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DO YOU KNOW GOD BY NAME?

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

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Can You Know God by Name?

Being invited to greet and address an important person by name is an honor. Dignitaries are often addressed by titles, such as “Mr. President,” “Your Majesty,” or “Your Honor.” So if someone in high station told you, “Please, just call me by my name,” you would no doubt feel privileged.

THE true God tells us in his written Word, the Bible: “I am Jehovah. That is my name.” (Isaiah 42:8) Although he also has many titles, such as “Creator,” “Almighty,” and “Sovereign Lord,” he has always honored his loyal servants by letting them address him by his personal name.

For example, the prophet Moses once began to implore God by saying: “Excuse me, Jehovah.” (Exodus 4:10) At the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, King Solomon opened his prayer with the words: “O Jehovah.” (1 Kings 8:22, 23) And when the prophet Isaiah addressed God on behalf of the peo-

ple of Israel, he said: “You, O Jehovah, are our Father.” (Isaiah 63:16) Clearly, our heavenly Father invites us to address him by name.

While *addressing* Jehovah by name is important, truly *knowing* him by name involves more. Regarding an individual who loves him and trusts in him, Jehovah promises: “I shall protect him because he has come to know my name.” (Psalm 91:14) Clearly, knowing God’s name must embrace a wealth of meaning, since it is a key factor in receiving God’s protection. What, then, would be required for you to know Jehovah by name?



Shrine of the Book, Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

What Knowing God's Name Involves

DOES your name have a particular meaning? In some parts of the world, it is the custom to give a child a name that is full of meaning. The name chosen may reflect the parents' beliefs and values or their hopes and dreams for the child's future.

The practice of giving names that are rich in meaning is not new. In Bible times, personal names were usually given because of the meaning they conveyed. Names could indicate a person's expected role in life. For example, when Jehovah told David about the future role of his son Solomon, He said: "Solomon [from a root meaning "Peace"] is what his name will become, and peace and quietness I shall bestow upon Israel in his days." —1 Chronicles 22:9.

Sometimes Jehovah gave a new name to a person who was to have a new role. The barren wife of Abraham received the name Sarah, meaning "Princess." Why? Jehovah explained: "I will bless her and also give you a son from her; and I will bless her and she shall become nations; kings of peoples will come from her." (Genesis 17:16) Clearly, understanding why Sarah received a new name would involve understanding her new role.

What about the most important of all

names—Jehovah? What does it mean? When Moses asked God about His name, Jehovah replied: "I shall prove to be what I shall prove to be." (Exodus 3:14) Rotherham's translation renders it: "I Will Become whatsoever I please." Jehovah's name reveals that he is a God of innumerable roles. To use a simple illustration: A mother may need to fill many roles each day in caring for her children—as a nurse, a cook, a teacher—according to the need that arises. It is similar with Jehovah, though on a more elevated level. In order to accomplish his loving purpose for mankind, he can become whatever he pleases, filling whatever role is needed. Knowing Jehovah by name thus involves understanding and appreciating his many roles.

Sadly, the beauty of God's personality is hidden from those who do not know him by name. By studying the Bible, however, you can appreciate Jehovah's roles as a wise Counselor, a powerful Savior, and a generous Provider, to name just a few. The rich meaning of Jehovah's name is, indeed, awe-inspiring.

Nevertheless, getting to know God by name is not always easy. The next article will show why.



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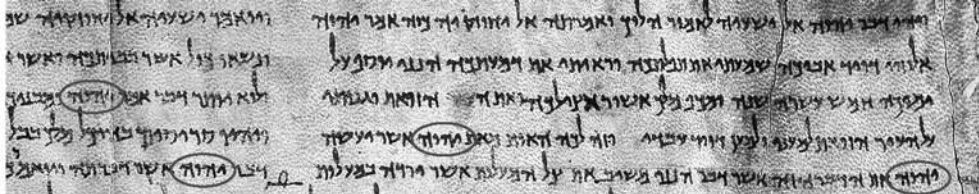
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Semimonthly

ENGLISH



A PORTION OF ISAIAH IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS, WITH THE DIVINE NAME HIGHLIGHTED

The Challenge of Knowing God by Name

THERE is someone who wants to prevent you from knowing Jehovah's name and enjoying a close relationship with Him. Who is this evil foe? The Bible explains: "The god of this system of things has blinded the minds of the unbelievers." The god of this present ungodly world is Satan the Devil. He wants to keep you in darkness so that your heart will not be illuminated with "the glorious knowledge of God." Satan does not want you to know Jehovah by name. How, though, does Satan blind people's minds?—2 Corinthians 4:4-6.

Satan has used false religion to hinder people from coming to know God by name. For example, in ancient times some Jews chose to ignore the inspired Scriptures in favor of tradition that called for avoiding the use of God's name. By the first centuries of our Common Era, Jewish public readers had evidently been instructed, not to read God's name as it appeared in their Holy Scriptures, but to substitute the word '*Adho-nai*', meaning "Lord." Doubtless, this practice contributed to a tragic decline in spirituality. Many lost out on the benefits of a close personal relationship with God. What, though, about

Jesus? What was his attitude toward Jehovah's name?

Jesus and His Followers Made God's Name Known

Jesus declared in prayer to his Father: "I have made your name known . . . and will make it known." (John 17:26) Jesus would undoubtedly have pronounced God's name on numerous occasions when he read, quoted, or explained portions of the Hebrew Scriptures containing that important name. Jesus would thus have used God's name just as freely as all the prophets did before him. If any Jews were already avoiding the use of God's name during the time of Jesus' ministry, Jesus would certainly not have followed their tradition. He strongly criticized the religious leaders when he said to them: "You have made the word of God invalid because of your tradition."—Matthew 15:6.

Faithful followers of Jesus continued to make God's name known after Jesus' death and resurrection. (See the box "Did the First Christians Use God's Name?") At Pentecost 33 C.E., the very day the Christian congregation was formed, the apostle Peter, quoting from a prophecy of Joel, said to a

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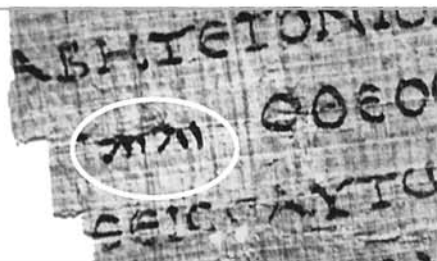
° Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

multitude of Jews and proselytes: “Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.” (Acts 2:21; Joel 2:32) Early Christians helped people from many nations to come to know Jehovah by name. Thus, in a meeting of the apostles and older men in Jerusalem, the disciple James said: “God . . . turned his attention to the nations to take out of them a people for his name.”—Acts 15:14.

Nevertheless, the enemy of God’s name

did not give up. Once the apostles were dead, Satan wasted no time in sowing apostasy. (Matthew 13:38, 39; 2 Peter 2:1) For example, the nominal Christian writer Justin Martyr was born about the time John, the last of the apostles, died. Yet, Justin repeatedly insisted in his writings that the Provider of all things is “a God who is called by no proper name.”

When apostate Christians made copies of the Christian Greek Scriptures, they evident-



Did the First Christians Use God’s Name?

During the days of Jesus’ apostles in the first century C.E., Christian congregations were formed in many lands. The members of those congregations regularly met together to study the Scriptures. Did those early Christians find Jehovah’s name in their copies of the Scriptures?

Since Greek had become the international language, many congregations used the Greek *Septuagint*, a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures completed in the second century B.C.E. Some scholars claim that from the time it was originally trans-

lated, the *Septuagint* had always replaced God’s name with the title *Kyri-os*, the Greek word for “Lord.” But the facts show otherwise.

The fragments illustrated here are portions of the Greek *Septuagint* that date from the first century B.C.E. They clearly show Jehovah’s name, represented in the Greek text by the four Hebrew letters יהוה (YHWH), or the Tetragrammaton. Professor George Howard wrote: “We have three separate pre-Christian copies of the Greek Septuagint Bible and in not a single instance is the Tetragrammaton translated *kyrios* or for that matter translated at all. We can now say with near certainty that it was a Jewish practice before, during, and after the New Testament period to write the divine name . . . right into the Greek text of Scripture.”

—*Biblical Archaeology Review*.

Did Jesus’ apostles and disciples use God’s name in their inspired writings? Pro-

fessor Howard notes: “When the Septuagint which the New Testament church used and quoted contained the Hebrew form of the divine name, the New Testament writers no doubt included the Tetragrammaton in their quotations.”

Therefore, we may safely conclude that the first Christians could read God’s name both in their translations of the Hebrew Scriptures and in their copies of the Christian Greek Scriptures.



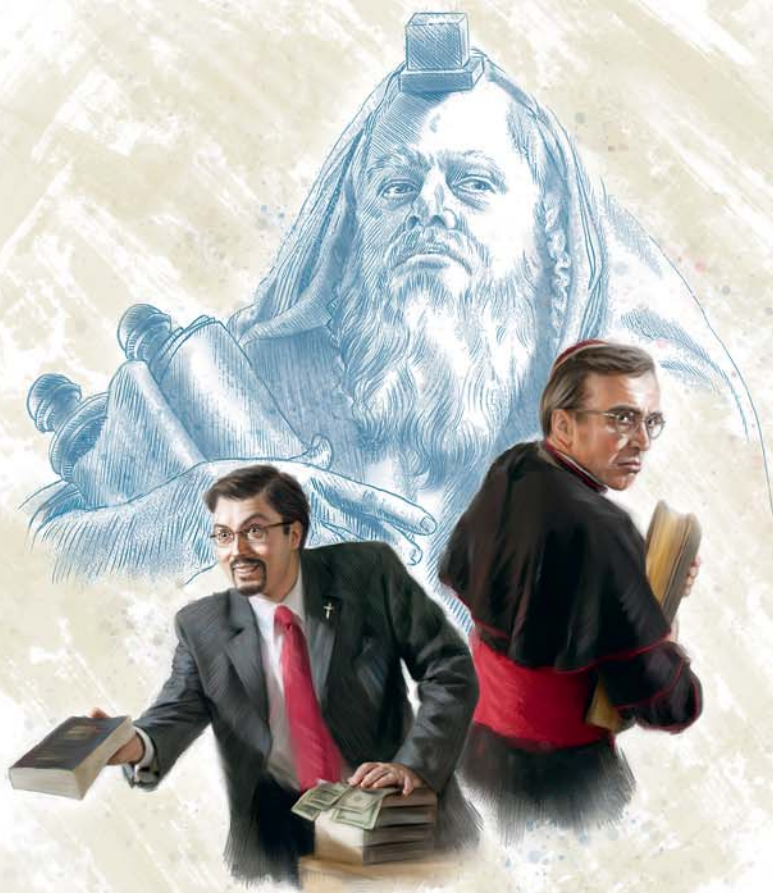
ly took Jehovah's personal name out of the text and substituted *Ky'ri-os*, the Greek word for "Lord." The Hebrew Scriptures did not fare any better. No longer reading God's name aloud, apostate Jewish scribes replaced the divine name in their Scriptures with '*Adho-nai*' more than 130 times. The influential translation of the Bible into Latin that was completed by Jerome in 405 C.E. and that came to be called the *Vulgate* similarly omitted the personal name of God.

Modern Attempts to Efface God's Name

Today, scholars are aware that Jehovah's personal name appears some 7,000 times in the Bible. Thus, some widely used translations, such as the Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*, the Catholic *La Biblia Latinoamérica* in Spanish, and the popular Reina-Valera version, also in Spanish, freely use God's personal name. Some translations render God's name "Yahweh."

Sadly, many churches that sponsor Bible translations pressure scholars into omitting God's name from their translations of the Bible. For example, in a letter dated June 29, 2008, to presidents of Catholic bishops' conferences, the Vatican stated: "In recent years the practice has crept in of pronouncing the God of Israel's proper name." The letter gives this pointed direction: "The name of God . . . is neither to be used or pronounced." Furthermore, "for the translation of the Biblical text in modern languages, . . . the divine *tetragrammaton* is to be rendered by the equivalent of *Adonai/Kyrios*: 'Lord.'" Clearly, this Vatican directive is aimed at eliminating the use of God's name.

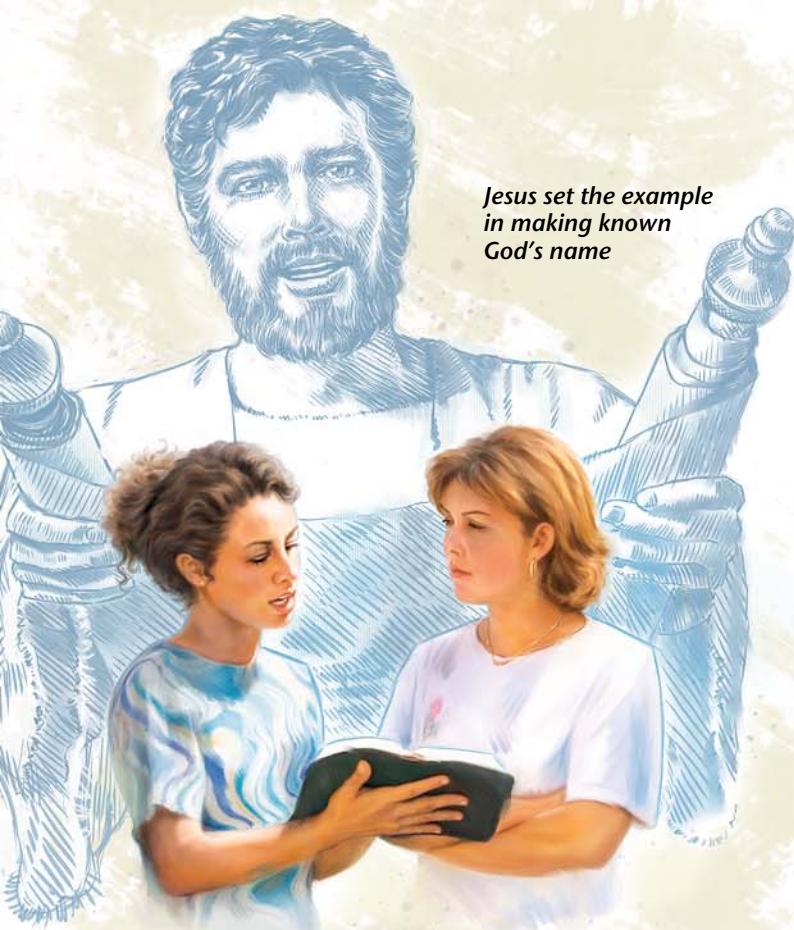
Protestants have been no less disrespectful in their treatment of Jehovah's name. A



Churches have suppressed God's name in the Bible because of Jewish tradition or even for the sake of profit

spokesman for the Protestant-sponsored *New International Version*, published in English in 1978, wrote: "Jehovah is a distinctive name for God and ideally we should have used it. But we put 2¼ million dollars into this translation and a sure way of throwing that down the drain is to translate, for example, Psalm 23 as, 'Yahweh is my shepherd.'"

In addition, churches have hindered Latin Americans from knowing God by name. Steven Voth, a translation consultant for the United Bible Societies (UBS), writes: "One of the ongoing debates in Latin American Protestant circles revolves around the use of the name *Jehová* . . . Interestingly enough, a very large and growing neo-pentecostal church . . .



*Jesus set the example
in making known
God's name*

said they wanted a Reina-Valera 1960 edition, but without the name *Jehová*. Instead, they wanted the word *Señor* [Lord].” According to Voth, the UBS rejected this request at first but later gave in and published an edition of the Reina-Valera Bible “without the word *Jehová*.”

Deleting God’s name from his written Word and replacing it with “Lord” hinders readers from truly knowing who God is. Such a substitution creates confusion. For example, a reader may not be able to discern whether the term “Lord” refers to Jehovah or to his Son, Jesus. Thus, in the scripture in which the apostle Peter quotes David as saying: “Jehovah said to my Lord [the resurrected Jesus]: ‘Sit at my right hand,’” many Bible translations read: “The Lord said to my Lord.” (Acts 2:34, *NIV*) In addition, David Clines, in his essay “Yahweh and the God of

Christian Theology,” points out: “One result of the absence of Yahweh from Christian consciousness has been the tendency to focus on the person of Christ.” Thus, many churchgoers are hardly aware that the true God to whom Jesus directed his prayers is a Person with a name—Jehovah.

Satan has worked hard at blinding people’s minds about God. Even so, you can become intimately acquainted with Jehovah.

You Can Know Jehovah by Name

To be sure, Satan has waged war on the divine name, and he has cleverly used false religion in the process. However, the reality is that no power in heaven or on earth can stop the Sovereign Lord Jehovah from making his name known to those who want to know the truth about him and his glorious purpose for faithful humans.

Jehovah’s Witnesses will be pleased to help you learn how to draw close to God through a study of the Bible. They follow the example of Jesus, who said to God: “I have made your name known to them.” (John 17:26) As you contemplate the scriptures that reveal the various roles that Jehovah has occupied for the blessing of mankind, you will come to know the many beautiful facets of his exalted personality.

The faithful patriarch Job enjoyed “intimacy with God,” and so can you. (Job 29:4) With knowledge of God’s Word, you can know Jehovah by name. Such knowledge will give you confidence that Jehovah will act in harmony with what he said was the meaning of his name—‘I Will Become whatsoever I please.’ (Exodus 3:14, footnote) Thus, he will surely fulfill all his good promises to mankind.



DID YOU KNOW?

Do ants really prepare their food in summer and gather their supplies in the harvest?

■ Proverbs 6:6-8 says: "Go to the ant, you lazy one; see its ways and become wise. Although it has no commander, officer or ruler, it prepares its food even in the summer; it has gathered its food supplies even in the harvest."

Several species of ant do, in fact, store food. Likely, the species Solomon referred to—and the most common in Israel today—is the harvester ant (*Messor semirufus*).

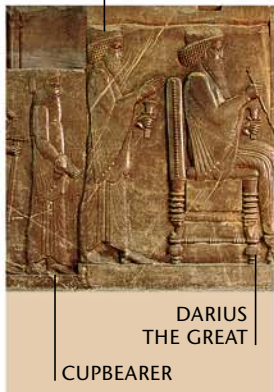
According to one source, "foraging harvester ants leave their nests during favorable weather to search for food . . . [and] collect seeds throughout the warmer months of the year." They may

pick seeds from plants or collect them from the ground. The insects build underground nests close to fields, granaries, or threshing floors, where grain can be found.

Within the nest itself, the ants store food supplies in a series of flat chambers connected by a network of galleries. Their granary chambers may measure up to five inches in diameter and half an inch in height. Well-supplied colonies of harvester ants are thus said to be capable of surviving "for over 4 months with no outside source of food or water."



CROWN PRINCE
XERXES



RELIEF FROM THE
PERSIAN PALACE OF
PERSEPOLIS

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What was involved in being cupbearer to the king?

■ Nehemiah was cupbearer to Persian King Artaxerxes. (Nehemiah 1:11) In the royal courts of the ancient Middle East, the king's cupbearer was no menial servant. On the contrary, he was a high-ranking official. Classical literature and a wealth of ancient pictorial representations of cupbearers allow us to draw a number of conclusions regarding Nehemiah's role at the Persian court.

The cupbearer would taste the king's wine to protect him from poisoning. The cupbearer thus had the king's unreserved confidence. "The great need for trustworthy court attendants is underscored by the intrigues which were endemic to the Achaemenid [Persian] court," says scholar Edwin M. Yama-

chi. The cupbearer was likely also a favorite official who had considerable influence with the king. His close proximity to the monarch on a daily basis may have enabled him to decide who had access to the king.

Such a position may have had a bearing on the success of Nehemiah's request to be allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls. Nehemiah must have been highly valued by the king. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* observes: "The king's only reply was 'How soon will you come back?'"—Nehemiah 2:1-6.



How to Help a Friend WHO IS ILL

HAVE you ever been at a loss for words when talking to a friend who is seriously ill? Rest assured that you can meet this challenge. How? There are no hard-and-fast rules. Cultural differences may be involved. People's personalities may also differ greatly. Thus, what may make one sick person feel better may not be helpful to another. And circumstances and feelings might vary considerably from one day to the next.

So the overriding need is for you to try to put yourself in the individual's place and find out what he or she really wants and

needs from you. How can you go about doing this? Here are a few suggestions that are based on Bible principles.

Be a good listener

BIBLE PRINCIPLES:

"Every man must be swift about hearing, slow about speaking."—JAMES 1:19.

"There is . . . a time to keep quiet and a time to speak."—ECCLESIASTES 3:1, 7.

■ When visiting a friend who is ill, listen attentively and sympathetically. Do not rush to provide advice or feel that you always have to come up with a solution. In a hurry to express yourself, you might inadvertently blurt out something that could hurt. Your ill friend is not necessarily looking for answers but for someone who will listen with an open heart and mind.

Let your friend express himself freely. Do not cut him short, trivializing his condition with clichés. "I had fungal meningitis and ended up losing my eyesight," says Emilio.* "Sometimes I feel really down, and friends

* Some names have been changed.



try to comfort me by saying: ‘You are not the only one with problems. There are people who are worse off.’ However, little do they know that minimizing my condition is of no help to me. On the contrary, it has an adverse effect, making me despondent.”

Allow your friend to pour out his heart without fear of criticism. If he tells you that he is afraid, acknowledge his feelings rather than simply telling him not to be fearful. “When I am apprehensive about my condition and break down in tears, it does not mean that I don’t trust in God anymore,” says Eliana, who is battling cancer. Make an effort to see your friend as he is, not as you want him to be. Take into account that he may be vulnerable now and is not his usual self. Be patient. Listen—even if it means hearing the same things over and over again. (1 Kings 19:9, 10, 13, 14) He may feel the need to share with you what he is experiencing.

Be empathetic and considerate

BIBLE PRINCIPLES:

“Rejoice with people who rejoice; weep with people who weep.”—ROMANS 12:15.

“All things . . . that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them.”

—MATTHEW 7:12.

■ Put yourself in your friend’s shoes. If he is preparing for surgery, undergoing treatment, or waiting for test results, he may be tense and tend to be quite sensitive. Try to recognize this and adapt to his mood swings. This may not be the time to ask too many questions, especially personal ones.

“Allow patients to talk about their illness when they want to and at their own pace,” says Ana Katalifós, a clinical psychologist. “When they are willing to chat, talk with them on whatever subject they may choose.

But when they are not in the mood for talking, you may just sit in silence, and a friendly hand to hold can do wonders. Or you may find that all they need is a shoulder to cry on.”

Respect your friend’s privacy. Author Rosanne Kalick, twice a cancer survivor, writes: “In taking your cues from the patient, assume that what is said to you is confidential. Unless you are asked to be the family spokesperson, don’t give out information. Ask the patient what he is willing to share.” Edson, a cancer survivor, says: “A friend spread the word that I had cancer and that I would not live very long. Mind you, I had just had surgery. I knew that I had cancer, but I was waiting for the results of the biopsy. There was no metastasis. But the harm was done. My wife was devastated by the thoughtless comments and questions from others.”

If your friend is weighing treatment options, do not be quick to say what you would do in his or her situation. Writer Lori Hope, a cancer survivor, says: “Before sending articles or news of any kind to a cancer patient or survivor, it’s best to ask whether they would like to receive such news. Otherwise, your well-meaning gesture could hurt your friend, and you might never know it.” Not everyone wants to be flooded with a huge amount of information about different kinds of medical treatments.

Even if you are a close friend, do not overstay your welcome. Your presence is very important, but your friend may not feel up to socializing with you. He may be tired and have little energy to talk or even to listen for very long. On the other hand, avoid giving the impression that you are in a hurry to leave. Your friend deserves to see how much you care.

Showing consideration involves using balance and good judgment. For example,

before preparing a meal for a sick friend or even bringing him flowers, you might inquire about any allergies that he may have. If you are sick, perhaps with a cold, the loving thing would be to wait until you are well before you visit your friend.

Be upbuilding

BIBLE PRINCIPLES:

"The tongue of the wise ones is a healing."

—PROVERBS 12:18.

"Let your utterance be always with graciousness, seasoned with salt."—COLOSSIANS 4:6.

■ If you keep a positive view of a friend who is ill, your words and actions will likely reveal it. Think of your friend as still being the same person and having the same qualities that made you feel drawn to him in the first place. Relate to him, not to his disease. If you talk to your friend as you would to a helpless victim, he may begin to see himself that way. Roberta, who has a rare genetic bone disease, says: "Treat me like a normal person. I am disabled, but I have my opinions and desires. Don't look at me with an air of pity. Don't talk to me as if I were stupid."

Remember that it is not only what you say but how you say it that matters. Even your tone of voice can have an effect. Shortly after he was diagnosed with cancer, Ernesto received an international phone call from a friend, who said: "I can't believe that *you* have *cancer!*" Ernesto recalls: "The intonation my friend gave to the 'you' and 'cancer' sent a chill down my spine."

Author Lori Hope gives another example: "Asking 'How are you?' can mean many different things to a patient. Depending on the questioner's tone of voice, body language, rapport, level of intimacy and, of course, timing, it can gently soothe a soul, inflict pain, or awaken a sleeping fear."

A friend who is ill likely wants to feel cared for, understood, and respected. So assure the individual that he or she is very important to you and that you will be there to help. Rosemary, a brain-tumor patient, says: "What really encouraged me was to hear my friends say that they loved me and that they would be there for me no matter what."—Proverbs 15:23; 25:11.

Be helpful

BIBLE PRINCIPLE:

"Let us love, neither in word nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth."—1 JOHN 3:18.

■ Needs will vary as your friend moves from diagnosis to treatment. But all during this time, he may need help. Rather than a general offer—"if you need anything, call me"—try to be specific. Offering to help with such daily activities as preparing meals, cleaning, washing, ironing, running errands, shopping, and driving your friend to and from the clinic or to the hospital for treatment are just a few of the practical ways to show that you care. Be dependable and punctual. Keep your word, and meet your commitments.—Matthew 5:37.

"Whatever we do, great or small, that bridges the gap between the patient's worlds of illness and health will be helpful," says author Rosanne Kalick. Sílvia, a two-time cancer survivor, agrees. "Having different friends drive me to another town daily for radiation was so relaxing and comforting! On the way, we talked about various subjects, and after the treatment, we always stopped at a coffee shop. This made me feel normal again."

But do not assume that you know exactly what your friend needs. "Ask, ask, ask," suggests Kalick. She adds: "In your desire to



help, don't take over. That can be counter-productive. If you let me do nothing, the message may be that I can do nothing. I need to feel competent. I need to feel that I am not a victim. Help me to do what I can."

Your friend likely needs to feel capable. Adilson, who has AIDS, says: "When you are ill, you don't want to be cast aside, as if you were good-for-nothing or totally incapable. You want to be of some help, even if it means doing minor tasks. It's so good to feel that you are still capable of doing something! It gives you the incentive to go on living. I like for people to let me decide—and then respect my decisions. Being ill does not mean that we can't go on fulfilling our function as father, mother, or whatever."



Remain connected

BIBLE PRINCIPLE:

"A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress."—PROVERBS 17:17.

■ If you are unable to visit your friend because of distance or some other circumstances, you can call him up for a friendly chat, write a note, or send an e-mail. What can



you write about? Alan D. Wolfelt, a grief counselor, suggests: "Reminisce about some of the fun times you've shared. Promise you'll write . . . again soon—and then follow through on that promise."

You need not hold back from reaching out to a friend who is ill, fearing that you may say the wrong thing or make mistakes. In many cases, it is your presence that really counts. In her book, Lori Hope writes: "All of us say and do things that can be misconstrued or can in some way inadvertently hurt someone. That's not the problem. The problem arises when you are so afraid of making a mistake that you stay away from someone who needs you."

A friend who is seriously ill may need you now more than ever. Prove to be "a true companion." Your efforts to help may not make his pain disappear, but you may well make a difficult situation more bearable for someone you love.



IMITATE THEIR FAITH

She Opened Her Heart to God in Prayer

HANNAH busied herself with preparations for the trip, trying to keep her mind occupied. It should have been a happy time; Elkanah, her husband, has customarily taken the whole family on these annual journeys to worship at the tabernacle in Shiloh. Jehovah meant for such occasions to be joyful. (Deuteronomy 16:15) And no doubt Hannah from her childhood had delighted in those festivals. But things had changed for her in recent years.

She was blessed to have a husband who loved her. However, Elkanah had another wife. Her name was Peninnah, and she seemed devoted to making Hannah's life miserable. Peninnah had figured out a way to make even these annual occasions a source of acute pain for Hannah. How? More to the point, how did Hannah's faith in Jehovah help her to cope with what often seemed like an impossible situation? If you face challenges that sap you of joy in life, you may find Hannah's story particularly moving.

"Why Does Your Heart Feel Bad?"

The Bible reveals two big problems in Hannah's life. She had little control over the first and none at all over the second. In the first place, she was in a polygamous marriage, with a rival wife who hated her. In the second place, she was barren. That condition is difficult for any wife who longs to bear children; but in Hannah's time and culture, it was a source of intense grief. Each family counted on offspring to carry on the family name. Barrenness seemed a bitter reproach and shame.

Hannah might have borne her burden with fortitude had it not been for Peninnah.

Polygamy was never an ideal situation. Rivalry, strife, and heartache were all too common. The practice was far from the standard of monogamy that God had set in the garden of Eden.* (Genesis 2:24) The Bible thus paints a grim portrait of polygamy, and the poignant depiction of life within Elkanah's household is one of the telling brushstrokes in that picture.

You see, Elkanah loved Hannah the most. Jewish tradition has it that he married Hannah first and that Peninnah came along some years later. At any rate, Peninnah, who was deeply jealous of Hannah, found many ways to make her rival suffer. Peninnah's great advantage over Hannah had to do with fertility. Peninnah produced one offspring after another, and her self-importance grew with each new child. Instead of feeling sorry for Hannah and comforting her in her disappointment, Peninnah played on that sensitive point. The Bible says that Peninnah vexed Hannah sorely "for the sake of making her feel disconcerted." (1 Samuel

* As to why God tolerated polygamy among his people for a time, see the article "Does God Approve of Polygamy?" on page 30 of the July 1, 2009, issue of *The Watchtower*.

1:6) Peninnah's actions were deliberate. She wanted to hurt Hannah, and she succeeded.

Peninnah's favorite opportunity, it seems, came at the time of the annual pilgrimage to Shiloh. To each of Peninnah's many children—"all her sons and her daughters"—Elkanah gave portions of the sacrifices offered to Jehovah. Childless Hannah, though, received only her own portion. Peninnah then so lorded it over Hannah and reminded her of her barrenness that the poor woman gave in to weeping and even lost her appetite. Elkanah could not help but notice that his beloved Hannah was distressed and was not eating, so he attempted to comfort her. "Hannah," he asked, "why do you weep, and why do you not eat, and why does your heart feel bad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"—1 Samuel 1:4-8.

To his credit, Elkanah discerned that Hannah's distress had to do with her barrenness. And Hannah surely treasured his kind assurances of love.* But Elkanah did not mention Peninnah's malice, nor does the record suggest that Hannah told him of it. Perhaps she saw that exposing Peninnah would only make her own situation worse. Would Elkanah really change things? Might not Peninnah's spite for Hannah only deepen, and would not the children and servants of that spiteful woman follow suit? Hannah would only feel more and more like an outcast in her own household.

Whether Elkanah knew the full scope of Peninnah's petty meanness or not, Jehovah God saw it all. His Word reveals the whole picture, thus providing a solemn warning to any who indulge in seemingly minor jealous and hateful acts. On the other hand, the in-

nocent and the peaceable, like Hannah, can find comfort in knowing that the God of justice sets all matters right in his own time and in his own way. (Deuteronomy 32:4) Perhaps Hannah knew as much, for it was to Jehovah that she turned for help.

"Self-Concerned No More"

In the early hours, the household was bustling. Everyone was getting ready for the trip, even the children. The journey to Shiloh would take the large family across more than 20 miles of the hilly country of Ephraim.* On foot, the trek would last a day or two. Hannah knew how her rival wife would act. However, Hannah did not stay home. She thus set a sterling example for worshippers of God to this day. It is never wise to let the misconduct of others interfere with our worship of God. Were we to do so, we would miss out on the very blessings that strengthen us to endure.

After a long day on winding mountain roads, the large family at last neared Shiloh. There it sat, on a hill nearly ringed by higher hills. As they approached, Hannah likely thought a great deal about what she would say in prayer to Jehovah. Once they arrived, the family shared a meal. Hannah pulled away from the group as soon as she could and made her way to the tabernacle of Jehovah. High Priest Eli was there, sitting near the doorpost of the temple. But Hannah's focus was on her God. Here at the tabernacle, she felt confident that she would be heard. If no one else could fully understand her plight, her Father in heaven could. Her bitterness welled up within her, and she began to weep.

As the sobs racked her body, Hannah spoke within herself to Jehovah. Her lips quivered

* Although the record says that Jehovah had 'closed up Hannah's womb,' there is no evidence that God was displeased with this humble and faithful woman. (1 Samuel 1:5) The Bible at times attributes to God events that he simply allowed to take place for a time.

* The distance is based on the likelihood that Elkanah's hometown, Ramah, was the same place that came to be known as Arimathea in Jesus' day.

as she mentally formed the words to express her pain. And she prayed at length, pouring out her heart to her Father. She did more, though, than just ask God to fulfill her desperate urge to bear offspring. Hannah was keen not only to receive blessings from God but also to give him what she could. So she made a vow, saying that if she had a son, she would dedicate the child to a life of service to Jehovah.—1 Samuel 1:9-11.

Hannah thus set an example for all of God's servants when it comes to prayer. Jehovah kindly invites his people to speak to him openly, without reservation, pouring out their concerns before him as a trusting child would to a loving parent. (Psalm 62:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17) The apostle Peter was inspired to write these comforting words about prayer to Jehovah: "Throw all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you." —1 Peter 5:7.

Humans, however, are not as understanding and empathetic as Jehovah is. As Hannah wept and prayed, she was startled by a voice. It was Eli, the high priest, who had been observing her. He said: "How long will you behave drunk? Put away your wine from upon you." Eli had noticed Hannah's quivering lips, her sobs, and her emotional demeanor. Instead of inquiring what was wrong, he jumped to the conclusion that she was drunk.—1 Samuel 1:12-14.

How hurtful for Hannah, in that moment of anguish, to have to face such a baseless accusation—and that from a man who held such an honored position! Nevertheless, she again set a sterling example of faith. She did not let a man's imperfections get in the way of her worship of Jehovah. She answered Eli respectfully and explained her situation. He replied, perhaps in a chastened and softer tone: "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of him."—1 Samuel 1:15-17.



Hannah was deeply troubled by her barrenness, and Peninnah did everything she could to make Hannah feel worse

What was the effect on Hannah of opening her heart to Jehovah and worshipping him there at his tabernacle? The account reads: "The woman proceeded to go on her way and to eat, and her face became self-concerned no more." (1 Samuel 1:18) *The Jerusalem Bible* here reads: "Her countenance was no more sad." Hannah felt relieved. She had, in a sense, transferred the weight of her emotional burden to shoulders infinitely broader and stronger than her own, those of her heavenly Father. (Psalm 55:22) Is any problem too heavy for him? No—not then, not now, not ever!

When we feel loaded down, overwhelmed, or overcome with sadness, we do well to follow Hannah's example and speak openly to the One whom the Bible calls the "Hearer of prayer." (Psalm 65:2) If we do so in faith, we too may find that our sadness is replaced by "the peace of God that excels all thought." —Philippians 4:6, 7.



Can you imitate Hannah's example of praying from the heart?

Though Eli misjudged her, Hannah did not take offense

"There Is No Rock Like Our God"

The next morning, Hannah returned to the tabernacle with Elkanah. She had likely told him of her request and her commitment, for the Mosaic Law said that a husband had the right to nullify a vow made by his wife without his consent. (Numbers 30:10-15) But that faithful man made no

Two Remarkable Prayers

Hannah's two prayers, recorded at 1 Samuel 1:11 and 2:1-10, contain a number of outstanding features. Consider just a few:

- Hannah addressed the first of the two prayers to "Jehovah of armies." She is the first person in the Bible record to be quoted as using that title. It occurs a total of 285 times in the Bible and refers to God's command over a vast array of spirit sons.
- Note that Hannah uttered the second prayer, not when her son was born, but when she and Elkanah offered him up for God's service at Shiloh. So Hannah's great joy lay, not in silencing her rival, Peninnah, but in being blessed by Jehovah.
- When Hannah said, "My horn is indeed exalted in Jehovah," she may have had in mind the ox, a powerful beast of burden that uses its horns mightily. Hannah was, in effect, saying: 'Jehovah, you make me strong.'—1 Samuel 2:1.
- Hannah's words about God's "anointed one" are considered prophetic. The expression is the same one rendered "messiah," and Hannah is the first person in the Bible record to use it to refer to a future anointed king.—1 Samuel 2:10.
- Jesus' mother, Mary, about 1,000 years later, echoed some of Hannah's expressions in her own words of praise to Jehovah.—Luke 1:46-55.

such move. Rather, he and Hannah worshipped Jehovah together at the tabernacle before heading homeward.

Just when did Peninnah realize that she had lost her power to upset Hannah? The account does not say, but the expression “self-concerned *no more*” suggests that Hannah’s spirits rose from that time forward. At any rate, Peninnah soon found that her spiteful conduct produced no effect. The Bible never mentions her name again.

As the months passed, Hannah’s peace of mind flowered into unbridled delight. She was pregnant! In her joy, Hannah never for a moment forgot where this blessing had come from. When the boy was born, she chose the name Samuel, which means “Name of God” and evidently refers to calling on the divine name, as Hannah had done. That year, she did not join Elkanah and the family for the trek to Shiloh. She stayed home with the child for three years, until he was weaned. Then she gathered her strength for the day on which she would have to part with her beloved son.

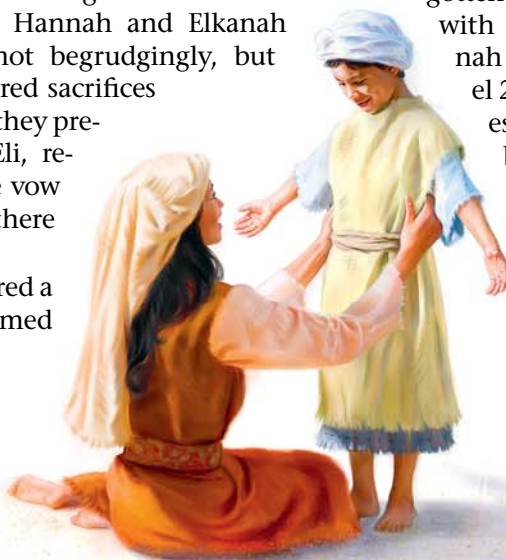
The parting could not have been easy. Of course, Hannah knew that Samuel would be well cared for in Shiloh, perhaps by the hands of some of the women who served at the tabernacle. Still, he was so young, and what mother does not long to be with her child? Nonetheless, Hannah and Elkanah brought the boy, not begrudgingly, but gratefully. They offered sacrifices at God’s house, and they presented Samuel to Eli, reminding him of the vow Hannah had made there years earlier.

Hannah then uttered a prayer that God deemed

worthy of inclusion in his inspired Word. As you read her words recorded at 1 Samuel 2:1-10, you will find the depth of her faith conveyed in every line. She praised Jehovah for his marvelous use of power—for his unmatched ability to humble the haughty, to bless the oppressed, and to end life or even to save it from death. She praised her Father for his unique holiness, his justice, and his faithfulness. With good reason, Hannah could say: “There is no rock like our God.” Jehovah is completely reliable, unchanging, and a refuge for all the oppressed and downtrodden who turn to him for help.

Little Samuel was certainly privileged to have a mother so filled with faith in Jehovah. Though he surely missed her as he grew up, he never felt forgotten. Year by year, Hannah would come back to Shiloh, bringing a little sleeveless coat for his service at the tabernacle. Every stitch bore evidence of her love and care for her son. (1 Samuel 2:19) We can just picture her putting the new coat on the boy, smoothing it out, and looking fondly at him while speaking kind, encouraging words. Samuel was blessed to have such a mother, and he grew up to be a blessing to his parents and to all Israel.

As for Hannah, she was not forgotten either. Jehovah blessed her with fertility, and she bore Elkanah five more children. (1 Samuel 2:21) Perhaps Hannah’s greatest blessing, though, was the bond between her and her Father, Jehovah, which grew ever stronger through the years. May the same happen to you, as you imitate the faith of Hannah.





Seven Steps to Beneficial Bible Reading

"Not only is the Bible the best-selling book of all time, it is the best-selling book of the year every year." —*TIME* MAGAZINE.

"I read the Bible sometimes, but I find it deadly boring."
—KEITH, A POPULAR MUSICIAN FROM ENGLAND.

IT IS ironic that many people have a Bible yet seem to gain little value from reading it. Others, though, treasure what they read in the Bible. For example, a woman named Nancy relates: "Since I began reading and meditating on the Bible early each morning, I feel ready to face whatever the day may bring. This routine has done more to relieve my bouts of depression than anything I have tried over the past 35 years."

Even if you have never read the Bible, does it intrigue you that some have received help from it? If you are already a Bible reader, would you like to benefit more from your reading? If so, try the seven steps described in this article.

STEP 1 Read for the right reason

■ You could read the Bible simply as beautiful literature or out of a sense of duty or with the idea that you might find guidance in this troubled world. You will benefit most, though, if your aim is to learn the truth about God. In addition, you will reap rich rewards if your motive is to see how the Bible's message can affect your life.

The Scriptures highlight the importance of reading for the right reason by comparing the Bible to a mirror: "If anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, this one is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, and off he goes and

immediately forgets what sort of man he is. But he who peers into the perfect law that belongs to freedom and who persists in it, this man, because he has become, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, will be happy in his doing it.”—James 1:23-25.

The man in this example looked at his face in the mirror but failed to adjust his appearance. Perhaps he only glanced at himself, or maybe he lacked the desire to make any changes. Similarly, we will benefit little if we read the Bible haphazardly or fail to apply what we read. In contrast, we can gain true happiness if we peer into the Bible with the idea of becoming “a doer,” allowing God’s thinking to mold our thoughts and actions.

STEP 2 Select a reliable translation

■ You may have many Bible translations to choose from in your language. While any translation of God’s Word can benefit you, some use archaic or scholarly language that may be hard to grasp. (Acts 4:13) Certain translations even change the Bible’s pure message by relying on traditions. For example, as we noted in the opening articles of this magazine, some have replaced God’s name, Jehovah, with titles, such as “God” or “Lord.” So when choosing a translation, look for one that accurately renders the Bible into easy-to-understand language that encourages reading.

Millions of readers the world over have found that the *New World Translation* does just that.* Consider the case of an elderly man in Bulgaria. He attended a meeting of Jehovah’s Witnesses and was given a copy of the *New World Translation*. Afterward, he

* The *New World Translation*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses, has been printed in whole or in part in 83 languages and is also available online in 11 languages at www.watchtower.org.

said, “I have read the Bible for many years, but I have never read a translation that is easier to understand and that goes right to the heart.”

STEP 3 Pray

■ You can gain more Bible understanding by asking the Author for his help, as did the psalmist who said: “Uncover my eyes, that I may look at the wonderful things out of your law.” (Psalm 119:18) Pray to God each time you read the Scriptures, asking him to help you to understand his Word. You can also express thanks for the Bible, for without it we would not know God.—Psalm 119:62.

Does God hear such prayers for help? Consider what happened to two teenage sisters in Uruguay. They were puzzled by what the Bible says at Daniel 2:44 and prayed that God send someone to help them understand it. While the girls’ Bible was still open, two of Jehovah’s Witnesses came to their door, read the exact verse the girls had prayed about, and explained that it describes that man-made governments would be replaced by God’s Kingdom.* The teenage sisters were convinced that God had answered their prayer for help.

STEP 4 Read daily

■ One book publisher noted that “there was an explosion of Bible sales” after the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001. Many turn to God’s Word only in times of distress. The Bible, however, encourages us to read it each day, for it says: “This book of the law should not depart from your mouth, and you must in an un-

* For more information about God’s Kingdom and what it will do, see chapter 8 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

dertone read in it day and night, in order that you may take care to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way successful and then you will act wisely.”—Joshua 1:8.

The value of regular Bible reading might be illustrated by a man who has had a heart attack and who decides to eat foods that are more nutritious. Would this regimen help him if he followed it only when he felt a sharp pain in his chest? No. He must consistently adhere to a healthy diet to gain the most benefit. Likewise, *daily* Bible reading will help you to “make your way successful.”

STEP 5 Vary your approach

■ Reading the Bible from Genesis to Revelation can work well, but you might find other approaches to be refreshing. Here are a few suggestions.

Follow a character. Read all the chapters or books that discuss a particular worshipper of God, such as the following:

- *Joseph*: Genesis 37-50.
- *Ruth*: Ruth 1-3.
- *Jesus*: Matthew 1-28; Mark 1-16; Luke 1-24; John 1-21.*

Focus on a topic. Read the scriptures related to it. For example, research the subject of prayer, and then read the Bible’s counsel on prayer as well as some of the many prayers recorded in the Bible.[#]

Read aloud. You can benefit greatly by reading the Bible aloud. (Revelation 1:3) You might even read aloud as a family, taking turns reading paragraphs or assigning characters to different family members. Some en-

* If you are new to Bible reading, try starting with the fast-paced record of Jesus’ ministry in the book of Mark.

[#] The book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* has helped many in a topical study of the Bible. Chapter 17, for example, discusses what the Scriptures say on the topic of prayer.

joy listening to a recording of the Bible. “I had a hard time getting started,” said one woman, “so I began by listening to recorded Bible reading. Now I find that the Bible is more exciting than a good novel.”

STEP 6 Meditate

■ The pace and distractions of modern-day life are not conducive to meditation. However, just as we have to digest our food in order to be nourished, we must meditate on what we read from the Bible in order to benefit. We do this by mentally reviewing what we read and by asking ourselves such questions as these: ‘What have I learned about Jehovah God? How does this apply to me? How might I use it to help others?’

Such thinking allows the Bible’s message to touch our heart and increases the joy we find in reading God’s Word. Psalm 119:97 says: “How I do love your law! All day long it is my concern.” Through meditation, the psalmist made the Scriptures his concern all day long. Doing so helped him to develop a deep love for what he learned.

STEP 7 Get help to understand

■ God does not expect us to grasp his Word fully on our own. Even the Bible acknowledges that it contains “some things hard to understand.” (2 Peter 3:16) The book of Acts describes an Ethiopian official who was perplexed by a portion of the Bible that he read. God sent one of His servants to help him, with the result that the Ethiopian man “kept going on his way rejoicing.”—Acts 8:26-39.

You too can profit more from Bible reading by getting help to understand what you read. Contact Jehovah’s Witnesses in your community, or write to the address on page 4 of this magazine for a free home Bible study.

Why Did Jesus Not Get Involved in POLITICS?

PICTURE a scene from the year 32 C.E. It is late in the day. Jesus, the foretold Messiah, has already won great renown for healing the sick and even resurrecting the dead. Today, he has awed a crowd of thousands by performing powerful signs and by sharing teachings of God. Now he divides the hungry people into smaller groups. He prays to Jehovah and miraculously feeds them all. Then, to avoid waste, he collects the leftovers. How do the people react?—John 6: 1-13.

Well, after seeing Jesus' miracles and his skillful leadership in managing the crowds and caring for their needs, the people conclude that Jesus would be a perfect king. (John 6:14) Their response is not surprising. Remember that they were desperate for a good, effective ruler; their beloved homeland was under the oppressive rule of a foreign power. So they put direct pressure on Jesus to join in the political process. With that background in mind, consider his reaction.

"Jesus, knowing they were about to come and seize him to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain all alone," says John 6:15. Jesus' stand could hardly have been more decisive. He resolutely refused to get involved in the politics of his homeland. His stand never changed. He said that his followers were to take the same position. (John 17:16) Why did he take this stand?

Why Did Jesus Choose Neutrality?

Jesus' neutrality regarding the politics of this world was well-grounded in Scriptural principles. Consider just two.

"Man has dominated man to his injury." (Ecclesiastes 8:9) That is how the Bible sums up the history of human rule. Remember, Jesus existed as a spirit in heaven long before he came to earth as a man. (John 17:5) He thus knew that man, however well-meaning, lacks the ability to care properly for the needs of billions of people; nor was he created by God to do so. (Jeremiah 10:23) Jesus knew that the solution to mankind's problems lay elsewhere—not in human governments.

"The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19) Do you find that statement startling? Many do. They think of sincere people who get involved in government because they want to make the world a better, safer place. Try as they might, though, even the most sincere rulers cannot overcome the influence of the one whom Jesus called "the ruler of this world." (John 12: 31; 14:30) That is why Jesus said to one worldly politician: "My kingdom is no part of this world." (John 18:36) Jesus was the prospective King of God's heavenly government. Had Jesus mixed in politics, he would have sacrificed his loyalty to his Father's government.

Did Jesus teach, then, that his followers have no obligation to earthly governments? On the contrary, he taught them how to find the right balance between their responsibilities toward God and their obligations toward secular governments.

Jesus Respected Governmental Authority

While Jesus was teaching in the temple, opposers tried to put him in an impossi-



ble situation by asking whether people should pay taxes. If Jesus said no, his answer would have been deemed seditious and might even have fueled a spirit of revolt among downtrodden people eager to throw off the yoke of Roman oppression. But if Jesus said yes, many would have felt that he condoned the injustices they faced. Jesus' answer was a masterpiece of balance. He said: "Pay back Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God." (Luke 20:21-25) So his followers have obligations to God and to Caesar—that is, the secular government.

Governments maintain a measure of order. They rightly require citizens to be honest, to pay taxes, and to uphold the law. What example did Jesus set in paying "Caesar's things to Caesar"? Jesus had been raised by parents who obeyed the law even when doing so was inconvenient. For example, Joseph and his pregnant wife, Mary, traveled some 90 miles to Bethlehem when a Roman census decree required it. (Luke 2:1-5) Like them, Jesus was law-abiding, even paying taxes that he did not really owe. (Matthew 17:24-27) He also carefully refrained from overstepping his authority in secular matters. (Luke 12:13, 14) We might say that Jesus respected the machinery of government, although he refused to operate it. What, though, did Jesus mean about paying "God's things to God"?

How Jesus Gave "God's Things to God"

Jesus was once asked which was the greatest of all the laws God gave to man. Christ answered: "'You must love

When people pressured Jesus to get involved in politics, he withdrew "into the mountain all alone"

Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. The second, like it, is this, ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37-39) Jesus taught that when it comes to paying “God’s things to God,” the first thing we owe Him is love—which involves our wholehearted, complete allegiance.

Can such love be divided? Can our loyalty be split, with some going to Jehovah God and his heavenly government and some going to an earthly government? Jesus himself stated the principle: “No one can slave for two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stick to the one and despise the other.” (Matthew 6: 24) Jesus was there speaking about dividing one’s loyalties between God and riches, but

he clearly felt that the same principle applied to involvement in politics—as did his followers in the first century.

The oldest available records show that Jesus’ followers in the ancient world did not take any active part in politics. Because they gave all their worship to the One whom Christ worshipped, they refused to pledge allegiance to Rome and its emperor, to take up military service, and to accept public office. They suffered all manner of hostility as a result. Their enemies sometimes accused them of hatred against mankind. Was that accusation a fair one?

True Christians Care About People

Recall Jesus’ reference to the second-greatest of God’s commandments—“You must love your neighbor as yourself.” Clear-

Do Jehovah’s Witnesses Help the Community?

Jehovah’s Witnesses are politically neutral. They are, however, deeply involved in helping people of all races and backgrounds in their community. Consider a few facts:

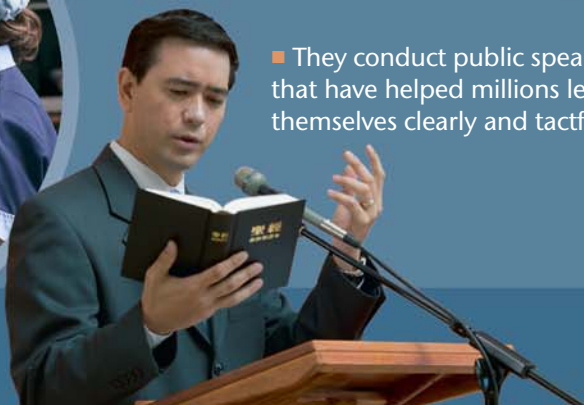
■ Jehovah’s Witnesses include over seven million volunteers who spend a total of more than 1.5 billion hours annually teaching people what the Bible contains and how it can help them overcome harmful habits and practices, build happy families, and otherwise improve their lives.

■ They print and distribute literature free of charge in over 500 languages, including some in which no other printed literature exists.

■ They conduct public speaking courses that have helped millions learn to express themselves clearly and tactfully.



24



ly, no genuine follower of Christ is free to hate mankind. Jesus loved people, expended himself for them, and helped them even with the most practical and mundane problems.—Mark 5:25-34; John 2:1-10.

For what, though, was Jesus primarily known? He was addressed, not as Healer, not as Feeder of Thousands, and not even as Resurrector of the Dead—although he did fill all those remarkable roles. But people called him Teacher, and rightly so. (John 1:38; 13:13) Jesus explained that a major reason he came to the earth was to teach people about the Kingdom of God.—Luke 4:43.

That is why Christ's genuine followers devote themselves to the same work that occupied their Master when he walked the earth—teaching people the good news about God's Kingdom. Jesus Christ commissioned all true Christians to teach people world-

wide about that subject. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) That incorruptible heavenly government will rule over all of God's creation, according to the law of love. It will accomplish God's will, even eliminating suffering and death. (Matthew 6:9, 10; Revelation 21:3, 4) No wonder the Bible refers to Christ's message as "good news"!—Luke 8:1.

So if you are looking for the genuine followers of Jesus Christ on earth today, how can you identify them? Will they be mixing in the politics of this world? Or are they making their main mission the same as that of Jesus—preaching and teaching about the Kingdom of God?

Would you like to learn more about the Kingdom of God and how it can affect your life now? We invite you to contact Jehovah's Witnesses locally or to visit their official Web site, www.watchtower.org.



■ They sponsor literacy programs that have helped tens of thousands of people worldwide learn to read and write.

■ They have organized over 400 Regional Building Committees worldwide to train volunteers in construction skills so that they can build centers of Bible education. In the past decade, over 20,000 houses of worship, or Kingdom Halls, have been built.

■ They are involved in disaster relief around the world, rendering aid to Witnesses and non-Witnesses. In a two-year period following a recent spate of hurricanes that struck the United States, Witness volunteers rebuilt over 90 Kingdom Halls and 5,500 homes.



LEFT TO RIGHT: WOODCUT OF DANIEL IN LIONS' DEN; GOLD-LEAF INITIAL CAPITAL; SHARPLY DEFINED TYPEFACES

All Bible photos: Courtesy American Bible Society Library; Koberger: Mit freundlicher Genehmigung der Linotype GmbH



An Early Publisher Promotes the Bible



KOBERGER

THE history of handwritten books and scrolls goes back thousands of years. Printed books, however, are not so old. The first known printed books were produced in China in 868 C.E. by using carved wooden blocks to make the impressions. In about 1455 in Germany, Johannes Gutenberg invented movable metal type and produced the first printed Bible in Latin.

DETAILS OF KOBERGER'S LATIN AND GERMAN BIBLES, SHOWING ILLUMINATED DECORATIONS AND COMMENTARY ON GENESIS 1:1



Only some years later, however, after book publishing had become an established industry, did the distribution of Bibles and other books really take off. Nuremberg became a focal point of the German publishing industry, and Anton Koberger, a native of that city, may have been the first large-scale, international Bible printer and publisher.

People of all cultures are indebted to the early Bible publishers, including Anton Koberger. Let us, then, take a closer look at Koberger and his work.

“The Care of One Book—The Bible”

Koberger opened Nuremberg’s first printery in 1470. At its peak, his firm operated 24 presses simultaneously, employing 100 printers, artisans, and other workers in Basel, Strasbourg, Lyon, and other European cities. Koberger published medieval Latin writings and much of the scientific literature of the day. During his career, he produced 236 separate works. Some ran to several hundred pages, all printed one at a time on hand-operated presses.

Koberger’s high-quality typefaces made his books famous for their beauty and readability. “Koberger always insisted on using freshly poured, sharply defined types,” writes historian Alfred Börckel. “Worn out letters were not allowed to be used.” In addition, many of Koberger’s books and Bibles included detailed woodcut illustrations.

From the beginning to the end of Koberger’s career, “the care of one book—the Bible—is seen throughout,” wrote his biographer, Oscar Hase. Koberger and his colleagues expended great effort to obtain the most accurate Bible texts available. This task must not have been easy, since many parchment manuscripts were the cherished treasures of particular monasteries and were lent out only briefly—if at all—for copying.

Latin and German Bibles

Koberger made 15 separate print runs of the *Biblia Latina* (Latin Bible), the first edition appearing in 1475. Some editions included depictions of Noah’s ark, the Ten Commandments, and Solomon’s temple. In 1483, Koberger printed his *Biblia Germanica* (German Bible), with a print run of about 1,500—a large number for the time. This Bible included over 100 woodcut illustrations to arouse readers’ interest, clarify the text, and remind those who could not read of familiar Bible stories. The pictures in this Bible significantly influenced later Bible illustrators, particularly in the case of German Bibles.

Koberger’s 1483 German Bible became popular, but as things turned out, it was the only German edition that Koberger would ever publish. Although his editors had carefully adjusted the wording to conform to the church-approved Latin *Vulgate*, he had based his version on a banned 14th-century Waldensian translation.* The following year, Pope Innocent VIII moved to destroy the Waldensian communities. Thereafter, church opposition to vernacular Bibles continued to increase. On March 22, 1485, Archbishop Berthold of Mainz, Germany, issued an edict condemning Bible translation into the German language. On January 4 of the following year, Berthold renewed the edict. In that toxic atmosphere, Koberger never again dared to print the Bible in German.

Nevertheless, Anton Koberger did not labor in vain. He took the lead in using the newly invented art of printing to make books of many kinds more affordable and available in Europe. Koberger’s work thereby helped to put the Bible into the hands of the common man.

* See the article “The Waldenses—From Heresy to Protestantism,” in the March 15, 2002, issue of *The Watchtower*.



OUR READERS ASK . . .

Did God have a beginning?

■ The Bible answers that God did not have a beginning. God has always existed. As difficult as the concept of God's eternity is to grasp, we cannot dismiss the idea simply because we cannot fully comprehend it.

How reasonable is it that we should expect to understand *all* of God's ways? The apostle Paul declared: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are and past tracing out his ways are!" (Romans 11:33) Our minds cannot fully grasp the depth of God's wisdom and knowledge any more than an infant can understand all the ways of a parent. These inspired words of Paul, although primarily about the uniqueness of God's wisdom and mercy, suggest that there are aspects of Jehovah God and his workings that are too deep for our minds to fathom. The concept of God's being without a beginning is apparently one of them. Yet, we can have absolute trust in what the Bible teaches about God. Jesus Christ said regarding the sacred writings: "Your word is truth."—John 17:17.

Moses said in prayer to Jehovah: "You have always been, and you will always be." (Psalm 90:2, *The Holy Bible, New Century Version*) Here Moses describes God's existence as stretching in two directions. One is toward the future. Jehovah is "the One that lives forever and ever." (Revelation 4:10) Thus, God's existence stretches forward into the eternal future. The other is toward the past. In other words,

God was neither created nor did he come into existence. Rather, God's existence stretches back into the infinite past.

Abstract ideas are hard for most of us to comprehend. Yet, we sometimes deal with challenging concepts, such as positive and negative numbers. Counting numbers can go on endlessly, either up or down. Could we not apply this example to the years in the life of the Creator?

It is therefore fitting that only God bears the unique title "King of eternity." (1 Timothy 1:17) Just think: Jesus Christ, the myriads of angels in heaven, and mankind on earth all have a beginning because of being created. (Colossians 1:15, 16) Not so with God. To insist that God must have been created introduces pointless and circular logic about who created the Creator. No, Jehovah alone exists "from eternity to eternity." (Psalm 90:2, *The New American Bible*) In other words, Jehovah existed "before all time."—Jude 25, footnote.

Keep in mind, though, that the concept of God's eternal existence is not just a cold fact. A closer look at Moses' prayer reveals that God's eternity guarantees a warm promise of everlasting life for us. In contrast with the fleeting nature of our present life, God is described as "a real dwelling for us during generation after generation." As a loving Father, Jehovah has been, is, and always will be there for his people. May you take comfort in that wonderful truth!—Psalm 90:1.



DRAW CLOSE TO GOD

He Looks for the Good

1 KINGS 14:13

"ALL hearts Jehovah is searching, and every inclination of the thoughts he is discerning." (1 Chronicles 28:9) Those inspired words were meant to fill us with appreciation for the depth of Jehovah's interest in us. Jehovah looks for the good in our hearts even though we are far from perfect. This is clearly evident in his words regarding Abijah, found at 1 Kings 14:13.

Abijah lived in a wicked household. His father, Jeroboam, was the head of an apostate dynasty.* Jehovah purposed to make a clean sweep of Jeroboam's house, "just as one clears away the dung." (1 Kings 14:10) But God ordered that only one member of Jeroboam's household, Abijah—who was gravely ill—be given an honorable burial.[#] Why? God explained: "Something good toward Jehovah the God of Israel has been found in him in the house of Jeroboam." (1 Kings 14:1, 12, 13) What do these words tell us about Abijah?

The Bible does not say that Abijah was a faithful worshipper of God. Still, there was a measure of goodness in him. This goodness was "toward Jehovah," perhaps involving His worship. Rabbinic writers suggest that Abijah made a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem or that he removed the guards that his father had posted to prevent the Israelites from going to Jerusalem.

Whatever its exact nature, Abijah's goodness was noteworthy. First, it was genuine. This

* Jeroboam had set up idolatrous calf worship in the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel to keep the people from going to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah at the temple there.

[#] In Bible times, to be denied a decent burial was seen as an expression of divine displeasure.—Jeremiah 25:32, 33.

goodness was "in him"—that is, in his heart. Second, it was exceptional. Abijah exhibited this goodness even though he was "in the house of Jeroboam." One scholar says: "It is a great commendation for men to retain their goodness whilst they live in bad places and families." Another says that Abijah's goodness was "conspicuous . . . , just as the stars are brightest when the sky is dark, and the cedars are most beautiful when surrounding trees are leafless."

Most important, the words of 1 Kings 14:13 teach us something beautiful about Jehovah and what he looks for in us. Recall that something good was "found in" Abijah. Jehovah evidently searched through Abijah's heart until He found a trace of goodness. Compared to his family, Abijah was, as one scholar put it, the lone pearl "in a heap of pebbles." Jehovah cherished this goodness and rewarded it, granting a measure of mercy to this one member of a wicked family.

Is it not reassuring to know that Jehovah looks for and values the good in us despite our imperfections? (Psalm 130:3) Knowing this should move us to draw closer to Jehovah, the God who sifts through our heart in search of even the smallest trace of goodness.



How to Find Loyal Friends

Instructions: Do this exercise in quiet surroundings. As you read the scriptures, imagine that you are part of the event. Visualize the scene. Hear the voices. Feel the emotions of the characters. Let the account come to life.

Main characters: Jonathan, David, and Saul

Summary: After David kills Goliath, Jonathan becomes David's best friend.

1 ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ 1 SAMUEL 17:57–18:11; 19:1; 20:1–17, 41, 42.

Describe Saul's appearance as you imagine it to be. (Clue: See 1 Samuel 10:20–23.) _____

When he met Jonathan, David was likely a teenager. How do you imagine his appearance? (Clue: See 1 Samuel 16:12, 13.) _____

What emotions do you sense in the voices of David and Jonathan when they part at the end of 1 Samuel chapter 20? _____

2 DIG DEEPER.

The account states that "Jonathan's very soul became bound up with the soul of David"—or as the *Contemporary English Version* puts it, "David and Jonathan became best friends." (1 Samuel 18:1) What qualities did David possess that might have drawn Jonathan to him? (Clue: See 1 Samuel 17:45, 46.) _____

David and Jonathan were approximately 30 years apart in age. What factors do you think helped them to become "best friends" despite the age gap? _____

What are some characteristics of a genuine friend, as shown in this gripping account? (Clue: See Proverbs 17:17; 18:24.)

Why did Jonathan put loyalty to David above loyalty to his own father?

3 APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT . . .

Friendship. _____

Loyalty. _____

Friendships with older ones. _____

How can you attract the best kind of friends?

4 WHAT ASPECT OF THIS ACCOUNT IS MOST MEANINGFUL TO YOU, AND WHY?



IF YOU
DON'T HAVE
A **BIBLE**,
ASK JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
FOR ONE, OR
READ IT ONLINE AT
www.watchtower.org



What can you do to encourage a friend who is seriously ill? SEE PAGES 10-13.



Who was Hannah, and how did her faith help her to cope with a mean-spirited rival? SEE PAGES 14-18.



What is one thing you can do to make Bible reading beneficial? SEE PAGES 19-21.



Did God have a beginning? SEE PAGE 28.



What does God look for in our heart? SEE PAGE 29.

Would you welcome a visit?