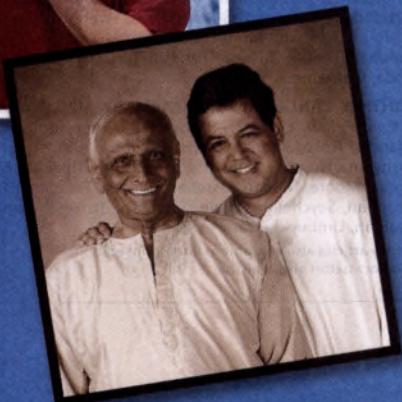
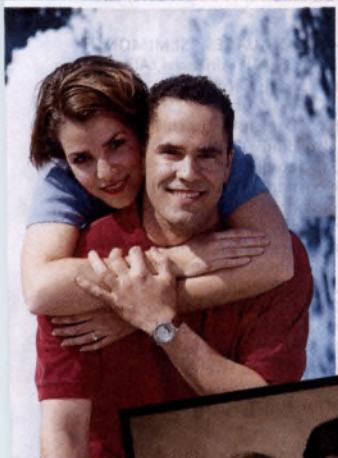


SEPTEMBER 15, 2001

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Can Anything
Really
Unite People?



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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Can Anything Really Unite People?

NO MATTER what your beliefs, you probably agree that there must be lovers of truth in nearly all religions. People who deeply appreciate what is true and who are willing to search for it can be found among Hindus, Catholics, Jews, and others. Yet, religion seems to divide mankind. Some even use religion for evil ends. Will it ever be possible for sincere people from all religions who have a love for what is good and true to be united? Could they be gathered together for a common purpose?

How disturbing it is to see that religion is increasingly the cause of division! Consider some of these conflicts. Hindus fight Buddhists in Sri Lanka. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews have shed blood in various conflicts. "Christians" fight Muslims in Chechnya, Indonesia, and Kosovo. And in March 2000, two days of strife linked with religion left 300 Nigerians dead. Indeed, religious hatred has fueled the ferocity of these conflicts.

Sincere people are often dismayed by the evils practiced in the name of religion. For instance, many churchgoers are shocked that clergymen who have abused children sexually have officially been tolerated by some churches. Other believers are greatly embarrassed by divisions within many so-called Christian sects over such issues as homosexuality and abortion. Clearly, religion has not united mankind. Yet, there are genuine

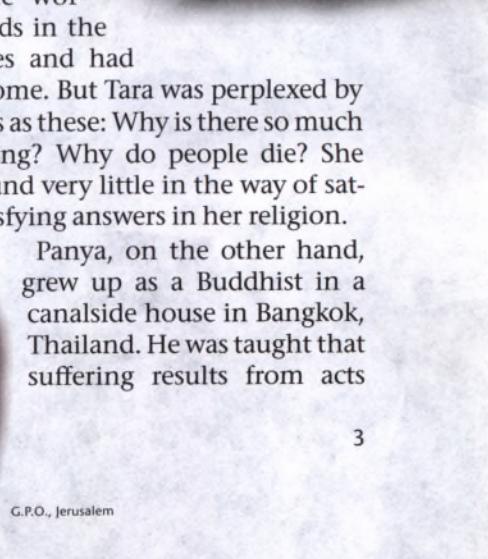
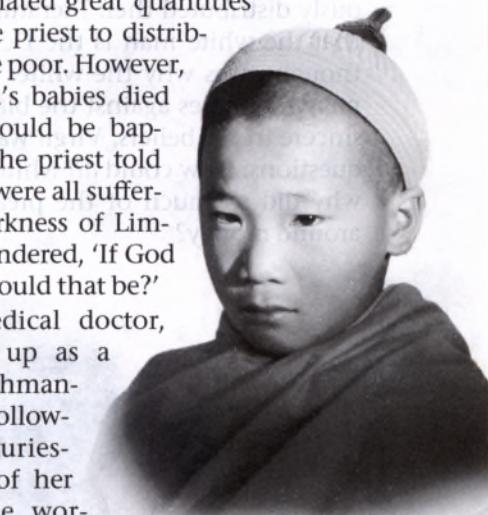
lovers of truth in many faiths, as the following experiences show.

They Yearned for the Truth

Fidelia was a sincere and devoted worshiper in the Catholic Church of San Francisco in La Paz, Bolivia. She prostrated herself before the image of Mary and placed the best candles she could buy before the crucifix. Each week, she donated great quantities of food to the priest to distribute among the poor. However, five of Fidelia's babies died before they could be baptized. When the priest told her that they were all suffering in the darkness of Limbo, Fidelia wondered, 'If God is good, how could that be?'

Tara, a medical doctor, was brought up as a Hindu in Kathmandu, Nepal. Following the centuries-old customs of her ancestors, she worshiped her gods in the Hindu temples and had idols in her home. But Tara was perplexed by such questions as these: Why is there so much suffering? Why do people die? She found very little in the way of satisfying answers in her religion.

Panya, on the other hand, grew up as a Buddhist in a canalside house in Bangkok, Thailand. He was taught that suffering results from acts



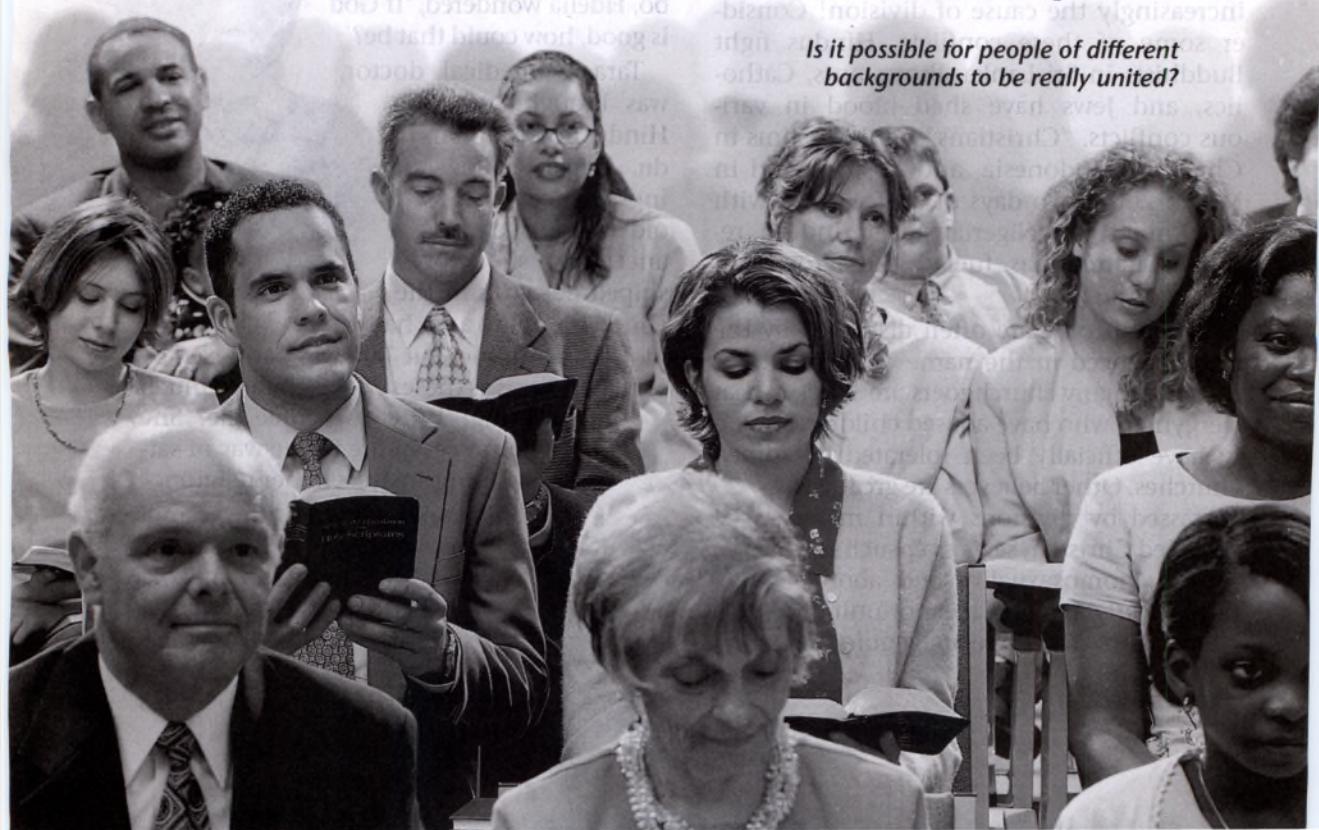
committed in previous lives and that freedom from it can be attained by ridding oneself of all desires. Like other sincere Buddhists, he was taught deep respect for the wisdom of the yellow-robed monks who came to the house each dawn for alms. He practiced meditation and collected images of the Buddha in the belief that they brought protection. After being involved in a serious accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down, Panya visited Buddhist monasteries, sincerely hoping for a miraculous cure. He did not find a cure or spiritual enlightenment. Instead, he was exposed to spiritism and started dabbling in it.

Virgil was born in the United States and joined the Black Muslims in college. He zealously distributed their literature, which held that the white man is the Devil. That, they thought, was why the whites committed so many atrocities against the blacks. Although sincere in his beliefs, Virgil was disturbed by questions: How could *all* whites be bad? And why did so much of the preaching revolve around money?

Even though Charo grew up in predominantly Catholic South America, she was a sincere Protestant. She was pleased to be no part of the idolatry that surrounded her. Charo enjoyed going to church every Sunday for the emotion-charged service, where she shouted "Hallelujah!" and joined in the religious singing and dancing that followed. Charo sincerely believed that she had been saved and was born again. She paid a tenth of her income to the church, and when her favorite TV evangelist asked for contributions, she sent him money for children in Africa. When she asked her pastor why a God of love torments souls in hell, however, she realized that he had no meaningful answer. Later, she also discovered that her contributions were not used to help children in Africa.

Although from different backgrounds, these five individuals had something in common. They loved truth and sincerely sought truthful answers to their questions. But could they really be united in true worship? The next article will answer that question.

Is it possible for people of different backgrounds to be really united?



True Worship Unites People

ALTHOUGH religion in general tends to divide mankind, the worship of the only true God has the power to unite people. When Israel was God's chosen nation, many sincere Gentiles were attracted to true worship. For example, Ruth abandoned the gods of her native Moab and said to Naomi: "Your people will be my people, and your God my God." (Ruth 1:16) By the first century C.E., a large number of Gentiles had become worshipers of the true God. (Acts 13:48; 17:4) Later when Jesus' apostles began traveling to distant places with the good news, other sincere people were united in the worship of the true God. "You turned to God from your idols to slave for a living and true God," wrote the apostle Paul. (1 Thessalonians 1:9) Does worship of the true God have such uniting power today?

Skeptics insist that it is wrong to speak of "true worshipers" or "the true God." They may feel that way because they are unaware of any source from which truth can be learned. But seekers of truth from many backgrounds have realized that worship is not a matter of preference. The only one worthy of our worship is the Creator of all things—Jehovah God. (Revelation 4:11) He is the true God, and he has the right to decide how he is to be worshiped.

To help us discern his requirements, Jehovah has communicated with us through his Word, the Bible. Nearly everyone on earth today has access to the entire Bible or portions of it. Moreover, God's Son said: "If you remain in my word, . . . you will know the truth." (John 8:31, 32) The truth, therefore, can be known. And millions of honest-hearted people from different religious back-

grounds are courageously embracing this truth and are being united in true worship.

—Matthew 28:19, 20; Revelation 7:9, 10.

Worldwide Unity in Our Time!

A remarkable prophecy in the Bible book of Zephaniah speaks of the coming together of people of diverse backgrounds. It states: "Then I [Jehovah God] shall give to peoples the change to a pure language, in order for them all to call upon the name of Jehovah, in order to serve him shoulder to shoulder." (Zephaniah 3:9) What a beautiful picture this is of changed peoples serving God in unity!

When was this to happen? Zephaniah 3:8 says: "'Keep yourselves in expectation of me,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'till the day of my rising up to the booty, for my judicial decision is to gather nations, for me to collect together kingdoms, in order to pour out upon them my denunciation, all my burning anger; for by the fire of my zeal all the earth will be devoured.'" Yes, during the time that Jehovah is gathering the nations but before he pours out upon them his burning anger, he gives to the meek ones of the earth the change to a pure language. That time is now, for the gathering of all nations to the war of the great day of God the Almighty at Armageddon is already under way.

—Revelation 16:14, 16.

To unify his people, Jehovah gives them a pure language. This new language includes a proper understanding of Bible truth about God and his purposes. Speaking the pure language involves believing the truth, teaching it to others, and living in harmony with God's laws and principles. It calls for shunning divisive politics and rooting out of the

heart selfish attitudes, such as the racism and divisive nationalism characteristic of this world. (John 17:14; Acts 10:34, 35) All honest-hearted ones who have love for the truth can learn this language. Consider how the five people mentioned in the preceding article—once so far apart religiously—are now united in the worship of the one and only true God, Jehovah.

They Are United in True Worship

When Fidelia, the devout Roman Catholic, bought a Bible for her daughter's school-work, she asked her priest to explain from it what had happened to her five dead children.

"What a disappointment!" she says. So when Jehovah's Witnesses called on her, she asked them a similar question. Upon reading in her own Bible the truth about the condition of the dead, she realized how the church had deceived her. She learned that the dead are conscious of nothing and therefore are not suffering in Limbo or anywhere else. (Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5) Fidelia discarded all her religious images, left the church, and started studying the Bible. (1 John 5:21) For the last ten years, she has enjoyed teaching Scriptural truth to others.

Tara from Kathmandu moved to a country where there are few Hindu temples. She therefore visited a Methodist church in hopes of satisfying her spiritual needs. But she found no answer to her question about human suffering. Then Jehovah's Witnesses contacted her and offered to study the

Bible with her. Tara says: "I came to realize that a God of love could not be responsible for all the suffering in the world . . . I was delighted with the prospect of a new world of peace and harmony." (Revelation 21:3, 4) Tara got rid of her Hindu images, stopped

following the religious customs of her native land, and found genuine happiness in helping to satisfy the spiritual needs of others as a Witness of Jehovah.

Panya, the Buddhist, was a fortune-teller when Jehovah's Witnesses first called on him in Bangkok, so the prophecies in the



Bible fascinated him. Panya related: "When I learned why present conditions are different from what the Creator originally purposed and how he has arranged to undo the damage caused by those who reject him and his sovereignty, it was as if a veil had been removed from my eyes. Everything about the Bible's message was so harmonious. I came to love Jehovah as a person; this gave me the motivation to practice what I knew was right. I was eager to help others to see the difference between human wisdom and godly wisdom. True wisdom has really changed my life."

In time, Virgil began to have serious doubts about his religious beliefs. Rather than praying to God for a way to help black people and for what he considered was a racist organization that seemed to produce hatred for whites, he prayed for the truth, whatever it was, wherever it was. "When I awakened the next day after my fervently praying to God," recalls Virgil, "I found a *Watchtower* magazine in the house. . . . It must have been slipped under the door." Soon he was intensely studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. He continues: "For the first time in my life, I felt satisfied. . . . A ray of hope began to dawn inside me." Virgil was soon united with those who offer people the only true hope as set out in God's Word, the Bible.



Charo from Latin America was impressed when a Witness named Gladys saw that she was having difficulties with her small children and began helping her by taking her to market. In time, Charo accepted an offer made by Gladys—a free home Bible study. When Charo learned from her own Bible that not all good people go to heaven but that Jehovah will also bless humans on earth with everlasting life, she was amazed. (Psalm 37: 11, 29) Charo herself has been sharing this hope with others for the past 15 years.

Imagine the whole earth populated by sincere people united in the worship of Jehovah.



vah, the only true God! This is not a fantasy. It is what Jehovah has promised. Through his prophet Zephaniah, God declared: "I shall certainly let remain in the midst of you a people humble and lowly, and they will actually take refuge in the name of Jehovah. . . . They will do no unrighteousness, nor speak a lie, nor will there be found in their mouths a tricky tongue; . . . and there will be no one making them tremble." (Zephaniah 3:12, 13) If this promise appeals to you, take to heart the Bible's exhortation: "Seek Jehovah, all you meek ones of the earth, who have practiced His own judicial decision. Seek righteousness, seek meekness. Probably you may be concealed in the day of Jehovah's anger."

—Zephaniah 2:3.



Conventions—Joyful Affirmations of Our Brotherhood

FIIFTY-YEAR-OLD Joseph F. Rutherford, in poor health after almost a year of unjust imprisonment, happily serves as a bellhop. He energetically totes suitcases and helps fellow Christians to their hotel rooms. Two of his former fellow inmates—fellow Bible Students—hand out room assignments to a huge crowd awaiting accommodations. Things keep humming till well after midnight. An infectious spirit of excitement overtakes all of them. What is the occasion?

The year is 1919, and the Bible Students (known today as Jehovah's Witnesses) are recovering from a period of vicious persecution. To reinvigorate their ranks, they are holding a convention in Cedar Point, Ohio, U.S.A., from September 1 to 8, 1919. On the last day of the convention, an electrified throng of 7,000 listen intently as Brother Rutherford encourages each of the conventioners with the words: "You are an ambassador of the King of kings and Lord of lords, announcing to the people . . . the glorious kingdom of our Lord."

Among Jehovah's people, conventions date back to the time of ancient Israel. (Exodus 23:14-17; Luke 2:41-43) Such gatherings were joyful occasions, helping all those present to keep their minds on the Word of God. Sim-

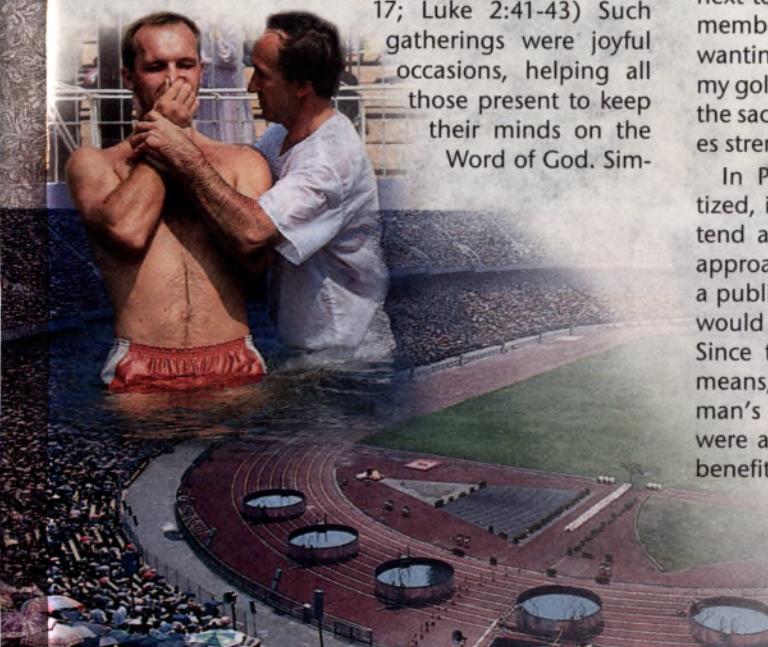
ilarly, the conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses in modern times center on spiritual interests. To sincere observers such joyful gatherings give undeniable evidence that the Witnesses are united by strong ties of Christian brotherhood.

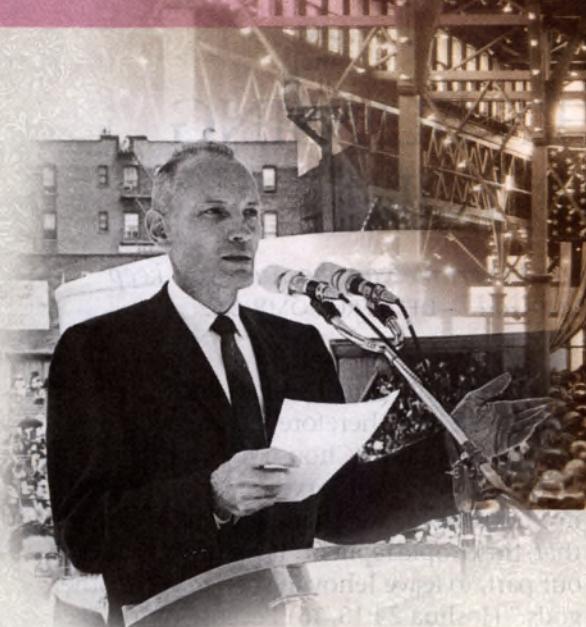
Efforts to Attend

Modern-day Christians realize that their conventions are periods of spiritual refreshment and instruction in God's Word. They consider these large meetings as an indispensable means of helping them to "stand complete and with firm conviction in all the will of God." (Colossians 4:12) Thus, the Witnesses wholeheartedly support these gatherings, making great efforts to attend them.

For some, their very presence at such conventions requires exercising faith and overcoming mountainlike obstacles. For example, consider an elderly Witness in Austria. Though having diabetes and needing insulin injections daily, she made sure that she attended all days of a district convention in her country. In India, a large family of Witnesses living in deep poverty found it next to impossible to attend a convention. One member of the family came to the rescue. "Not wanting to miss the occasion," she said, "I sold my gold earrings to finance the trip. It was worth the sacrifice, since the association and experiences strengthened our faith."

In Papua New Guinea, a group of unbaptized, interested people were determined to attend a district convention in the capital. They approached a man in their village who owned a public motor vehicle and asked how much he would charge to get them to the convention. Since the amount required was beyond their means, they made arrangements to work on the man's home, remodeling his kitchen. Thus they were able to get to the district convention and benefit from attending the entire program.





Distance is not an insurmountable problem for Witnesses of Jehovah intent on being present at conventions. In 1978, to attend a convention in Lille, France, a young delegate from Poland traveled 750 miles by bicycle in six days. During the summer of 1997, two Witnesses from Mongolia made a 750-mile journey to attend a Christian gathering in Irkutsk, Russia.

True Brotherhood in Action

The unity and brotherhood manifested by the Witnesses at their conventions is clearly evident to fair-minded observers. Many have been impressed that there is no partiality among the conventioners and that genuine warmth exists even among those who may be meeting one another for the first time.

During a recent international convention in Australia, a tour guide who accompanied visiting convention delegates for a week wanted to stay with them a little longer to enjoy their company. Impressed by their love and unity, he could not believe that they got



along so well, since most of them were strangers. When it came time for him to leave, he called for their attention. Addressing them as "brothers and sisters," he started to thank them but could not finish, for he choked up with emotion and gave way to tears.

In 1997, Sri Lanka held its first trilingual district convention in a large stadium. The entire program was presented simultaneously in English, Sinhalese, and Tamil. In a world of increasing ethnic tensions, such a gathering of three language groups did not go unnoticed. One policeman asked a brother: "Who is running this convention—the Sinhalese, the Tamils, or the English?" "Neither group is running the convention," replied the brother. "We're all doing this together." The policeman reacted in disbelief. When all three language groups joined for the final prayer and a united "Amen" resounded throughout the stadium, the conventioners broke out in spontaneous applause. There was hardly a dry eye in the audience. Yes, conventions are indeed joyful affirmations of our brotherhood.

—Psalm 133:1.*

* See pages 66-77, 254-82 of the book *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

WILL JEHOVAH'S BLESSING OVERTAKE YOU?

"All these blessings must come upon you and overtake you, because you keep listening to the voice of Jehovah your God."—DEUTERONOMY 28:2.

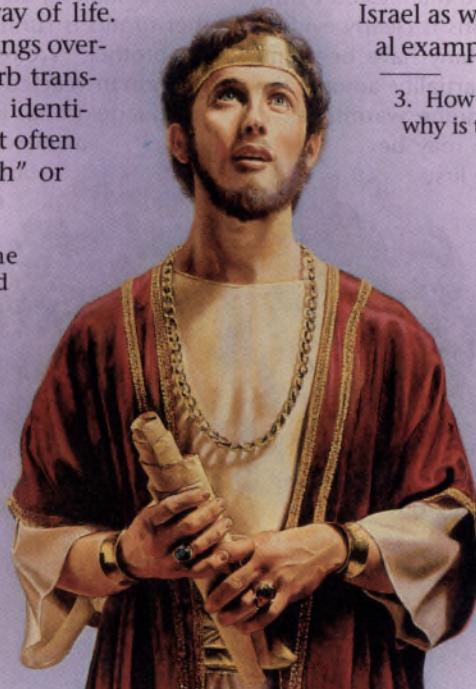
NEAR the end of their 40-year trek in the wilderness, the Israelites were encamped on the Plains of Moab. The Promised Land lay before them. Moses now wrote the book of Deuteronomy, which includes a series of blessings and maledictions, or curses. If the people of Israel were to "keep listening to the voice of Jehovah" by obeying him, blessings would "overtake" them. Jehovah loved them as his "special property" and wanted to show his strength in their behalf. But if they did not keep listening to him, maledictions would just as surely overtake them.—Deuteronomy 8:10-14; 26:18; 28:2, 15.

2 The Hebrew verb rendered "keep listening" at Deuteronomy 28:2 denotes continuous action. Jehovah's people must not simply listen to him occasionally; they must keep listening as a way of life. Only then will divine blessings overtake them. The Hebrew verb translated "overtake" has been identified as a hunting term most often meaning "to catch up with" or "to reach."

1. What was to determine whether the Israelites received blessings or maledictions?
2. What is the meaning behind the Hebrew verbs rendered "keep listening" and "overtake" at Deuteronomy 28:2?

3 The Israelite leader Joshua chose to listen to Jehovah and therefore experienced blessings. Joshua said: "Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve . . . As for me and my household, we shall serve Jehovah." At that, the people replied: "It is unthinkable, on our part, to leave Jehovah so as to serve other gods." (Joshua 24:15, 16) Because of Joshua's fine attitude, he was among the few of his generation privileged to enter the Promised Land. Today, we stand on the threshold of a vastly superior Promised Land—a paradise earth in which blessings far richer than those of Joshua's day await all who have God's approval. Will such blessings overtake you? They will if you keep listening to Jehovah. To help strengthen your resolve to do so, consider the national history of ancient Israel as well as instructive individual examples.—Romans 15:4.

3. How can we be like Joshua, and why is this vitally important?



King Solomon prayed for an obedient heart, and Jehovah blessed him with wisdom

Blessing or Malediction?

⁴ During most of King Solomon's reign, the Israelites received extraordinary blessings from Jehovah. They enjoyed security and good things in abundance. (1 Kings 4:25) Solomon's wealth became legendary, though he had not asked God for material riches. Instead, while still young and inexperienced, he had prayed for an obedient heart—a request that Jehovah granted by blessing him with wisdom and understanding. This enabled Solomon to judge the people properly, discerning between good and bad. Although God also gave him wealth and glory, as a young man, Solomon appreciated the excelling value of spiritual riches. (1 Kings 3:9-13) Whether we have much in a material way or not, how thankful we can be if we enjoy Jehovah's blessing and are spiritually rich!

⁵ The Israelites failed to show appreciation for Jehovah's blessing. Because they did not keep on listening to him, foretold maledictions overtook them. This resulted in conquest by their enemies and exile for the inhabitants of Israel and Judah. (Deuteronomy 28:36; 2 Kings 17:22, 23; 2 Chronicles 36:17-20) Did God's people learn from such suffering that divine blessings overtake only those who keep listening to Jehovah? The Jewish remnant who returned to their homeland in 537 B.C.E. had the opportunity to demonstrate whether they had acquired "a heart of wisdom" and now saw the need to keep listening to God.—Psalm 90:12.

⁶ The repatriated Jews set up an altar and began work on the temple in Jerusalem. But when powerful opposition arose, their zeal

4. In response to Solomon's prayer, what did God grant him, and how should we feel about such blessings?

5. What happened when the people of Israel and Judah failed to keep listening to Jehovah?

6. (a) Why did Jehovah send Haggai and Zechariah to prophesy to his people? (b) What principle was illustrated by God's message through Haggai?

began to flag and construction stopped. (Ezra 3:1-3, 10; 4:1-4, 23, 24) They also started to give priority to personal comforts. Hence, God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to rekindle his people's zeal for true worship. Through Haggai, Jehovah said: "Is it the time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house [of worship] is waste? . . . Set your heart upon your ways. You have sown much seed, but there is a bringing of little in. There is an eating, but it is not to satisfaction. . . . And he that is hiring himself out is hiring himself out for a bag having holes." (Haggai 1:4-6) Sacrificing spiritual interests in the pursuit of material advantages does not result in Jehovah's blessing.—Luke 12:15-21.

⁷ Consumed by daily concerns, the Jews had forgotten that divine blessings in the form of rain and fruitful seasons would overtake them only if they endured in a course of obedience to God, even in the face of opposition. (Haggai 1:9-11) How fitting, then, the exhortation: "Set your heart upon your ways"! (Haggai 1:7) In effect, Jehovah was telling them: 'Think! See the connection between your futile labor in the fields and the desolate state of my house of worship.' The inspired words of Jehovah's prophets finally reached the hearts of their listeners, for the people resumed work on the temple, completing it in 515 B.C.E.

⁸ Later, in the days of the prophet Malachi, the Jews again began to vacillate spiritually, even presenting unacceptable sacrifices to God. (Malachi 1:6-8) Thus, Jehovah exhorted them to bring the tenth parts of their produce into his storehouse and to test him out to see whether he would not open to them the floodgates of the heavens and actually empty

7. Why did Jehovah say to the Jews: "Set your heart upon your ways"?

8. What exhortation did Jehovah give the Jews in Malachi's day, and why?



Boaz treated others with respect and kindness

out upon them a blessing until there was no more want. (Malachi 3:10) How foolish the Jews were to toil for the very things God would give them abundantly if only they would keep listening to his voice!—2 Chronicles 31:10.

⁹ In addition to presenting Israel's national history, the Bible chronicles the lives of many individuals who received divine blessings or maledictions, depending on whether they kept listening to Jehovah or not. Let us see what we can learn from three of them—Boaz, Nabal, and Hannah. In this regard, you may wish to read the book of Ruth as well as 1 Samuel 1:1-2:21 and 1 Samuel 25:2-42.

Boaz Listened to God

¹⁰ Although Boaz and Nabal were not contemporaries, they had certain things in common. For instance, both men lived in the land of Judah. They were wealthy landowners, and both had a special opportunity to display

9. We will examine the lives of what three individuals of Bible record?
10. What did Boaz and Nabal have in common?

loving-kindness toward someone in need. But there the similarities end.

¹¹ Boaz lived during the era of Israel's judges. He treated others with respect, and his harvester had high regard for him. (Ruth 2:4) In obedience to the Law, Boaz made sure that in his field, gleanings were left for the afflicted and poor. (Leviticus 19:9, 10) What did Boaz do when he learned about Ruth and Naomi and saw Ruth's diligence in providing for her elderly mother-in-law? He gave Ruth special consideration and commanded his men to let her glean in his field. By his words and loving deeds, Boaz revealed that he was a spiritual man who listened to Jehovah. He therefore received God's favor and blessing.—Leviticus 19:18; Ruth 2:5-16.

¹² The most outstanding evidence that Boaz kept listening to Jehovah was the unselfish way in which he acted on God's law of repur-

11. How did Boaz show that he kept listening to Jehovah?

12, 13. (a) How did Boaz show deep regard for Jehovah's law of repurchase? (b) What divine blessings overtook Boaz?

chase. Boaz did all he could to ensure that the inheritance of his relative—Naomi's late husband, Elimelech—would remain in Elimelech's family. Through "brother-in-law marriage," a widow was to marry her deceased husband's next of kin so that a son born to them might carry on the inheritance. (Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Leviticus 25:47-49) Ruth presented herself for marriage in the place of Naomi, who was beyond the age of childbearing. After a closer relative of Elimelech declined to help Naomi, Boaz took Ruth as his wife. Their son Obed was viewed as Naomi's offspring and the legal heir of Elimelech.—Ruth 2:19, 20; 4:1, 6, 9, 13-16.

¹³ Rich blessings overtook Boaz because of his unselfish compliance with God's law. Through their son Obed, he and Ruth were blessed with the privilege of becoming ancestors of Jesus Christ. (Ruth 2:12; 4:13, 21, 22; Matthew 1:1, 5, 6) From the unselfish deeds of Boaz, we learn that blessings overtake those who show love for others and act in harmony with God's requirements.

Nabal Did Not Listen

¹⁴ In contrast with Boaz, Nabal failed to listen to Jehovah. He violated God's law: "You must love your fellow as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18) Nabal was not a spiritual man; he was "harsh and bad in his practices." Even his own men viewed him as "a good-for-nothing fellow." Fittingly, his name, Nabal, means "senseless," or "stupid." (1 Samuel 25:3, 17, 25) So how would Nabal respond when he had an opportunity to show kindness to someone in need—David, the anointed of Jehovah?—1 Samuel 16:13.

¹⁵ When encamped in the vicinity of Nabal's flocks, David and his men, without asking for any payment, furnished protection

14. What kind of man was Nabal?
15. How did Nabal treat David, and how did Abigail differ from her husband in this regard?

from marauding bands. "A wall was what they proved to be around us both by night and by day," said one of Nabal's shepherds. When David's messengers asked for some food, however, Nabal "screamed rebukes at them" and sent them away empty-handed. (1 Samuel 25:2-16) Nabal's wife, Abigail, promptly took provisions to David. Hot with anger, David had been about to exterminate Nabal and his men. Abigail's initiative thus saved the lives of many and prevented David from becoming bloodguilty. But Nabal's greed and harshness had gone too far. About ten days later, "Jehovah struck Nabal, so that he died."—1 Samuel 25:18-38.

¹⁶ What a contrast there was between Boaz and Nabal! While we should reject the harsh and selfish ways of Nabal, let us imitate the kindness and unselfishness of Boaz. (Hebrews 13:16) We can do so by applying the apostle Paul's counsel: "As long as we have time favorable for it, let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Galatians 6:10) Today, Jesus' "other sheep," Christians with an earthly hope, have the privilege of doing good to Jehovah's anointed, the remnant of the 144,000, who will be granted immortality in heaven. (John 10:16; 1 Corinthians 15:50-53; Revelation 14:1, 4) Jesus views such loving deeds as though they are done to him personally, and doing these good things results in Jehovah's rich blessing.—Matthew 25:34-40; 1 John 3:18.

Hannah's Trials and Blessings

¹⁷ Jehovah's blessing also overtook the godly woman Hannah. She lived in the mountainous region of Ephraim with her Levite husband, Elkanah. As allowed and regulated by the Law, he had another wife—Peninnah.

16. How can we imitate Boaz and repudiate the ways of Nabal?
17. What trials confronted Hannah, and what attitude did she display?

Hannah remained barren, a reproach for an Israelite woman, while Peninnah had several children. (1 Samuel 1:1-3; 1 Chronicles 6:16, 33, 34) Instead of comforting Hannah, however, Peninnah acted in an unloving way that vexed Hannah to the point of tears and loss of appetite. Worse still, this happened “year by year,” every time the family went to Jehovah’s house in Shiloh. (1 Samuel 1:4-8) How heartless of Peninnah, and what a trial for Hannah! Yet, Hannah never blamed Jehovah; nor did she stay home when her husband went to Shiloh. Eventually, therefore, a rich blessing was sure to overtake her.

¹⁸ Hannah set a fine example for Jehovah’s people today, especially for those who may have been hurt by the unkind remarks of others. In such situations, isolating oneself is not the answer. (Proverbs 18:1) Hannah did not allow her trials to diminish her desire to be where God’s Word was taught and his people assembled for worship. She therefore remained spiritually strong. The depth of her spirituality is revealed in her beautiful prayer recorded at 1 Samuel 2:1-10.*

¹⁹ As Jehovah’s present-day servants, we do not worship at a tabernacle. Nevertheless, we can demonstrate our appreciation for spiritual things, even as Hannah did. For instance, we can show our deep appreciation for spiritual riches by our regular presence at Christian meetings, assemblies, and conventions. Let us use these occasions to encourage one another in the true worship of Jehovah, who has granted us “the privilege of fearlessly rendering sacred service to him with loyalty and righteousness.”—Luke 1:74, 75; Hebrews 10:24, 25.

* Hannah’s expressions bear some similarity to those of the virgin girl Mary, spoken shortly after she learned that she was to become the mother of the Messiah.—Luke 1:46-55.

18. What example was set by Hannah?
19. How can we demonstrate our appreciation for spiritual things?

²⁰ Jehovah took note of Hannah’s godly devotion and rewarded her abundantly. On one of the family’s annual trips to Shiloh, a tearful Hannah earnestly prayed to God and vowed: “O Jehovah of armies, if you will without fail look upon the affliction of your slave girl and actually remember me, and you will not forget your slave girl and actually give to your slave girl a male offspring, I will give him to Jehovah all the days of his life.” (1 Samuel 1:9-11) God heard Hannah’s entreaty and blessed her with a son, whom she named Samuel. When he was weaned, she took him to Shiloh so that he could serve at the tabernacle.—1 Samuel 1:20, 24-28.

²¹ Hannah displayed love for God and fulfilled her vow to him in connection with Samuel. And think of the rich blessing she and Elkanah enjoyed because their dear son served at Jehovah’s tabernacle! Many Christian parents have similar joys and blessings because their sons and daughters serve as full-time pioneer ministers, Bethel family members, or in other ways that honor Jehovah.

Keep Listening to Jehovah!

²² Of what can we be sure if we keep listening to Jehovah? We will be spiritually rich if we demonstrate whole-souled love for God

20, 21. How was Hannah rewarded for her godly devotion?

22, 23. (a) Of what can we be certain if we keep on listening to Jehovah’s voice? (b) What will be considered in the next article?

Do You Recall?

- What can Israel’s history teach us about divine blessings?
- How did Boaz and Nabal differ?
- How can we imitate Hannah?
- Why should we keep on listening to Jehovah’s voice?

and fulfill our dedication to him. Even when pursuing such a course means that we must endure severe trials, Jehovah's blessing will inevitably overtake us—often in greater ways than we can imagine.—Psalm 37:4; Hebrews 6:10.

²³ Many blessings will be bestowed upon God's people in the future. For obediently listening to Jehovah, "a great crowd" will be preserved through "the great tribulation" and will experience the joys of life in God's new world. (Revelation 7:9-14; 2 Peter 3:13) There Jehovah will fully satisfy the righteous desires of all his people. (Psalm 145:16) As the next article will show, however, even now those who keep on listening to Jehovah's voice are blessed with 'good gifts and perfect presents from above.'—James 1:17.

Hannah was richly blessed for relying on Jehovah



JEHOVAH'S BLESSING MAKES US RICH

"The blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it."

—PROVERBS 10:22.

MATERIALISTIC pursuits govern the lives of millions today. But do material things make them happy? "I can't remember a time when people have been so gloomy about their lot," says *The Australian Women's Weekly*. It adds: "It's a paradox. We're told that Australia is in excellent shape economically, that life has never been better. . . . Still pessimism is rife across the nation. Men and women alike sense that something is missing from their lives but aren't able to define what it is." How true the Scriptures are in pointing

1, 2. Why is happiness not associated with material wealth?

out that neither happiness nor life results from the things we possess!—Ecclesiastes 5:10; Luke 12:15.

² The Bible teaches that the greatest happiness comes from God's blessing. In this regard, Proverbs 10:22 states: "The blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it." Pain often results from greedy acquisition of material riches. Fittingly, the apostle Paul warned: "Those who are determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is

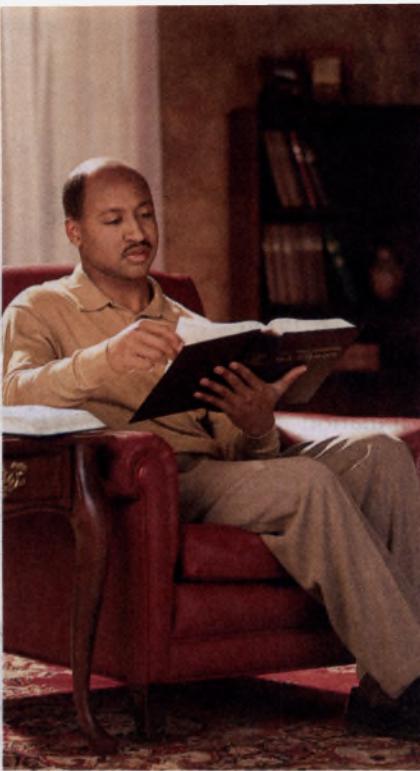
a root of all sorts of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have been led astray from the faith and have stabbed themselves all over with many pains."—1 Timothy 6:9, 10.

³ On the other hand, painless blessings overtake all who "keep listening to the voice of Jehovah." (Deuteronomy 28:2) Yet, some may ask, 'If no pain is added to Jehovah's blessing, why do many of God's servants suffer?' The Bible reveals that our trials are permitted by God but actually originate with Satan, his wicked system, and our own imperfect nature. (Genesis 6:5; Deuteronomy 32:4, 5; John 14, 15) Jehovah is the source of "every good gift and every perfect present." (James 1:17) Hence, his blessings never cause pain. Let us therefore consider some of God's perfect presents.

God's Word—A Priceless Gift

⁴ Regarding "the time of the end," Daniel's prophecy states: "The true knowledge will become abundant." However, this was qualified by the words: "No wicked ones at all will understand; but the ones having insight will understand." (Daniel 12:4, 10) Imagine that! God's Word—prophecy in particular—is expressed with such divine wisdom that the wicked cannot get the real sense of it, though Jehovah's people do. "I publicly praise you,

3. Why do God's servants experience trials?
4. What blessing and priceless gift do Jehovah's people enjoy during this "time of the end"?



Do you show appreciation for God's gift of his written Word?

15:19; James 1:

Father, Lord of heaven and earth," prayed God's Son, "because you have carefully hidden these things from wise and intellectual ones, and have revealed them to babes." (Luke 10: 21) What a blessing it is to have the priceless gift of God's written Word, the Bible, and to be among those to whom Jehovah has granted spiritual insight!—1 Corinthians 1:21, 27, 28; 2:14, 15.

⁵ We would have no spiritual insight at all were it not for "the wisdom from above." (James 3:17) Wisdom is the ability to use knowledge and understanding to solve problems, avoid or avert dan-

gers, achieve goals, or provide sound counsel. How do we obtain godly wisdom? Proverbs 2:6 states: "Jehovah himself gives wisdom; out of his mouth there are knowledge and discernment." Yes, Jehovah will bless us with wisdom if we persist in praying for it, even as he gave King Solomon "a wise and understanding heart." (1 Kings 3:11, 12; James 1: 5-8) To gain wisdom, we must also keep listening to Jehovah by regularly studying and applying his Word.

⁶ Prime examples of godly wisdom are found in the Bible's laws and principles. These benefit us in every way—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The psalmist fittingly sang: "The law of Jehovah is perfect, bringing back the soul. The reminder of Jehovah is trustworthy, making

5. What is wisdom, and how can we obtain it?
6. Why is it the course of wisdom to apply God's laws and principles in our life?

the inexperienced one wise. The orders from Jehovah are upright, causing the heart to rejoice; the commandment of Jehovah is clean, making the eyes shine. The fear of Jehovah is pure, standing forever. The judicial decisions of Jehovah are true; they have proved altogether righteous. They are more to be desired than gold, yes, than much refined gold."

—Psalm 19:7-10; 119:72.

⁷ On the other hand, those who disregard God's righteous standards do not find the happiness and freedom they seek. Sooner or later, they discover that God is not one to be mocked, for a person will reap what he sows. (Galatians 6:7) Millions who disregard Bible principles are reaping such tragic consequences as unwanted pregnancies, loathsome diseases, or debilitating addictions. Unless they repentantly change their course in life, their path will ultimately lead them to death and perhaps destruction at God's hand.—Matthew 7:13, 14.

⁸ However, those who love God's Word and apply it will be overtaken with rich blessings now and in the future. They rightly feel liberated by God's law, are truly happy, and keenly await the time when they will be set free from sin and its deadly effects. (Romans 8:20, 21; James 1:25) This hope is sure because it rests on God's most loving gift to mankind—the ransom sacrifice of his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 20:28; John 3:16; Romans 6:23) Such a superlative gift confirms the depth of God's love for humankind and guarantees endless blessings

7. What results from disregarding God's righteous standards?
8. Why are lovers of God's Word happy?



In spite of very difficult circumstances, Laurel Nisbet served God zealously

for all who keep on listening to Jehovah.—Romans 8:32.

Grateful for the Gift of Holy Spirit

⁹ Another loving gift of God for which we should be grateful is his holy spirit. On the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., the apostle Peter urged the multitude present in Jerusalem: "Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the

name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the free gift of the holy spirit." (Acts 2:38) Today, Jehovah gives holy spirit to his dedicated servants who pray for it and who want to do his will. (Luke 11:9-13) In ancient times, this most potent force in the universe—God's holy spirit, or active force—empowered men and women of faith, including the early Christians. (Zechariah 4:6; Acts 4:31) It can do the same for us, even though we may face formidable obstacles or challenges as Jehovah's people.—Joel 2:28, 29.

¹⁰ Consider the example of Laurel, who was stricken with polio and lived in an iron lung for 37 years.* In spite of her extremely trying circumstances, she served God zealously until her death. Over the years, Jehovah's rich blessing overtook Laurel. For instance, she was able to help some 17 individuals to come to an accurate knowledge of Bible truth, even though she was confined to her machine 24 hours a day! Her situation calls to mind the apostle Paul's words: "When I am weak, then I am powerful."

* See *Awake!*, January 22, 1993, pages 18-21.
9, 10. How do we benefit from Jehovah's gift of holy spirit? Give an example.

(2 Corinthians 12:10) Yes, any success we might have in preaching the good news stems, not from our own ability and power, but from God's help by holy spirit, which he gives to those who keep on listening to his voice.—Isaiah 40:29-31.

¹¹ If we obediently listen to God, his spirit produces in us the qualities of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22, 23) This "fruitage of the spirit" is part of "the new personality" that Christians put on in place of any rapacious, beast-like traits they may formerly have displayed. (Ephesians 4:20-24; Isaiah 11:6-9) Of great importance in this fruitage is love, "a perfect bond of union."—Colossians 3:14.

Christian Love—A Gift to Cherish

¹² Christian love is another blessed gift from Jehovah—one that we rightly cherish. It is governed by principle, but it is so rich in affection that it draws believers closer together than even fleshly ties can. (John 15:12, 13; 1 Peter 1:22) For example, consider Tabitha, a fine Christian woman of the first century. "She abounded in good deeds and gifts of mercy," especially in behalf of the widows in the congregation. (Acts 9:36) These women may have had fleshly relatives, but Tabitha wanted to do what she could to help and encourage them. (1 John 3:18) What a fine example Tabitha set! Brotherly love moved Prisca and Aquila to 'risk their own necks' for Paul. Love also motivated Epaphras, Luke,



Like Tabitha, present-day Christians are well-known for their acts of love

Onesiphorus, and others to help the apostle while he was imprisoned in Rome. (Romans 16:3, 4; 2 Timothy 1:16; 4:11; Philemon 23, 24) Yes, Christians of that sort today 'have love among themselves,' a blessed gift from God that identifies them as Jesus' true disciples.—John 13:34, 35.

- ¹³ Do you cherish the love manifested in
12. How did Tabitha and other first-century Christians demonstrate love?
13. How can we show that we deeply appreciate our Christian brotherhood?

11. What qualities does God's spirit produce in those who put on "the new personality"?
12. How did Tabitha and other first-century Christians demonstrate love?

the Christian congregation? Are you grateful for our spiritual brotherhood, which circles the globe? These too are blessed and enriching gifts from above. How can we show that we value them? By rendering sacred service to God, by sharing in Christian meetings, and by displaying love and the other fruits of God's spirit.—Philippians 1:9; Hebrews 10:24, 25.

"Gifts in Men"

¹⁴ Christian men who desire to serve their fellow worshipers as elders or ministerial servants have a fine goal. (1 Timothy 3:1, 8) To qualify for these privileges, a brother must be a spiritual man, well-versed in the Scriptures and zealous in the field ministry. (Acts 18:24; 1 Timothy 4:15; 2 Timothy 4:5) He must display humility, modesty, and patience, for divine blessings do not overtake presumptuous, proud, and ambitious people. (Proverbs 11:2; Hebrews 6:15; 3 John 9, 10) If married, he would have to be a loving family head capable of presiding well over his entire household. (1 Timothy 3:4, 5, 12) Because he values spiritual riches, such a man invites Jehovah's blessing.—Matthew 6:19-21.

¹⁵ When those serving as elders in the congregation exert themselves as evangelizers, shepherds, and teachers, they give us sound reasons to appreciate such "gifts in men." (Ephesians 4:8, 11) Those who benefit from their loving service may not always express their appreciation, but Je-

14. What is required of a Christian if he is to serve as an elder or a ministerial servant?

15, 16. Who prove to be "gifts in men"? Give examples.

Christian elders have loving concern for fellow believers

hovah sees all that faithful elders do. He will not forget the love they show for his name by ministering to his people.—1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 6:10.

¹⁶ Consider the case of one hard-working elder who visited a Christian girl about to have brain surgery. "He was so kind, so supportive, so caring," wrote a family friend. "He asked permission to pray to Jehovah with us. As he prayed, the father [not one of Jehovah's Witnesses] sobbed, and tears fell from the eyes of everyone in the hospital room. How tender that elder's prayer was, and how loving of Jehovah to send him at just such a time!" Another Witness patient said of the elders who visited her: "When they came toward my bed in the intensive care unit, I knew that no matter what happened from that point on, I could bear it. I became strong and peaceful." Could anyone buy such loving concern? Never! It is a gift from God, made available through the Christian congregation.—Isaiah 32:1, 2.



The Gift of the Field Ministry

¹⁷ No greater honor could be bestowed on any human than that of serving Jehovah, the Most High. (Isaiah 43:10; 2 Corinthians 4:7; 1 Peter 2:9) Nevertheless, the privilege of sharing in the public ministry is open to all—young and old, male and female—who have a genuine desire to serve God. Do you make use of this precious gift? Some may hold back because they feel inadequate, but remember that Jehovah gives holy spirit to those serving him, and it makes up for any lack we may have.—Jeremiah 1:6-8; 20:11.

¹⁸ Jehovah has entrusted the Kingdom-preaching work to his humble servants, not to individuals who tend to be proud and to rely on their own abilities. (1 Corinthians 1:20, 26-29) Humble, modest people acknowledge their limitations and depend on God's help as they engage in the field ministry. They also appreciate the spiritual assistance he provides through "the faithful steward." —Luke 12:42-44; Proverbs 22:4.

Happy Family Life—A Fine Gift

¹⁹ Marriage and a happy family life are gifts from God. (Ruth 1:9; Ephesians 3:14, 15) Children too are a precious "inheritance from Jehovah," bringing joy to parents who successfully instill godly qualities in them. (Psalm 127:3) If you are a parent, keep listening to Jehovah's voice by training your little ones according to his Word. Those who do so are sure to experience Jehovah's support and rich blessing.—Proverbs 3:5, 6; 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-4.

²⁰ Despite the conscientious efforts of godly parents, perhaps certain ones of their chil-

17, 18. (a) What gift of service has Jehovah made available to all his people? (b) What help has God provided so that we can accomplish our ministry?

19. What factors lead to success in raising children?
20. What may be helpful to parents whose children turn away from true worship?

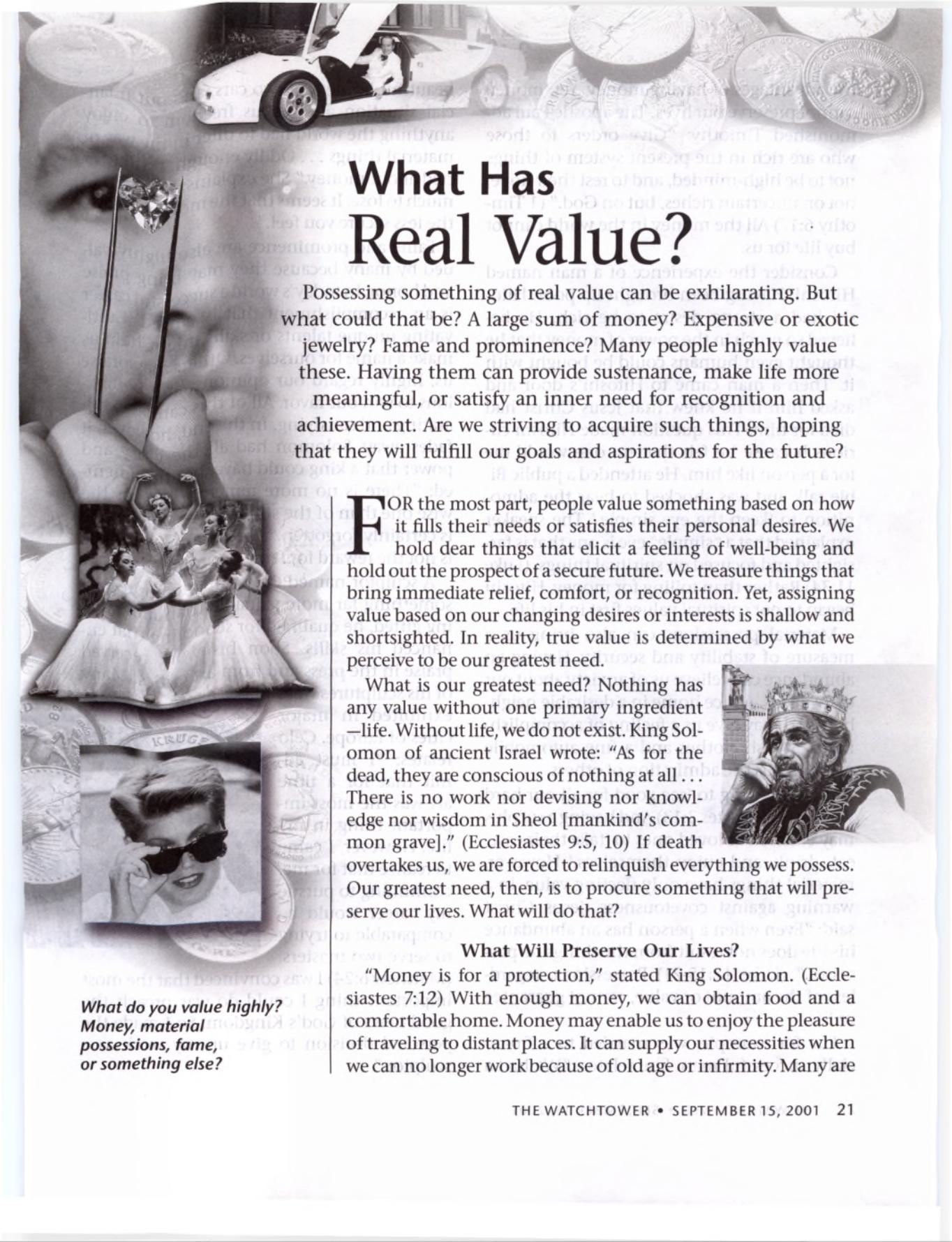
dren choose to turn away from true worship when they get older. (Genesis 26:34, 35) This can be emotionally devastating to parents. (Proverbs 17:21, 25) Instead of giving up all hope, however, it may be helpful for them to remember Jesus' illustration of the prodigal son. Although that son left home and pursued a wayward course, he later returned to the house of his father, who received him in a joyful and loving manner. (Luke 15:11-32) Whatever may happen, faithful Christian parents can be assured of Jehovah's understanding, his loving concern, and his unfailing support.—Psalm 145:14.

²¹ Let each of us, then, determine what is truly important in our life. Are we avidly pursuing material abundance, which may bring pain to us and to our families? Or are we pursuing the 'good gifts and perfect presents' that come from "the Father of the celestial lights"? (James 1:17) Satan, "the father of the lie," wants us to toil for material wealth and to lose out on both happiness and life. (John 8:44; Luke 12:15) Jehovah, though, has our very best interests at heart. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) So, then, let us keep on listening to our loving heavenly Father and always "take exquisite delight" in him. (Psalm 37:4) If we pursue such a course, Jehovah's priceless gifts and abundant blessing will make us rich—and that without a hint of pain.

21. To whom should we listen, and why?

Do You Recall?

- Where can the greatest happiness be found?
- What are some of the gifts that Jehovah gives to his people?
- Why is the field ministry a gift?
- What can parents do to gain God's blessing as they raise their children?



What Has Real Value?

Possessing something of real value can be exhilarating. But what could that be? A large sum of money? Expensive or exotic jewelry? Fame and prominence? Many people highly value these. Having them can provide sustenance, make life more meaningful, or satisfy an inner need for recognition and achievement. Are we striving to acquire such things, hoping that they will fulfill our goals and aspirations for the future?

FOR the most part, people value something based on how it fills their needs or satisfies their personal desires. We hold dear things that elicit a feeling of well-being and hold out the prospect of a secure future. We treasure things that bring immediate relief, comfort, or recognition. Yet, assigning value based on our changing desires or interests is shallow and shortsighted. In reality, true value is determined by what we perceive to be our greatest need.

What is our greatest need? Nothing has any value without one primary ingredient—life. Without life, we do not exist. King Solomon of ancient Israel wrote: “As for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all . . . There is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol [mankind’s common grave].” (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) If death overtakes us, we are forced to relinquish everything we possess. Our greatest need, then, is to procure something that will preserve our lives. What will do that?



What Will Preserve Our Lives?

“Money is for a protection,” stated King Solomon. (Ecclesiastes 7:12) With enough money, we can obtain food and a comfortable home. Money may enable us to enjoy the pleasure of traveling to distant places. It can supply our necessities when we can no longer work because of old age or infirmity. Many are

What do you value highly?
Money, material possessions, fame, or something else?

the advantages of having money. Yet, money cannot preserve our lives. The apostle Paul admonished Timothy: "Give orders to those who are rich in the present system of things not to be high-minded, and to rest their hope, not on uncertain riches, but on God." (1 Timothy 6:17) All the money in the world cannot buy life for us.

Consider the experience of a man named Hitoshi. Having been brought up poor, Hitoshi had a strong desire to be rich. He believed so much in the power of money that he thought even humans could be bought with it. Then a man came to Hitoshi's door and asked him if he knew that Jesus Christ had died for him. This question made Hitoshi curious because he felt that no one would die for a person like him. He attended a public Bible talk and was shocked to hear the admonition to 'keep the eye simple.' The speaker explained that a "simple" eye is one that is farsighted and focused on spiritual things. (Luke 11:34) Rather than toiling for money, Hitoshi began to put spiritual values first in his life.

Material possessions can also bring us a measure of stability and security. Having an abundance can relieve us of anxiety about our daily needs. A nice home in a desirable neighborhood may give us a feeling of accomplishment. Stylish clothes and a fine automobile can bring us the admiration of others.

It is a blessing to 'see good for all our hard work.' (Ecclesiastes 3:13) And having a surplus may enable our loved ones to 'take their ease, eat, drink, and enjoy themselves.' However, material things have only fleeting value. In a warning against covetousness, Jesus Christ said: "Even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses." (Luke 12:15-21) Possessions, regardless of the amount or value, cannot guarantee us life.

Liz, for example, was married to a financially successful man. She relates: "We had a

beautiful home and two cars, and our financial situation allowed us freedom to enjoy anything the world had to offer in the way of material things . . . Oddly enough, I still worried about money." She explains: "We had so much to lose. It seems that the more you have, the less secure you feel."

Fame and prominence are also highly valued by many because they may bring praise and honor. In today's world a successful career is an accomplishment that is envied. Cultivating unique talents or skills might help us make a name for ourselves. Others may praise us, highly regard our opinions, and be anxious to win our favor. All of this can be exhilarating and satisfying. In the end, however, it fades away. Solomon had all the glory and power that a king could have, but he lamented: "There is no more remembrance of the wise one than of the stupid one . . . Everyone is certainly forgotten." (Ecclesiastes 2:16) Life is not the reward for fame or prominence.

A sculptor named Celo came to appreciate something far more valuable than fame. Being gifted, he qualified for schooling that enhanced his skills. Soon his work received praise in the press and from art critics. Many of his sculptures were exhibited in major cities of Europe. Celo relates: "I must admit that for a time art was the most important thing in my life. However, I came to realize that for me, continuing to pursue my career would be comparable to trying to serve two masters.

(Matthew 6:24) I was convinced that the most important thing I could do was preach the good news of God's Kingdom. So I made the personal decision to give up my work as a sculptor."





We need to study the Scriptures carefully

about Jehovah God and Jesus Christ results in ‘knowledge that means everlasting life.’ (John 17:3) Such knowledge is a treasure to be cherished!—Proverbs 2:1-5.

The knowledge we gain from God’s Word equips us to take the next step—exercising faith in Jesus Christ. Jehovah has decreed that all who come to him must do so through Jesus. (John 14:6) Actually, “there is no salvation in anyone else.” (Acts 4:12) Our ultimate survival depends, not on ‘silver or gold . . . , but on the precious blood of Christ.’ (1 Peter 1:18, 19) We must demonstrate our faith by believing Jesus’ teachings and following his example. (Hebrews 12:1-3; 1 Peter 2:21) And how valuable his sacrifice is! The application of its benefits determines the everlasting future of all mankind. When it is fully applied in our behalf, we are given the truly valuable gift of everlasting life.—John 3:16.

Jesus said: “You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.” (Matthew 22:37) Loving Jehovah means that “we observe his commandments.” (1 John 5:3) His commandments require that we keep separate from the world, maintain upright conduct, and loyally support his Kingdom. That is the way we “choose life” instead of death. (Deuteronomy 30:19) If we ‘draw close to God, he will draw close to us.’—James 4:8.

An assurance of God’s favor is worth far more than all the world’s treasures. Those who have it are the wealthiest people on earth! May we, then, strive to acquire the treasure of real value—Jehovah’s approval. By all means, let us take to heart the apostle Paul’s admonition: “Pursue righteousness, godly devotion, faith, love, endurance, mildness of temper. Fight the fine fight of the faith, get a firm hold on the everlasting life.”—1 Timothy 6:11, 12.

What Has the Greatest Value?

Since nothing has any meaning or value without life, what can we acquire that will guarantee that we keep living? All life originates with Jehovah God. (Psalm 36:9) Indeed, “by him we have life and move and exist.” (Acts 17:28) He bestows everlasting life as a gift on those he loves. (Romans 6:23) What must we do to qualify for this gift?

Receiving the gift of everlasting life depends on our having a close relationship with Jehovah. His favor, therefore, has greater value than anything else we could possibly possess. When we have it, we have the prospect of genuine and everlasting happiness. Without God’s favor, however, we face eternal extinction. Clearly, then, anything that will help us to achieve a good relationship with Jehovah is of immense value.

What We Must Do

Our success depends on our gaining knowledge. The source of accurate knowledge is Jehovah’s Word, the Bible. It alone tells us what we must do to please God. We therefore need to study the Scriptures carefully. A diligent effort to learn all we can

WALK IN 'the Path of Uprightness'

"IT WILL be well with the righteous one," declared the prophet Isaiah, "for they will eat the very fruitage of their dealings." Isaiah also said: "The path of the righteous one is uprightness." (Isaiah 3:10; 26:7) Clearly, if our dealings are to produce good fruitage, we must do what is right in God's eyes.

How, though, may we walk in the path of uprightness? What blessings can we expect from doing so? And how may others benefit from our conforming to God's righteous standards? In chapter 10 of the Bible book of Proverbs, King Solomon of ancient Israel provides answers to these questions as he contrasts the righteous with the wicked. In doing so, he uses the expression "righteous one[s]" 13 times. Nine of these occurrences are in verses 15 through 32. Considering Proverbs 10:15-32, then, will prove to be encouraging.*

Hold Fast to Discipline

Solomon points to the importance of righteousness. He says: "*The valuable things of a rich man are his strong town. The ruin of the lowly ones is their poverty. The activity of the righteous one results in life; the produce of the wicked one results in sin.*"—Proverbs 10:15, 16.

Riches can serve as a protection against some uncertainties in life, just as a fortified town provides a degree of security to those who reside in it. And poverty can be ruinous when there are unexpected developments. (Ecclesiastes 7:12) However, the wise king could also be hinting at a danger involving both wealth and poverty. A rich man may be inclined to put his complete trust in his wealth, imagining that his valuable things are "like a protective wall." (Proverbs 18:11) And

* For a detailed discussion of Proverbs 10:1-14, see *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2001, pages 24-7.



a poor person may mistakenly take the view that his poverty makes his future hopeless. Thus, both fail to make a good name with God.

On the other hand, whether a righteous person has much or little materially, his upright activity leads to life. How? Well, he is content with what he has. He does not allow his financial situation to interfere with his good standing with God. Whether rich or poor, a righteous man's course of life brings him happiness now and hope of everlasting life in the future. (Job 42:10-13) The wicked one does not benefit even if he gains wealth. Instead of appreciating its protective value and living in accord with God's will, he uses his riches to promote a life of sin.

"He that is holding to discipline is a path to life," continues the king of Israel, *"but he that is leaving reproof is causing to wander."* (Proverbs 10:17) One Bible scholar suggests that this verse can be understood in two ways. One possibility is that the person who submits to discipline and pursues righteousness is on the path to life, whereas the one leaving reproof wanders off that path. The verse could also mean that "he who heeds discipline shows the way to life [to others because his good example benefits them], but whoever ignores correction leads others astray." (Proverbs 10:17, *New International Version*) In either case, how vital it is that we hold fast to discipline and do not forsake reproof!

Replace Hatred With Love

Solomon next presents a two-part proverb carrying a similar idea, the second part reinforcing the first. He says: *"Where there is one covering over hatred there are lips of falsehood."* If a man has hatred in his heart for another and is concealing it behind sweet words or flattery, he is being deceitful—he has "lips of falsehood." To this the wise king adds: *"The one bringing forth a bad report is*

stupid." (Proverbs 10:18) Rather than conceal their hatred, some people make false accusations or spread disparaging comments concerning the one they hate. This is foolish because the slanderous report does not really change what that person is. And a perceptive listener will come to see the malice and will think less of the slanderer. Thus the one spreading a bad report hurts himself.

The righteous course is to resort neither to deception nor to slander. God told the Israelites: "You must not hate your brother in your heart." (Leviticus 19:17) And Jesus counseled his listeners: "Continue to love [even] your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you; that you may prove yourselves sons of your Father who is in the heavens." (Matthew 5:44, 45) How much better it is to fill our heart with love rather than hate!

'Keep Lips in Check'

Emphasizing the need to control the tongue, the wise king states: *"In the abundance of words there does not fail to be transgression, but the one keeping his lips in check is acting discreetly."*—Proverbs 10:19.

"The foolish one speaks many words." (Ecclesiastes 10:14) His mouth "bubbles forth with foolishness." (Proverbs 15:2) This is not to say that every talkative person is a fool. But how easy it is for an individual who talks too much to be a channel for spreading harmful gossip or rumor! A ruined reputation, hurt feelings, strained relationships, and even physical harm can often be attributed to foolish speech. "Where words abound, sin will not be wanting." (Proverbs 10:19, *An American Translation*) Moreover, it is irritating to be around a person who has something to say on every matter. May we not abound in words.

More than merely avoiding falsehood, the one keeping his lips in check is acting



The tongue can be like "choice silver"

discreetly. He thinks before he speaks. Motivated by love for Jehovah's ways and a genuine desire to help his fellowman, he takes into consideration the effect of his words on others. His statements are loving and kind. He meditates on how to make what he says appealing and helpful. His words are like "apples of gold in silver carvings"—artful and dignified at all times.—Proverbs 25:11.

"Keep Pasturing Many"

"The tongue of the righteous one is choice silver," Solomon goes on to say, *"the heart of the wicked one is worth little."* (Proverbs 10:20) What the righteous say is pure—like choice, refined silver, free of dross. This certainly is true of Jehovah's servants as they dispense the life-saving knowledge of God's Word to others. Their Grand Instructor, Jehovah God, has educated them and 'given them the tongue of the taught ones, that they may know how to answer the tired one with a word.' (Isaiah 30:20; 50:4) Indeed, their tongue is like choice silver as it speaks forth Bible truth. How infinitely more valuable their utterances are to the honesthearted ones than are the intentions of the wicked one! Let us be eager to speak about God's Kingdom and the wonderful works of God.

The righteous one is a blessing to those around him. *"The very lips of the righteous one keep pasturing many,"* continues Solomon, *"but for want of heart the foolish themselves keep dying."*—Proverbs 10:21.

How does "the righteous one keep pasturing many"? The Hebrew word that is used here conveys the idea of "shepherding." (Proverbs 10:21, footnote) It carries the thought of guiding as well as nourishing, much as a shepherd of ancient times cared for his sheep. (1 Samuel 16:11; Psalm 23:1-3; Song of Solomon 1:7) The righteous person guides or leads others to the way of righteousness, his speech nourishing his listeners. As a result, they lead happier, more satisfying lives, and may even receive everlasting life.

What, though, of the foolish one? Being in want of heart, he shows a lack of good motive or concern about the consequences of his course. Such a person does whatever he wants to, oblivious of the results. Hence, he suffers the penalties of his actions. While the righteous one helps to keep others alive, the person in want of heart cannot even keep himself alive.

Shun Loose Conduct

The personality of an individual is often revealed by his likes and dislikes. Stating this fact, the king of Israel says: *"To the stupid one the carrying on of loose conduct is like sport, but wisdom is for the man of discernment."*—Proverbs 10:23.

Some view loose conduct as a sport, or a game, and engage in it just for "fun." Such people discount God as the one to whom all must render an account, and they remain blind to the wrongness of their course. (Romans 14:12) They become perverted in their reasoning to the point of assuming that God does not see their wrongdoing. By their ac-

tions, they in effect say: "There is no Jehovah." (Psalm 14:1-3; Isaiah 29:15, 16) How foolish!

The man of discernment, on the other hand, realizes that loose conduct is not a sport. He knows that it displeases God and can destroy a person's relationship with him. Such conduct is foolish because it robs people of self-respect, ruins marriages, harms both mind and body, and leads to loss of spirituality. We are wise to shun loose conduct and cultivate affection for wisdom as for a dearly loved sister.—Proverbs 7:4.

Build on the Right Foundation

Pointing to the value of building one's life on a proper foundation, Solomon states: "*The thing frightful to the wicked one—that is what will come to him; but the desire of the righteous ones will be granted. As when the storm wind passes over, so the wicked one is no more; but the righteous one is a foundation to time indefinite.*"—Proverbs 10:24, 25.

The wicked one may cause much fright to others. In the end, however, what he dreads comes upon him. Lacking a foundation in righteous principles, he is like an unstable building that collapses in a violent storm. He caves in under pressure. On the other hand, the righteous one is like the man who acts in harmony with Jesus' sayings. He is "a discreet man, who built his house upon the rock-mass." "And," said Jesus, "the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and lashed against that house, but it did not cave in, for it had been founded upon the rock-mass." (Matthew 7: 24, 25) Such a person is stable—his thinking and actions are solidly founded upon godly principles.

Before going further with the contrast between the wicked and the righteous, the wise king presents a concise but important warn-

ing. He says: "As vinegar to the teeth and as smoke to the eyes, so the lazy man is to those sending him forth." (Proverbs 10:26) Vinegar is a source of discomfort to the teeth. The acetic acid contained in it produces a sour taste in the mouth and can cause one's teeth to feel sensitive. Smoke makes the eyes sting and smart. Accordingly, whoever hires a lazy person or uses him as a representative is bound to be vexed and will suffer loss.

"The Way of Jehovah Is a Stronghold"

The king of Israel continues: "*The very fear of Jehovah will add days, but the years themselves of the wicked ones will be cut short. The expectation of the righteous ones is a rejoicing, but the very hope of the wicked ones will perish.*"—Proverbs 10:27, 28.

The righteous one is guided by godly fear and tries to please Jehovah by his thoughts, words, and deeds. God cares for him and fulfills his righteous expectations. However, the wicked one lives a godless life. His hopes may at times appear to be fulfilled but only temporarily, for his days are often cut short by violence or an ailment resulting from his lifestyle. On the day of his death all his hopes are shattered.—Proverbs 11:7.

"The way of Jehovah is a stronghold for the blameless one," says Solomon, *"but ruin is for the practicers of what is hurtful."* (Proverbs 10: 29) The way of Jehovah here refers, not to

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

You Can Have True Faith

How Can You Help a
"Prodigal" Child?

What Does It Mean to Be Loyal?

the path of life in which we should walk, but to God's way of dealing with mankind. "The Rock, perfect is his activity," said Moses, "for all his ways are justice." (Deuteronomy 32:4) God's just ways mean security for the righteous and ruin for the wicked.

What a stronghold Jehovah proves to be for his people! *"As for the righteous one, to time indefinite he will not be caused to stagger; but as for the wicked ones, they will not keep residing on the earth. The mouth of the righteous one—it bears the fruit of wisdom, but the tongue of perverseness will be cut off. The lips*

of the righteous one—they come to know good-will, but the mouth of the wicked ones is perverseness."—Proverbs 10:30-32.

The righteous certainly fare well and are blessed because of walking in the path of uprightness. Indeed, *"the blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it."* (Proverbs 10:22) May we, then, always take care to act in harmony with godly principles. Let us also keep our lips in check and use our tongue to nurture others with the life-saving truth of God's Word and guide them to the way of righteousness.

Questions From Readers

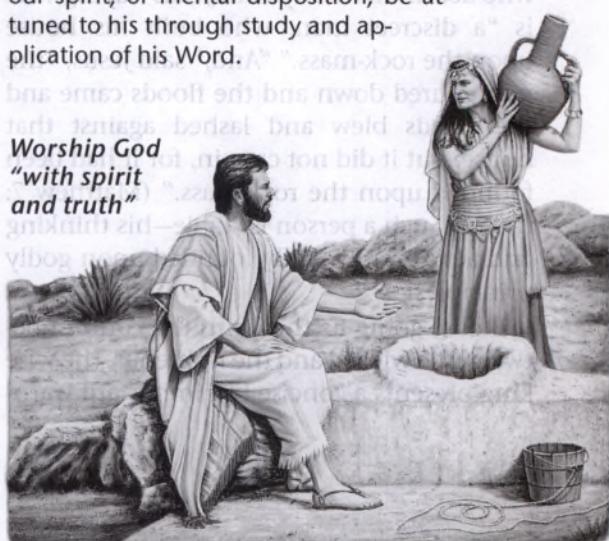
What does it mean to worship Jehovah "with spirit"?

When witnessing to a woman of Samaria who had come to draw water at Jacob's fountain near the city of Sychar, Jesus Christ said: "God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) True worship must be rendered 'with truth' in that it must conform to what Jehovah God has revealed in the Bible about himself and his purposes. Our service to God must also be spirited, or zealous, motivated by a heart full of love and faith. (Titus 2:14) However, the context shows that Jesus' statement about 'worshiping God with spirit' pertains to far more than the mental disposition with which we serve Jehovah.

The discussion that Jesus had with the woman at the well was not about the presence of fervor or the lack of it in worship. Even false worship can be rendered with zeal and devotion. Rather, after stating that the Father would be worshiped neither at a mountain in Samaria nor at the temple in Jerusalem—both physical locations—Jesus pointed to a new method of worship based on the true nature of God. (John 4:21) He said: "God is a spiritual Being." (John 4:24, Charles B. Williams) The true God is not material and cannot be seen or felt. His worship does not revolve

around a physical temple or a mountain. Hence, Jesus referred to an aspect of worship that goes beyond the things seen.

In addition to being rendered with truth, acceptable worship would also have to be guided by the holy spirit—God's invisible active force. "The [holy] spirit searches into all things," wrote the apostle Paul, "even the deep things of God." He added: "We received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been kindly given us by God." (1 Corinthians 2:8-12) To worship God acceptably, we must have his spirit and be guided by it. Moreover, it is essential that our spirit, or mental disposition, be attuned to his through study and application of his Word.



Enoch Walked With God in an Ungodly World

THE Devil contends that he can turn all humans away from God, and at times it must have seemed as though he was succeeding. For almost five centuries after Abel's death, no one distinguished himself as a faithful servant of Jehovah. On the contrary, sinful and ungodly conduct had become the norm.

It was during that spiritually degenerate time that Enoch appeared on the scene. Bible chronology sets his birth at 3404 B.C.E. Unlike his contemporaries, Enoch proved to be a man acceptable to God. The apostle Paul included him among Jehovah's servants whose faith stands as an example for Christians. Who was Enoch? What challenges would he have to face? How did he meet them? And of what relevance is his integrity to us?

In the days of Enosh, almost four centuries before Enoch's time, "a start was made of calling on the name of Jehovah." (Genesis 4:26) The divine name had been used since the beginning of human history. Hence, what began when Enosh was alive evidently was not a calling on Jehovah in faith and pure worship. Some Hebrew scholars hold that Genesis 4:26 should read "began profanely" or "then profanation began." Men may have applied Jehovah's name to themselves or to other humans through whom they pretended to approach God in worship. Or perhaps they applied his name to idols.

'Enoch Walked With the True God'

Although Enoch was surrounded by ungodliness, he "kept walking with the true God," Jehovah. It is not said that his progenitors—Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, and Jared—walked with God. At least they did not do so to the same degree as Enoch, whose way of life apparently distinguished him from them.—Genesis 5:3-27.

Walking with Jehovah implied a familiarity and an intimacy with God possible only because Enoch lived in harmony with the divine will. Jehovah approved of Enoch's devotion. In fact, the Greek *Septuagint* says that "Enoch was well pleasing" to God, a thought expressed also by the apostle Paul.—Genesis 5:22, footnote; Hebrews 11:5.

Fundamental to Enoch's good relationship with Jehovah was his faith. He must have exercised faith in the promised "seed" of God's "woman." If he was personally acquainted with Adam, Enoch could have obtained some information about God's dealings with the first human couple in Eden. The knowledge he had of God made Enoch the sort of person who was "earnestly seeking him."—Genesis 3:15; Hebrews 11:6, 13.

In Enoch's case and ours, a good relationship with Jehovah requires more than just knowledge of God. If we particularly value intimacy with a certain person, is it not true that our thoughts and actions are influenced by his

views? We avoid words or actions that would ruin that friendship. And if we contemplate making some change in our own circumstances, do we not also take into account how this would affect that relationship?

The desire to maintain a close relationship with God likewise has a bearing on what we do. A prerequisite is accurate knowledge of what he approves and disapproves. Then we need to be guided by that knowledge, striving to please him in thought and action.

Yes, to walk with God, we must please him. That is what Enoch did for hundreds of years. In fact, the form of the Hebrew verb indicating that Enoch "walked" with God denotes repeated, continuous action. Another faithful man who 'walked with God' was Noah.
—Genesis 6:9.

Enoch was a family man who had a wife and fathered "sons and daughters." One of his sons was Methuselah. (Genesis 5:21, 22)

Enoch must have done all he could to preside over his household in a fine way. With ungodliness all around him, however, it was not easy for him to serve God. Lamech, the father of Noah, may have been his only contemporary who exercised faith in Jehovah. (Genesis 5:28, 29) Yet, Enoch courageously practiced true worship.

What helped Enoch to remain faithful to God? Undoubtedly, he did not associate with profaners of Jehovah's name or with others who were unsuitable companions for a worshiper of God. Seeking Jehovah's help in prayer must also have strengthened Enoch's determination to avoid anything that could displease his Creator.

Prophecy Against the Ungodly

Maintaining high standards is hard enough when we are surrounded by ungodly people. But Enoch also delivered an uncompromising message of judgment against the

Does the Bible Quote From the Book of Enoch?

The Book of Enoch is an apocryphal and pseudepigraphic text. It is falsely ascribed to Enoch. Produced probably sometime during the second and first centuries B.C.E., it is a collection of extravagant and unhistorical Jewish myths, evidently the product of exegetical elaborations on the brief Genesis reference to Enoch. This alone is sufficient for lovers of God's inspired Word to dismiss it.

In the Bible, only the book of Jude contains Enoch's prophetic words: "Look! Jehovah came with his holy myriads, to execute judgment against all, and to convict all the ungodly concerning all their ungodly deeds that they did in an ungodly way, and concerning all the shocking things that ungodly sinners spoke against him." (Jude 14, 15) Many scholars contend that Enoch's prophecy against his ungodly contemporaries is quoted directly from the Book of Enoch. Is it possible that Jude used an unreliable apocryphal book as his source?

How Jude knew of Enoch's prophecy is not revealed in the Scriptures. He may simply have quoted a common source, a reliable tradition handed down from remote antiquity. Paul evidently did something similar when he named Jannes and Jambres as the otherwise anonymous magicians of Pharaoh's court who opposed Moses. If the writer of the Book of Enoch had access to an ancient source of this kind, why should we deny it to Jude?*—Exodus 7:11, 22; 2 Timothy 3:8.

How Jude received the information about Enoch's message to the ungodly is a minor matter. Its reliability is attested to by the fact that Jude wrote under divine inspiration. (2 Timothy 3:16) God's holy spirit guarded him from stating anything that was not true.

* The disciple Stephen also provided information found nowhere in the Hebrew Scriptures. It concerned Moses' Egyptian education, his being 40 years old when he fled Egypt, the 40-year duration of his stay in Midian, and the angelic role in transmitting the Mosaic Law.—Acts 7:22, 23, 30, 38.

wicked. Directed by God's spirit, Enoch prophetically declared: "Look! Jehovah came with his holy myriads, to execute judgment against all, and to convict all the ungodly concerning all their ungodly deeds that they did in an ungodly way, and concerning all the shocking things that ungodly sinners spoke against him."

—Jude 14, 15.

What effect would that message have on perverse nonbelievers? It is reasonable to suppose that such stinging words made Enoch unpopular, perhaps eliciting jeers, taunts, and threats. Some must have wanted to silence him for good. However, Enoch was not intimidated. He knew what had happened to righteous Abel, and like him, Enoch was determined to serve God, come what may.

"God Took Him"

Enoch was apparently in mortal danger when "God took him." (Genesis 5:24) Jehovah did not allow his faithful prophet to suffer at the hands of rabid enemies. According to the apostle Paul, "Enoch was transferred so as not to see death." (Hebrews 11:5) Many say that Enoch did not die—that God took him to heaven, where he kept on living. However, Jesus plainly stated: "No man has ascended into heaven but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man." Jesus was the "forerunner" of all who ascend to heaven.—John 3:13; Hebrews 6:19, 20.

So, what happened to Enoch? His being "transferred so as not to see death" may mean that God put him in a prophetic trance and then terminated his life while he was in that state. Under such circumstances, Enoch would not experience the pangs of death. Then "he was nowhere to be found," appar-



Enoch courageously delivered Jehovah's message

ently because Jehovah disposed of his body, even as he disposed of Moses' body.—Deuteronomy 34:5, 6.

Enoch lived 365 years—not nearly as long as most of his contemporaries. But the important thing for lovers of Jehovah is that they serve him faithfully to the end of their days. We know that Enoch did that because "before his transference he had the witness that he had pleased

God well." The Scriptures do not disclose how Jehovah communicated this to Enoch. Nevertheless, before Enoch died, he was given assurance of God's approval, and we can be certain that Jehovah will remember him in the resurrection.

Imitate Enoch's Faith

We can appropriately imitate the faith of godly humans. (Hebrews 13:7) It was by faith that Enoch served as the first faithful prophet of God. The world of Enoch's day was like ours—violent, profane, and ungodly. However, Enoch was different. He had true faith and was exemplary in godly devotion. Yes, Jehovah gave him a weighty judgment message to declare, but he also strengthened him to proclaim it. Enoch courageously carried out his commission, and God took care of him in the face of enemy opposition.

If we exercise faith as Enoch did, Jehovah will strengthen us to declare his message in these last days. He will help us to face opposition courageously, and our godly devotion will make us very different from the ungodly. Faith will enable us to walk with God and conduct ourselves in a way that makes his heart rejoice. (Proverbs 27:11) By faith, righteous Enoch succeeded in walking with Jehovah in an ungodly world, and so can we.

They Use the Divine Name in CENTRAL AFRICA

THE great majority of people in Central Africa believe in God. They have no doubt that he is the Creator of all things. (Revelation 4:11) Just like many people elsewhere, though, they often ignore his personal name—Jehovah.

People in Central Africa, as well as in other parts of the world, refer to God's name when they say, "Hallowed be thy name" in the Lord's Prayer. (Matthew 6:9, King James Version) But for a long time, few knew that name. Over the years, however, the zealous preaching activity of Jehovah's Witnesses has changed people's attitude toward the use of the divine name. Today, the divine name is widely known and accepted in many African languages, such as Zulu (uJehova), Yoruba (Jehovah), Xhosa (uYehova) and Swahili (Yehova). Yet, most Bible translations in these languages still avoid using the divine name.

A fine translation that does use the divine name is the Bible in Zande, a language spoken in parts of the Central African Republic, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In that part of the world, people use God's name, spelling it Yekova in their native tongue. Regardless of how the divine name is presented in a vernacular language, it is important to use it. Why? Because "everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved."—Romans 10:13.

