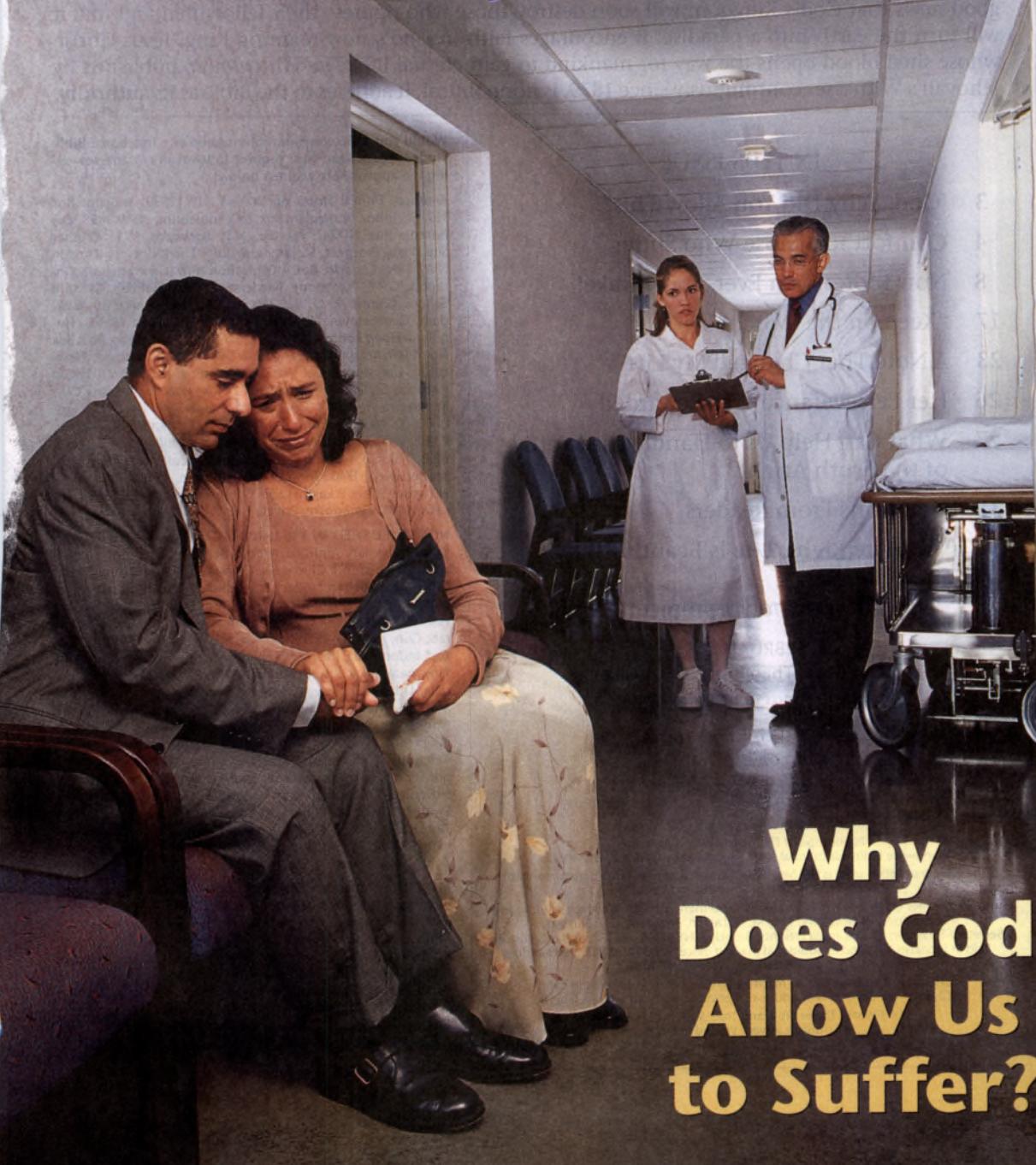


JANUARY 1, 2003

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**Why
Does God
Allow Us
to Suffer?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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'GOD, Why Did You Allow This?'

RICARDO still remembers sitting with his wife, Maria, in the doctor's waiting room.* Neither of them had the courage to read the results of Maria's latest medical examinations. Then, Ricardo opened the envelope, and they hastily glanced over the medical language of the report. They spotted the word "cancer," and both began to cry as they realized the full import of that word.

"The doctor was very kind," recalls Ricardo, "but he obviously realized the gravity of the situation because he kept telling us that we had to trust in God."

Before radiation treatment had begun, Maria's doctor noticed involuntary movements in her right foot. Further tests revealed that the cancer had spread to her brain. After just one week of treatment, the radiation was suspended. Maria slipped into a coma and died two months later. "I was glad that her suffering had ended," explains Ricardo, "but I missed her so much that I found myself wishing that my life would come to an end too. Often, I would cry out to God: 'Why did you allow this to happen?'"

When Tragedy Strikes, Questions Abound

Like Ricardo, countless people throughout the world are forced to face up to the reality of suffering. Many times, it is the innocent who suffer. Think of the heartrending grief caused by the relentless armed conflicts that plague mankind. Or consid-



The doctor kept telling us that we had to trust in God

er the pain felt by the numerous victims of rape, child abuse, domestic violence, and other evils committed by man. Throughout history there seems to have been no limit to the injustice and pain that men and women have been willing to inflict on one another. (Ecclesiastes 4:1-3) Then there is the anguish of victims of natural disasters or of emotional, mental, and physical illnesses. It is little wonder that many ask, "Why does God allow such suffering?"

Even for those with religious convictions, suffering is never easy to deal with. You too may wonder what reason a loving, all-powerful God could possibly have for permitting human suffering. Finding a satisfying and truthful answer to this puzzling question is vital for our peace of mind and our relationship with God. The Bible provides such an answer. Please consider what it has to say as presented in the following article.

* Names have been changed.

Comfort COMFORT for Those Who Suffer

OVER the centuries, the question of why God allows suffering has challenged many philosophers and theologians. Some have asserted that since God is all-powerful, he must ultimately be responsible for suffering. The writer of *The Clementine Homilies*, an apocryphal second-century work, claimed that God rules the world with both hands. With his "left hand," the Devil, he causes suffering and affliction, and with his "right hand," Jesus, he saves and blesses.

Others, unable to accept that God could permit suffering even if he does not cause it, have chosen to deny that suffering exists. "Evil is but an illusion, and it has no real basis," wrote Mary Baker Eddy. "If sin, sickness, and death were understood as nothingness, they would disappear."—*Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures*.

In the wake of the tragic events of history, especially from the first world war until our day, many have reached the conclusion that God is simply unable to prevent suffering. "The Holocaust has, I think, dismissed any easy use of omnipotence as an attribute appropriate to God," wrote Jewish scholar David Wolf Silverman. "If God is to be intelligible in some manner," he added, "then His goodness must be compatible with the existence of evil, and this is only if He is not all-powerful."

However, claims that God is somehow an accomplice to suffering, that he is unable to prevent it, or that suffering is a mere figment of our imagination offer scant

comfort to those who suffer. And more important, such beliefs are utterly at odds with the just, dynamic, and caring God who is revealed in the pages of the Bible. (Job 34:10, 12; Jeremiah 32:17; 1 John 4:8) What, then, does the Bible say about the reason why suffering has been permitted?

How Did Suffering Begin?

God did not create humans to suffer. On the contrary, he endowed the first human couple, Adam and Eve, with perfect minds and bodies, prepared a delightful garden to serve as their home, and assigned them meaningful, satisfying work. (Genesis 1:27, 28, 31; 2:8) However, their continued happiness depended on their recognizing God's rulership and his right to decide what was good and what was bad. That divine prerogative was represented by a tree called "the tree of the knowledge of good and bad." (Genesis 2:17) Adam and Eve would demonstrate their subjection to God if they obeyed his command not to eat from that tree.*

Tragically, Adam and Eve failed to obey God. A rebellious spirit creature, later identified as Satan the Devil, convinced Eve that it was not in her best interests to obey God. In fact, God was supposedly depriving her of something highly desirable: independence, the right to choose for herself

* In its footnote to Genesis 2:17, *The Jerusalem Bible* explains "the knowledge of good and evil" as "the power of deciding . . . what is good and what is evil and of acting accordingly, a claim to complete moral independence by which man refuses to recognise his status as a created being." It adds: "The first sin was an attack on God's sovereignty."



**Adam and Eve
rejected
divine rulership**

what was good and what was bad. Satan claimed that if she ate of the tree, 'her eyes were bound to be opened and she was bound to be like God, knowing good and bad.' (Genesis 3:1-6; Revelation 12:9) Seduced by the prospect of independence, Eve partook of the forbidden fruit, and Adam soon did the same.

That same day, Adam and Eve began to experience the results of their rebellion. By rejecting divine rulership, they lost out on the protection and blessings that subjection to God had afforded them. God evicted them from Paradise and told Adam: "Cursed is the ground on your account. In pain you will eat its produce all the days of your life. In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground." (Genesis 3:17, 19) Adam and Eve became subject to sickness, pain, aging, and death. Suffering had become a part of human experience.—Genesis 5:29.

Settling the Issue

Someone may ask, 'Could God not have simply overlooked Adam and Eve's sin?' No, because that would have further undermined respect for his authority, perhaps encouraging future rebellions and resulting in even greater suffering. (Ecclesiastes 8:11) In addition, condoning such disobedience would have made God a party to wrongdoing. The Bible writer Moses reminds us: "God's works are perfect, for all his ways are

justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4, footnote) To be true to himself, God had to allow Adam and Eve to suffer the consequences of their disobedience.

Why did God not immediately destroy the first human couple along with Satan, the invisible instigator of their rebellion? He had the power to do so. Adam and Eve would not have produced offspring subject to a legacy of suffering and death. However, such a demonstration of divine *power* would not have proved the *rightfulness* of God's authority over his intelligent creatures. Furthermore, had Adam and Eve died childless, that would have signaled the failure of God's purpose to fill the earth with their perfect descendants. (Genesis 1:28) And "God is not like men . . . Whatever he promises, he does; he speaks, and it is done."—Numbers 23:19, *Today's English Version*.

In his perfect wisdom, Jehovah God decided to allow the rebellion to proceed for a limited time. The rebels would have ample opportunity to experience the effects of independence from God. History would demonstrate beyond doubt mankind's need for divine guidance and the superiority of God's rule over man's or Satan's. At the same time, God took steps to ensure that his original purpose for the earth would be fulfilled. He promised that a "seed," or "offspring," would come who would 'bruise Satan in the head,' eliminating once and for all his rebellion and its damaging effects.—Genesis 3:15, footnote.

Jesus Christ was that promised Seed. At 1 John 3:8, we read that "the Son of God was made manifest . . . to break up the works of the Devil." This he did by laying down his perfect human life and paying the ransom price to redeem Adam's children from inherited sin and death. (John 1:29; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6) Those who truly exercise faith in Jesus'

sacrifice are promised permanent relief from suffering. (John 3:16; Revelation 7:17) When will this happen?

An End to Suffering

The rejection of God's authority has caused untold suffering. It is fitting, then, that God should use a special expression of his authority to end human suffering and accomplish his original purpose for the earth. Jesus mentioned this divine provision when he taught his followers to pray: "Our Father in the heavens, . . . let your *kingdom* come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth."—Matthew 6:9, 10.

The time that God has allowed for humans to experiment with self-government is about to end. In fulfillment of Bible prophecy, his Kingdom was established in the heavens in 1914 with Jesus Christ as its King.* Shortly, it will crush and put an end to all human governments.—Daniel 2:44.

During his brief earthly ministry, Jesus provided a foregleam of the blessings that the restoration of divine rule will bring to humanity. The Gospels provide evidence that Jesus showed compassion for members of human society who were poor and discriminated against. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and resurrected the dead. Even the forces of nature obeyed his voice. (Matthew 11:5; Mark 4:37-39; Luke 9:11-16) Imagine what Jesus will accomplish when he uses the cleansing effect of his ransom sacrifice to benefit all obedient mankind! The Bible promises that by means of Christ's rule, God "will wipe out every tear from [mankind's] eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."—Revelation 21:4.

* For a detailed discussion of Bible prophecy relating to 1914, see chapters 10 and 11 of the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Comfort for Those Who Suffer

How heartening it is to know that our loving and all-powerful God, Jehovah, cares for us and that he will shortly bring relief to mankind! Usually, a seriously sick patient willingly accepts treatment that will cure him even if it is very painful. In the same way, if we know that God's way of handling matters will bring eternal blessings, that knowledge can sustain us no matter what temporary difficulties we face.

Ricardo, mentioned in the preceding article, is one who has learned to draw comfort from the Bible's promises. "After my wife's death, I felt a strong desire to isolate myself," he recalls, "but I soon realized that this would not bring my wife back and would only worsen my emotional state." Instead, Ricardo stuck to his routine of attending Christian meetings and sharing the Bible's message with others. "As I felt Jehovah's loving support and noticed how he answered my prayers in seemingly small matters, I drew closer to him," says Ricardo. "It was this awareness of God's love that enabled me to

HOW CAN WE

"Throw all your anxiety upon [God]." (1 Peter 5:7) Feelings of confusion, anger, and abandonment are only natural when we endure suffering or see someone we love suffer. Still, be assured that Jehovah understands our feelings. (Exodus 3:7; Isaiah 63:9) Like faithful men of old, we can open our heart to him and express our doubts and anxieties. (Exodus 5:22; Job 10:1-3; Jeremiah 14:19; Habakkuk 1:13) He may not miraculously remove our trials, but in response to our heartfelt prayers, he can grant us the wisdom and strength to deal with them.
—James 1:5, 6.

endure what certainly was the worst trial I had ever faced." He admits: "I still miss my wife very much, but I now firmly believe that nothing Jehovah allows to happen can cause us lasting harm."

Do you, like Ricardo and millions of others, yearn for the time when mankind's present sufferings "will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart"? (Isaiah 65:17) Be assured that the blessings of God's Kingdom are within your grasp if you follow the Bible's advice: "Search for Jehovah . . . while he may be found. Call to him while he proves to be near."—Isaiah 55:6.

To help you do this, make the reading and careful study of God's Word a priority in your life. Get to know God and the one whom he sent forth, Jesus Christ. Strive to live in harmony with God's standards and thus show that you are willing to submit to his sovereignty. Such a course will bring you greater happiness now despite the tests that you may have to face. And in the future, it will result in your enjoying life in a world free of suffering.

—John 17:3.



God promises
a world free
of suffering

COPE WITH SUFFERING?

"Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you." (1 Peter 4:12, New International Version) Here Peter is speaking of persecution, but his words apply equally well to any suffering a believer may endure. Humans suffer privation, sickness, and loss. The Bible says that "time and unforeseen occurrence" befall everyone. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) Such things are part of the human condition at present. Realizing this will help us to deal with suffering and misfortune when it occurs. (1 Peter 5:9) Most of all, recalling the assurance that "the

eyes of Jehovah are toward the righteous ones, and his ears are toward their cry for help" will especially be a source of comfort.—Psalm 34:15; Proverbs 15:3; 1 Peter 3:12.

"Rejoice in the hope." (Romans 12:12) Instead of dwelling on lost happiness, we can meditate on God's promise to end all suffering. (Ecclesiastes 7:10) This well-founded hope will protect us as a helmet protects the head. Hope cushions the blows in life and helps to ensure that they do not prove fatal to our mental, emotional, or spiritual health.—1 Thessalonians 5:8.

NOW MORE THAN EVER, STAY AWAKE!

"Let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses."

—1 THESSALONIANS 5:6.

IN THE first century of our Common Era, Pompeii and Herculaneum were two prosperous Roman cities that were situated in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius. For wealthy Romans, they were popular resorts. Their theaters were capable of holding audiences of over a thousand, and in Pompeii there was a large amphitheater that could seat almost the entire town. Excavators of Pompeii have counted 118 bars and taverns, some of which served as houses of gambling or prostitution. Immorality and materialism were rampant, as wall paintings and other remains testify.

² On August 24, 79 C.E., Mount Vesuvius began to erupt. Volcanologists believe that the first explosion, which rained down pumice and ash on the two cities, would probably not have prevented the inhabitants from escaping. Indeed, many seem to have done so. Others, though, who underestimated the danger or just ignored the warning signs chose to remain. Then, about midnight, an avalanche of superheated gases, pumice, and rock roared into Herculaneum, suffocating all the residents left in the city. Early the following morning, a similar avalanche killed everyone in Pompeii. What a tragic result from not heeding warning signs!

1, 2. (a) What sort of cities were Pompeii and Herculaneum? (b) What warning did many inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum ignore, and with what result?

The End of the Jewish System of Things

³ The appalling end of Pompeii and Herculaneum was more than matched by the cataclysmic destruction of Jerusalem nine years earlier, although that catastrophe was man-made. Described as "one of the most terrible sieges in all history," it is reported to have led to the death of over a million Jews. However, like the disaster at Pompeii and Herculaneum, the destruction of Jerusalem did not happen without warning.

⁴ Jesus Christ had predicted the city's destruction, and he foretold events that would precede it—such disturbing occurrences as wars, food shortages, earthquakes, and lawlessness. False prophets would be active, but the good news of God's Kingdom would be preached worldwide. (Matthew 24:4-7, 11-14) While Jesus' words have their major fulfillment today, they did have a minor fulfillment back then. History records a severe famine in Judea. (Acts 11:28) Jewish historian Josephus reports an earthquake in the Jerusalem area shortly before the city's destruction. As Jerusalem's end approached, there were continual uprisings, internecine warfare between Jewish political factions, and massacres in several cities with a mixed Jewish and Gentile population. Nevertheless,

3. What similarity is there between Jerusalem's destruction and that of Pompeii and Herculaneum?
4. What prophetic sign did Jesus give to warn his followers that the end of a system of things was close, and how was it initially fulfilled in the first century?

In 66 C.E., the Christian community in Jerusalem heeded Jesus' warning



less, the good news of the Kingdom was being preached "in all creation that is under heaven."—Colossians 1:23.

⁵ Finally, in 66 C.E., the Jews rebelled against Rome. When Cestius Gallus led an army to besiege Jerusalem, Jesus' followers remembered Jesus' words: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in the country places not enter into her." (Luke 21: 20, 21) The time had come to leave Jerusalem—but how? Unexpectedly, Gallus withdrew his troops, opening the way for Christians in Jerusalem and Judea to obey Jesus' words and flee to the mountains.—Matthew 24:15, 16.

⁶ Four years later, about Passover time, Roman troops returned under General Titus, who was determined to stamp out the Jewish rebellion. His army surrounded Jerusalem and built "a fortification with pointed stakes," making escape impossible. (Luke 19: 43, 44) Despite the threat of war, Jews from all over the Roman Empire had flocked to Jerusalem for the Passover. Now they were trapped. According to Josephus, these hapless visitors made up the majority of the ca-

5, 6. (a) What prophetic words of Jesus were fulfilled in 66 C.E.? (b) Why was the death toll so great when Jerusalem finally fell in 70 C.E.? *start line wod*

sualties of the Roman siege.* When Jerusalem finally fell, about one seventh of all Jews in the Roman Empire perished. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple meant the end of the Jewish state and its religious system based on the Mosaic Law.[#]—Mark 13: 1, 2.

⁷ In 70 C.E., Jewish Christians could have been killed or enslaved along with everyone else in Jerusalem. However, according to the historical evidence, they had heeded Jesus' warning given 37 years earlier. They had abandoned the city and had not returned.

Timely Apostolic Warnings

⁸ Today, a more far-reaching destruction is looming, one that will bring an end to this entire system of things. Six years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the apostle Peter gave urgent and timely counsel that applies especially to Christians of our day: Stay alert! Peter saw the need for Christians to arouse

* It is unlikely that Jerusalem in the first century had more than 120,000 inhabitants. Eusebius calculates that 300,000 residents from the province of Judea traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover of 70 C.E. The remaining casualties must have come from other parts of the empire.

[#] Of course, from Jehovah's standpoint, the Mosaic Law was replaced by the new covenant in 33 C.E.—Ephesians 2:15.

7. Why did faithful Christians survive Jerusalem's destruction?
8. What need did Peter discern, and what words of Jesus did he likely have in mind?



Staying active helps Christians to stay awake

their "clear thinking faculties" so that they would not ignore "the commandment of the Lord," Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:1, 2) In urging Christians to be alert, Peter likely had in mind what he had heard Jesus say to His apostles a few days before His death: "Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is."—Mark 13:33.

⁹ Today, some mockingly ask: "Where is this promised presence of his?" (2 Peter 3:3, 4) Evidently, those individuals feel that things never really change but continue the same as they always have from the world's creation. Such skepticism is dangerous. Doubts can weaken our sense of urgency, influencing us to drift toward self-indulgence. (Luke 21:34) Besides, as Peter points out, such ridiculers forget the Flood of Noah's day, which destroyed a worldwide

9. (a) What dangerous attitude would some develop? (b) Why is a skeptical attitude particularly dangerous?

system of things. The world really did change then!—Genesis 6:13, 17; 2 Peter 3:5, 6.

¹⁰ Peter helps his readers to cultivate patience by reminding them why God often does not act immediately. First, Peter says: "One day is with Jehovah as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8) Since Jehovah lives forever, he can take all factors into consideration and choose the best possible time to act. Then, Peter points to Jehovah's desire that people everywhere should repent. God's patience means salvation for many who would perish if he acted precipitously. (1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 2 Peter 3:9) However, Jehovah's patience does not mean that he will never act. "Jehovah's day *will* come as a thief," says Peter.—2 Peter 3:10.

¹¹ Peter's comparison is noteworthy.

10. With what words does Peter encourage those who may become impatient?

11. What will help us to stay awake spiritually, and how will this 'speed up,' as it were, Jehovah's day?

Thieves are not easy to apprehend, but a watchman who stays awake all night is more likely to spot a thief than is one who dozes from time to time. How can a watchman stay awake? Walking about is more conducive to alertness than sitting down all night. Similarly, staying spiritually active will help us as Christians to stay awake. Thus, Peter urges us to keep busy in "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion." (2 Peter 3:11) Such activity will help us to continue "keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah." The Greek word rendered "keeping close in mind" can be literally translated "speeding up." (2 Peter 3:12; footnote) True, we cannot change Jehovah's timetable. His day will come at his appointed hour. But the time from now until then will seem to pass much more quickly if we are busy in his service.—1 Corinthians 15:58.

¹² Hence, any who feel that the day of Jehovah is delaying are encouraged to heed Peter's counsel to wait patiently upon Jehovah's appointed time. Indeed, we can use wisely the extra time that God's patience allows. We can, for example, continue to cultivate vital Christian qualities as well as share the good news with many more than would otherwise have been possible. If we stay awake, Jehovah will find us "spotless and unblemished and in peace" at the end of this system of things. (2 Peter 3:14, 15) What a blessing that will be!

¹³ Paul, in his first letter to the Thessalonian Christians, also speaks of the need to stay awake. He counsels: "Let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses." (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 6) Today, with the destruction of an entire world system of things approaching, how necessary

12. How can we as individuals take advantage of Jehovah's patience?

13. What words of Paul to the Thessalonian Christians are particularly appropriate today?

that is! Worshipers of Jehovah live in a world full of spiritual apathy, and this can affect them. Hence, Paul counsels: "Let us keep our senses and have on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet the hope of salvation." (1 Thessalonians 5:8) A regular study of God's Word and regular association with our brothers at the meetings will help us to follow Paul's counsel and to keep our sense of urgency.—Matthew 16:1-3.

Millions Keep on the Watch

¹⁴ Are there many today who heed the inspired encouragement to stay alert? Yes. During the 2002 service year, a peak of 6,304,645 publishers—a 3.1-percent increase over 2001—gave evidence of being spiritually alert by spending 1,202,381,302 hours talking to others about God's Kingdom. For these, such activity was not a casual matter. It was a central part of their lives. The attitude of many of them is exemplified by Eduardo and Noemi in El Salvador.

¹⁵ Some years ago, Eduardo and Noemi took note of Paul's words: "The scene of this world is changing." (1 Corinthians 7:31) They simplified their lives and entered the full-time pioneer ministry. As time went by, they were blessed in many ways and even shared in the circuit and district work. Despite having faced serious problems, Eduardo and Noemi are convinced that they made the right decision when they sacrificed material comfort in favor of the full-time service. Many of the 29,269 publishers—including 2,454 pioneers—in El Salvador have shown a similar self-sacrificing spirit, which is one reason why that country had a 2-percent increase in the number of publishers last year.

14. What statistics indicate that many today are following Peter's counsel to stay awake?

15. What experience from El Salvador shows that many are keeping spiritually alert?

2002 SERVICE YEAR REPORT OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WORLDWIDE

Country or Territory	Population	2002 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Publisher to	2002 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2001	2001 Av. Pubs.	2002 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Congs.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attendance
Alaska	660,000	2,380	277	2,208	4	2,119	59	249	26	375,071	905	4,663
Albania	3,262,000	2,708	1,205	2,570	12	2,285	336	800	63	1,054,962	5,086	12,795
American Samoa	59,200	203	292	171	8	158	2	16	2	29,107	145	657
Andorra	66,094	138	479	130	-3	134	2	14	2	23,389	47	244
Angola	12,300,000	48,333	254	46,473	5	44,317	4,347	5,563	720	10,710,459	107,559	186,799
Anguilla	10,000	34	294	32	-3	33	4	1	8,120	32	130	
Antigua	65,952	372	177	350	-3	361	3	43	6	71,885	387	1,086
Argentina	36,223,947	126,709	286	123,336	2	120,777	5,801	16,071	1,735	24,694,592	89,396	277,307
Armenia	3,344,336	7,644	438	7,215	10	6,572	497	1,442	52	2,038,024	6,707	19,508
Aruba	92,638	685	135	656	5	622	22	50	9	107,080	611	2,223
Australia	19,603,502	60,902	322	59,934	2	58,993	1,398	4,830	770	9,526,171	20,314	111,184
Austria	8,065,166	20,380	396	20,122	0	20,088	414	1,600	301	3,309,534	8,387	33,687
Azerbaijan	8,141,400	346	23,530	318	23	259	59	2	86,857	383	878	
Azores	241,762	543	445	526	0	525	15	62	15	108,865	457	1,220
Bahamas	304,913	1,462	209	1,398	1	1,384	32	184	24	300,053	1,423	3,565
Bangladesh	129,250,000	101	1,279,703	92	6	87	3	14	2	19,063	103	241
Barbados	260,490	2,390	109	2,336	1	2,309	76	218	28	370,915	1,650	5,592
Belarus	9,959,941	3,381	2,946	3,121	8	2,902	448	524	35	778,272	2,486	7,863
Belau	19,565	98	200	93	7	87	3	28	1	28,436	154	408
Belgium	10,244,725	24,961	410	24,125	-1	24,383	501	1,666	375	3,583,942	7,498	45,179
Belize	270,000	1,411	191	1,289	13	1,144	64	148	28	260,075	1,384	4,876
Benin	5,532,000	6,901	802	6,673	5	6,340	480	1,041	147	1,661,486	11,353	28,351
Bermuda	63,973	488	131	432	6	409	15	75	5	101,232	281	1,062
Bolivia	8,330,800	17,724	470	16,427	3	15,965	943	2,867	210	4,342,324	22,140	61,866
Bonaire	13,411	54	248	51	-4	53	3	4	1	9,206	58	216
Bosnia & Herzegovina	4,354,911	1,080	4,032	1,063	0	1,060	46	256	13	350,985	663	2,137
Botswana	1,680,863	1,285	1,308	1,178	6	1,108	103	118	35	236,789	1,615	3,534
Brazil	175,172,635	591,154	296	551,459	5	523,998	32,918	55,997	8,800	98,104,647	602,550	1,467,844
Britain	58,884,235	125,398	470	120,801	1	119,655	2,504	10,268	1,475	17,807,826	40,923	213,558
Bulgaria	8,240,000	1,289	6,393	1,217	6	1,153	115	192	17	326,961	1,156	3,423
Burkina Faso	10,352,000	1,036	9,992	996	3	963	43	145	24	280,573	1,640	3,243
Burundi	7,032,178	4,542	1,548	4,137	15	3,591	537	736	77	1,290,255	9,658	14,619
Cambodia	11,400,000	125	91,200	115	40	82	16	51	3	62,018	344	598
Cameroon	16,242,400	28,747	565	27,853	1	27,637	1,229	2,414	682	5,001,303	35,652	86,002
Canada	31,230,836	110,814	282	108,217	1	107,218	2,144	10,909	1,340	18,759,871	36,147	183,676
Cape Verde	408,760	1,551	264	1,504	3	1,463	79	258	29	386,063	3,204	6,411
Cayman Islands	32,000	164	195	148	4	142	8	14	2	25,325	140	422
Central Afr. Rep.	3,600,000	2,392	1,505	2,349	2	2,309	169	396	53	614,458	4,363	13,743
Chad	7,500,000	646	11,610	596	5	570	49	49	111	184,116	1,032	4,659
Chile	15,050,341	67,909	222	60,701	4	58,227	2,823	9,106	737	12,920,710	53,331	156,704
Chuuk	63,221	66	958	63	7	59	5	28	3	32,557	240	748
Colombia	43,789,839	123,770	354	111,115	6	104,850	6,644	14,683	1,688	22,856,800	149,012	420,009
Comoros	630,000	12	52,500	10	-17	12	2			2,087	18	46
Congo, Dem. Rep. of	53,000,000	121,188	437	114,026	7	106,894	8,926	13,485	2,929	24,077,828	224,318	644,674
Congo, Rep. of	3,100,000	4,372	709	4,008	6	3,795	327	575	89	1,047,446	14,192	20,930
Cook Islands	14,600	171	85	147	7	137	2	18	2	29,204	159	381
Costa Rica	4,019,723	20,028	201	18,963	1	18,727	710	1,552	253	2,830,452	14,811	49,578
Côte d'Ivoire	17,497,706	6,701	2,611	6,497	5	6,204	541	983	164	1,734,025	14,202	25,491
Croatia	4,381,352	5,499	797	5,425	1	5,349	104	690	69	1,179,256	2,361	9,903

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Cuba	11,217,100	86,946	129	86,482	0	86,185	3,140	11,419	1,308	16,062,060	129,474
Curaçao	130,627	1,364	96	1,344	-1	1,354	35	127	20	230,339	1,290
Cyprus	689,471	1,847	373	1,831	1	1,816	66	221	24	341,906	940
Czech Republic	10,195,995	15,901	641	15,584	0	15,558	326	1,057	230	2,208,291	5,982
Denmark	5,374,255	14,721	365	14,414	0	14,421	203	1,103	209	2,112,357	3,890
Dominica	71,794	353	203	336	0	335	9	47	8	72,326	417
Dominican Rep.	8,800,000	24,688	356	23,857	3	23,082	1,181	4,192	365	6,011,745	41,260
East Timor	800,000	31	25,806	21	91	11	3	8	1	12,241	54
Ecuador	12,090,804	46,660	259	43,947	5	42,051	2,993	7,110	605	10,405,964	66,230
El Salvador	6,517,800	29,269	223	28,040	2	27,507	1,387	2,454	509	4,987,324	27,399
Equatorial Guinea	1,014,999	871	1,165	747	4	719	40	164	16	217,036	2,098
Estonia	1,366,723	3,978	344	3,869	3	3,764	211	503	48	745,791	2,723
Ethiopia	68,212,000	6,685	10,204	6,471	5	6,156	424	1,175	114	1,815,654	4,853
Faeroe Islands	45,411	88	516	83	12	74	26	4	24,779	41	144
Falkland Islands	2,913	5	583	5	0	5	1	631	3	13	
Fiji	806,217	2,008	402	1,922	0	1,930	79	237	32	391,415	1,829
Finland	5,194,901	19,660	264	19,378	0	19,467	321	1,779	303	2,699,060	7,342
France	59,670,000	115,414	517	110,987	1	110,423	2,060	7,760	1,512	16,582,762	31,251
French Guiana	172,500	1,528	113	1,490	1	1,475	72	187	26	339,994	2,624
Gabon	1,300,000	2,278	571	2,160	2	2,116	119	291	46	510,417	5,547
Gambia, The	1,379,170	151	9,134	140	0	140	5	36	3	52,099	269
Georgia	4,452,000	15,137	294	14,521	2	14,228	668	2,162	140	2,827,940	6,048
Germany	82,440,307	164,806	500	161,850	0	161,440	3,479	10,870	2,159	24,123,223	63,307
Ghana	19,363,239	70,174	276	68,181	4	65,473	3,806	6,314	1,118	12,971,554	157,378
Gibraltar	28,231	110	257	91	-3	94	1	6	2	12,330	22
Greece	10,539,771	28,115	375	27,937	1	27,625	692	3,262	388	5,020,173	9,993
Greenland	55,983	137	409	126	2	124	3	21	7	31,097	89
Grenada	96,000	625	154	603	2	590	18	69	9	114,257	594
Guadeloupe	420,000	7,719	54	7,397	0	7,383	171	502	107	1,079,370	6,307
Guam	154,805	629	246	619	1	611	15	151	10	175,156	833
Guatemala	10,580,000	21,890	483	21,108	4	20,300	1,282	2,261	310	4,078,129	19,605
Guinea	7,763,109	839	9,253	660	16	571	61	120	20	207,812	1,506
Guinea-Bissau	1,253,381	90	13,926	79	8	73	13	30	3	47,161	406
Guyana	777,648	2,174	358	2,091	0	2,099	100	233	37	372,565	2,332
Haiti	8,304,062	12,270	677	11,658	2	11,422	798	1,363	218	2,350,650	17,421
Hawaii	1,224,398	7,816	157	7,571	3	7,319	237	1,185	98	1,634,151	5,204
Honduras	6,872,442	13,888	495	13,209	5	12,617	738	1,629	207	2,909,313	16,993
Hong Kong	6,600,000	4,698	1,405	4,571	1	4,547	231	876	47	1,180,441	4,722
Hungary	10,174,853	22,034	462	20,807	2	20,451	731	1,654	251	3,331,164	10,572
Iceland	286,575	302	949	292	-3	302	2	36	7	54,498	164
India	1,036,574,635	24,160	42,905	22,145	4	21,224	1,157	1,614	499	3,090,807	14,896
Indonesia	210,000,000	16,937	12,399	16,004	5	15,287	870	1,330	381	3,069,216	15,825
Ireland	5,615,111	4,782	1,174	4,647	3	4,491	108	643	115	953,481	1,878
Israel	9,592,000	1,288	7,447	1,236	10	1,122	93	98	16	211,114	862
Italy	57,844,017	231,226	250	228,147	1	226,683	4,890	31,428	3,020	47,369,264	94,968
Jamaica	2,599,000	11,233	231	10,586	0	10,580	443	1,053	195	1,728,378	10,394
Japan	126,478,672	218,731	578	217,971	0	218,866	3,925	71,584	3,213	72,436,323	143,281
Kazakhstan	14,841,900	13,428	1,105	12,679	1	12,610	1,028	1,722	131	2,724,483	10,659
Kenya	31,000,000	17,138	1,809	16,361	7	15,343	1,425	3,032	410	4,686,690	26,849
Kiribati	78,300	84	932	67	-12	76	2	8	1	16,667	137
Korea, Republic of	47,639,618	89,006	535	88,290	1	87,363	2,603	35,455	1,414	35,113,210	54,004
Kosrae	9,351	23	407	19	27	15	1	7	1	8,659	69
Kyrgyzstan	4,851,000	3,596	1,349	3,435	-3	3,533	59	398	35	625,550	2,652
Latvia	2,335,300	2,256	1,035	2,173	4	2,091	154	413	33	587,541	2,153

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Lebanon	3,627,774	3,598	1,008	3,490 1	3,469	103	241	69	553,225	1,707	6,775
Lesotho	2,233,266	2,891	772	2,713 7	2,541	197	334	71	591,265	3,310	7,607
Liberia	3,100,000	3,565	870	3,522 4	3,396	365	810	58	1,286,091	12,890	24,468
Liechtenstein	33,525	53	633	47 -2	48	3	1	5,590	16	90	
Lithuania	3,500,000	2,697	1,298	2,594 7	2,432	132	394	39	618,587	1,927	5,875
Luxembourg	509,658	1,792	284	1,763 -1	1,779	32	134	32	274,905	710	3,375
Macao	500,000	111	4,505	105 1	104	3	22	2	33,159	90	241
Macedonia	2,000,000	1,058	1,890	1,024 1	1,015	29	147	16	239,706	622	2,887
Madagascar	15,838,000	12,955	1,223	11,850 5	11,323	1,003	2,085	281	3,116,217	28,952	58,714
Madeira	245,012	1,119	219	1,093 3	1,058	35	80	17	162,896	576	1,922
Malawi	10,599,166	54,331	195	51,050 7	47,591	4,118	6,350	849	10,076,687	42,394	162,212
Malaysia	23,880,000	2,325	10,271	2,270 6	2,148	174	401	51	588,127	3,150	6,119
Mali	12,047,338	201	59,937	182 7	170	8	53	7	82,254	473	707
Malta	386,350	564	685	544 0	542	7	49	7	84,615	174	923
Marshall Islands	65,875	213	309	207 -3	213	16	58	4	72,289	587	1,187
Martinique	380,460	4,023	95	3,930 1	3,901	101	356	49	686,001	3,018	8,957
Mauritius	1,163,900	1,436	811	1,408 3	1,361	65	114	25	252,631	1,220	3,290
Mayotte	145,000	60	2,417	51 2	50	3	6	1	11,896	68	122
Mexico	101,114,289	557,126	181	551,071 3	535,712	22,572	66,398	10,997	105,862,599	578,576	1,704,459
Moldova	4,247,700	18,425	231	17,846 3	17,401	1,028	1,875	204	2,672,945	9,477	42,653
Mongolia	2,442,544	62	39,396	52 73	30	11	18	1	28,589	132	346
Montserrat	3,000	9	333	7 0	7	1	1	722	4	45	
Mozambique	18,082,523	37,563	481	35,764 4	34,347	3,345	5,986	898	8,581,716	50,494	158,895
Myanmar	52,200,000	3,039	17,177	2,990 4	2,868	139	349	106	609,866	2,194	7,251
Namibia	1,826,854	1,210	1,510	1,073 7	999	78	113	20	224,328	1,351	3,361
Nauru	10,600	8	1,325	6 0	6	1	1	328	2	81	
Nepal	23,900,000	561	42,602	519 16	446	61	79	6	123,586	848	1,666
Netherlands	16,161,175	31,070	520	29,442 1	29,125	609	1,794	419	3,914,508	8,645	52,550
Nevis	10,080	56	180	51 -6	54	4	1	1	10,357	46	152
New Caledonia	220,000	1,660	133	1,533 2	1,502	43	128	22	261,125	1,432	4,648
New Zealand	3,849,000	13,343	288	12,599 1	12,456	340	1,154	168	2,041,773	5,596	25,566
Nicaragua	5,200,000	16,676	312	15,382 5	14,639	936	1,982	295	3,436,994	23,698	66,751
Niger	7,490,000	224	33,438	203 -2	207	7	44	11	67,450	358	1,260
Nigeria	126,635,626	255,835	495	244,720 4	235,870	13,520	33,853	4,537	46,436,469	407,243	592,039
Niue	1,748	27	65	24 0	24	4	1	4,867	14	38	
Norfolk Island	2,085	16	130	15 0	15	1	1	1	1,623	3	20
Norway	4,538,400	9,965	455	9,504 2	9,348	187	584	171	1,203,987	3,058	16,607
Pakistan	142,500,000	663	214,932	580 3	563	45	92	13	134,735	679	3,027
Panama	3,060,090	10,501	291	9,919 4	9,551	475	1,392	204	2,166,032	12,648	35,601
Papua New Guinea	5,528,312	3,472	1,592	3,099 0	3,103	136	330	52	583,847	3,189	15,843
Paraguay	5,773,674	8,037	718	7,138 4	6,850	455	1,041	101	1,616,176	7,992	17,491
Peru	26,749,000	83,862	319	75,808 6	71,687	5,658	19,459	896	22,652,726	120,628	281,153
Philippines	78,000,000	142,124	549	138,416 2	135,867	6,892	27,190	3,465	26,658,427	97,456	430,010
Pohnpei	42,532	79	538	73 7	68	1	15	1	20,011	155	374
Poland	38,644,000	126,538	305	124,294 1	123,034	3,802	7,469	1,774	14,429,483	43,548	232,766
Portugal	9,869,050	48,401	204	47,299 2	46,573	1,134	3,700	649	7,460,203	20,973	94,479
Puerto Rico	3,937,316	25,522	154	24,940 1	24,785	629	2,687	332	4,394,033	14,260	61,199
Réunion	706,000	2,617	270	2,564 1	2,548	67	237	35	454,285	1,613	5,481
Rodrigues	36,000	33	1,091	30 -6	32	1	5	1	6,729	23	68
Romania	21,698,181	39,122	555	38,417 0	38,311	1,226	3,455	566	5,825,367	17,258	85,695
Rota	2,786	9	310	7 -22	9	1	2	1	2,155	6	36
Russia	143,954,400	131,130	1,098	120,498 6	114,137	9,718	19,012	1,206	28,772,238	104,893	275,259
Rwanda	8,585,000	10,679	804	9,472 17	8,100	1,485	2,194	210	3,583,353	23,613	42,520
Saba	1,600	3	533	3 0	3	1	1	1,199	12	19	

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St. Eustatius	2,900	13	223	12	-8	13	1	1	1,528	6	26	
St. Helena	5,157	126	41	122	-6	130	5	3	12,872	69	272	
St. Kitts	31,800	168	189	160	12	143	8	21	35,179	224	510	
St. Lucia	138,150	696	198	670	-1	679	41	93	10	143,325	816	1,676
St. Maarten	40,000	273	147	263	2	257	24	50	3	69,472	341	295
St. Pierre & Miquelon	6,600	18	367	18	0	18	2	1	3,007	7	25	
St. Vincent	111,380	298	374	280	-1	282	10	44	7	76,152	391	877
Saipan	62,392	173	361	161	-3	166	5	24	39,368	249	538	
Samoa	176,848	357	495	343	-6	363	17	58	77,287	295	1,210	
San Marino	25,061	187	134	182	2	179	2	18	2	38,565	85	303
São Tomé & Príncipe	170,372	388	439	353	8	326	38	90	7	127,539	1,344	1,830
Senegal	10,028,664	979	10,244	910	3	884	35	175	22	292,315	1,452	2,420
Seychelles	81,202	224	363	210	-2	215	14	20	4	41,908	255	598
Sierra Leone	5,589,417	1,072	5,214	1,018	7	947	61	164	24	287,037	2,103	4,375
Slovakia	5,389,515	12,422	434	12,093	0	12,132	285	479	165	1,406,938	3,447	23,458
Slovenia	1,994,793	1,846	1,081	1,823	-1	1,842	50	213	29	376,498	658	3,150
Solomon Islands	409,042	1,730	236	1,699	3	1,644	93	291	40	384,373	1,905	6,247
South Africa	45,454,211	72,707	625	69,674	3	67,338	4,123	8,615	1,438	14,274,356	81,037	173,108
Spain	40,847,371	103,883	393	96,877	1	95,774	1,628	10,724	1,334	18,497,242	30,707	167,277
Sri Lanka	19,238,575	3,608	5,332	3,409	6	3,222	243	380	77	650,743	2,915	9,687
Suriname	438,076	2,037	215	1,984	1	1,957	72	259	39	414,975	2,435	6,627
Swaziland	929,718	2,211	420	2,037	2	1,994	108	259	70	465,094	2,606	6,306
Sweden	8,929,219	22,965	389	22,284	0	22,222	364	2,027	329	3,199,942	7,531	36,539
Switzerland	7,261,200	17,823	407	17,008	0	17,018	350	986	289	2,383,471	6,435	29,766
Tahiti	219,521	1,753	125	1,710	1	1,696	48	152	26	291,431	1,576	5,438
Taiwan	22,125,000	4,600	4,810	4,481	5	4,258	274	1,173	68	1,509,477	5,565	11,250
Tajikistan	6,187,800	332	18,638	300	12	268	50	59	3	89,890	504	1,169
Tanzania	34,500,000	11,338	3,043	10,332	13	9,176	944	1,954	325	2,811,823	16,714	41,230
Thailand	62,873,767	2,033	30,927	1,993	5	1,901	120	338	59	478,639	2,107	4,906
Tinian	2,477	14	177	14	0	14	4	1	5,410	32	43	
Togo	4,829,700	12,249	394	11,982	4	11,550	790	1,494	215	2,644,675	28,183	47,545
Tonga	100,283	168	597	152	17	130	4	23	4	35,959	180	564
Trinidad & Tobago	1,293,200	8,151	159	8,011	1	7,967	269	1,212	97	1,551,941	8,601	21,590
Turkey	67,803,927	1,655	40,969	1,626	1	1,602	65	223	25	372,572	987	2,997
Turks & Caicos Isls.	18,738	141	133	121	6	114	4	11	3	26,150	164	415
Tuvalu	9,403	52	181	46	-18	56	2	4	3	6,020	25	200
Uganda	22,500,000	3,080	7,305	2,844	10	2,589	276	470	72	741,186	5,775	10,875
Ukraine	48,146,000	125,030	385	119,323	4	114,377	7,740	15,674	1,279	23,978,956	81,888	272,621
U.S. of America	282,937,597	1,012,201	280	972,754	3	945,689	29,816	121,514	11,752	184,842,031	463,249	2,217,148
Uruguay	3,030,000	10,591	286	10,547	2	10,387	413	822	147	1,482,021	7,638	24,028
Vanuatu	211,000	317	666	288	2	283	17	39	8	59,786	467	1,650
Venezuela	25,093,000	92,568	271	87,920	4	84,570	4,484	14,156	1,284	20,720,113	114,215	302,314
Virgin Isls. (Brit.)	17,000	195	87	183	8	169	6	26	3	35,226	150	612
Virgin Isls. (U.S.)	109,343	637	172	619	-1	627	23	102	9	137,196	568	1,830
Wallis & Futuna Isls.	15,000	68	221	61	13	54	3	5	1	12,895	81	253
Yap	11,241	30	375	27	23	22	3	11	1	12,686	67	151
Yugoslavia, F. R.	10,546,983	4,014	2,628	3,962	-1	3,987	94	554	60	872,852	1,788	8,611
Zambia	10,901,431	118,919	92	110,443	2	107,772	10,941	12,467	2,111	20,405,960	164,613	504,798
Zimbabwe	11,991,839	32,900	364	29,348	7	27,388	2,198	3,608	978	5,795,373	43,150	70,016
28 Other Lands		10,672		9,817	5.4	9,316	337	1,578	167	2,473,644	11,372	26,415
GRAND TOTAL (234 Lands)		6,304,645		6,048,600	2.8	5,881,776	265,469	798,938	94,600	1,202,381,302	5,309,289	15,597,746

During the 2002 service year, Jehovah's Witnesses spent over \$72.4 million in caring for special pioneers, missionaries, and traveling overseers in their field service assignments.

MEMORIAL PARTAKERS WORLDWIDE: 8,760

¹⁶ In Côte d'Ivoire, the same attitude was shown by a young Christian man who wrote to the branch office: "I am serving as a ministerial servant. But I cannot tell the brothers to pioneer while I am not setting a good example myself. So I have left a well-paying job and am now self-employed, which gives me more time for the ministry." This young man became one of the 983 pioneers serving in Côte d'Ivoire, which reported 6,701 publishers last year, an increase of 5 percent.

¹⁷ Intolerance, prejudice, and discrimination continue to cause problems for the 24,961 Kingdom publishers in Belgium. Still, they are zealous and are not intimidated. When a 16-year-old Witness heard Jehovah's Witnesses described as a sect during a class on ethics at school, she asked permission to give the other side of the story. Using the video *Jehovah's Witnesses—The Organization Behind the Name* and the brochure *Jehovah's Witnesses—Who Are They?*, she was able to explain who the Witnesses really are. The information was much appreciated, and the following week the students were given a test in which all the questions dealt with the Christian religion of Jehovah's Witnesses.

16. What attitude was shown by a young brother in Côte d'Ivoire?

17. How did a young Witness in Belgium show that she was not intimidated by prejudice?

How Would You Answer?

- What development enabled Jewish Christians to escape the destruction of Jerusalem?
- How does the counsel in the writings of the apostles Peter and Paul help us to stay awake?
- Who today give evidence of being wide awake?
- What lesson do we learn from the account of Lot and his wife?

¹⁸ Most Christians have to face grave problems during these last days. Still, they try not to be distracted. In spite of well-publicized economic problems, Argentina reported a new peak of 126,709 Witnesses last year. There is still widespread poverty in Mozambique. Nevertheless, 37,563 reported sharing in the witness work, an increase of 4 percent. Life is difficult for many in Albania, yet that country reported a fine increase of 12 percent, reaching a peak of 2,708 publishers. Clearly, Jehovah's spirit is not hindered by difficult conditions when his servants put Kingdom interests first.—Matthew 6:33.

¹⁹ The monthly average of 5,309,289 Bible studies reported last year worldwide show that there are still many sheeplike people who hunger for Bible truth. Of the new peak of 15,597,746 attending the Memorial, the majority are not yet actively serving Jehovah. May they continue to grow in knowledge and in love, both of Jehovah and of the brotherhood. It is exciting to see that the "great crowd" of "other sheep" continue to be productive as they serve the Creator "day and night in his temple" in association with their spirit-anointed brothers.—Revelation 7:9, 15; John 10:16.

A Lesson From Lot

²⁰ Of course, even faithful servants of God can momentarily lose their sense of urgency. Think of Abraham's nephew Lot. He learned from two angelic visitors that God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. The news could not have surprised Lot, who "was greatly distressed by the indulgence

18. What evidence is there that economic problems did not distract publishers in Argentina and Mozambique from serving Jehovah?

19. (a) What gives evidence that there are still many sheeplike people who hunger for Bible truth? (b) What are some other details of the annual report that demonstrate that Jehovah's servants are staying awake spiritually? (See the chart on pages 12-15.)

20. What do we learn from the example of Lot and his wife?



of the law-defying people in loose conduct." (2 Peter 2:7) Still, when the two angels came to escort him out of Sodom, he "kept lingering." The angels almost had to drag him and his family out of the city. Subsequently, Lot's wife ignored the angels' warning not to look back.

Her lax attitude cost her dearly. (Genesis 19:14-17, 26) "Remember the wife of Lot," Jesus warned.—Luke 17:32.

²¹ The catastrophe at Pompeii and Herculaneum

21. Why is it vital to stay awake now more than ever before?

neum and the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as the examples of the Flood of Noah's day and of Lot, all illustrate the importance of taking warnings seriously. As Jehovah's servants, we recognize the sign of the time of the end. (Matthew 24:3) We have separated ourselves from false religion. (Revelation 18:4) Like first-century Christians, we need to 'keep close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah.' (2 Peter 3:12) Yes, now more than ever before, we must stay awake! What steps can we take, and what qualities can we develop in order to stay awake? The following article will consider those matters.

"KEEP ON THE WATCH"!

"What I say to you I say to all, Keep on the watch."

—MARK 13:37.



JUAN kept his valuables at home. He stored them under his bed—in his opinion the safest place in the house. One night, however, while he and his wife were sleeping, a thief entered the bedroom. Evidently, the thief knew just where to look. He silently removed every valuable item from under the bed as well as money Juan had left in a drawer in the bedside table. The following morning, Juan discovered the theft. He will long remember the painful lesson that he learned: A sleeping man cannot guard his possessions.

² The same is true in a spiritual sense. We cannot safeguard our hope and our faith if we fall asleep. Hence, Paul's exhortation: "Let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses." (1 Thessalonians 5:6) To show how vital it is to stay awake, Jesus used the illustration of a thief. He described the events that would lead up to his coming as Judge, and then he warned: "Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is

1, 2. (a) What lesson did one man learn about safeguarding his property? (b) From Jesus' illustration about a thief, what do we learn about staying awake?

coming. But know one thing, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have kept awake and not allowed his house to be broken into. On this account you too prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man is coming.” (Matthew 24:42-44) A thief does not announce in advance when he is coming. He hopes to arrive when no one is expecting him. Similarly, as Jesus said, the end of this system will come at ‘an hour that we do not think to be it.’

“Stay Awake, Stand Firm in the Faith”

³ In words recorded in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus compared Christians to slaves waiting for their master to return from a wedding. They need to keep alert so that when he arrives they will be awake, ready to receive him. In a similar way, Jesus said: “At an hour that you do not think likely the Son of man is coming.” (Luke 12:40) Some who have served Jehovah over many years may lose their sense of urgency regarding the times we live in. They may even come to the conclu-

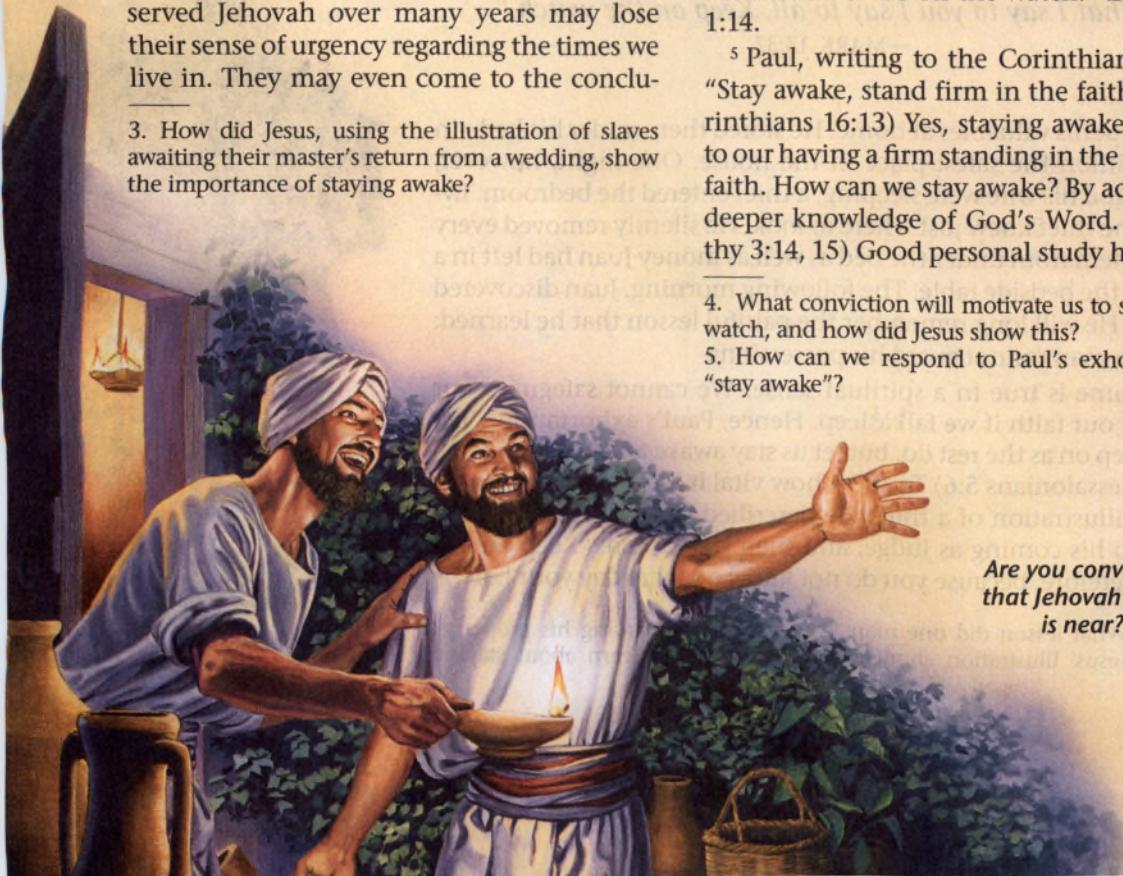
3. How did Jesus, using the illustration of slaves awaiting their master’s return from a wedding, show the importance of staying awake?

sion that the end could yet be a long way off. But such thinking could lead us to turn our attention away from spiritual things and toward material goals, distractions that can make us spiritually drowsy.—Luke 8:14; 21:34, 35.

⁴ We can derive another lesson from Jesus’ illustration. Although the slaves did not know the hour when their master would arrive, apparently they knew the night. It would have been difficult to keep awake all that night if they thought that their master might come some other night. But no, they knew which night he was coming, and that gave them strong incentive to stay awake. In a rather similar way, Bible prophecies clearly reveal that we are living in the time of the end; but they do not tell us the day or the hour of the end itself. (Matthew 24:36) Our belief that the end is coming helps us to stay awake, but if we are convinced that Jehovah’s day really is near, we will have far stronger motivation to be on the watch.—Zephaniah 1:14.

⁵ Paul, writing to the Corinthians, urged: “Stay awake, stand firm in the faith.” (1 Corinthians 16:13) Yes, staying awake is linked to our having a firm standing in the Christian faith. How can we stay awake? By acquiring a deeper knowledge of God’s Word. (2 Timothy 3:14, 15) Good personal study habits and

4. What conviction will motivate us to stay on the watch, and how did Jesus show this?
5. How can we respond to Paul’s exhortation to “stay awake”?



*Are you convinced
that Jehovah’s day
is near?*



regular meeting attendance help to strengthen our faith, and keeping Jehovah's day close in mind is an important aspect of our faith. So our reviewing from time to time the Scriptural proof

that we are living close to the end of this system will help us not to lose sight of the important truths regarding that coming end.* It is also good to take note of unfolding world events that fulfill Bible prophecy. One brother in Germany wrote: "Every time I watch the news—the wars, the earthquakes, the violence, and the contamination of our planet—it drives home to me the nearness of the end."

In Mark chapter 13, we find another account of Jesus' exhortation to his followers that they stay awake. According to this chapter, Jesus compares their situation to that of a doorkeeper waiting for his master to return from a journey abroad. The doorkeeper did not know the hour of his master's return. He

* It may be helpful to review the six lines of evidence indicating that we are living in "the last days" that were outlined on pages 12-13 of the January 15, 2000, issue of *The Watchtower*.—2 Timothy 3:1.

6. In what way did Jesus illustrate the tendency to lose spiritual alertness as time goes on?

Meetings, prayer, and good study habits help us to keep on the watch

just had to keep on the watch. Jesus referred to four different watches during which the master might arrive. The fourth watch lasted from about three in the morning until sunrise. On that final watch, drowsiness could easily overcome the doorkeeper. Reportedly, soldiers consider the hour before dawn to be the best time to catch an enemy unawares. Similarly, at this late hour, when in a spiritual sense the world around us sleeps soundly, we might face our greatest struggle to stay awake. (Romans 13:11, 12) Hence, in his illustration, Jesus repeatedly urges: "Keep looking, keep awake . . . Therefore keep on the watch . . . What I say to you I say to all, Keep on the watch."—Mark 13:32-37.

Many times during his ministry and after his resurrection, Jesus urged vigilance. In fact, almost every time that the Scriptures refer to the end of this system of things, we find the warning to stay awake or to keep on the watch.* (Luke 12:38, 40; Revelation 3:2; 16:14-16) Clearly, spiritual drowsiness is a

* Speaking of the Greek verb rendered "keep awake," lexicographer W. E. Vine explains that it literally means 'to chase sleep away,' and it "expresses not mere wakefulness, but the watchfulness of those who are intent upon a thing."

7. What real danger exists, and with this in view, what encouragement do we frequently read in the Bible?

very real danger. We all need those warnings!
—1 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 6.

Three Apostles Who Could Not Keep Awake

⁸ Keeping awake requires more than good intentions, as we see from the example of Peter, James, and John. These were three spiritual men who loyally followed Jesus and felt deep affection for him. Nevertheless, on the night of Nisan 14, 33 C.E., they failed to stay awake. Leaving the upper room where they had celebrated the Passover, the three apostles accompanied Jesus to the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus there said to them: "My soul is deeply grieved, even to death. Stay here and keep on the watch with me." (Matthew 26:38) Three times Jesus prayed fervently to his heavenly Father, and three times he returned to his friends, only to find them sleeping.—Matthew 26:40, 43, 45.

⁹ Why did these faithful men fail Jesus that night? Physical tiredness was a factor. The hour was late, probably after midnight, and "their eyes were heavy" with sleep. (Matthew 26:43) Still, Jesus said: "Keep on the watch and pray continually, that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit, of course, is eager, but the flesh is weak."—Matthew 26:41.

¹⁰ Undoubtedly, Jesus was also tired on that historic night. Rather than fall asleep, however, he spent those vital last moments of freedom in fervent prayer. A few days earlier, he had urged his followers to pray, saying: "Keep awake, then, all the time making sup-

8. In the garden of Gethsemane, how did three of Jesus' apostles respond to his request that they keep on the watch?

9. Likely, what contributed to the apostles' drowsiness?

10, 11. (a) Despite his fatigue, what helped Jesus to keep on the watch in the garden of Gethsemane? (b) What can we learn from what happened to the three apostles when Jesus asked them to keep on the watch?

plication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man." (Luke 21:36; Ephesians 6:18) If we heed Jesus' counsel and follow his fine example in the matter of prayer, our heartfelt supplications to Jehovah will help us to stay spiritually awake.

¹¹ Of course, Jesus understood—as his disciples did not at the time—that soon he would be arrested and condemned to death. His trials would reach an agonizing climax on the torture stake. Jesus had warned his apostles of these things, but they had not understood what he was saying. Hence, they fell asleep while he stayed awake praying. (Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:15-18) As was true of the apostles, our flesh is also weak and there are things that we do not yet know. Still, if we lose sight of the urgency of the times in which we live, we could fall asleep in a spiritual sense. Only by being alert will we stay awake.

Three Vital Qualities

¹² How can we maintain our sense of urgency? We have already seen the importance of prayer and the need for keeping in mind Jehovah's day. In addition, Paul mentions three vital qualities that we should cultivate. He says: "As for us who belong to the day, let us keep our senses and have on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet the hope of salvation." (1 Thessalonians 5:8) Let us consider briefly the role of faith, hope, and love in our keeping spiritually awake.

¹³ We must have an unshakable faith that Jehovah exists and that "he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Hebrews 11:6) The initial, first-century fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy about the end

12. What three qualities does Paul link to keeping our senses?

13. What part does faith play in our keeping alert?

strengthens our faith in its greater fulfillment during our time. And our faith keeps us in eager expectation of Jehovah's day, certain that "[the prophetic vision] will without fail come true. It will not be late."—Habakkuk 2:3.

¹⁴ Our sure hope is like "an anchor for the soul" that enables us to endure difficulties even if we have to wait for the certain fulfillment of God's promises. (Hebrews 6:18, 19) Margaret, a spirit-anointed sister in her 90's who was baptized over 70 years ago, admits:

14. How is hope vital if we are to keep awake?

"When my husband was dying of cancer in 1963, I felt that it would be wonderful if the end came quickly. But now I realize that I was thinking mainly of my own interests. We had no idea at that time to what extent the work would expand all over the world. Even now, there are still many places where the work is just opening up. So I am glad that Jehovah has exercised patience." The apostle Paul assures us: "Endurance [produces] an approved condition; the approved condition, in turn, hope, and the hope does not lead to disappointment."—Romans 5:3-5.

"Happy Is the One Who Is Keeping in Expectation."—Daniel 12:12

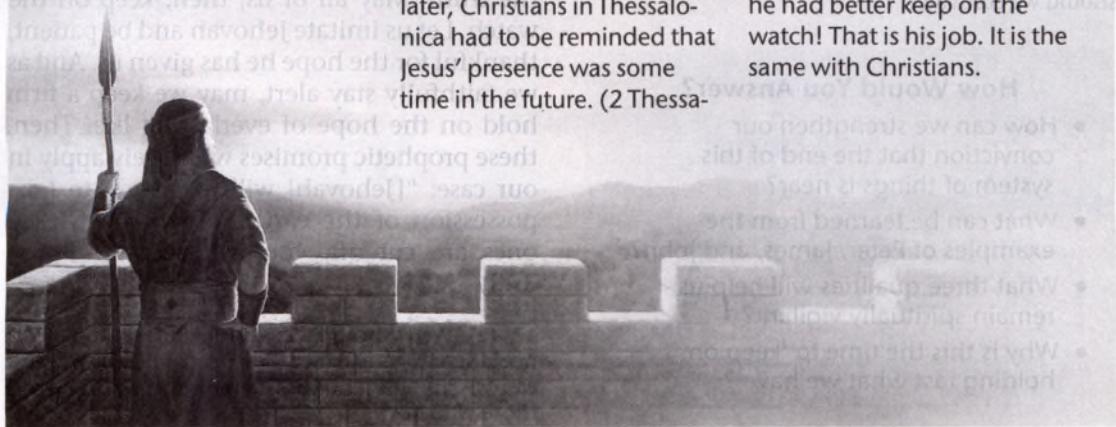
Imagine that a watchman suspects that a thief is planning to burgle the premises he is guarding. When night falls, the watchman listens intently for any noise that might betray the presence of the burglar. Hour after hour he strains his ears and eyes. It is easy to see how he could be deceived by a false alarm

—the sound of a gust of wind in the trees or a cat knocking something over.—Luke 12:39, 40.

Something similar can happen to those who are "eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:7) The apostles thought that Jesus would 'restore the kingdom to Israel' soon after his resurrection. (Acts 1:6) Years later, Christians in Thessalonica had to be reminded that Jesus' presence was some time in the future. (2 Thessa-

lonians 2:3, 8) Still, false alarms about the day of Jehovah did not make those early followers of Jesus abandon the path leading off into life. —Matthew 7:13.

In our day, disappointment over seeming delays in the coming of the end of this system of things should not cause us to drop our guard. An alert watchman may be deceived by a false alarm, yet he had better keep on the watch! That is his job. It is the same with Christians.



¹⁵ Christian love is an outstanding quality because it is the underlying motive for everything we do. We serve Jehovah because we love him, irrespective of his timetable. Love of neighbor moves us to preach the good news of the Kingdom, however long it might be God's will that we do so and however many times we return to the same homes. As Paul wrote, "there remain faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13) Love keeps us going and helps us to remain awake. "[Love] hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."—1 Corinthians 13:7, 8.

"Keep On Holding Fast What You Have"

¹⁶ We live in momentous times when world events constantly remind us that we are in the final part of the last days. (2 Timothy 3: 1-5) Now is not the time to slacken the hand but to 'keep on holding fast what we have.' (Revelation 3:11) By being "vigilant with a view to prayers" and by cultivating faith, hope, and love, we will prove ourselves ready at the hour of test. (1 Peter 4:7) We have plenty to do in the work of the Lord. Being busy in deeds of godly devotion will help keep us wide awake.—2 Peter 3:11.

15. How will love motivate us even if it seems that we have been waiting a long time?

16. Rather than slacken the hand, what attitude should we cultivate?

How Would You Answer?

- How can we strengthen our conviction that the end of this system of things is near?
- What can be learned from the examples of Peter, James, and John?
- What three qualities will help us remain spiritually vigilant?
- Why is this the time to 'keep on holding fast what we have'?



Like Margaret, may we patiently and actively keep on the watch

¹⁷ "Jehovah is my share," Jeremiah wrote, "that is why I shall show a waiting attitude for him. Good is Jehovah to the one hoping in him, to the soul that keeps seeking for him. Good it is that one should wait, even silently, for the salvation of Jehovah." (Lamentations 3:24-26) Some of us have been waiting for just a short time. Others have waited for many years to see the salvation of Jehovah. How short, though, this waiting period is when compared with the eternity ahead! (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) And while we wait for Jehovah's due time, we can cultivate essential Christian qualities and help others to take advantage of Jehovah's patience and embrace the truth. May all of us, then, keep on the watch. Let us imitate Jehovah and be patient, thankful for the hope he has given us. And as we faithfully stay alert, may we keep a firm hold on the hope of everlasting life. Then, these prophetic promises will surely apply in our case: "[Jehovah] will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it."—Psalm 37:34.

17. (a) Why should occasional disappointments not discourage us? (See box on page 21.) (b) How can we imitate Jehovah, and what blessing awaits those who do?



A NOTE THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

AS TOLD BY
IRENE HOCHSTENBACH

It happened on a Tuesday evening in 1972. I was 16 years old and had accompanied my parents to a religious meeting in Eindhoven, a city in the province of Brabant, in the Netherlands. I felt insecure and wished I were somewhere else. Then two young women handed me a note with a message: "Dear Irene, we would love to help you." Little did I realize how that note would change my life. But before I relate what happened next, let me tell you something about my background.

I WAS born on the island of Belitung, in Indonesia. I remember some of the sounds of that tropical island—the rustle of palm trees in the wind, the gentle murmur of a nearby river, the laughter of children playing around our house, as well as the sound of music filling our home. In 1960, when I was four years old, our family moved from Indonesia to the Netherlands. We made the long journey by ship, and the sound I especially remember is that of a favorite toy that

traveled with me—a little clown with a set of drums. At age seven, I lost my hearing because of an illness, and since then I have not been able to hear any of the sounds around me. Memories are all I have left.

Growing Up Deaf

Because of the loving care of my parents, at first I didn't fully grasp the consequences of being deaf. As a child, I thought that even my huge hearing aid was kind of fun,

*I remember the sound
of my favorite toy*

though it was of little use to me. To communicate with me, neighborhood children would chalk whole stories on the sidewalk, and I answered them, even though I couldn't hear my own voice.

As I grew older, I became aware that I was different from the people around me. I also began to notice that some people made fun of me because of my deafness, while others excluded me from their company. I began to feel isolated and lonely. I started to grasp what it meant to be deaf, and the older I got, the more afraid I became of the world of hearing people.

To enable me to attend a special school for the deaf, my parents moved the whole family from a village in the province of Limburg to the city of Eindhoven. There, my father looked for a job, and my brother and sisters went to a new school. I'm grateful for all the adjustments they made for my sake. At school, I was taught to adapt the volume of my voice and to articulate more clearly. And although the teachers did not use sign language, my classmates taught me to sign.

Living in My Own World

As I grew up, my parents tried hard to communicate with me, but there were many things I did not comprehend. For example, I didn't understand that my parents were studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. But I remember that one day our family visited a place where lots of people were sitting on chairs. They all looked to the front, sometimes applauded, and now and then stood up—but why these people did all of that, I didn't know. Much later, I learned that I had



been at a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. My parents also used to take me to a small hall in the city of Eindhoven. I felt that it was all right there because everyone was kind and my family seemed happy, but why we always went there, I didn't know. Now I know that the small hall was a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Unfortunately, there was no one present at these meetings to interpret the program for me. I now realize that those present wanted to help me but that they did not know how to deal with my deafness. At these meetings, I felt left out and thought, 'I wish I were at school instead of here.' But just when those thoughts were going through my mind, two young women scribbled something on a piece of paper and handed it to me. That was the note I mentioned in the introduction. I had no idea that this note would be the start of a precious friendship that would free me from my world of isolation.

Developing a Precious Friendship

Colette and Hermine, who sent the note, were in their early 20's. Later, I learned that they had come to the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses that I was visiting to serve as regular pioneers, or full-time ministers. Although Colette and Hermine did not really know sign language, I managed to read their lips as they spoke to me, and in this way we communicated quite well.

My parents were pleased when Colette and Hermine asked about studying the Bible with me, but these young women did much more than that. They tried hard to interpret the meetings at the Kingdom Hall for me as well as to involve me in association with others in the congregation. They practiced Bible presentations with me to use in the preaching

work, and they also helped me prepare student talks for the Theocratic Ministry School. Just imagine, now I even had the courage to give a talk in front of a group of hearing people!

Moreover, Colette and Hermine made me feel that I could trust them. They were patient and listened to me. Although we often laughed about my mistakes, they never made fun of me; nor were they embarrassed by my presence. They tried to understand my feelings and treated me as an equal. These kind girls gave me a beautiful gift—their love and friendship.

Most important, Colette and Hermine taught me that I had to get to know our God, Jehovah, as a friend who can be trusted. They explained that Jehovah had seen me sitting in the Kingdom Hall and that he understood what it meant for me to be deaf. How grateful I am that our common love for Jehovah brought the three of us together as friends! I was moved by Jehovah's care for me, and out

of love for him, I symbolized my dedication to him by water baptism in July 1975.

Accompanying a Special Friend

In the years that followed, I became acquainted with more and more Christian brothers and sisters. One brother became a very special friend to me, and we were married in 1980. Shortly thereafter, I began to serve as a pioneer, and in 1994 my husband, Harry, and I were assigned to serve as special pioneers in the Dutch Sign Language field. The following year, I faced a challenging assignment. I was to accompany my husband, who can hear, as he visits different congregations as a substitute circuit overseer.

This is how I go about it. When we visit a congregation for the first time, I promptly go up to as many brothers and sisters as possible and introduce myself. I tell them that I am deaf and ask them to look at me while speaking slowly to me. I also try to give an answer right away at the congregation meetings. And I ask if someone is willing to be my interpreter for that week of meetings and field service.

This approach works so well that at times, my brothers and sisters forget that I cannot hear, leading to comical situations. For instance, they tell me that when they see me walking in town, they blow the horn of their car to greet me, but of course, I don't react. I

In the ministry and with my husband, Harry



too forget my limitations sometimes—like when I try to whisper something confidential in my husband's ear. When I see him suddenly blush, I know that my "whisper" was much too loud.

Children help out in unexpected ways. In one congregation that we visited for the first time, a nine-year-old boy had noticed that some in the Kingdom Hall were a bit hesitant to talk to me, and he decided to do something about it. He walked up to me, took me by the hand, led me to the middle of the Kingdom Hall, and called out at the top of his voice, "May I introduce Irene to

you—she is deaf!" Those present came up to me and introduced themselves.

As I accompany my husband in the circuit work, my circle of friends keeps growing. How different my life is today from the years that I felt excluded and isolated! Ever since that evening when Colette and Hermine slipped that little note into my hand, I have experienced the power of friendship and have met people who became very special to me. Most of all, I have come to know Jehovah, the most precious Friend of all. (Romans 8:38, 39) How that little note changed my life!

Her Perseverance Was Rewarded

Many righthearted individuals want their loved ones to learn about God's purposes and thus have a happy life. When someone dedicates himself to God, others, young as well as old, may well have contributed to that wise decision by their good conduct. Such was the case of Jearim, a teenage girl in Mexico, who turned in the following note at a special assembly day of Jehovah's Witnesses:

"I want to share with you my joy and happiness. Let me tell you why. Eighteen years ago, when I was not yet born, my parents learned the truth. My mother progressed, and later on my brother and I did too. Together we prayed to Jehovah that my father would also get on the road to life. Eighteen years have gone by, and today is a very special day for us. My father is getting

baptized. I thank Jehovah that he did not bring about the end before this long-awaited moment arrived. Thank you, Jehovah!"

Over the years, the family of this young girl surely had in mind the principles embodied in the inspired counsel of 1 Peter 3:1, 2, which says: "You wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, in order that, if any are not obedient to the word, they may be won without a word through the conduct of their wives, because of having been eyewitnesses of your chaste conduct together with deep respect." And young Jearim certainly applied the words of Deuteronomy 5:16: "Honor your father and your mother, just as Jehovah your God has commanded you." Applying such principles and patiently waiting on Jehovah certainly brought blessings to Jearim and her family.

WHAT CAN HELP US TO HANDLE THE WORD OF THE TRUTH ARIGHT?

A THEATER critic for a newspaper once went to see a certain play. He did not much like it and afterward wrote: "If triviality is what you happen to be wanting, by all means go and see this play." Later, the promoters of the play published an advertisement that featured a quote from the critic's review. The quote was: "By all means go and see this play"! The advertisement accurately quoted the critic's words, but it lifted them out of context and thus grossly misrepresented his view.

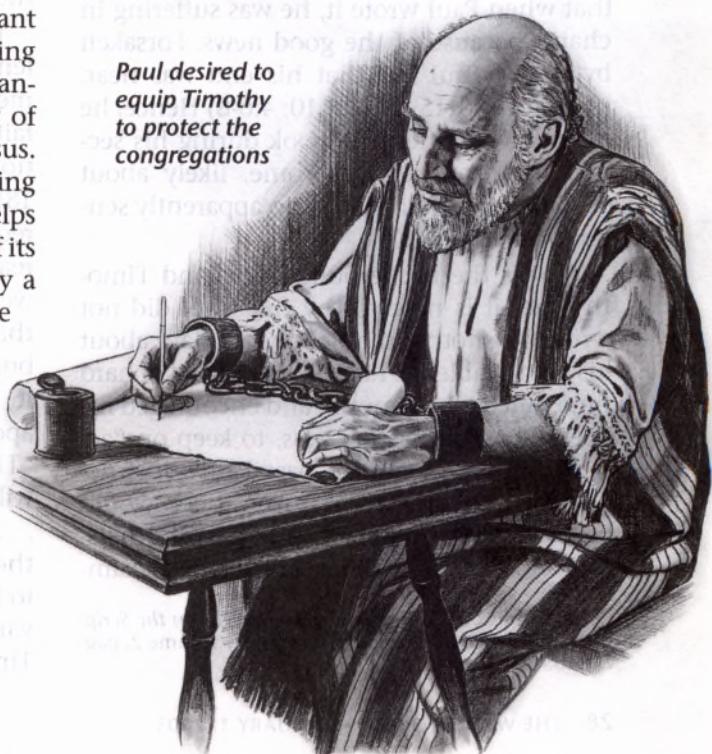
That example illustrates how important the context of a statement can be. Taking words out of context can distort their meaning, just as Satan distorted the meaning of Scripture when he tried to mislead Jesus. (Matthew 4:1-11) On the other hand, taking the context of a statement into account helps us to get a more accurate understanding of its meaning. For this reason, when we study a Bible verse, it is always wise to look at the context and see the verse in its setting in order to understand better what the writer was talking about.

Handle With Care

A dictionary defines context as "the parts of a written or spoken statement that precede or follow a specific word or passage, usually influencing its meaning or effect." Context can also be "the set of circumstances or

facts that surround a particular event, situation, etc." In this latter sense, a synonym for "context" would be "background." Considering the context of a scripture is particularly important in view of what the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright." (2 Timothy 2:15) In order to handle God's Word aright, we need to understand it

Paul desired to equip Timothy to protect the congregations



properly and then explain it honestly and accurately to others. Respect for Jehovah, the Bible's Author, will move us to try to do that, and considering the context will be an important help.

The Background of Second Timothy

Let us examine, for example, the Bible book of Second Timothy.* To start our examination, we could ask about the background of the book. Who wrote Second Timothy? When? Under what circumstances? Then we could ask, What was the situation of the "Timothy" who appears in the book's title? Why did he need the information in the book? The answers to these questions will greatly enrich our appreciation of the book and help us to see how we today can benefit from it.

The opening verses of Second Timothy indicate that the book is a letter written by the apostle Paul to Timothy. Other verses show that when Paul wrote it, he was suffering in chains because of the good news. Forsaken by many, Paul felt that his end was near. (2 Timothy 1:15, 16; 2:8-10; 4:6-8) Hence, he must have written the book during his second imprisonment in Rome, likely about 65 C.E. Soon after that, Nero apparently sentenced him to death.

That is the background of Second Timothy. Yet, it is noteworthy that Paul did not write to Timothy in order to complain about his own problems. Rather, he warned of hard times ahead for Timothy and encouraged his friend to avoid distractions, to keep on "acquiring power," and to pass Paul's instructions on to others. In turn, these would be adequately equipped to help still others. (2 Timothy 2:1-7) What an excellent exam-

ple of unselfish concern for others even in difficult times! And what fine counsel for us today!

Paul calls Timothy "a beloved child." (2 Timothy 1:2) The young man figures often in the Christian Greek Scriptures as a faithful companion of Paul. (Acts 16:1-5; Romans 16:21; 1 Corinthians 4:17) When Paul wrote this letter to him, it seems that Timothy was in his 30's—still viewed as youthful. (1 Timothy 4:12) Yet, he already had an excellent record of faithfulness, 'slaving with Paul' for perhaps 14 years. (Philippians 2:19-22) Despite Timothy's relative youth, Paul charged him with counseling other elders "not to fight about words" but to concentrate on important matters, such as faith and endurance. (2 Timothy 2:14) Timothy was also authorized to handle the appointing of congregation overseers and ministerial servants. (1 Timothy 5:22) However, he may have been a little diffident about exercising his authority.—2 Timothy 1:6, 7.

The young elder faced some serious challenges. For one thing, two individuals, Hy menaeus and Philetus, were "subverting the faith of some," teaching that 'the resurrection had already occurred.' (2 Timothy 2:17, 18) Evidently, they held that the only resurrection was a spiritual one and that it had already occurred for Christians. Perhaps they were quoting out of context Paul's statement that Christians had been dead in their sins but were made alive through God's spirit. (Ephesians 2:1-6) Paul warned that such apostate influence would increase. He wrote: "There will be a period of time when they will not put up with the healthful teaching, . . . and they will turn their ears away from the truth, whereas they will be turned aside to false stories." (2 Timothy 4:3, 4) Paul's advance warning showed that it was urgent for Timothy to heed the apostle's counsel.

* For additional information, see *Insight on the Scriptures*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, Volume 2, pages 1105-8.

The Book's Value Today

From the foregoing, we see that Paul wrote Second Timothy for at least the following reasons: (1) He knew that his end was imminent, and he sought to prepare Timothy for the time when he was no longer there to support Timothy. (2) He desired to equip Timothy to protect the congregations under his supervision from apostasy and other harmful influences. (3) He wanted to encourage Timothy to stay busy in Jehovah's service and rely on an accurate knowledge of inspired Scripture in his stand against false teachings.

Understanding this background makes Second Timothy more meaningful to us. Today, too, there are apostates like Hymenaeus and Philetus who promote their own ideas and would like to subvert our faith. Moreover, the "critical times hard to deal with" that Paul prophesied about are here. Many have experienced the truth of Paul's warning: "All those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:1, 12) How can we stand firm? Like Timothy, we need to heed the counsel of those who have served Jehovah for many years. And by personal study, prayer, and Christian association, we can "keep on acquiring power" through Jehovah's undeserved kindness. Moreover, with confidence in the power of accurate knowledge, we can take note of Paul's exhortation: "Keep holding the pattern of healthful words."—2 Timothy 1:13.

"The Pattern of Healthful Words"

What are the "healthful words" of which Paul spoke? He uses that expression to refer to true Christian doctrine. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul explained that "healthful words" are basically "those of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Timothy 6:3) Imitating the pattern of healthful words results in one's hav-

ing a sound mind, a loving disposition, and consideration for others. Since Jesus' ministry and teachings are in harmony with all other teachings found in the entire Bible, the expression "healthful words" can refer by extension to all Bible teachings.

For Timothy, as for all Christian elders, the pattern of healthful words was a "fine trust" that had to be guarded. (2 Timothy 1:13, 14) Timothy was to "preach the word, be at it urgently in favorable season, in troublesome season, reprove, reprimand, exhort, with all long-suffering and art of teaching." (2 Timothy 4:2) When we realize that apostate teachings were spreading in Timothy's day, we appreciate why Paul emphasized the urgency of teaching healthful words. We see, too, that Timothy would have to protect the flock by 'reproving, reprimanding, exhorting' with long-suffering, exercising fine teaching ability.

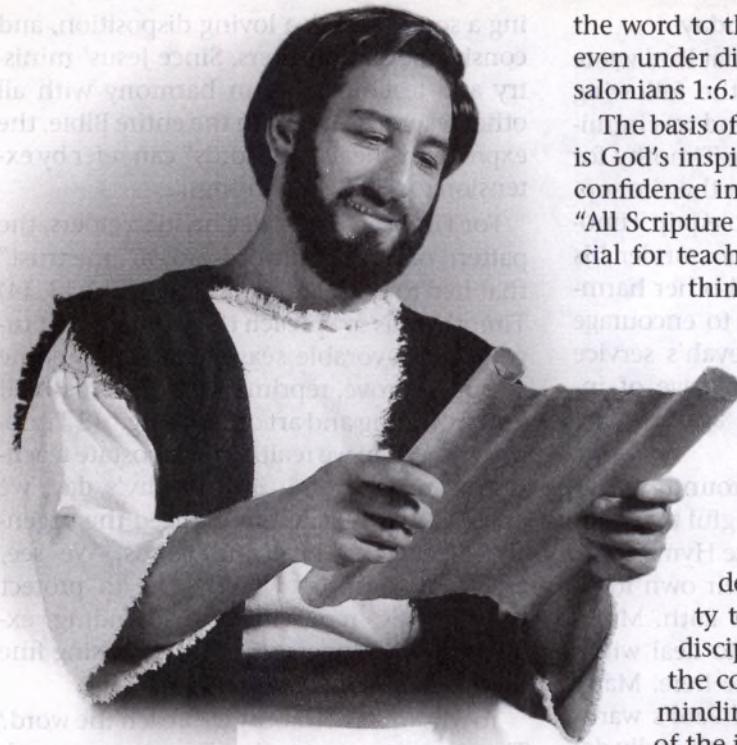
To whom was Timothy to preach the word? The context suggests that Timothy, as an elder, would preach the word within the Christian congregation. In view of the pressures exerted by opposers, Timothy was to keep his spiritual balance and to declare with boldness the word of God, not human philosophies, personal ideas, or useless speculations. True, this might bring opposition from some who may have been wrongly

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Has Evil Won?

Do You Really Have Faith in the Good News?

'One That Is Good Gets God's Approval'



Paul reminded Timothy to trust the wisdom of the inspired Word

inclined. (2 Timothy 1:6-8; 2:1-3, 23-26; 3:14, 15) However, by following Paul's counsel, Timothy would continue to be a barrier to apostasy, even as Paul himself had been. —Acts 20:25-32.

Do Paul's words about preaching the word also apply to preaching outside the congregation? Yes, they do, as the context shows. Paul goes on to say: "You, though, keep your senses in all things, suffer evil, do the work of an evangelizer, fully accomplish your ministry." (2 Timothy 4:5) Evangelizing—preaching the good news of salvation to unbelievers—is central to the Christian ministry. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) And just as God's word is preached in the congregation even in "troublesome season," so we persist in preaching

the word to those outside the congregation even under difficult circumstances.—1 Thessalonians 1:6.

The basis of all our preaching and teaching is God's inspired Word. We have the fullest confidence in the Bible. Paul told Timothy: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:

16) Those words are often correctly quoted to show that the Bible is God's inspired Word. But what was Paul's purpose in writing them?

Paul was speaking to an elder, one with the responsibility to 'reprove, set things straight, discipline in righteousness,' within the congregation. Hence, he was reminding Timothy to trust the wisdom of the inspired Word, in which Timothy had been instructed since infancy. Elders, like Timothy, must at times reprove wrongdoers. When doing so, they should always have confidence in the Bible. Moreover, since the Scriptures are inspired of God, all reproof based on them is really reproof from God. Any who reject Bible-based reproofs are rejecting, not some human ideas, but inspired counsel that comes from Jehovah himself.

How rich the book of Second Timothy is in godly wisdom! And how much more meaningful it is when we consider its counsel in context! In this article, we have only skimmed the surface of the wonderful, inspired information that this book contains, but it is enough to demonstrate how helpful it is to consider the context of what we read in the Bible. That will help to ensure that we are indeed "handling the word of the truth aright."

Questions From Readers

What did Paul mean when he said: "As often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup"?

Referring to the institution of the Memorial of Jesus' death, Paul wrote: "As often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup, you keep proclaiming the death of the Lord, until he arrives." (1 Corinthians 11:25, 26) Some feel that the word "often" here indicates that Christ's death should be commemorated frequently, in the sense of many times. Hence, they commemorate it more often than once a year. Is that what Paul meant?

It is now almost 2,000 years since Jesus inaugurated the Memorial of his death. Therefore, celebrating the Memorial even once a year means that it has been celebrated often since 33 C.E. However, in the context of 1 Corinthians 11:25, 26, Paul was discussing, not *how often*, but *how the Memorial should be observed*. In the original Greek, he did not use the word *pol-la'kis*, which means "often" or "frequently." Rather, he used the word *ho-sa'kis*, which means "as often as," an idiom meaning "whenever," "every time that." Paul was saying: 'Every time that you do this, you keep proclaiming the death of the Lord.'*

How often, then, should the Memorial of Jesus' death be commemorated? It is appropriate to observe it just once a year. It truly is a *memorial*, and memorials are usually observed annually. In addition, Jesus died on the day of the Jewish Passover, which was held

* Compare the account at 1 Samuel 1:3, 7. There, "as often as" (in the modern translation of the Hebrew) refers to events that happened "from year to year," or once a year, when Elkanah and his two wives went to the tabernacle at Shiloh.

once a year. Appropriately, Paul referred to Jesus as "Christ our passover," since Jesus' sacrificial death opened the way to life for spiritual Israel, just as the first Passover sacrifice preserved alive the natural Israelites' firstborn in Egypt and opened the way for the nation's release from slavery. (1 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 6:16) This connection with the annual Jewish Passover is further evidence that the Memorial of Jesus' death should be observed just once a year.

Moreover, Paul associated Jesus' death with another annual Jewish feast, the Day of Atonement. At Hebrews 9:25, 26, we read: "Neither is it in order that [Jesus] should offer himself often, as indeed the high priest enters into the holy place from year to year [on Atonement Day] with blood not his own. . . . But now he has manifested himself once for all time at the conclusion of the systems of things to put sin away through the sacrifice of himself." Since Jesus' sacrifice replaced the annual Atonement Day sacrifice, the Memorial of his death is properly observed annually. There is no Scriptural reason to observe the Memorial more frequently than that.

In harmony with this, historian John Laurence von Mosheim reports that the second-century Christians in Asia Minor were accustomed to observing the Memorial of Jesus' death "on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month [Nisan]." It was only in later years that it became customary in Christendom to observe it more often than once a year.



"You Are Right, Life Is Beautiful!"



WOULD you like to learn the real meaning of life? Eighteen-year-old Magdalena, one of Jehovah's Witnesses who lives in Szczecin, Poland, helped her high school classmate Katarzyna to do just that. Katarzyna was an avowed atheist, but when Magdalena talked to her about the Bible, she showed genuine interest.

Although Katarzyna appreciated what Magdalena shared with her from the Bible, she

could not fully accept it. As she talked with Magdalena about true friends, Katarzyna once said: "You have the Bible; you know what principles to follow and where to look for friends. But what about those who, at least for now, cannot accept those principles?"

A turning point came when Katarzyna took a trip to London, England. She visited the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses there, and she was moved by the kindness shown to her. Such simple gestures as opening the door for her and showing genuine interest in what she was saying appealed to her.

When the new school year started in September 2001, Katarzyna decided to accept a regular Bible study. She is building her appreciation for Bible principles and has started to apply them in her everyday life. Recently, she confided in Magdalena, saying: "I feel as if I am starting a new life." She also sent her a short message via cellular phone: "Thanks so much for our study today! You are right, life is beautiful! It is wonderful to know whom we should thank for that."