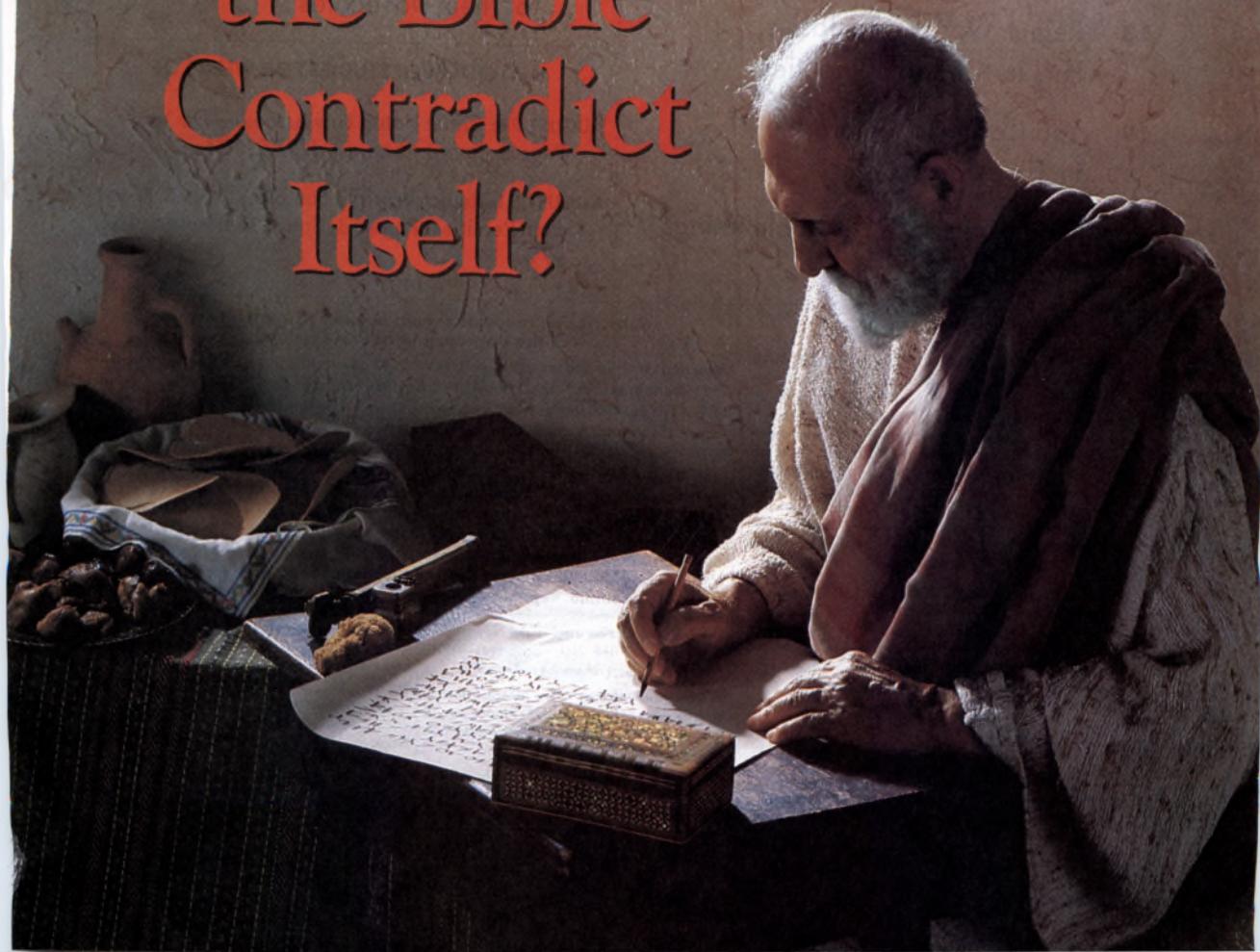


JULY 15, 1992

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Does
the Bible
Contradict
Itself?



THE WATCHTOWER.TM

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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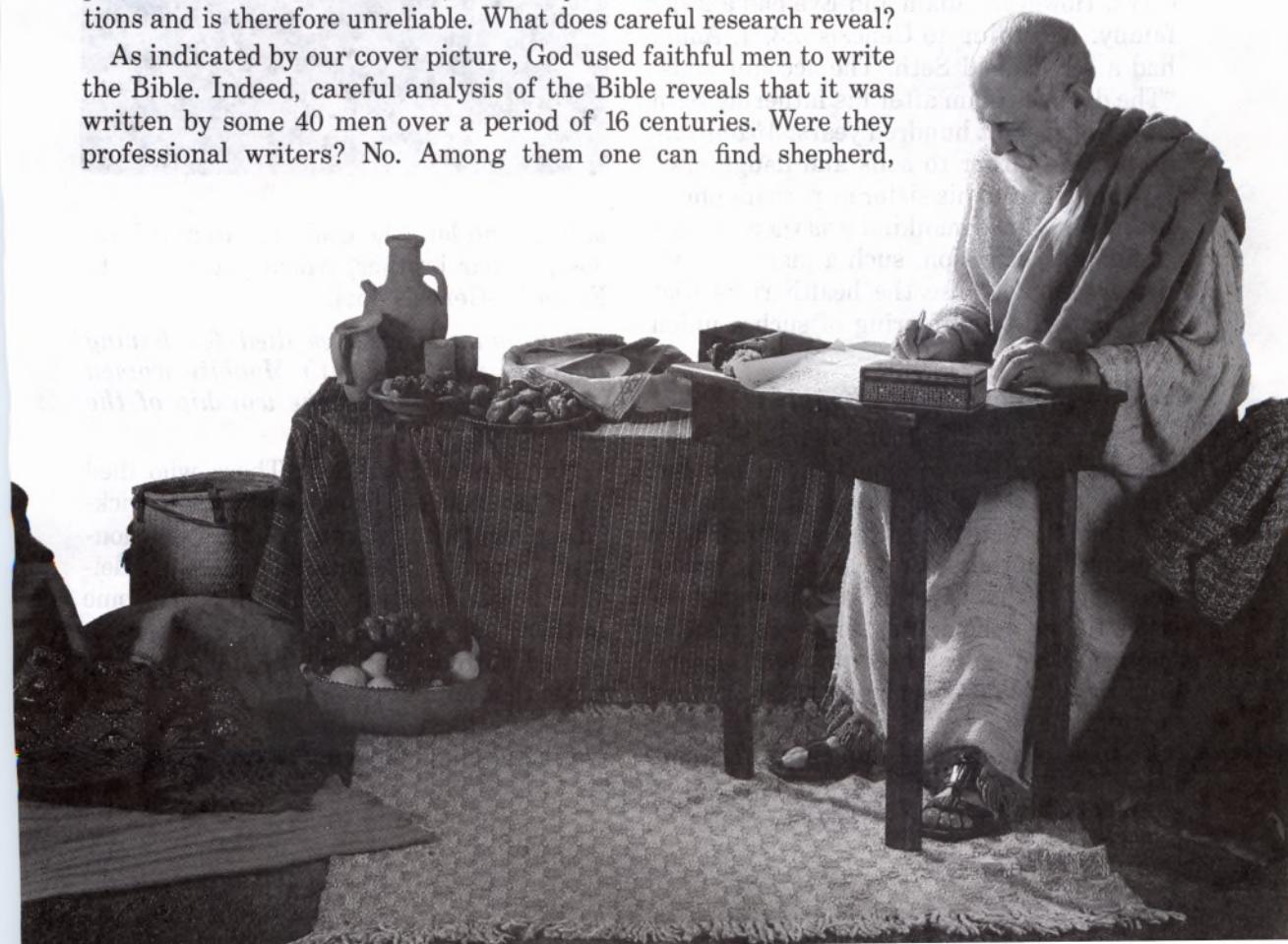
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Does the Bible Contradict Itself?

AUTHOR Henry Van Dyke once wrote: "Born in the East and clothed in Oriental form and imagery, the Bible walks the ways of all the world with familiar feet and enters land after land to find its own everywhere. It has learned to speak in hundreds of languages to the heart of man. Children listen to its stories with wonder and delight, and wise men ponder them as parables of life. The wicked and the proud tremble at its warnings, but to the wounded and penitent it has a mother's voice. . . . No man is poor or desolate who has this treasure for his own."

The Bible has indeed "learned to speak in hundreds of languages." At least one of its 66 books has been translated into some 1,970 tongues. Millions view the Bible as a gift from God and read it with pleasure and benefit. However, others say that it contains contradictions and is therefore unreliable. What does careful research reveal?

As indicated by our cover picture, God used faithful men to write the Bible. Indeed, careful analysis of the Bible reveals that it was written by some 40 men over a period of 16 centuries. Were they professional writers? No. Among them one can find shepherd,



fisherman, tax collector, physician, tent-maker, priest, prophet, and king. Their writings often mention people and customs unfamiliar to us in the 20th century. In fact, the Bible writers themselves did not always comprehend the significance of what they wrote. (Daniel 12:8-10) So we should not be surprised if we encounter certain difficulties when reading the Bible.

Can such difficulties be resolved? Does the Bible contradict itself? To find out, let us consider some examples.

Are These Real Difficulties?

■ *Where did Cain get his wife? (Genesis 4:17)*

One might think that after the murder of Abel, only his guilty brother Cain and their parents, Adam and Eve, were left on the earth. However, Adam and Eve had a large family. According to Genesis 5:3, 4, Adam had a son named Seth. The account adds: "The days of Adam after his fathering Seth came to be eight hundred years. Meanwhile he became father to sons and daughters." So Cain married his sister or perhaps one of his nieces. Since mankind was then so close to human perfection, such a marriage evidently did not pose the health risks that may imperil the offspring of such a union today.

■ *Who sold Joseph into Egypt?*

Genesis 37:27 says that Joseph's brothers decided to sell him to some Ishmaelites. But the next verse states: "Now men, Midianite merchants, went passing by. Hence they [Joseph's brothers] drew and lifted up Joseph out of the waterpit and then sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty silver pieces. Eventually these brought Joseph into Egypt." Was Joseph sold to Ishmaelites or to Midianites? Well, the Midianites may also have been called Ishmaelites, to whom

they were related through their forefather Abraham. Or Midianite merchants may have been traveling with an Ishmaelite caravan. At any rate, Joseph's brothers did the



selling, and later he could tell them: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt."—Genesis 45:4.

■ *How many Israelites died for having immoral relations with Moabite women and for engaging in the worship of the Baal of Peor?*

Numbers 25:9 states: "Those who died from the scourge [from God for their wicked conduct] amounted to twenty-four thousand." However, the apostle Paul said: "Neither let us practice fornication, as some of them [Israelites in the wilderness] committed fornication, only to fall, twenty-three thousand of them in one day." (1 Corinthians 10:8) Perhaps the number slain was between 23,000 and 24,000, so that ei-

ther figure would be satisfactory. Yet, the book of Numbers especially indicates that "all the head ones of the people" involved in this sin were killed by judges. (Numbers 25: 4, 5) There may have been 1,000 of these guilty "head ones," making a total of 24,000 when added to the 23,000 mentioned by Paul. Whereas apparently 23,000 were direct victims of the scourge from God, all 24,000 experienced Jehovah's scourge because every one of them died under his decree of adverse judgment.—Deuteronomy 4:3.

■ *Since Agag was a contemporary of Israelite king Saul, was not Balaam's much earlier reference to an Amalekite ruler of that name a discrepancy?*

In about 1473 B.C.E., Balaam foretold that a king of Israel would be "higher than Agag." (Numbers 24:7) No subsequent reference was made to Agag until the reign of King Saul (1117-1078 B.C.E.). (1 Samuel 15:8) This was not a discrepancy, however, for "Agag" may have been a royal title similar to that of Pharaoh in Egypt. It is also possible that Agag was a personal name repeatedly used by Amalekite rulers.

■ *Who caused David to take a count of the Israelites?*

Second Samuel 24:1 states: "Again the anger of Jehovah came to be hot against Israel, when one incited David [or, "when David was incited," footnote] against them, saying: 'Go, take a count of Israel and Judah.'" But it was not Jehovah who moved King David to sin, for 1 Chronicles 21:1 says: "Satan [or, "a resister," footnote] proceeded to stand up against Israel and to incite David to number Israel." God was displeased with the Israelites and therefore allowed Satan the Devil to bring this sin upon them. For this reason, 2 Samuel 24:1

reads as though God did it himself. Interestingly, Joseph B. Rotherham's translation reads: "The anger of Yahweh kindled against Israel, so that he suffered David to be moved against them saying, Go count Israel and Judah."

■ *How can one harmonize the different figures given for Israelites and Judeans in David's count?*

At 2 Samuel 24:9 the figures are 800,000 Israelites and 500,000 Judeans, whereas 1 Chronicles 21:5 numbers Israel's fighting men at 1,100,000 and Judah's at 470,000. Enlisted regularly in the royal service were 288,000 troops, divided into 12 groups of 24,000, each group serving one month during the year. There were an additional 12,000 attendant on the 12 princes of the tribes, making a total of 300,000. Apparently the 1,100,000 of 1 Chronicles 21:5 includes this 300,000 already enlisted, whereas 2 Samuel 24:9 does not. (Numbers 1:16; Deuteronomy 1:15; 1 Chronicles 27:1-22) As regards Judah, 2 Samuel 24:9 apparently included 30,000 men in an army of observation stationed on the Philistine frontiers but which were not included in the figure at 1 Chronicles 21:5. (2 Samuel 6:1) If we remember that 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles were written by two men with different views and objectives, we can easily harmonize the figures.

■ *Who was the father of Shealtiel?*

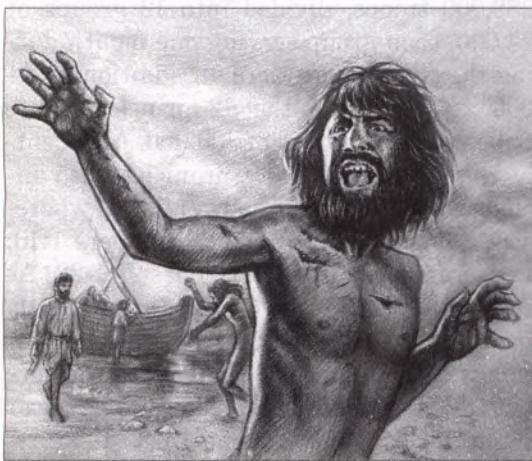
Certain texts indicate that Jeconiah (King Jehoiachin) was the fleshly father of Shealtiel. (1 Chronicles 3:16-18; Matthew 1:12) But the Gospel writer Luke called Shealtiel the "son of Neri." (Luke 3:27) Neri apparently gave his daughter to Shealtiel as a wife. Since the Hebrews commonly referred to a son-in-law as a son, especially in genealogical listings, Luke could properly

call Shealtiel the son of Neri. Similarly, Luke referred to Joseph as the son of Heli, who was actually the father of Joseph's wife, Mary.—Luke 3:23.

Harmonizing Texts Involving Jesus

■ *From how many men did Jesus Christ expel the demons who took possession of a large herd of swine?*

The Gospel writer Matthew mentions two men, but Mark and Luke refer to just one. (Matthew 8:28; Mark 5:2; Luke 8:27) Evidently, Mark and Luke drew attention to



only one demon-possessed man because Jesus spoke to him and his case was more outstanding. Possibly, that man was more violent or had suffered under demon control for a longer time. Afterward, perhaps that one man alone wanted to accompany Jesus. (Mark 5:18-20) In a somewhat parallel situation, Matthew spoke of two blind men healed by Jesus, whereas Mark and Luke mentioned only one. (Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35) This was not contradictory, for there was at least one such man.

■ *What color was the garment Jesus wore on the day of his death?*

According to Mark (15:17) and John (19:2), the soldiers put a purple garment on Jesus. But Matthew (27:28) called it "a scarlet cloak," emphasizing its redness. Since purple is any color having components of both red and blue, Mark and John agree that the cloak had a red hue. Light reflection and background could have given different casts to the garment, and the Gospel writers mentioned the color that was strongest to them or to those from whom they got their information. The minor variation shows the individuality of the writers and proves that there was no collusion.

■ *Who carried Jesus' torture stake?*

John (19:17) said: "Bearing the torture stake for himself, [Jesus] went out to the so-called Skull Place, which is called *Golgotha* in Hebrew." But Matthew (27:32), Mark (15:21), and Luke (23:26) say that 'as they were going out, Simon of Cyrene was impressed into service to bear the torture stake.' Jesus bore his torture stake, as John stated. In his condensed account, however, John did not add the point that Simon was later impressed into service to carry the stake. Hence, the Gospel accounts harmonize in this regard.

■ *How did Judas Iscariot die?*

Matthew 27:5 states that Judas hanged himself, whereas Acts 1:18 says that "pitching head foremost he noisily burst in his midst and all his intestines were poured out." While Matthew seems to deal with the mode of the attempted suicide, Acts describes the results. Judas apparently tied a rope to the branch of a tree, put a noose around his neck, and tried to hang himself by jumping off a cliff. It seems that either the rope or the tree limb broke so that he

plunged downward and burst open on the rocks below. The topography around Jerusalem makes such a conclusion reasonable.

How Will You View Matters?

If we encounter seeming discrepancies in the Bible, it is good to realize that people often say things that appear contradictory but are easily explained or understood. For instance, a businessman may correspond with someone by dictating a letter to his secretary. If questioned, he would say that he sent the letter. But since his secretary typed and mailed the letter, she could say that she sent it. Similarly, it was not contradictory for Matthew (8:5) to say that an army officer came to ask Jesus a favor, whereas Luke (7:2, 3) said that the man sent representatives.

The foregoing examples show that Bible difficulties can be resolved. Hence, there is good reason to have a positive attitude toward the Scriptures. Such a spirit was recommended in these words appearing in a family Bible published in the year 1876:

"The proper spirit in which to deal with those difficulties is, to remove them as far as practicable, and to cleave and submit to the truth, even when every cloud cannot be cleared away from it. We should imitate the example of the apostles, who, when some of the disciples were offended by what they called a 'hard saying,' so as to forsake Christ, silenced every objection with this: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' . . . When we see a truth seemingly in conflict with another truth, let us try to reconcile them, and show them thus reconciled to all."—John 6:60-69.

**Have you asked Jehovah's Witnesses
why they have faith in the Bible?**

Will you take such a position? After examining just a few examples demonstrating the harmony of the Scriptures, it is hoped that you agree with the psalmist who said to God: "The substance of your word is truth." (Psalm 119:160) Jehovah's Witnesses take that view of the entire Bible and will gladly give reasons for their faith in it. Why not discuss this peerless book with them? Its heartening message may well fill you with true hope and happiness.





CHRIST HATED LAWLESSNESS —DO YOU?

“You loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness. That is why God, your God, anointed you with the oil of exultation more than your partners.”—HEBREWS 1:9.

JEHOVAH'S true servants love him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. (Mark 12:30) They want to make Jehovah's heart rejoice by keeping integrity. (Proverbs 27:11) To do that, not only must they love righteousness but they must also hate lawlessness. Their Exemplar, Jesus Christ, certainly did. Of him it was said: “You loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness.”—Hebrews 1:9.

² What is lawlessness? It is sin, as the apostle John showed when he wrote: “Every-

1. Besides loving righteousness, what else is required of all true servants of Jehovah God?
2. What is included in lawlessness?

one who practices sin is also practicing lawlessness, and so sin is lawlessness.” (1 John 3:4) A lawless person is “not restrained or controlled by law.” (Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary) Lawlessness includes all that is bad, wicked, immoral, corrupt, and dishonest. A look at the world shows us that lawlessness is rampant today as never before. There is no question that we live in the “critical times” that the apostle Paul foretold at 2 Timothy 3:1-5. In view of all this lawlessness, how fine it is that we are commanded to hate all badness! For instance, we are told: “O you lovers of Jehovah, hate what is bad.” (Psalm 97:10) Likewise, we read: “Hate

Jesus cleansed the temple because he hated lawlessness

what is bad, and love what is good.”—Amos 5:15.

Three Kinds of Hatred

³ What does it mean to hate? In God's Word, “hate” is used in three distinct ways. There is the hatred motivated by malice and that seeks to harm its object. Christians must avoid this kind of hatred. It is the kind that prompted Cain to kill his righteous brother Abel. (1 John 3:12) This is also the kind of hatred that the religious leaders had for Jesus Christ.—Matthew 26:3, 4.

⁴ Further, the word “hate” is used in the Scriptures in the sense of loving less. For example, Jesus said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own soul, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26) Clearly, Jesus simply meant loving these less than we love him. Jacob ‘hated Leah,’ but he actually loved her less than he did Rachel.—Genesis 29:30, 31.

⁵ Then there is the meaning of the word “hate” with which we are especially concerned here. It has the thought of having such an intense feeling of dislike for or strong aversion to someone or something that we avoid having anything to do with such a person or thing. In Psalm 139 this is spoken of as “a complete hatred.” There David said: “Do I not hate those who are intensely hating you, O Jehovah, and do I not feel a loathing for those revolting against you? With a complete hatred I do hate them. They have become to me real enemies.” —Psalm 139:21, 22.

3-5. In what three ways is the word “hate” used in God's Word?

Why We Should Hate Lawlessness

⁶ Why should we hate lawlessness? One reason is so that we may have self-respect and a good conscience. Only in this way can we have a good relationship with our righteous, loving heavenly Father, Jehovah. David set a fine example in this regard, as can be seen by reading Psalm 26. For example, he said: “I have hated the congregation of evildoers, and with the wicked ones I do not sit.” (Psalm 26:5) Our love for God and righteousness should motivate us to have righteous indignation—yes, hatred—for all that is lawless from his standpoint, including the lawless acts of those who disobey and hate Jehovah. Furthermore, we should hate lawlessness because of the reproach that it brings upon God's name.

⁷ Another reason why Jehovah's people should hate lawlessness is that it is very dangerous and harmful. Sowing to the flesh, which means sowing lawlessness, will have what result? Paul warned: “Do not be misled: God is not one to be mocked. For whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap; because he who is sowing with a view to his flesh will reap corruption from his flesh, but he who is sowing with a view to the spirit will reap everlasting life from the spirit.” (Galatians 6:7, 8) So we should want to have absolutely nothing to do with lawlessness. Truly, we need to hate all lawlessness for our own well-being and peace of mind.

Those Hating Lawlessness

⁸ In hating lawlessness, God sets the prime example for all intelligent creatures. He is righteously indignant at lawlessness,

6, 7. (a) Why, principally, should we hate lawlessness? (b) What is a second powerful reason to hate lawlessness?

8. Who has set the prime example in hating lawlessness, as shown by what scriptures?

and his Word says: "There are six things that Jehovah does hate; yes, seven are things detestable to his soul: lofty eyes, a false tongue, and hands that are shedding innocent blood, a heart fabricating hurtful schemes, feet that are in a hurry to run to badness, a false witness that launches forth lies, and anyone sending forth contentions among brothers." We also read: "The fear of Jehovah means the hating of bad. Self-exaltation and pride and the bad way and the perverse mouth I have hated." (Proverbs 6:16-19; 8:13) Moreover, we are told: "I, Jehovah, am loving justice, hating robbery along with unrighteousness."—Isaiah 61:8.

⁹ Jesus Christ imitated his Father in hating lawlessness. Thus, we read: "You loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness. That is why God, your God, anointed you with the oil of exultation more than your partners." (Hebrews 1:9) Jesus set an example for us in this kind of hatred. He showed his hatred of lawlessness by exposing those willfully practicing it—the false religious leaders. Repeatedly, he denounced them as hypocrites. (Matthew, chapter 23) On another occasion Jesus told them: "You are from your father the Devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father." (John 8:44) Jesus showed his hatred for lawlessness even to the extent of using physical force, on two occasions cleansing the temple of greedy religious hypocrites.—Matthew 21:12, 13; John 2:13-17.

¹⁰ Jesus also showed his hatred of lawlessness and sin by keeping absolutely free from them. Therefore, he could well ask his opposers: "Who of you convicts me of sin?" (John 8:46) Jesus was "loyal, guileless,

9, 10. How did Jesus show that he hated lawlessness?



defiled, separated from the sinners." (Hebrews 7:26) Confirming this, Peter wrote that Jesus "committed no sin, nor was deception found in his mouth."—1 Peter 2:22.

¹¹ Jesus, though, was a perfect man. Do we have Scriptural examples of imperfect humans who truly hated lawlessness? Indeed we do! For example, Moses and his fellow Levites showed great hatred of idolatry by executing about 3,000 idolaters at Jehovah's command. (Exodus 32:27, 28) Phinehas showed great hatred of lawlessness when he killed two fornicators with a lance. —Numbers 25:7, 8.

Expressing Hatred of Lawlessness

¹² Coming down to our time, how can we show our hatred of lawlessness? By controlling our thoughts, words, and actions. We need to cultivate the habit of thinking about

11. What Scriptural examples do we have of imperfect humans who hated lawlessness?
12. (a) How can we show our hatred of lawlessness? (b) What are some practical ways to avoid lawless thoughts?

upbuilding things when our minds are not occupied with work at hand. If we happen to lay awake at night, there may be an inclination to do some negative thinking, such as dwelling on grievances or indulging in sexual fantasies. Never allow room for such things, but get in the habit of engaging in beneficial thinking. For example, try to memorize scriptures, the nine happinesses, and the nine fruits of the spirit. (Matthew 5:3-12; Galatians 5:22, 23) Can you name the 12 apostles? Do you know the Ten Commandments? What are the seven congregations addressed in Revelation? Memorizing Kingdom songs also helps to keep our minds on things true, of serious concern, righteous, chaste, lovable, well spoken of, virtuous, and praiseworthy.—Philippians 4:8.

¹³ Further, we show that we hate lawlessness by avoiding all unclean speech. Many worldly people take delight in telling and listening to dirty jokes, but Christians must not be inclined even to listen to them. Rather, we should walk away and avoid participating in any conversation that gravitates to such low levels. If unable to walk away, we can at least show by our facial expression that we hate such talk. We need to heed this fine counsel: “Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth, but whatever saying is good for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to the hearers.” (Ephesians 4:29) We should not defile ourselves by speaking what is unclean or by listening to it.

¹⁴ Our hatred of lawlessness must also be directed against all sinful practices. Hating lawlessness will help us to avoid the trap of compromising in this regard. Genuine

-
13. Hating lawlessness will cause us to hate what kind of speech?
 14. What safeguard will hatred of lawlessness provide as to business practices and employment?

Christians do not practice sin. (Compare 1 John 5:18.) For example, we must hate all dishonest business practices. Today, many of Jehovah's Witnesses have been put under pressure to do dishonest things for their employers but have refused to do so. Christians have even been willing to lose their jobs rather than do something that violates their Bible-trained conscience. Moreover, we also want to show our hatred of lawlessness by not violating traffic laws and by not cheating when we must pay taxes or customs duties.—Acts 23:1; Hebrews 13:18.

Hating Sexual Uncleanness

¹⁵ As Christians, we must particularly hate all uncleanness that involves sexual matters. By creating mankind with strong mating instincts, God served two fine purposes. He made certain that the human race would not die out, and he also made a most loving provision for happiness. Even people who are poor, illiterate, or disadvantaged in some other way can find great happiness in the marital relationship. However, Jehovah has set bounds within which this relationship may be enjoyed. These divinely stated limits must be respected.—Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4.

¹⁶ If we hate lawlessness, we will studiously avoid all sexually unclean practices and immoral entertainment. We will therefore avoid all morally questionable books, magazines, and newspapers. Likewise, if we hate lawlessness, we will not view any unclean visual presentations, whether on television, in motion pictures, or on the stage. If we find a program to be immoral, we should be moved to switch off the television set at once or should have the courage to

15. Creating humans with strong mating instincts served what fine purposes?
16. What should be our attitude toward sexually unclean entertainment and practices?

leave the theater. Similarly, hating lawlessness will make us guard against all music that is passion-arousing in its lyrics or its tempo. We will not seek knowledge of immoral matters but will be ‘babes as to badness, yet full-grown in powers of understanding.’—1 Corinthians 14:20.

¹⁷ Most fittingly, we are counseled: “Deaden, therefore, your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite.” (Colossians 3:5) There is no question that powerful measures are needed on our part if we are going to be determined to remain morally clean. Regarding the Greek verb rendered “dead-en” at Colossians 3:5, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* states: “It suggests that we are not simply to suppress or control evil acts and attitudes. We are to wipe them out, completely exterminate the old way of life. ‘Slay utterly’ may express its force.... Both the meaning of the verb and the force of the tense suggest a vigorous, painful act of personal determination.” We should therefore avoid pornography as though it were a dangerous, infectious, death-dealing disease, for that is what it is morally and spiritually. Christ expressed a similar thought when he said to get rid of a hand, a foot, or even an

17. What counsel does Colossians 3:5 give that can help us to stay morally clean?

How Would You Answer?

- How do the Scriptures use the word “hate”?
- What are some good reasons for us to hate lawlessness?
- What fine examples do we have of those who hated lawlessness?
- How can we show our hatred for lawlessness?

eye if it is causing us to stumble.—Mark 9: 43-48.

Hating False Religion and Apostasy

¹⁸ Then, too, as Jesus showed his hatred for lawlessness by exposing hypocritical religionists, so today Jehovah’s Witnesses are showing their hatred for all hypocritical religious lawlessness. How? By distributing Bible literature that lays bare Babylon the Great for what she really is, a religious harlot. If we truly hate lawless religious hypocrisy, we will be forthright in exposing Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. We will do so for the sake of honest-hearted people whom she has blinded and held in spiritual bondage. To the extent that we truly hate the lawlessness of Babylon the Great, to that extent we will be zealous in sharing in all the features of the Kingdom ministry.—Matthew 15:1-3, 7-9; Titus 2: 13, 14; Revelation 18:1-5.

¹⁹ The obligation to hate lawlessness also applies to all activity by apostates. Our attitude toward apostates should be that of David, who declared: “Do I not hate those who are intensely hating you, O Jehovah, and do I not feel a loathing for those revolting against you? With a complete hatred I do hate them. They have become to me real enemies.” (Psalm 139:21, 22) Modern-day apostates have made common cause with “the man of lawlessness,” the clergy of Christendom. (2 Thessalonians 2:3) As loyal Witnesses of Jehovah, we therefore have absolutely nothing in common with them. Being imperfect, our hearts could easily have a tendency toward being critical of our brothers. As individuals, those of “the faithful and discreet slave” are imperfect humans. (Mat-

18. How can we express our hatred for religious lawlessness?

19. How should we view apostates, and why?

thew 24:45-47) But this class is faithful and discreet. Apostates capitalize on errors or seeming mistakes made by brothers who take the lead. Our safety lies in avoiding apostate propaganda as though it were poison, which in fact it is.—Romans 16:17, 18.

²⁰ We have seen that the world is filled with lawlessness, which is synonymous with sin. It is not enough for us to love righteousness; we must also hate lawlessness. Some of those who have been disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation may have thought that they loved righteousness, but they did not sufficiently hate lawlessness.

20, 21. How can reasons for hating lawlessness be summarized?

We have also seen why we should hate lawlessness. We cannot have a good conscience and self-respect unless we do. Furthermore, lawlessness means being disloyal to Jehovah God. And lawlessness causes us to reap very bitter fruitage—misery, corruption, and death.

²¹ We have also noted how we show that we hate lawlessness. We do so by having absolutely nothing to do with any kind of dishonesty, sexual immorality, or apostasy. Since we want to share in Jehovah's vindication and desire to make his heart rejoice, we must not only love righteousness and keep busy in his service but also hate lawlessness, as did our Leader and Commander, Jesus Christ.

REJECT WORLDLY FANTASIES, PURSUE KINGDOM REALITIES

"Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you."—MATTHEW 6:33.

MORE than all else that is to be guarded, safeguard your heart, for out of it are the sources of life.” (Proverbs 4:23) Why was it necessary for wise King Solomon to give this warning? Because “the heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate.” (Jeremiah 17:9) One of the chief ways in which our figurative heart can deceive us is by causing us to indulge in world-

1. What warning does God’s Word give regarding the figurative heart, and what is one of the chief ways that it deceives us?

ly fantasies. But what are fantasies? They are unrealistic imaginations, daydreams, idle mind wanderings. When these daydreams become worldly fantasies, they are not merely a waste of time but are also very harmful. Hence, we must reject them completely. In fact, if we hate lawlessness as Jesus did, we will guard our heart against indulging in worldly fantasies.—Hebrews 1:8, 9.

² But what are worldly fantasies? They
2. What are worldly fantasies, and why should we reject them?

are fantasies characteristic of this world lying in Satan's power. Concerning it, the apostle John wrote: "Everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world." (1 John 2:16; 5:19) Why must Christians reject worldly fantasies? Because such fantasies stir up selfish desires in mind and heart. Daydreaming about doing what is wrong can in fact be a rehearsal in the mind of what a person will actually do. The disciple James warns us: "Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire. Then the desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin; in turn, sin, when it has been accomplished, brings forth death."—James 1:14, 15.

Warning Examples

³ Let us consider examples showing why worldly fantasies must be rejected. Satan the Devil's case provides the foremost example of the harm that can result from indulging in selfish fantasies. He allowed feelings of self-importance to develop in his heart to the extent that he envied Jehovah's unique position as the Universal Sovereign and wanted to be worshiped. (Luke 4:5-8) An unrealistic fantasy? It certainly was! That will be proved beyond question when Satan is bound for a thousand years and especially when he is hurled into "the lake of fire," the second death.—Revelation 20:1-3, 10.

⁴ We have another warning example in the case of the first woman, Eve. In Satan's efforts to realize his ambition, he seduced Eve by presenting to her mind the fantasy that if she ate of the forbidden fruit, she

3. Whose case provides the foremost warning example of the harmfulness of selfish fantasies?
4. How did Satan deceive Eve?

would not die but would be like God, knowing good and bad. Was that fantasy unrealistic, selfish? Indeed it was, as we can see from Jehovah's condemnation of Eve and her husband, Adam, when holding court. As a result, they lost the right to life in Paradise for themselves and for all their imperfect offspring.—Genesis 3:1-19; Romans 5:12.

⁵ We also have the warning example of certain angelic sons of God. (Genesis 6:1-4) Instead of being satisfied with the blessings they enjoyed in the heavenly presence of Jehovah, they fantasized about women on the earth and how pleasurable it would be to have sexual relations with them. Because of acting on these fantasies, the disobedient angels are now confined to the spiritual darkness of Tartarus, awaiting their annihilation at the end of the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus Christ.—2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 20:10.

Reject Worldly Fantasies

⁶ Let us now consider one of the most common and dangerous fantasies promoted by Satan. Through every form of the media, we are tempted to indulge in worldly fantasies. These are often caused by a craving for riches. In itself, there is nothing wrong with possessing wealth. Godly Abraham, Job, and King David were very rich, but they did not crave material riches. Materialistic fantasies motivate people to work laboriously for years to acquire wealth. Such fantasies also prompt them to indulge in all kinds of gambling, such as betting on horses and buying lottery tickets. Let us not entertain any illusions about wealth. If we

5. What brought about the downfall of certain angelic sons of God, and with what result to them?
6, 7. Why are worldly fantasies about material riches harmful and deceptive?

think that material riches will provide security, consider this realistic proverb: "Valuable things will be of no benefit on the day of fury, but righteousness itself will deliver from death." (Proverbs 11:4) Indeed, material riches will be of no avail in surviving the "great tribulation."—Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:9, 14.

⁷ Material riches can easily deceive us. That is why we are told: "The valuable things of the rich are his strong town, and they are like a protective wall in his imagination." (Proverbs 18:11) Yes, only "in his imagination," for material wealth offers little protection in times of runaway inflation, economic collapse, political upheaval, or terminal illness. Jesus Christ warned against the folly of putting our trust in material riches. (Luke 12:13-21) We also have the apostle Paul's warning words: "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 6:10.

⁸ Other fantasies relate to illicit sex. The extent to which sinful human nature likes to dwell on sexual fantasies can be seen from the popularity of the verbal filth available by dialing certain telephone numbers and listening to pornographic messages. In the United States, dial-a-porn is a multibillion-dollar business. If we were to let our minds dwell on illicit sex, would we not be hypocrites, only appearing to be clean Christians? And is there not the danger that such fantasies may lead to immoral intimacies? This has happened and has resulted in some being disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation for committing fornication or adultery. In view of Jesus'

8. How prevalent are worldly fantasies of a sexual nature, and what dangers do these pose?



Worldly fantasies are often caused by a craving for material wealth

words at Matthew 5:27, 28, are not all who persistently indulge in such fantasies guilty of committing adultery in their hearts?

⁹ To counteract the tendency of our sinful hearts to indulge in such fantasies, we need to bear in mind Paul's warning: "There is not a creation that is not manifest to [God's] sight, but all things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of him with whom we have an accounting." (Hebrews 4:13) We should at all times want to be like Moses, who "continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27) Yes, we must keep telling ourselves that worldly fantasies are displeasing to Jehovah and can only result in harm to ourselves. We must be concerned about cultivating all the fruits of God's spirit, particularly self-control, for we cannot escape the fact that

9. What fine counsel do the Scriptures contain to warn us against worldly fantasies?

if we sow to the flesh, we will reap corruption from the flesh.—Galatians 5:22, 23; 6:7, 8.

The Realities of the Kingdom

¹⁰ The best way to reject worldly fantasies is to keep pursuing Kingdom realities. The realities of the Kingdom that are produced by God stand in striking contrast to worldly fantasies. Is *God* a reality? There is no

there the immensity of creation, its symmetry, beauty, order, harmony and diversity, and yet doubt that the Creator of these is vastly his superior both in wisdom and power, or who can suppose for a moment that such order came by chance, without a Creator, has so far lost or ignored the faculty of reason as to be properly considered what the Bible terms him, a fool (one who ignores or lacks reason).”—Psalm 14:1.

¹¹ We learn all about the Kingdom in the Holy Bible. Is the Bible in reality *the written Word of God*? It most certainly is, as can be seen from its harmony, its scientific accuracy, and its power to change people's lives and especially by the fulfillment of its prophecies.* What about the King of God's Kingdom, *Jesus Christ*? Did he really exist? The Gospel accounts and the divinely inspired letters of the Christian Greek Scriptures unequivocally and eloquently testify to the historicity of Jesus Christ. As to Jesus' historicity, there is also the testimony of the Jewish Talmud, which refers to him as a person. So do Jewish and Roman historians of the first century C.E.

¹² What about the reality of the *Kingdom* itself? It is largely ignored by Christendom, as shown in this complaint by a prominent Presbyterian: “It has certainly been more than thirty years since I have listened to a minister attempt to explain to his people the reality of the Kingdom for them.” Yet, the sanctification of Jehovah’s name by means of the Kingdom is the theme of his Word. God himself made the first Kingdom promise, saying: “I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your



Preaching the good news is one way to pursue Kingdom realities

question about his existence. Visible creation testifies to that fact. (Romans 1:20) We are reminded of what was said more than a hundred years ago in the book *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, published by the Watch Tower Society. It stated: “He who can look into the sky with a telescope, or even with his natural eye alone, and see

10, 11. (a) What facts argue for the reality of the Creator? (b) What proof is there that the Bible is in reality God’s Word? (c) What evidence is there of the reality of the King of God’s Kingdom?

* See the book *The Bible—God’s Word or Man’s?* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

12, 13. What facts testify to the reality of God’s Kingdom?

seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel." (Genesis 3:15) The Kingdom was foreshadowed by the nation of Israel, especially during King Solomon's reign. (Psalm 72) Further, the Kingdom was the theme of Jesus' preaching. (Matthew 4:17) He featured it in many of his illustrations, such as those in Matthew chapter 13. Jesus told us to pray for the Kingdom and to keep on seeking it first. (Matthew 6:9, 10, 33) In fact, God's Kingdom is mentioned close to 150 times in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

¹³ The Kingdom is a real government, with power and authority, and it will fulfill all rightful expectations. It has a set of laws, found in the Bible. The Kingdom has already brought many things to reality. It has loyal subjects—over 4,000,000 Witnesses of Jehovah. In 211 lands they are preaching the good news of God's Kingdom, in fulfillment of Matthew 24:14. During their 1991 service year, they spent 951,870,021 hours preaching the Kingdom message. This activity is producing tangible, lasting results as multitudes learn the "pure language" of Bible truth.—Zephaniah 3:9.

Pursuing Kingdom Realities

¹⁴ How, then, can we pursue Kingdom realities? Our hope must be securely based on strong conviction. God's promised new world must be real to us. (2 Peter 3:13) And we must have faith in the promise that God "will wipe out every tear from [our] eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." (Revelation 21:4) How can we be sure that this is no fantasy? It is bound to be realized in God's due time, for it is impossible for him to lie. (Titus 1:1, 2; Hebrews 6:18) We need to meditate on those promises. Pictur-

14. How can we strengthen our appreciation for the reality of the Kingdom?

ing ourselves in God's new world and enjoying its blessings is not an unrealistic fantasy but gives evidence of faith. As Paul defined it, "faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of *realities* though not beheld." (Hebrews 11:1) Let us strengthen our faith by regularly feeding on God's Word and Christian publications that help us to understand and apply it. And the more time we devote to telling others about the Kingdom, formally and informally, the more we strengthen our faith and brighten our hope in it.

¹⁵ We also need to work in harmony with Kingdom realities by improving the quality



Are you pursuing Kingdom realities by diligently studying God's Word?

of our ministry. Since there is still much to be done, how can we do this? (Matthew 9:37, 38) The saying is true that one is never too old to learn. No matter how many years we have been sharing in the witness work,

15. What obligation do we have regarding the Christian ministry?

we can improve. By becoming more effective in handling the Word of God, we are better able to help others to hear the voice of the King, Jesus Christ. (Compare John 10:16.) When we consider that the everlasting destinies of people are involved, we should want to cover our territory thoroughly so as to give them repeated opportunity to demonstrate where they stand, either as "sheep" or as "goats." (Matthew 25: 31-46) Of course, that means keeping careful records of those not at home and especially of those interested in the Kingdom message.

Keep Pursuing the Kingdom

¹⁶ Earnest effort is required to keep on pursuing Kingdom realities. Are we not encouraged by the zealous example of the remaining anointed Christians? They have been pursuing Kingdom realities for decades. This pursuit was described in Jesus' words: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of the heavens is the goal toward which men press, and those pressing forward are seizing it." (Matthew 11:12) Here the thought is not that of enemies seizing the Kingdom. Rather, this pertains to the activity of those in line for the Kingdom. One Bible scholar said: "In this way is described that eager, irresistible striving and struggling after the approaching Messianic kingdom." Anointed ones have spared no effort in making the Kingdom their own. Similar vigorous efforts are required of the "other sheep" in order for them to qualify as earthly subjects of God's heavenly Kingdom.—John 10:16.

¹⁷ Truly, we are living in a special period

16. Who have set a fine example in pursuing Kingdom realities, and how are they "seizing" the Kingdom?

17. What will be the lot of those pursuing worldly fantasies?

of opportunity. Those who pursue worldly fantasies will someday awaken to stark reality. Their lot is well described in these words: "It must occur just as when someone hungry dreams and here he is eating, and he actually awakes and his soul is empty; and just as when someone thirsty dreams and here he is drinking, and he actually awakes and here he is tired and his soul is dried out." (Isaiah 29:8) For a certainty, the fantasies of the world will never make anyone satisfied and happy.

¹⁸ Jehovah's Kingdom is a reality. It is actively ruling, whereas this wicked system of things faces an imminent, permanent destruction. Therefore, take to heart Paul's counsel: "Let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses." (1 Thessalonians 5:6) May we keep our hearts and minds focused on Kingdom realities and thus enjoy eternal blessings. And may it be our lot to hear the King of that Kingdom say to us: "Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world."—Matthew 25:34.

18. In view of the reality of the Kingdom, what course should we pursue, with what prospect in view?

How Would You Answer?

- What are worldly fantasies, and why should we reject them?
- What examples show the folly of indulging in worldly fantasies?
- What facts prove the reality of the Creator, his written Word, Jesus Christ, and the Kingdom?
- How can we strengthen our faith in Kingdom realities?

YOU CAN FIND COMFORT IN TIMES OF DISTRESS

HOW should we view feelings of distress? If we are dedicated to Jehovah, should we look upon them as strange because of our wonderful hope and our spiritual resources? Do such feelings mean that we are spiritually unsuited for God's service?

"Elijah was a man with feelings like ours," wrote the disciple James. (James 5:17) Though God used Elijah in an extraordinary way, even that faithful prophet felt distress. "It is enough!" exclaimed Elijah on one occasion. "Now, O Jehovah, take my soul away, for I am no better than my forefathers." (1 Kings 19:4) The integrity-keeping man Job, the faithful woman Hannah, and other loyal servants of Jehovah experienced distress. Even the godly psalmist David prayed: "Distresses of my heart have multiplied; from the stresses upon me O bring me out."—Psalm 25:17.

Jehovah's use of humans in his service does not make them totally carefree. They still have human infirmities and feelings and may experience distress when under trial. (Acts 14:15) Nevertheless, God's servants have better help than others do in coping with emotional stress. Let us consider a few Biblical examples to see what helped certain individuals to overcome their mental depression and feelings of distress.

Distressed Apostle Finds Comfort

The apostle Paul knew what it was like to be depressed. "In fact," said he, "when we

arrived in Macedonia, our flesh got no relief . . . There were fights without, fears within. Nevertheless God, who comforts those laid low, comforted us by the presence of Titus." (2 Corinthians 7:5, 6) Paul's depression was caused by several distressing situations occurring at the same time. There were "fights without"—severe persecution imperiling life itself. (Compare 2 Corinthians 1:8.) Moreover, there were "fears within" in the form of worries about the congregations, such as the one in Corinth.

A few months earlier, Paul had written his first letter to the Corinthian Christians. In it he had condemned several very bad conditions in the congregation and apparently was concerned about how the Corinthians would react to his letter. However, Paul was comforted when Titus came from Corinth with a favorable report about their response. Similarly, Jehovah may use one of his present-day servants to bring us good news and allay our distress.

How to View God-Given Assignments

Certain Christians have a measure of distress with regard to their ministry. Indeed, some of Jehovah's servants have thought that God-given assignments would be too demanding for them to fulfill. For instance, Moses felt unfit to be God's representative in behalf of the Israelites in Egypt. Among other things, he said that he was not an eloquent speaker. (Exodus 3:11; 4:10) But with trust in God and having Aaron as his

mouthpiece, Moses set about fulfilling his assignment.

In time Moses no longer depended on Aaron. Similarly, some initially find the Christian ministry difficult, but they receive training and become skilled evangelizers. For example, many young Witnesses of Jehovah have grown up to become full-time preachers as pioneers and missionaries. It is comforting to know that Jehovah can always be relied upon to qualify Christian ministers and empower them to fulfill their God-given assignments.—Zechariah 4:6; 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; Philippians 4:13.

Comfort When Distressed by Regrets

We may be disheartened because we regret that we have not done more in God's service. A brother who had been inactive for years began to share in the field ministry once more. Shortly thereafter, he fell seriously ill and was permanently confined to bed. The downhearted brother said: "Earlier, when I could have been active, I shirked responsibility. Now, when I want to be active, I am not able."

Would it not be wise to do our best now instead of expending emotional energy on what happened in the past? Jesus' fleshly half brothers James and Jude did not become believers until after his death and resurrection. If they had some regrets over this, it did not stop them from being God's servants and even Bible writers.

Never Neglect Prayer

When depressed, God's people should pray fervently. In fact, the Scriptures contain many prayers said in times of distress. (1 Samuel 1:4-20; Psalm 42:8) Some may think: 'I am so depressed that I cannot pray.' Then why not consider Jonah? While

in the fish's belly, he said: "When my soul fainted away within me, Jehovah was the One whom I remembered. Then my prayer came in to you, into your holy temple. . . . With the voice of thanksgiving I will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed, I will pay. Salvation belongs to Jehovah." (Jonah 2:4-9) Yes, Jonah prayed, and God comforted and saved him.

Although a sister in Sweden had been a pioneer for many years, she suddenly felt dejected and worn out despite a rewarding ministry. She mentioned her downheartedness in prayer to Jehovah. A few days later, she received a telephone call from a brother at the Watch Tower Society's branch office. He asked if she could assist there about one day a week in connection with the Bethel extension. This sister later said: "The atmosphere at Bethel and having the opportunity of seeing the extension work and sharing in it gave me the extra strength I needed."

If we are depressed, it is good to remember that prayer is one way to fight depression. (Colossians 4:2) In answer to our prayers, Jehovah may open a door leading to greater activity in his service, or he may bless our ministry with increased productivity. (1 Corinthians 16:8, 9) In any event, "the blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it." (Proverbs 10:22) This is sure to lift our spirits.

Distressed by Doubts?

Occasionally, one of Jehovah's servants may have doubts. If that should happen to us, we should not immediately conclude that we have lost God's favor. Jesus did not reject the apostle Thomas for doubting eyewitness reports of his Master's resurrection. Instead, Jesus lovingly helped Thomas to get over his doubts. And how

thrilled Thomas was when he realized that Jesus was alive!—John 20:24-29.

By their false teaching, murmuring, and so forth, “ungodly men” who had slipped into the first-century Christian congregation were causing some to have distressing doubts. Hence, the disciple Jude wrote: “Continue showing mercy to some that have doubts; save them by snatching them out of the fire.” (Jude 3, 4, 16, 22, 23) To continue receiving God’s merciful consideration, Jude’s fellow worshipers—especially the congregation elders—needed to show mercy to doubters eligible for it. (James 2:13) Their everlasting life was at stake, for they were in danger of “the fire” of eternal destruction. (Compare Matthew 18:8, 9; 25: 31-33, 41-46.) And what joy there is when help is kindly given to fellow believers having doubts and they become strong spiritually!

If grievous trials make us doubt that God is with us, we need to be specific in our prayers. Under such circumstances, let us persevere in asking Jehovah for wisdom. He gives generously without reproaching us for lacking wisdom and praying for it. We must “keep on asking in faith, not doubting at all,” for a doubter is “like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and blown about” in every direction. Such persons get nothing from God because they are indecisive, “unsteady” in prayer and in all their ways. (James 1:5-8) So let us have faith that Jehovah will help us to view our trials properly and endure them. Scriptures may be brought to our attention by fellow believers or during Bible study. Events maneuvered through God’s providence may help us to see what we should do. Angels may share in directing us, or we may receive guidance by holy spirit. (Hebrews 1:14) The main thing

is to pray for wisdom with full trust in our loving God.—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Remember That Jehovah Gives Comfort

Paul prayerfully relied on Jehovah and knew him to be the Source of comfort. The apostle wrote: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation through the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God.”—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

The God of all comfort is aware of distress experienced by his servants and wants to give them relief. In the case of Paul’s concern over the Corinthians, relief came through his Christian associate Titus. This is one way that we may be comforted today. When we are distressed, we should therefore avoid isolating ourselves. (Proverbs 18:1) Association with fellow Christians is one of the means by which God comforts us. We may think: ‘I am so downhearted that I am not strong enough to be with my Christian friends.’ However, we should fight such feelings and not deprive ourselves of the comfort that fellow believers can offer.

Do Not Give Up!

Some of us may not have experienced a trial having such impact that we have suffered severe depression. But debilitating illness, the death of a marriage mate, or another very trying situation could bring on emotional distress. If that should occur, let us not conclude that we are necessarily sick spiritually. A depressed person may be well qualified for God’s service, even being able to help others spiritually. Paul urged the brothers to “speak consolingly to the

depressed souls," not suspiciously thinking that they had done something wrong and were spiritually sick. (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Though depression is sometimes associated with wrongdoing and guilt, that is not the case with those serving God out of a pure heart. Their worship, perhaps rendered with extreme difficulty, is acceptable to Jehovah. He loves them and comes to their aid with needed help and comfort.—Psalm 121:1-3.

Those making up the remnant of spiritual Israel were sorely distressed by trials in the year 1918. (Compare Galatians 6:16.) Their preaching organization was nearly destroyed, some of them were wrongfully imprisoned, and many of their former associates became disloyal, opposing apostates. Moreover, the faithful anointed ones did not understand why God had allowed all of this to happen. For

some time 'they sowed seed with tears,' but they did not give up. They kept on serving Jehovah and also examined themselves. The result? They 'came in with a joyful cry, carrying along their sheaves.' (Psalm 126:5, 6) The anointed now realize that God allowed such trials in order to purify them for their approaching international harvest work.

If we should become distressed because we are beset by various trials, we can benefit from the experience of the anointed remnant. Instead of giving up, let us keep on doing what is right, even if we must do so while weeping. In time, there will be a way out of our trials, and we will 'come in with a joyful cry.' Yes, joy—a fruit of God's holy spirit—will be ours for having endured our trials. For us, Jehovah will surely prove to be "the God of all comfort."

ANNUAL MEETING

OCTOBER 3, 1992

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the members of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania will be held on October 3, 1992, at the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, New Jersey. A preliminary meeting of the members only will convene at 9:30 a.m., followed by the general annual meeting at 10:00 a.m.

The members of the Corporation should inform the Secretary's Office now of any change in their mailing addresses during the past year so that the regular letters of notice and proxies can reach them shortly after August 1.

The proxies, which will be sent to the members along with the notice of the annual meeting, are

to be returned so as to reach the Office of the Secretary of the Society not later than August 15. Each member should complete and return his proxy promptly, stating whether he is going to be at the meeting personally or not. The information given on each proxy should be definite on this point, since it will be relied upon in determining who will be personally present.

It is expected that the entire session, including the formal business meeting and reports, will be concluded by 1:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter. There will be no afternoon session. Because of limited space, admission will be by ticket only. No arrangements will be made for tying in the annual meeting by telephone lines to other auditoriums.

Gathering “the Desirable Things” in P · O · L · A · N · D

POLAND is said to be a Catholic country. According to official statistics, 93 percent of the population belong to the Catholic Church. The recent political and social changes occurring there, however, have had a remarkable impact on the people and on their religious life. Surveys indicate that only about 50 percent of those polled consider themselves to be practicing Catholics.

In May 1989, Jehovah's Witnesses were legally recognized as a religious organization in Poland. Since then, some 11,000 new ones have joined their ranks as publishers of the good news of the Kingdom. Now more than 106,000 Kingdom publishers are associated with over 1,300 congregations, and 200,422 persons attended the 1991 observance of the Memorial of Christ's death. Thus, the foretold gathering of ‘the desirable things of the nations’ is taking place in Poland. (Haggai 2:7) Recently, headline-making international conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses were held in Poland. But a look at some of the smaller towns in the country will especially show how the gathering work is proceeding in that land.

Pioneers Open the Way

Sztum is a town of about 10,000 situated near the point where the Vistula River empties into the Baltic Sea. This town has long been considered rocky territory as far as the preaching work is concerned. In 1987 there were only eight publishers in the area. However, things began to change when pio-

neers, or full-time Kingdom proclaimers, arrived. At the fifth meeting, held in a movie theater, 100 interested people were in attendance! A congregation was formed after two years of diligent effort. Now the 90 publishers have their own Kingdom Hall, and 150 persons attend their meetings regularly.

As expected, opposition soon came from the Catholic Church. A “specialist” nun gave some defamatory speeches about the Witnesses, accusing them of teaching false doctrines. But as so often happens, this boomeranged. Her lectures only made people want to find out the facts. Many of them have learned the truth and are now regular pioneers! They say: ‘While learning the truth, we thought everybody wanting to be a Witness had to be like his teacher, which meant becoming a pioneer.’ So the pioneer spirit pervades the whole congregation.

As a result, some 180 home Bible studies are being conducted in the area. By means of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, some have even been taught to read. At the same time, they have learned the truth. Regular ten-minute Bible studies are being conducted with a group of local prison inmates when they come out to clean the streets. One of them came to the defense of a Witness when a woman passing by started to abuse her. He ran up to the sister, took the *Live Forever* book from her hands, held it up, and asked the abusive woman: “Can't you read? What's written here? You can live forever in Paradise on

earth! Have you ever heard of such a thing? Why in the world are you insulting God and his worshipers?"

Talk of the Town

Kruszwica, Poland's onetime legendary capital, is a Catholic stronghold. Even by the middle of 1990, there were only a few Witnesses among its 9,300 inhabitants. But Jehovah's rich blessing was upon the efforts of the Kingdom proclaimers.

Noticing the hypocrisy of their spiritual leaders, more and more people—especially young ones—turned to the Witnesses for answers. In a very short time, 20 home Bible studies were started. The parish priest gave some vicious sermons about Jehovah's Witnesses, but this did not discourage sincere people from attending their meetings. The Witnesses became the main topic of conversation in the shops and parks and even in the church. Half a year later, two large book-study groups were formed. Kruszwica now has a very active congregation of some 35 worshipers of Jehovah. They are conducting 75 home Bible studies and are busily bringing in "the desirable things" that were once held captive by false religion.

Among these was 23-year-old Bogdan, a member of a staunchly Catholic family. He recalls: "I used to drink, smoke, and live an immoral life. I was known as a punk and an anarchist, and no one seemed to care. When I began to study the Bible, however, my mother threatened to poison herself. Not being able to stand the pressure, I cut off all contact with the Witnesses. Later, with the

loving help of special pioneers, I was able to break free from all the bad practices. Having been baptized at the 1991 'Lovers of Freedom' District Convention, I have chosen the full-time ministry as my goal in life and have been auxiliary pioneering since then."



Twenty-one-year-old Sławomir was entangled in spiritism and Satanism, which he rejected once he saw that the Bible condemns such practices. "But Satan persisted," he says. "One night the record player began playing without being switched on, and I heard satanic music, although I had removed from the house everything related to Devil worship. I prayed to Jehovah, and he helped me regain spiritual balance. A psychiatrist I used to consult at the urgings of my parents recognized radical

improvements in my condition and concluded that I was healthy. He wrote on my chart: 'Cured by Jehovah's Witnesses.'

Resisting the Worldly Spirit

Southwest of Kruszwica is Środa Śląska. "The desirable things" are also making their appearance in this little town of 9,000 people. Four years ago, there was only one of our spiritual sisters living there. Now, however, the number of Kingdom publishers has climbed to 47. Many of the Witnesses were once trapped in the snares of spiritism, drug addiction, and immorality. They feel that this was largely due to the spiritual vacuum existing in the church that is only able to condemn people spiritually, not help them. The Witnesses are offering the people real relief.

The young ones in the congregation have made school their personal territory for the preaching work. "My schoolmates often say to me: 'You are wasting your youth,'" reports 18-year-old Kasia. "But I have avoided many troubles, and my life has become meaningful. I conduct several Bible studies at school and neglect neither my homework nor my personal study. Girls who say I am 'wasting my youth' are already mothers, grappling with loads of problems."

Watch Tower publications have become very popular in the local schools. For example, a teacher of Polish told her students to follow the plain language of our journal *Awake!* as a model in writing their essays. Auxiliary pioneer Ewa finds the brochure *School and Jehovah's Witnesses* very useful. "I really appreciate this publication. My teachers are well acquainted with it. I've never had any problem in getting permission to be excused from classes in order to attend large conventions." Such a fine atti-

tude on the part of young people makes Jehovah's heart rejoice.—Proverbs 27:11.

Hardened Convicts Changed

To the east of Środa Śląska is Strzelce Opolskie, where there are two prisons. One is a high-security prison for incorrigible offenders. The Witnesses regularly visit these two penal institutions to bring the truth to the prisoners, many of whom were also captives of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion.—Revelation 18:1-5.

The Witnesses study the Bible with individual inmates and small groups of prisoners, some of whom have been baptized. Although they must serve their sentences, they are actively preaching the good news to other inmates. One prisoner preparing for baptism made such remarkable changes that the prison authorities allowed him to go home once a week. Others have written to their families expressing their determination to leave prison, not as criminals, but as Jehovah's Witnesses.

The chief officer of one of the prisons complained that Catholic priests used to come but accomplished nothing. He asked the Witnesses: "What enables you to change and rehabilitate these people?" A letter from a prisoner to his family answers: "Here in prison, Jehovah's Witnesses have told me about God's wonderful promise concerning the new government, Jehovah's Kingdom, that is soon to rule over the earth. Here I have had time to analyze my previous way of life in the light of the Bible. Having drawn bitter conclusions, I have been seized with the desire to become a free man and to find myself a subject of God's Kingdom. Today I am a baptized Witness of Jehovah."

In the other prison, many are serving 25-year terms for murder. A regular Bible study is being conducted with 12 men. One of them dedicated his life to Jehovah and

was baptized, and others are planning to take these steps. Appreciating the good results of the educational methods used by Jehovah's Witnesses, the chief prison officer said: "I don't have 12 convicts. I have 600. Please help me rehabilitate them. I will supply you with everything you need, but please prepare the program. Take care of them!"



**Preaching the Kingdom message
in Kruszwica, Poland**

That was exactly what the brothers did. They presented a Bible program dealing with the purpose of life, the hope for the future, and the importance of giving up wrong practices. They also related experiences of a former prisoner who became one of Jehovah's Witnesses and in time was appointed a congregation elder. The Witnesses also gave highlights from the life stories of a diamond thief and a drug abuser who have learned the truth.* The 20 prisoners

* See *Awake!* of October 8, 1983, pages 16-19, and November 22, 1987, pages 21-3.

present found the program most interesting and asked many questions, some even requesting Bible studies.

Faith and Endurance Tested

Lubaczów is a small town of 12,000 people near the border of Ukraine. The evangelizing work there gained impetus in 1988 when pioneers moved in to help the 12 local publishers. Now there are 72 active Kingdom publishers, and 150 persons attended the 1991 Memorial observance in the newly built Kingdom Hall.

In June 1991, Pope John Paul II visited Lubaczów. But that did nothing to bolster genuine faith among the people. Many of them are assailed with doubts and questions about the purpose of life and the hope for the future. When they are unable to get satisfying answers from the clergy, they turn to Jehovah's Witnesses. Though the people may at first have pangs of conscience for turning their backs on their religion, the Bible truth they learn helps them to see that they have made the right decision.

Typical is the experience of Honorata, now a regular pioneer. About a year ago, she asked the priest at confession what God's name was. "God is love—that's his most beautiful name," answered the priest. After a while, he added: "You are like a bucket of crystal-clear water into which someone has dropped ink. The effects are irreversible." She thus got her answer. "I decided then that I would become one of Jehovah's Witnesses," says Honorata. "That too is irreversible."

Nearly everyone who learned the truth in Lubaczów had to endure strong, even fanatic, opposition. But that did not deter them from embracing Bible truth and taking their stand for Jehovah.

Elżbieta relates: "At first they beat me at

home. Then my family burst into the Kingdom Hall. . . . They took me home and began 'administering justice' with a knotty stick. I was beaten and kicked from head to toe just because of associating with the Witnesses. I was beaten so hard that I needed urgent medical treatment and was sent to the hospital. Jehovah helped me, and I recovered. My family rejected me. When I mentioned this to the priest, he belittled me, saying: 'You've come to complain just because of a few slaps?'

Another sister recalls: "Every year I used to go to Częstochowa to walk the Way of the Cross, which I considered a duty for every sincere Catholic. I still have scars on my knees." At 18 she learned the truth and told the priest and her family that she was not going to return to church. She was severely beaten—"so badly that I had a brain con-

cussion," she reports. "But in the hospital I recovered sufficiently to attend the 'Lovers of Freedom' District Convention. I wept for joy when I saw true unity and love among people without fanaticism—things I never saw in Częstochowa. How happy I am that I have experienced Jehovah's goodness and have learned to trust him." Jehovah strengthens and upholds those who throw their burdens upon him.—Psalm 55:22.

Many captives of Babylon the Great are now heeding the call to "get out of her" in this Catholic country, even as they are elsewhere. If it is Jehovah's will, his fearless people will continue to gather in yet more of "the desirable things" scattered throughout Poland. Surely, many will yet respond to the call: "'Come!' And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life's water free."—Revelation 18:4; 22:17.

FOLLOW THE SURPASSING WAY OF LOVE

JEHOVAH GOD is the personification of love. (1 John 4:8) His Son, Jesus Christ, said that we should love God and our neighbor. (Matthew 22:37-40) Why, God operates the whole universe on the basis of this quality! So for eternal life anywhere, we must follow the way of love.

God showed love for the nation of Israel but later rejected that organization for unfaithfulness. He then identified the congregation of Jesus' disciples as His new organization. How? By special manifestations of holy spirit empowering them to speak in

tongues and to prophesy. Thus, at Pentecost 33 C.E., 3,000 Jews and proselytes became believers and left the old organization for God's new one. (Acts 2:1-41) Since the spirit's gifts were thereafter bestowed through Jesus' apostles, such manifestations ceased at their death. (Acts 8:5-18; 19:1-6) But by then the gifts had proved that God's favor was on spiritual Israel.—Galatians 6:16.

Miracles resulting from gifts of the spirit were beneficial. However, displaying love or unselfish concern for others is more

important than having the spirit's gifts. The apostle Paul showed this in his first letter to the Corinthians (c. 55 C.E.). In it he spoke of love as "a surpassing way." (1 Corinthians 12:31) That way is discussed in 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

Without Love, We Are Nothing

Paul reasoned: "*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I have become a sounding piece of brass or a clashing cymbal.*" (1 Corinthians 13:1) Without love, it would mean nothing to speak in a spirit-imparted human language or a heavenly angelic tongue. Paul preferred to speak five edifying words instead of ten thousand in a tongue people did not understand. (1 Corinthians 14:19) A loveless person would be like "a sounding piece of brass"—a noisy, annoying gong—or an unmelodious "clashing cymbal." Loveless speaking in tongues was not a soothing, spiritually upbuilding way to glorify God and help his people. Today, we show love by using understandable speech in the Christian ministry.

The apostle next said: "*If I have the gift of prophesying and am acquainted with all the sacred secrets and all knowledge, and if I have all the faith so as to transplant mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*" (1 Corinthians 13:2) Miraculous prophesying, special comprehension of sacred secrets, and spirit-imparted knowledge might benefit others but not those possessing such gifts if the gifted ones were unloving. Paul used special understanding of sacred secrets to help others, and a gift of knowledge enabled him to foretell survival of shipwreck victims. (Acts 27:20-44; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2) Yet, if he had 'all knowledge and all faith' but was unloving, he would be nothing in Jehovah's sight.

Today, Jehovah's spirit enables his Witnesses to understand Bible prophecies and sacred secrets and guides them in imparting such knowledge to others. (Joel 2:28, 29) The spirit also produces faith needed to surmount mountainous obstacles. (Matthew 17:20) Since the spirit does these things, it is wrong to seek personal glory from them. We amount to nothing unless we do things for God's glory and with love for him and fellow humans.—Galatians 5:6.

Not Profited by Loveless Sacrifice

Paul said: "*If I give all my belongings to feed others, and if I hand over my body, that I may boast, but do not have love, I am not profited at all.*" (1 Corinthians 13:3) Without love, Paul would not profit if he gave everything he owned to feed others. God rewards us for the love behind our gifts, not for their material value or because we seek glory as givers, like lying Ananias and Sapphira. (Acts 5:1-11) Paul set a fine example by lovingly giving of himself in connection with a relief ministry for believers in Judea.—1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-24; 9:7.

Even loveless martyrdom as a witness to the truth means nothing to God. (Proverbs 25:27) Jesus spoke of his sacrifice but did not boast about it. Instead of boasting he gave himself willingly out of love. (Mark 10:45; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 10:5-10) His spiritual brothers 'present their bodies a living sacrifice' in God's service not in self-glorifying martyrdom but in unspectacular ways that glorify Jehovah and demonstrate their love for him.—Romans 12:1, 2.

Some Ways That Love Will Make Us Act

Paul wrote: "*Love is long-suffering and kind.*" (1 Corinthians 13:4a) For many, God's long-suffering since Adam's sin has

meant repentance leading to salvation. (2 Peter 3:9, 15) If we have love, we will patiently teach others the truth. We will avoid emotional outbursts and will be considerate and forgiving. (Matthew 18:21, 22) Love is also kind, and we are drawn to God because of his kindness. His spirit's fruit of kindness keeps us from being more demanding of others than he is of us. (Ephesians 4:32) Love even makes us kind to unthankful people.—Luke 6:35.

Paul added: “*Love is not jealous, it does not brag, does not get puffed up.*” (1 Corinthians 13:4b) Jealousy is a work of the flesh that will exclude one from God’s Kingdom. (Galatians 5:19-21) Love keeps us from being jealous of another person’s possessions or favorable circumstances. If he receives a service privilege we desired, love will make us rejoice with him, give him our support, and thank God that he can be used to benefit the congregation.

Since love “does not brag,” it does not move us to boast about what God lets us do in his service. Some Corinthians boasted as if they originated the spirit’s gifts, but these were from God, as are privileges in his modern-day organization. Instead of boasting about our standing in God’s organization, then, let us beware that we do not fall. (1 Corinthians 1:31; 4:7; 10:12) Love “does not get puffed up,” but an unloving person’s mind may be inflated with self-importance. Loving people do not feel superior to others.

—1 Corinthians 4:18, 19; Galatians 6:3.

Not Indecent, Selfish, Resentful

Love “*does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked.*” (1 Corinthians 13:5a) It promotes good manners, godly conduct, respect for authority, and decent behavior at Christian meetings. (Ephesians 5:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 14:40; compare Jude 4,

8-10.) Since love makes everyone feel needed, like all parts of the human body, a loving congregation is a place of peace and refuge. (1 Corinthians 12:22-25) Instead of selfishly ‘looking for its own interests,’ love causes us to sacrifice our rights at times and show interest in others and in their welfare. (Philippians 2:1-4) Love makes us ‘become all things to all sorts of people, that we might save some’ by our ministry.—1 Corinthians 9:22, 23.

Love “does not become provoked.” Fits of anger are works of the sinful flesh, but love makes us “slow about wrath.” (James 1:19; Galatians 5:19, 20) Even if we get justifiably angry, love does not let us remain provoked, thus giving place to the Devil. (Ephesians 4:26, 27) Especially must elders avoid anger if fellow believers fail in carrying out some suggestion.

Paul also said of love: “*It does not keep account of the injury.*” (1 Corinthians 13:5b) Love does not keep a list of wrongs, like entries in a ledger. It sees good in fellow believers and does not retaliate for real or imagined wrongs. (Proverbs 20:22; 24:29; 25:21, 22) Love helps us to “pursue the things making for peace.” (Romans 14:19) Paul and Barnabas had a dispute and went separate ways in God’s service, but love healed the breach and kept them from holding a grudge.—Leviticus 19:17, 18; Acts 15:36-41.

Disposed to Righteousness and Truth

Regarding love, Paul went on to say: “*It does not rejoice over unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth.*” (1 Corinthians 13:6) Some take such delight in unrighteousness that “they do not sleep unless they do badness.” (Proverbs 4:16) But in God’s organization we do not contend with one another or rejoice if one is ensnared by sin. (Proverbs 17:5; 24:17, 18) If

there had been enough love for God and righteousness in the Corinth congregation, immorality would not have been tolerated there. (1 Corinthians 5:1-13) Among other things, love for righteousness keeps us from enjoying television, motion picture, or theatrical portrayals of unrighteousness.

Love "rejoices with the truth." Here truth is contrasted with unrighteousness. This evidently means that love causes us to rejoice over the influence for righteousness that the truth has on people. We find joy in things that build people up and that advance the cause of truth and righteousness. Love prevents us from telling lies, gives us joy when the upright are proved innocent, and causes us to rejoice in the triumph of God's truth.—Psalm 45:4.

How Love Deals With All Things

Continuing his definition of love, Paul wrote: "*It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*" (1 Corinthians 13:7) 'Bearing all things,' love keeps out resentment as a good roof does rain. If anyone offends us but then asks forgiveness, love makes us bear injury, forgiving the offender instead of gossiping about matters. In love we try to 'gain our brother.'—Matthew 18:15-17; Colossians 3:13.

Love "believes all things" in God's Word and makes us grateful for spiritual food provided through "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47) Though we are not gullible, love prevents us from having an unbelieving heart and keeps us from imputing bad motives to fellow believers. (Ecclesiastes 7:21, 22) Love also "hopes all things" recorded in the Scriptures, such as truths regarding God's Kingdom. Moved by love, we hope and pray for the best outcome in trying situations. Love also moves us to

tell others the reason for our hope. (1 Peter 3:15) Additionally, love "endures all things," including sins against us. (Proverbs 10:12) Love for God also helps us to endure persecution and other trials.

Paul added: "*Love never fails.*" (1 Corinthians 13:8a) It can no more end or fail than Jehovah can. Since our eternal God is the epitome of love, this quality will never cease. (1 Timothy 1:17; 1 John 4:16) The universe will always be governed by love. Let us therefore pray that God will help us to overcome selfish traits and display this unfailing fruit of his spirit.—Luke 11:13.

Things Due to Pass Away

Pointing ahead, Paul wrote: "*But whether there are gifts of prophesying, they will be done away with; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will be done away with.*" (1 Corinthians 13:8b) 'Gifts of prophesying' enabled their possessors to utter new prophecies. Though such gifts passed away after the Christian congregation was established as God's organization, his prophetic power never passes away, and his Word contains all the prophecy we now need. Spirit-imparted ability to speak in tongues also ceased, and special knowledge was "done away with," as foretold. But Jehovah's complete Word supplies what we need to know for salvation. (Romans 10:8-10) Moreover, God's people are filled with his spirit and bring forth its fruitage.

Paul continued: "*For we have partial knowledge and we prophesy partially; but when that which is complete arrives, that which is partial will be done away with.*" (1 Corinthians 13:9, 10) The gifts of knowledge and prophecy were incomplete. Apparently, such prophecy did not go into detail, and each prophet was partial in dis-

closing the future, lacking perfect knowledge about what he foretold. Now, however, the understanding of prophecy is gradually becoming complete. For instance, facts fulfilling Bible prophecy confirm that Jesus received kingly authority over mankind in 1914. Since then, we have been in "the time of the end" and are enjoying continual growth in spiritual knowledge and understanding of Bible prophecy. (Daniel 12:4) Hence, we are coming to perfect knowledge and "that which is complete" must be at hand.

The Greatest Quality Remains

Alluding to the congregation's progress, Paul wrote: "*When I was a babe, I used to speak as a babe, to think as a babe, to reason as a babe; but now that I have become a man, I have done away with the traits of a babe.*" (*1 Corinthians 13:11*) Since a babe acts on the basis of limited knowledge and physical development, it can be swayed to and fro, as though being rocked in a cradle. But a man is much more developed physically, has greater knowledge, and usually is not easily swayed. He has abolished childhood thoughts, attitudes, and methods. Similarly, after God's earthly organization grew out of its infancy, He judged that it did not need the spirit's gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge. Though present-day members of the congregation, now in its old age, also feel no need for such gifts, they are glad to serve God under the guidance of his spirit.

Paul added: "*For at present we see in hazy outline by means of a metal mirror, but then it will be face to face. At present I know partially, but then I shall know accurately even as I am accurately known.*" (*1 Corinthians 13:12*) During the congreg-

ation's infancy, it was not God's time to reveal certain things. Hence, they were seen in hazy outline, as though Christians were looking into a metal mirror lacking a fine reflecting surface. (Acts 1:6, 7) But we are beyond a hazy view. Fulfillment now stares type and prophecy in the face, for this is God's time of revelation. (Psalm 97:11; Daniel 2:28) Though Paul himself knew God, the pinnacle of knowledge of Jehovah and the most intimate relationship with Him would come when the apostle would be resurrected to heavenly life, thus receiving the full reward of his Christian course.

Concluding his epitome of love, Paul wrote: "*Now, however, there remain faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*" (*1 Corinthians 13:13*) Despite the absence of the spirit's miraculous gifts, the congregation now has more complete knowledge and reason for richer faith, hope, and love. It has faith that everything God has promised is as good as fulfilled. (Hebrews 11:1) Features of faith will end as things foretold in God's Word are realized. Aspects of hope will cease when we see hoped-for things. But love will remain forever. Hence, let all of Jehovah's Witnesses continue to follow the surpassing way of love.

In Our Next Issue

Life—A Gift From God

How Are You Running
in the Race for Life?

"Return to Me,
and I Will Return to You"

Like doves flying to their dovecotes

Doves were perhaps among the first birds domesticated by man. Thousands of years ago, Egyptians—with an eye to a year-round food supply—erected dovecotes near their homes.

The meat of the birds was much appreciated, and their dung was used for manure. By the Middle Ages, dovecotes were such coveted possessions that in some countries only noblemen or religious orders were allowed to possess them.

Although chickens have now replaced pigeons as sources of meat on most tables, some ancient dovecotes can still be encountered. The dovecotes depicted here are found in Egypt.

Returning en masse in the evening, a veritable cloud of birds descends on the dovecote. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah referred to this when he asked: "Who are these that come flying just like a cloud, and like doves to their birdhouse holes?" As another translation puts it: "Who are these that sail along like clouds, that fly like doves to their dovecotes?"—Isaiah 60:8; *The New English Bible*.

The answer is found today in the hundreds of thousands of God-fearing people flocking to Jehovah's organization. In the Kingdom Halls of Jehovah's Witnesses, they learn to hope in God. (Isaiah 60:9) Among God's people, they discover that spiritual values, a living faith, and wholesome companionship impart a sense of peace and security similar to that found by the dove in its dovecote.



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"Return to Me
and I Will Return to You"