. Rather, Christ wants us to trust God implicitly and to love him enough to pray without ceasing. Thus, Jesus continued: "I say to you, Keep on asking, and it will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you. For everyone asking receives, and everyone seeking finds, and to everyone knocking it will be opened." (Luke 11:9, 10) Surely, then, we should keep praying when we experience persecution, distress over some deeply rooted personal weakness, or any other trial. Jehovah is always ready to

15. In essence, what did Jesus say at Luke 11: 5-8?
16. As regards prayer, what did Jesus want us to do?

As human fathers give good gifts to their children, Jehovah gives holy spirit to those asking him

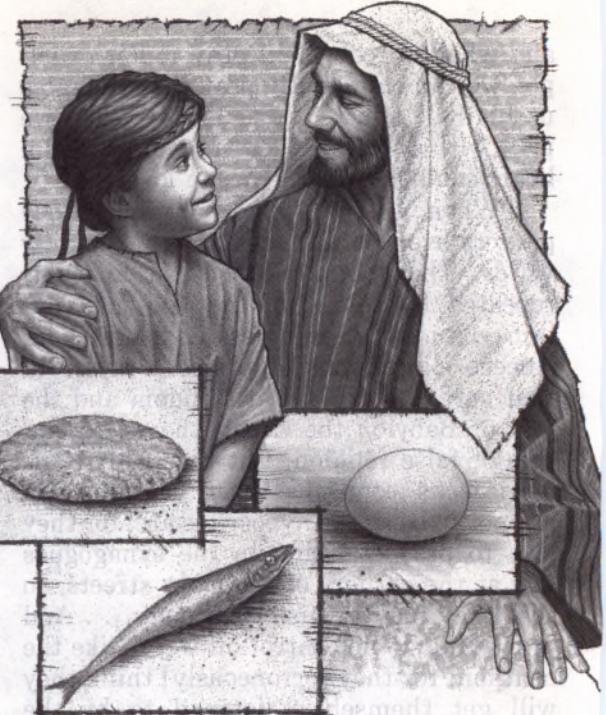
help his faithful servants. He never tells us: "Quit making me trouble."

¹⁷ If we are to enjoy a close relationship with God, we need his holy spirit, or active force. Hence, Jesus continued: "Indeed, which father is there among you who, if his son asks for a fish, will perhaps hand him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he also asks for an egg, will hand him a scorpion? Therefore, if you, although being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will the Father in heaven give holy spirit to those asking him!" (Luke 11:11-13) Matthew 7:9-11 speaks of giving a stone instead of bread. The force of Jesus' words is increased if we realize that the bread of ancient Bible lands was of a size and shape like that of a flat, round stone. Some kinds of serpents resemble certain types of fish, and there is a small white scorpion that somewhat resembles an egg. But if asked for bread, a fish, or an egg, what kind of father would give his child a stone, a serpent, or a scorpion?

17, 18. (a) How did Jesus encourage us to ask for holy spirit, and what increases the force of his words? (b) How did Jesus compare the dealings of an earthly parent with those of God?

Do You Recall?

- Through whom must we approach God in prayer, and why?
- In what way is prayer a restricted privilege?
- What does it mean to 'pray with holy spirit'?
- How can you prove Scripturally that the prayers of Jehovah's faithful baptized Witnesses are heard?



¹⁸ Jesus next compared the dealings of an earthly parent with the actions of God toward the members of His family of worshipers. If we, though being more or less wicked because of inherited sinfulness, give good gifts to our children, how much more we should expect our heavenly Father to give the splendid gift of his holy spirit to his loyal servants who humbly ask for it!

¹⁹ Jesus' words intimate that we should ask God for more of His holy spirit. If we are led by it, we will not 'complain about our lot in life' and view trials and disappointments as being really injurious to us. (Jude 16) True, "man, born of woman, is short-lived and glutted with agitation," and many have not lived to see the end of their problems or heartaches. (Job 14:1)

19. (a) What is intimated by Jesus' words recorded at Luke 11:11-13 and Matthew 7:9-11? (b) If we are led by holy spirit, how will we view our trials?

But let us never view our trials as stones, serpents, and scorpions that the Hearer of prayer has somehow handed us. He is the very epitome of love and does not try anyone with evil things. Rather, he gives us ‘every good gift and perfect present.’ Ultimately, he will make everything right for all who love and fear him. (James 1:12-17; 1 John 4:8) Those who have walked in the truth for years know from experience that some of their hardest trials have, through prayer and faith, worked out to their benefit and have increased the fruitage of God’s spirit in their lives. (3 John 4) In fact, in what better way could we learn dependence on our heavenly Father and be helped to cultivate the spirit’s fruitage of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, and self-control?—Galatians 5:22, 23.

²⁰ Jesus’ words recorded at Luke 11:5-13 thus give us blessed assurance of Jehovah’s love and tender care. This should fill our hearts with the deepest gratitude and love. It ought to strengthen our faith and increase our desire to go often to the footstool of the King Eternal and linger in his loving presence. Moreover, Jesus’ words assure us that we will never be turned away empty. Our heavenly Father is most pleased to have us throw our burdens upon him. (Psalm 55:22; 121:1-3) And when we, as his faithful dedicated servants, ask for his holy spirit, he gives it to us unstintingly. This is our loving God, and we can have full faith that he is the Hearer of our prayers.

20. Jesus’ words recorded at Luke 11:5-13 should have what effect upon us?

“TEACH US HOW TO PRAY”

“A certain one of his disciples said to him: ‘Lord, teach us how to pray.’”—LUKE 11:1.

SOME people are gifted with a fine singing voice. Others have natural talent as musicians. But to reach their highest potential, even these singers and instrumentalists need instruction. It is similar with prayer. The disciples of Jesus Christ came to realize that they needed instruction if God was to hear their prayers.

² Jesus usually went to his Father privately in prayer, as he did for an entire night before choosing the 12 apostles. (Luke 6:12-16) Though he also urged

1-3. (a) Why did Jesus’ disciples seek instruction on prayer? (b) What questions about prayer arise?

his disciples to pray privately, they heard him say public prayers and observed that he was not like the religious hypocrites who prayed to be seen by men. (Matthew 6:5, 6) Logically, then, Jesus’ followers desired his advanced instruction on prayer. Thus, we read: “Now on the occasion of his being in a certain place praying, when he stopped, a certain one of his disciples said to him: ‘Lord, teach us how to pray, just as John [the Baptizer] also taught his disciples.’”—Luke 11:1.

³ How did Jesus respond? What can we learn from his example? And how can we benefit from his instruction on prayer?

**Jesus' followers asked him to teach them how to pray.
Do you know how we can benefit from his instructions on prayer?**

Lessons for Us

⁴ We can learn much from Jesus' words and example as a man of prayer. One lesson is that if God's perfect Son needed to pray regularly, his imperfect disciples have a much greater need to look to God continually for guidance, comfort, and spiritual sustenance. Therefore, we should "pray incessantly." (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Of course, this does not mean that we must always be literally on our knees. Rather, we should constantly have a prayerful attitude. We should look to God for guidance in all aspects of life so that we can act with insight and always have his approval.

—Proverbs 15:24.

⁵ In these "last days," many things can encroach on the time we should spend in prayer. (2 Timothy 3:1) But if domestic worries, business cares, and the like are interfering with regular prayer to our heavenly Father, we are too weighed down with the concerns of this life. Such a situation ought to be corrected without delay, for failure to pray leads to loss of faith. Either we should reduce our secular obligations or counterbalance the cares of life with more earnest and repeated turning of our heart to God for guidance. We should "be vigilant with a view to prayers."

—1 Peter 4:7.

4. Why should we "pray incessantly," and what does it mean to do so?
5. What may encroach on the time we should devote to prayer, and what should we do about this?



⁶ In what has been called the model prayer, Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, not exactly what to say. Luke's account differs somewhat from that of Matthew because different occasions were involved. We will study this prayer as a sample of the nature of our prayers as Jesus' followers and Witnesses of Jehovah.

Our Father and His Name

⁷ "Our Father in the heavens." (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2) Since Jehovah is mankind's Creator and dwells in the heavenly realm, it is proper to address him as "our Father in the heavens." (1 Kings 8:49; Acts 17:24, 28) Use of the term "our" acknowledges that others too have a close relationship with God. But who have the unrestricted privilege of addressing him as their Father? Only dedicated, baptized individuals in his family of worshipers. Calling Jehovah "our Father" indicates that we have faith in God and realize that the only basis for reconciliation with him is full

6. What prayer will we now study, and with what objective?
7. Who are privileged to address Jehovah as "our Father"?

acceptance of Jesus' ransom sacrifice.—Hebrews 4:14-16; 11:6.

⁸ How close we should feel to our heavenly Father! As children who never tire of going to their father, we should long to spend time in prayer to God. Deep gratitude for his spiritual and material blessings should move us to thank him for his goodness. We should feel inclined to carry to him the burdens that weigh us down, being confident that he will sustain us. (Psalm 55:22) We can be sure that if we are faithful, everything will ultimately work out well because he cares for us.—1 Peter 5:6, 7.

⁹ “*Let your name be sanctified.*” (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2) The word “name” sometimes denotes the person himself, and “to sanctify” means “to make holy, set apart or hold as sacred.” (Compare Revelation 3:4.) In effect, then, a prayer for the sanctification of God’s name is a request that Jehovah act to sanctify himself. How? By clearing away all the reproach ever heaped on his name. (Psalm 135:13) To that end, God will remove wickedness, magnify himself, and make the nations know that he is Jehovah. (Ezekiel 36:23; 38:23) If we yearn to see that day and really appreciate Jehovah’s majesty, we will always approach him in the reverent spirit implied by the words “let your name be sanctified.”

God’s Kingdom and His Will

¹⁰ “*Let your kingdom come.*” (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2) The Kingdom here meant is the sovereign rulership of Jehovah, as expressed through the heavenly Messianic government in the hands of Jesus Christ

8. Why should we yearn to spend time in prayer to Jehovah?

9. A prayer for the sanctification of God’s name is a request for what?

10. What is meant when we pray for God’s Kingdom to come?

and his associated “holy ones.” (Daniel 7:13, 14, 18, 27; Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:1-5) What is meant by praying for it to “come”? This means that we ask that God’s Kingdom come against all earthly opposers of divine rulership. After the Kingdom ‘crushes and puts an end to all earthly kingdoms,’ it will transform the earth into a global paradise.—Daniel 2:44; Luke 23:43.

¹¹ “*Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.*” (Matthew 6:10) This is a request that God carry out his purpose toward the earth, which includes removing his enemies. (Psalm 83:9-18; 135:6-10) In fact, it implies that we long to see the divine will done throughout the universe. If that is in our heart, we will always do Jehovah’s will to the best of our ability. We could not honestly make such a petition if we did not earnestly endeavor to have God’s will done in our own case. If we are praying in this way, then, we should make sure that we do not do things contrary to that will, such as courting an unbeliever or adopting worldly ways. (1 Corinthians 7:39; 1 John 2:15-17) Rather, we should always have in mind the thought, ‘What is Jehovah’s will in this matter?’ Yes, if we love God with all our heart, we will seek his direction in all of life’s affairs.—Matthew 22:37.

Our Daily Bread

¹² “*Give us today our bread for this day.*” (Matthew 6:11) Luke’s account reads: “Give us our bread for the day according to the day’s requirement.” (Luke 11:3) Asking God to provide necessary food “for this day” promotes faith in his ability to care for our needs from day to day. The Israelites were to gather manna “each his amount day for day,” not for a week or

11. If we long to see Jehovah’s will done throughout the universe, what will we do?

12. Requesting only ‘daily bread’ has what good effect on us?

more. (Exodus 16:4) This is not a prayer for delicacies and superabundant provisions but for our daily needs as they arise. Requesting only daily bread also helps us not to become greedy.—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

¹³ In a broad sense, asking for daily bread indicates that we do not feel independent but constantly look to God for food, drink, clothing, and other necessities. As dedicated members of his family of worshipers, we trust our Father but do not sit idly by waiting for him to provide for us miraculously. We work and use whatever means are at our disposal to obtain food and other necessities. Yet, we rightly thank God in prayer because we see behind these provisions the love, wisdom, and power of our heavenly Father. (Acts 14:15-17; compare Luke 22:19.) Our diligence may result in prosperity. But even if we work hard and barely have enough, let us be grateful and content. (Philippians 4:12; 1 Timothy 6:6-8) In fact, a godly person with common fare and attire may be much happier than some who are materially prosperous. So even if we have little because of circumstances beyond our control, let us not become downhearted. We can still be rich spiritually. Indeed, we need not be impoverished in faith, hope, and love for Jehovah, to whom our praise and thanks ascend in heartfelt prayer.

Forgiving Our Debts

¹⁴ “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12) Luke’s account shows that those debts are sins. (Luke 11:4) Inherited sinfulness prevents us from doing all things according to

13. (a) In a broad sense, what is meant by asking for daily bread? (b) What should be our attitude, even if we work hard and barely have enough to subsist on?

14. For what debts do we ask forgiveness, and what does God apply to them?

our Father’s perfect will. In a sense, therefore, these shortcomings have been our debts, or obligations to God, since we started ‘living and walking by spirit.’ (Galatians 5:16-25; compare Romans 7:21-25.) We have these debts because we are imperfect and cannot now fully measure up to God’s standards. It is for the forgiveness of these sins that we are privileged to pray. Happily, God can apply the merit of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice to these debts, or sins.—Romans 5:8; 6:23.

¹⁵ If we expect God to forgive our debts, or sins, we must be repentant and willing to receive discipline. (Proverbs 28:13; Acts 3:19) Because Jehovah loves us, he gives us the discipline we need personally so that we can correct our weaknesses. (Proverbs 6:23; Hebrews 12:4-6) We can be happy, of course, if growth in faith and knowledge finds our heart so fully in accord with God’s laws and principles that we never transgress with any measure of willfulness. But what if we discern some willfulness in our wrongdoing? Then we should be deeply pained and ought to pray earnestly for forgiveness. (Hebrews 10:26-31) Applying counsel we have received, we should correct our course quickly.

¹⁶ Regularly asking God to forgive our sins is beneficial. Doing this keeps our sinfulness before us and ought to have a humbling effect. (Psalm 51:3, 4, 7) We need to have our heavenly Father “forgive us our sins and . . . cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8, 9) Moreover, mentioning our sins in prayer helps us to keep putting up a hard fight against them. Thus we are also continually reminded of our need for the ransom and the merit of Jesus’ shed blood.—1 John 2:1, 2; Revelation 7:9, 14.

15. What attitude should we have toward needed discipline?

16. Why is it beneficial to keep asking God to forgive our sins?

¹⁷ Praying for forgiveness also assists us to be merciful, compassionate, and generous toward those who may be our debtors in matters great and small. Luke's account says: "Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone that is in debt to us." (Luke 11:4) In fact, we may attain forgiveness from God only if we already "have forgiven our debtors," persons sinning against us. (Matthew 6:12; Mark 11:25) Jesus added: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; whereas if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14, 15) Praying for forgiveness of our sins should move us to put up with others and forgive them. The apostle Paul wrote: "Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also."—Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:32.

Temptation and the Wicked One

¹⁸ "And do not bring us into temptation." (Matthew 6:13; Luke 11:4) These words do not imply that Jehovah tempts us to commit sin. The Scriptures sometimes speak of God's doing or causing things that he merely permits. (Ruth 1:20, 21; compare Ecclesiastes 11:5.) But "with evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone," wrote the disciple James. (James 1:13) Therefore, let us never blame our heavenly Father for temptations and trials with evil things, for Satan is the Tempter who tries to maneuver us into sinning against God.—Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5.

¹⁹ By the request, "Do not bring us into temptation," we in effect ask Jehovah not to allow us to succumb when tempted or

17. How does praying for forgiveness assist us in our relationship with others?

18. Why should we never blame God for our temptations and trials?

19. How might we pray with regard to temptation?

pressured to disobey him. We can entreat our Father to guide our steps so that no temptation will come our way that is too severe for us. In this regard, Paul wrote: "No temptation has taken you except what is common to men. But God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13) We can pray that Jehovah lead us so that we are not tempted beyond what we can bear and that he provide a way of escape when we are sorely distressed. Temptations are from the Devil, our sinful flesh, and the weaknesses of others, but our loving Father can guide us so that we are not overwhelmed.

²⁰ "*But deliver us from the wicked one.*" (Matthew 6:13) God surely can prevent Satan, "the wicked one," from overcoming us. (2 Peter 2:9) And never has there been a greater need for deliverance from the Devil than now, for 'he has great anger, knowing his time is short.' (Revelation 12:12) We are not ignorant of Satan's designs, but neither is he unaware of our weaknesses. Hence, we need to pray that Jehovah keep us from the clutches of the lionlike Adversary. (2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; compare Psalm 141:8, 9.) For instance, if we are interested in getting married, we may need to ask Jehovah to deliver us from Satan's designs and from temptation to cultivate worldly relationships that can lead to immorality or to disobeying God by marrying an unbeliever. (Deuteronomy 7:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 7:39) Do we yearn for wealth? Then prayer may be needed to help us resist temptations to gamble or practice fraud. Eager to destroy our relationship with Jehovah, Satan will use any weapon in his arsenal of temptations. So may we continually pray to our

20. Why pray for deliverance from "the wicked one"?

heavenly Father, who never abandons the righteous to temptation and who provides deliverance from the wicked one.

Prayer Builds Faith and Hope

²¹ Our heavenly Father, who delivers us from the wicked one, delights in blessing us abundantly. Yet, why has he for such a long time allowed his dear people to pray, "Let your kingdom come"? Well, over the years, praying in this way has increased our desire and appreciation for the Kingdom. Such prayer reminds us of the great need for this benevolent heavenly government. It also keeps before us the hope of life under Kingdom rule.—Revelation 21:1-5.

²² Prayer unquestionably builds faith in Jehovah. Our bond with him is strengthened when he answers our prayers. Therefore, let us never tire of turning to him

21. How have we benefited from praying for the Kingdom?

22. What should be our continuing attitude toward prayer to our heavenly Father, Jehovah?

daily with praise, thanksgiving, and supplication. And may we be grateful for Jesus' helpful response to his followers' request: "Lord, teach us how to pray."

Do You Recall?

- What lessons can we learn from Jesus' words and example as a man of prayer?
- For what should we pray regarding our heavenly Father and his name?
- What are we requesting when we pray for God's Kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth?
- We are asking for what when praying for our daily bread?
- What is meant when we pray for forgiveness of our debts?
- Why is it vital to pray regarding temptation and deliverance from Satan, the wicked one?

True Christianity Is Improving Life in Sweden

SWEDEN provides its population with one of the world's highest living standards. In addition to abundant food and housing space, cars, pleasure boats, television sets, and personal computers, Sweden's inhabitants enjoy virtually free medical care, old-age and disability pensions, child allowances, and other government-backed services.

You might thus conclude that no one could possibly improve upon the quality of life in such a land. Nevertheless, for all its

material advantages, Sweden has its share of problems: divorce, alcoholism, drug abuse, crime, and suicide. Religion, which might be expected to exert a powerful moral influence, is all but dead in Sweden. Over 90 percent of the nation's citizens belong to the Lutheran State Church, but only 2.1 percent go to its services regularly. Charges one priest: "The Church lives in retirement. . . . It has lost its vital force and has disassociated itself from people's needs."

The failure of the church to improve life in Sweden, however, in no way amounts to a failure of true Christianity. Some 22,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses in 331 congregations are finding success in helping people to apply Bible principles to their betterment. This work has not gone unnoticed.

"We must admire Jehovah's Witnesses for their zeal in going out with their message!" says a teacher of religion in the nationwide Pentecostal newspaper *Dagen* (The Day). The article adds: "Jehovah's Witnesses compose the group that wins the greatest number of new members every year and has the largest crowd of youths . . . We should learn from Jehovah's Witnesses!"

Indeed, those really willing to learn from Jehovah's Witnesses will discover something. What is that? How Bible truths can dramatically improve the quality of their lives.

Bible Knowledge Helps!

Consider a letter that the local branch office of the Watch Tower Society received from a young unwed mother. She wrote: "I want to express my appreciation for the good life I have been experiencing since I began to study with Jehovah's Witnesses. I have a smoke-free home. I have come to appreciate the need to spend more time with my daughter. My financial situation has improved, although I have the same salary. I have fewer problems sleeping. I also have true friends to be happy about. Yes, I would not trade my present way of life for the one I had before."

Another example involves the matter of divorce—very common in Sweden. However, the Bible helped a couple named Arne and Ketie. They had been married for 13 years and had two children when personal differences caused them to obtain a divorce. They hated each other.

Arne, who moved away to live by himself, was contacted by Jehovah's Witnesses and began to study the Bible. He got so excited about what he learned that one day he rushed over to Ketie and tried to force her and the children to study too! When she refused, he threw her against the wall and said: "You study, or I'll kill you!" Ketie called Jehovah's Witnesses and complained, saying: "What kind of cruel God is that Jehovah?"

Ketie was patiently told that Jehovah is a loving God who does not force anyone. She became curious and wanted to learn more. As Arne gained further knowledge of godly principles, he calmed down and got back on speaking terms with Ketie. They regularly saw each other at meetings in the Kingdom Hall. The result? After both became baptized Witnesses, they were remarried! They have been married for eight years, and Arne serves as a congregation elder. "Our marriage has never been better than it is now," they say. "We have so much to thank Jehovah for."

Bible truths are also helping young people improve the quality of their lives. A young man named David recalls: "My parents were divorced, and everything seemed to go wrong in my life. I didn't care about anything. I often skipped school and didn't do any homework during the last three years. At times I found life not even worth living. I wore ragged jeans and old shoes. My hair went halfway down my back. I tried different life-styles, such as that of a punk rocker and a hard rocker. I smoked and drank and got involved in crime.

"In 1986 one of Jehovah's Witnesses visited me. 'Another of those shady religious types,' I thought. 'Let me ask him some questions that he won't be able to answer.' To my surprise, he did answer them. I went on one of his Bible studies and found that he had a logical answer to

almost everything—that there was no hole in the truth. I attended an assembly and was amazed to see those neat, friendly people. I began to go to the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses and was surprised when so many came up and shook hands with me. What unity among these people!"

A year and a half later, David got baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. His relatives, former friends, teachers, and others could hardly believe that this neatly dressed and well-groomed young man was the David they knew earlier.

A Ripple Effect

Preaching from door to door in Sweden can at times be discouraging. The Swede zealously guards his privacy. When the doorbell rings, he may look through a peephole, and many doors remain closed to Jehovah's Witnesses. But they do not lose heart. The Witnesses know that the angels can locate righteously disposed individuals. (Revelation 14:6; compare Matthew 13:41.) Once the truth enters into such a person's life, it often spreads—like ripples on the water—to relatives and friends.

A woman in Stockholm recalls sitting at her kitchen table weeping about the misery of her life. "I was desperate," she said. "Suddenly, I began to pray: 'God, I want to talk with you about life.' The doorbell rang. Through the peephole, I saw a well-dressed man, so I opened the door. He said he wanted to share some encouraging thoughts from God's Word. He was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I asked if he had called on the other people on my floor. 'No,' he said, 'I was on my way home from a Bible study when I decided to make some calls. I happened to start here.' I was astounded because I lived a couple of floors up. I liked what he showed me."

Soon this woman started to study the Bible. Enthusiastically, she began sharing

what she learned with relatives and friends. She distributed 28 Bibles and 96 books. The result? Her husband, two of her sisters, her niece and nephew, her brother-in-law, her father and mother, her husband's son from a previous marriage, her workmate, and her husband's fellow worker and his wife were soon studying the Bible and getting ready for baptism. So far, 13 persons have had the opportunity to improve the quality of their life through one call at a door by one of Jehovah's Witnesses. This woman says: "Conforming to Jehovah's will has done so much good in our lives that we should thank him on our knees every day!"

Witnessing in School

There are serious disciplinary problems in many schools in Sweden. But young Witnesses are proving to be a positive influence by sharing Bible truths with teachers and fellow students. For example, young Jorgen openly told his teachers and classmates that he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. He was respected for his frankness and fine conduct. Jorgen always answered even provocative questions politely and with references to the Bible. This made a deep impression on his classmates. Reports Jorgen:

"A year after finishing school, I met Peter, a former classmate. After some discussions, I began to conduct a Bible study with him. As his mother was opposed, we





studied on the beach. Peter was baptized in March 1988. His mother noticed that her son had changed for the better, so she also began to study. After some time, she got baptized.

"Another former classmate, Torbjorn, began to study the Bible. So did his mother. They too are now baptized." Altogether, four of Jorgen's classmates began studying the Bible, and a fifth one has expressed interest. "I hope this experience will encourage young Witnesses in school not to hold back," concludes Jorgen. "Their Christian conduct and firm stand for the truth may sow seeds that may later bear fine fruit."

Fighting for Religious Freedom

Jehovah's Witnesses have also played a key role in establishing basic religious freedom in Sweden. This has worked to the benefit of everyone.

For example, as in all other lands, Jehovah's Witnesses in Sweden have decided individually to maintain Christian neutrality. (John 17:16) As a result, many were sentenced to long prison terms. But

in 1966 a blow was struck for religious freedom when the authorities decided that pending individual investigation, Witnesses would not be called up for military service. (Isaiah 2:2-4) Sweden's religious tolerance has served as a model for other governments.

Another matter involved the rights of patients. Jehovah's Witnesses take seriously the Bible's command to 'abstain from blood' and therefore refuse blood transfusions. (Acts 15:28, 29) Though not all doctors and medical personnel have respected this Scriptural position, the most prominent medical journal in Sweden recently announced in a headline: "No to Blood Transfusion Should Be Respected if the Patient Is Aware of Consequences."

These words headed a report on a meeting of the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Delegation for Medical Ethics of the Swedish Society of Medicine. After discussing the situation of Jehovah's Witnesses, these authorities decided to urge all doctors to comply when a legally competent patient—from 15 years of age and older—refuses to accept a blood transfusion. They recognized that there is now greater restraint about giving blood transfusions because of the risk of transmitting diseases. More important, however, their enlightened decision supports the basic right of any patient to refuse a particular form of medical treatment.

Most of Sweden's inhabitants do, indeed, enjoy a good life materially. But many need to be upbuilt morally and spiritually. Unquestionably, true Christians in that land are helping to improve the lives of all who are willing to learn and apply God's Word. Such responsive individuals also enjoy the prospect of life eternal in God's coming new world.—John 17:3; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:3, 4.

ZEALOUS WITNESSES OF JEHOVAH *on the march!*

JEHOVAH'S first-century witnesses were a people of bold and zealous action. They eagerly carried out Jesus' commission: "Go . . . make disciples of people of all the nations."—Matthew 28:19, 20.

But how do we know that Christ's early followers took that commission seriously? Why, the Bible book Acts of Apostles proves that they were zealous witnesses of Jehovah, truly on the march!

BENEFITS AND OTHER FEATURES

Similarity in language and style between the third Gospel and the book of Acts indicates one writer—Luke, "the beloved physician." (Colossians 4:14) Among its unique features are the conversations and prayers preserved in Acts. About 20 percent of the book consists of speeches, such as those given by Peter and Paul in support of the true faith.

The book of Acts was written in Rome about 61 C.E. Apparently that is why it does not mention Paul's appearance before Caesar or the persecution Nero waged against Christians about 64 C.E.—2 Timothy 4:11.

Like Luke's Gospel, Acts was directed to Theophilus. It was written to bolster faith and report on the spread of Christianity. (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1, 2) The book proves that Jehovah's hand

was with his loyal servants. It makes us aware of the power of his spirit and strengthens our confidence in divinely inspired prophecy. Acts also helps us to endure persecution, moves us to be self-sacrificing Witnesses of Jehovah, and builds up our faith in the Kingdom hope.

HISTORICAL ACCURACY

As Paul's associate, Luke recorded their travels. He also spoke to eyewitnesses. These factors and thorough research make his writings a masterpiece as far as historical accuracy is concerned.

Scholar William Ramsay could therefore say: "Luke is a historian of the first rank: not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense . . . This author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."

PETER—A FAITHFUL WITNESS

The God-given work of declaring the good news can be carried out only in the power of Jehovah's holy spirit. Thus, when Jesus' followers receive holy spirit, they will become his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and "to the most distant part of the earth." At Pentecost 33 C.E., they are filled with holy spirit. Since it is only 9:00 a.m., they surely are not drunk, as some think. Peter gives a thrilling witness, and 3,000 are baptized. Religious opposers try

to silence Kingdom proclaimers, but in answer to prayer, God enables his witnesses to speak his word with boldness. Threatened again, they respond: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." The work goes on as they continue to preach from house to house.—1:1-5:42.

Reliance on Jehovah's spirit enables his witnesses to endure persecution. Hence, after the faithful witness Stephen is stoned to death, Jesus' followers are scattered, but this only spreads the word. Philip the evangelizer pioneers in Samaria. Surprisingly, the violent persecutor Saul of Tarsus is converted. As the apostle Paul, he feels the heat of persecution in Damascus but escapes the Jews' murderous designs. Briefly, Paul associates with the apostles in Jerusalem and then moves on in his ministry.—6:1-9:31.

Jehovah's hand is with his witnesses, as Acts goes on to show. Peter raises Dorcas (Tabitha) from the dead. Responding to a call, in Caesarea he declares the good news to Cornelius, his household, and friends. They are baptized as the first Gentiles to become Jesus' disciples. The "seventy weeks" thus end, bringing us to 36 C.E. (Daniel 9:24) Shortly thereafter, Herod Agrippa I executes the apostle James and has Peter arrested. But the apostle experiences angelic deliverance from prison, and 'the word of Jehovah goes on growing and spreading.'—9:32-12:25.

PAUL'S THREE MISSIONARY TOURS

Blessings flow to those who expend themselves in God's service, as Paul did. His first missionary tour begins at Antioch,

Syria. On the island of Cyprus, the proconsul Sergius Paulus and many others become believers. At Perga in Pamphylia, John Mark departs for Jerusalem, but Paul and Barnabas press on to Antioch in Pisidia. In Lystra, Jews foment persecution. Though stoned and left for dead, Paul recovers and carries on in the ministry. Finally, he and Barnabas return to Antioch in Syria, ending the first tour.—13:1–14:28.

Like its first-century counterpart, today's Governing Body resolves questions with guidance by the holy spirit. Circumcision was not among the "necessary things," which include "abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from forni-

'RAYER ON A HOUSETOPI:

Peter was not being ostentatious when he prayed lone on the housetop. (10:9) A parapet round the flat roof of likely hid him from view. Deuteronomy 2:8: The roof was also a place to relax and escape street noise in the evening.



CORNELIUS THE CENTURION: Cornelius was an army officer, or a centurion. (10:1) A centurion's annual wages were about five times those of an infantryman, or some 1,200 denarii, but could be much higher. Upon retirement, he received a grant in money or land. His military attire was colorful, from a silver helmet to a kiltlike garment, a fine woolen cloak, and decorated greaves. A centurion's company theoretically consisted of 100 men, but at times there were only 80 or so. Recruits for "the Italian band" apparently came from among Roman citizens and freedmen in Italy.

cation." (15:28, 29) As Paul begins a second missionary tour, Silas accompanies him, and they are later joined by Timothy. Prompt action follows a call to step over into Macedonia. At Philippi, witnessing results in an uproar and imprisonment. But Paul and Silas are released by an earthquake and preach to the jailer and his household, and these become baptized believers.—15:1–16:40.

Jehovah's servants should be diligent students of his Word, like Paul and the Scripture-searching Bereans. On the Areopagus in Athens, he gives a witness about Jehovah's creatorship, and some become believers. So much interest is manifested in Corinth that he remains in that city for 18 months. While there, he writes First and Second Thessalonians. Parting company with Silas and Timothy, the apostle sails to Ephesus, then embarks for Caesarea, and travels on to Jerusalem. When he returns to Syrian Antioch, his second missionary tour has ended.—17:1–18:22.

SUPPOSED GODS IN HUMAN FORM: Paul's healing of a lame man made residents of Lystra think that gods had appeared as men. (14:8–18) Zeus, the chief Greek god, had a temple at that city, and his son Hermes, the messenger of the gods, was noted for eloquence. Since the people thought that Paul was Hermes because he took the lead in speaking, they viewed Barnabas as Zeus. It was customary to crown false-god idols with garlands of flowers or of leaves of cypress or pine, but Paul and Barnabas rejected such idolatrous treatment.

THE JAILER BELIEVES: When an earthquake opened the prison doors and loosened the bonds of the inmates, the Philippian jailer was going to do away with himself. (16:25–27) Why? Because Roman law decreed that a jailer was to suffer an escapee's penalty. The jailer apparently preferred to die a suicide rather than experience death by torture, which probably awaited some of the prisoners. However, he accepted the good news, and "he and his wife were baptized without delay."—16:28–34.



As Paul showed, house-to-house witnessing is a vital part of the Christian ministry. The apostle's third tour (52-56 C.E.) largely retraces his second journey. Paul's ministry stirs up opposition at Ephesus, where he writes First Corinthians. Second Corinthians is written in Macedonia, and he writes to the Romans while in Corinth. At Miletus, Paul meets with the elders of Ephesus and speaks of how he taught them publicly and from house to house. His third tour ends upon his arrival in Jerusalem.—18:23-21:14.

TEMPLE KEEPER OF ARTEMIS: Upset over Paul's preaching, the silversmith Demetrius incited a riot. But the city recorder dispersed the crowd. (19: 23-41) The silversmiths made small silver shrines of the most sacred part of the temple in which the statue of the many-breasted fertility goddess Artemis was located. Cities competed with one another for the honor of being her *neokoros*, or "temple keeper."



AN APPEAL TO CAESAR: As a Roman citizen from birth, Paul had the right to appeal to Caesar and be tried in Rome.

(25:10-12) A Roman citizen was not to be bound, scourged, or punished without a trial.—16:35-40; 22:22-29; 26:32.



PERSECUTION INEFFECTIVE

Persecution does not seal the lips of Jehovah's faithful witnesses. So when mob violence breaks out against Paul at the temple in Jerusalem, he boldly witnesses to the seething rioters. A plot to murder him is frustrated when he is sent to Governor Felix at Caesarea with a military guard. Paul is kept in bonds for two years as Felix holds out for a bribe that never comes. His successor, Festus, hears Paul appeal to Caesar. Before heading for Rome, however, the apostle makes a stirring defense before King Agrippa.—21:15-26:32.

Undaunted by trials, Jehovah's servants keep on preaching. This surely was true of Paul. Because of his appeal to Caesar, the apostle sets out for Rome with Luke about 58 C.E. At Myra in Lycia, they transfer to another ship. Though they are shipwrecked and land on the island of Malta, later another vessel takes them

to Italy. Even under military guard in Rome, Paul calls people in and declares the good news to them. During this imprisonment, he writes to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, Philemon, and the Hebrews.—27:1-28:31.

EVER ON THE MARCH

The book of Acts demonstrates that the work begun by God's Son was carried on in faithfulness by Jehovah's witnesses of the first century. Yes, under the power of God's holy spirit, they witnessed zealously.

Because Jesus' early followers prayerfully relied on God, His hand was with them. Thousands thus became believers, and 'the good news was preached in all creation under heaven.' (Colossians 1:23) Indeed, both then and now, true Christians have proved to be zealous witnesses of Jehovah on the march!

TROUBLE AT SEA: When the ship carrying Paul was battered by the tempestuous wind called Euroaquito, 'they were hardly able to get possession of the skiff at the stern.' (27:15, 16) The skiff was a small boat that was usually towed by a vessel. A ship carried cables that could be passed around the hull to undergird it and spare it strain caused by the working of the mast during storms. (27:17) These mariners cast out four anchors and loosened the lashings of the rudder oars, or paddles, used to steer the vessel. (27:29, 40) The ship of Alexandria had the figure-head "Sons of Zeus"—Castor and Pollux, regarded as patrons of sailors.—28:11.



REMEMBER YOUR GRAND CREATOR IN YOUR YOUTH

DISCONTENTED Youth: A Fact of International Life." So read the headline of an article in *The Star* of Johannesburg, South Africa. The caption for the article read: "With huge populations of youths now confronting limited opportunities that are being even further reduced by worldwide recession, dissatisfaction of youth in bulging cities has become a conspicuous fact of international life. In the riots in Miami, in San Salvador, in Managua, in Teheran and in Cape Town there was one common aspect—in each case the first to kill and to be killed were the youth."

That was published some ten years ago, and circumstances have become worse since then. Why such discontent among young people worldwide? The growing instability of this system of things is definitely a factor. Unemployment has reached epic proportions. And with rapidly deteriorating family life, what security is there for young people? No wonder some of them lash back at a world beyond their control. Is this not because they lack a sure hope on which to anchor their lives?

One would expect the world's religions to infuse such a hope. Yet, one youth wrote: "I am very confused. . . . I have many friends, belonging to many different religions, and they are just the same as me. I am really so confused I do not know what to believe anymore. Please, could you give me some advice?" What advice would you give such a young person?

Youths who stick close to God's Word and the true Christian congregation are

spared such confusion and heartache. Whereas most young people do not have a sure hope for the future, Christian youths trust in Jehovah God and his sure Word of truth. Hence, they have the prospect of surviving the end of this system of things with everlasting life in view. Thereafter, on an earth cleansed of injustice and wickedness, they will form part of the foundation of the "new earth" in which "righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:13; John 17:3) For the realization of such glorious prospects, young people are admonished to 'remember their Grand Creator.' (Ecclesiastes 12:1) And the best advice that can be given is that they become and remain an integral part of the Christian congregation. Why is this?

The majority of you young people in the Christian congregation have believing parents who love you and care for you. Each congregation has its appointed elders, who are keenly interested in your spiritual welfare. Such help and care should not be minimized. The truth from God's Word, along with theocratic direction, will give you security, freedom from frustration, and a sure hope for the future. All of this will help you to 'hold faith and a good conscience' and cling to a hope that is like an anchor preventing a vessel from experiencing shipwreck in stormy seas.—1 Timothy 1:18, 19; compare Hebrews 6:19.

Steer Clear of Worldly Enticements

In spite of the manifold spiritual blessings that you young ones can enjoy in the

Christian congregation, the tendency of some is to pursue the ways of the world. It is as if they feel they are lacking something worthwhile that can be found only in the world outside the Christian congregation. But does the world really have anything worthwhile to offer?

After spending more than 40 years in the full-time ministry, one of God's servants put matters this way: "The only part of my life that I regret is the part that I lived before I came into the truth. I was then a part of the world. I lived only for the world. When I reached the age of 18 and looked back over my life, I realized that it was empty. There was no aim, no purpose, to my life. The worldly pleasures I thought I enjoyed really brought only frustration and sorrow. I began to search for the truth. I found it and a year later started to engage in the full-time service. I had no money, just a year's experience in the truth and faith that Jehovah would back me up. Now when I look back over my life, two thirds of which I have spent in full-time service, I am extremely happy. I will never want to exchange what I have gained from serving Jehovah for anything the world has to offer." Indeed, this echoes the feelings of thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses.

So why long for things that other Christians have left behind? Why yearn for the things of a world that is heading for destruction? (1 John 2:15-17) As a young person, perhaps you feel that serving Jehovah is too restrictive and will cause you to lose out on the enjoyment the world offers. But is it wise to view your parents and the elders as too restrictive when they want to help you to please Jehovah and gain everlasting life?

If a mother who is sending her child to a local store reminds him to stop and look both ways before crossing the street,

would you consider her to be overly restrictive? Rather, is she not lovingly trying to protect her child? Suppose the child ignored the warning and was struck by a car and killed? Would you still feel that the mother had been too restrictive? Why, you might think that she should have taken more precautions to protect the life of her child! Similarly, the reminders from God's Word and his organization are given lovingly, not as restrictions but for our protection.

Growing up in a Christian home is not enough to make you able to withstand the pressures of this world. You also need to be personally convinced of the truth of God's Word. Such personal conviction and love for the Creator form a basis for dedicating your life to God. This personal conviction is also necessary in order for you to be able to defend your faith before others. (1 Peter 3:15) Being guided by God's Word is the basis for a successful life. (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 119:9) But for success in life, you also need good training.

Giving Specific Training

Surely, you Christian parents would be delighted to see your children take a firm stand for the truth and remain united with you in true worship. It is primarily

In Our Next Issue

- A Grand Millennium Approaching
- Walk in the Fear of Jehovah
- Serving Jehovah in Favorable Season and in Troublesome Season

the father's responsibility to bring children up "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) But can you spot areas wherein you need to improve in training them? Are you spending enough time with your children? Do you do things as a family? And do you enjoy wholesome recreation together?

Do not forget that your setting the right example has a powerful effect on your children. If you want them to take the truth seriously, then that is the way you should view it. (3 John 2-4) And if you want them to develop deep respect for Jehovah's organization and the elders, then you should always have such a healthy attitude yourself.

Although child training is primarily the duty of parents, elders also have a responsibility toward young ones in the congregation. In caring for God's flock, overseers also need to shepherd the lambs. (1 Peter 5:1-3) What a fine example Jehovah has set in tenderly caring for even the little ones! (Isaiah 40:11) Responding to his example, Christian undershepherds will also want to display warm, loving interest in young people and make them feel a part of the congregation. Some youths have expressed the desire that the elders talk to them more often and help them in the field ministry.

Training a young person means more than giving him head knowledge of the Scriptures. From his heart, he must hate what God hates and love what God loves. (Amos 5:14, 15) If he is to remember his Creator in youth, he needs to be Scripturally disciplined in walking in Jehovah's way of righteousness. (Proverbs 22:6; 2 Timothy 3:16) Parents should not hold back the needed discipline. Some parents who want to keep their child's friendship at all costs are inclined to overlook wrongdoing, playing down its seriousness. They become influenced by the world's permissiveness.

But it is the loving parent who is attentive to reports that his child has been misbehaving and gives proper discipline as needed. (Proverbs 13:24) Really, what Christian parent wants to keep a friendship based on permissiveness but lose his child for lack of proper discipline? —Proverbs 22:15.

Have a Purpose in Life

Jehovah God made us so that we derive our greatest joy and satisfaction from serving him. Think of the tremendous field that you youths can cultivate. About half the population of the world is 20 years of age and younger. These young people are floundering in the sea of humanity. Whereas they have no hope, you Christian youths have a sure hope and something worthwhile to share with them. Through your fine Christian conduct and your zeal for Jehovah's service, you may attract many of them to the truth. You can thus help them on the way to life.

What more worthwhile goal can you have than that of devoting your life to the service of Jehovah God? Have you thought of taking up the lifesaving preaching work on a full-time basis? Perhaps you can share in spreading the good news as a pioneer, or you can serve at one of the Watch Tower Society's branch offices where Bible literature is produced. Even if you cannot do that, should you not make the worship of Jehovah the focal point in your life, thus remembering your Grand Creator? You have a worthwhile work to do. Until the end of this system of things, therefore, be determined to have 'plenty to do in the Lord's work.'—1 Corinthians 15:58.

So press onward you Christian youths. Remember your Grand Creator now, and he will preserve you when he brings this godless world to an end. Yes, Jehovah will protect you at that time and bless you with an endless, glorious future.

Insight on the News

Old-Fashioned?

According to an Anglican priest in Adelaide, Australia, warnings against physical stimulation of the body that can lead to fornication and adultery are old-fashioned and from non-Christian sources. In his recent study on sexuality, he states that couples engaged to marry were not necessarily sinning if they had sexual intercourse before marriage. The study also asserts that homosexuality might be acceptable in some cases. According to the Brisbane *Courier Mail*, a spokesman for the Uniting Church in Australia "agreed with the basic principles of the report."

The Bible, however, states that it is God's will for all to "abstain from fornication" and that "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men...will inherit God's kingdom." (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) Surely, those who accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God recognize that its view of sex comes from the all-wise Creator. The effect upon

those who live by Bible standards proves that these so-called old-fashioned moral guidelines still contribute to family stability and provide a safeguard against the deep emotional scars and loathsome diseases that result from immoral conduct.

The Best Prevention

Misuse of drugs remains a serious problem. So then, what is the best way to protect youth from drug abuse? In an interview published in the Brazilian newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, French professor and psychiatrist Claude Olievenstein emphasized the need for guidelines and loving support. He said: "When people talk about drugs today, the role of the police, the judicial system, and the school is emphasized. However, the great need is that of family [drug use] prevention. . . . Many children do not know what paternal authority is. The father is absent; apparently he has resigned."

Explaining why drug abuse prevention is vital on the family level, Dr. Olievenstein add-

ed: "We live in a society of profit where people are ashamed of morals. When, because of drugs, our children start to manifest a certain behavior, it is because we no longer make morals known. Our society has become hard, insensible, industrialized. People think only of the fight to live."

According to the magazine *Superinteressante*, a U.S. survey confirms the importance of parental authority. The journal states: "Adolescents with the best performance in school examinations and emotionally more stable come from families in which parents exercised authority to fix clear rules of conduct and offered freedom within well-defined limits. Likewise, the proportion of adolescents addicted to drugs and alcohol is appreciably lower in such families."

With good reason, the Bible admonishes parents: "Chastise your son and he will bring you rest and give much pleasure to your soul." (Proverbs 29:17) Yes, correction based on the Bible can help parents to prevent drug abuse and to improve the quality of life for the entire family.

Questions From Readers

■ Is it appropriate for a Christian to go hunting or fishing?

The varied reactions to hunting often involve deep feelings. So it is best for Christians to strive to understand and apply Jehovah God's thinking on the matter as found in the Bible.

God gave mankind dominion over both "wild" and "domestic" animals. At first, humans did not have the Creator's permission, nor perhaps any physical need,

to kill animals for food. (Genesis 1:24, 29, 30) Only after the Flood did God give mankind the right to eat animal flesh that was properly drained of "its soul—its blood." (Genesis 9:3, 4) That could be meat from either domestic or wild animals.

The Israelites raised animals, such as sheep and cattle, that could be slaughtered for food

when they craved meat. They also hunted and fished to obtain food. (Deuteronomy 12:20-24; 14:4-20) This harmonizes with God's figurative saying that he would 'send many fishers to fish for his people and many hunters to hunt for them.' (Jeremiah 16:16) Later, Jesus included fishermen among his apostles and directed actual fishing operations.—Matthew 4:18-22; 17:27; Luke 5:2-6; John 21:4-7.

When the aged patriarch Isaac asked for a tasty meat dish, his son Jacob was willing to kill two young goats to make a dish for him. Esau, though, hunted a wild animal to get venison for his father. Note that although meat from domestic animals was available, Isaac asked for meat from a game animal. Note, too, that both sons killed animals that would be food, not for themselves, but for someone else.—Genesis 27:1-19.

Animals might be killed for reasons other than their meat. Their skins could be made into clothing. (2 Kings 1:8; Mark 1:6; Hebrews 11:37) Protective coverings and utensils were also made from animal hides, even of animals dietarily unclean and that Israelites did not eat.—Exodus 39:33, 34; Numbers 24:7; Judges 4:19; Psalm 56:8.

God's requirement that the blood of slain animals be poured out should remind hunters that animal life is from him and so ought to be treated respectfully, not wantonly. (Leviticus 17:13) Nimrod evidently slaughtered animals and probably boasted about his hunting skill, the size or number of his kills, or the trophies that might have been made from them. He was "a mighty hunter in opposition to Jehovah."—Genesis 10:9.

Such a thrill over hunting or killing animals, or over reeling in fish, could develop in a Christian. Many a hunter or fisherman who has scrutinized his heart has discovered that he was infected with the 'joy of the kill.' Such excitement goes hand in hand with wanton disregard for animal life. So while it is not wrong to hunt or fish (when the kill or catch will be used by someone for food or another fitting purpose), it would be im-

proper to do so if a Christian had a spirit reminiscent of Nimrod. But there are dangers besides getting a thrill out of the chase, the kill, or a trophy.

The Watchtower of July 15, 1983, discussed why true Christians do not carry or keep guns for use against humans or protection from them. (Pages 23-6) Meditating on that counsel has led some Witnesses to reevaluate having even hunting guns. Not a few have chosen to get rid of their guns altogether or to avoid having them on display and readily accessible. These Christians thus would not give the impression of taking pride in weapons or trusting in them. Furthermore, not even having hunting guns, or not having them easily accessible, can avert tragedy. The deadly weapons could not then come into the hands of children who might accidentally hurt or kill someone, nor would guns be at hand if someone was extremely frightened or depressed.—Compare Proverbs 22:3.

Some Christians may like the flavor of certain game or fish, and the most practical way to obtain such food is by hunting or fishing. Others enjoy the air and exercise linked with hunting in the woods, or find that quiet hours of fishing are relaxing. The Bible does not speak against this, so there is no need to judge others as to whether they enjoy such things or not. And the example of Isaac and his sons shows that there is no need to make an issue of who will eat the game or fish.—Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 14:4.

The apostle Peter was evidently quite attached to fishing. With some fish lying nearby, the resurrected Jesus helped him to analyze his own feelings about



fish or the fishing business. Jesus asked: "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"—John 21:1-3, 9-15; see *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1988, page 31.

Similarly, a Christian who in good conscience chooses to go hunting or fishing should have his priorities in order. For example, if a hunting or fishing season was to open at a time when congregation meetings were scheduled, what would he do? Or does his conversation show that he takes pride in his prowess at hunting or fishing? How fine it is if a mature Christian who, on occasion, chooses to hunt or fish can say with conviction: "Yes, Lord, you know I have affection for you [more than for these pursuits]."—John 21:16.

“A Most Wonderful Way of Teaching”

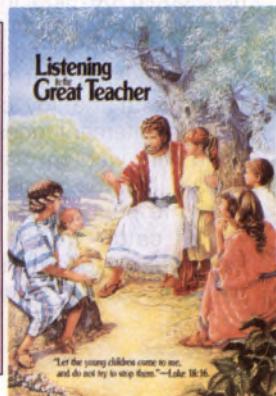
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