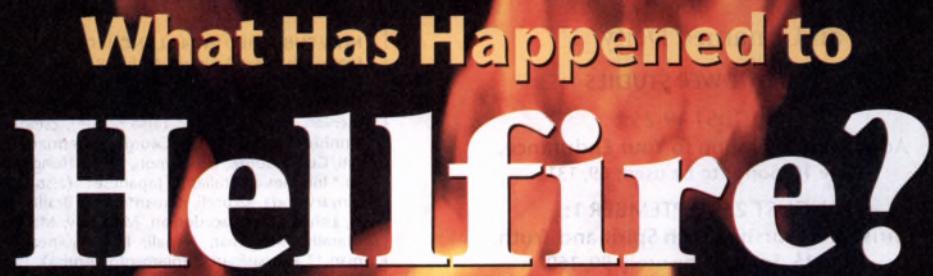


JULY 15, 2002

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



What Has Happened to
Hellfire?

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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What Has Happened to Hellfire?

WHAT image does the word "hell" conjure up in your mind? Do you see hell as a literal place of fire and brimstone, of unending torment and anguish? Or is hell perhaps a symbolic description of a condition, a state?

For centuries, a fiery hell of excruciating torments has been envisioned by religious leaders of Christendom as the certain destiny for sinners. This idea is still popular among many other religious groups. "Christianity may have made hell a household word," says *U.S. News & World Report*, "but it doesn't hold a monopoly on the doctrine. The threat of

painful retribution in the afterlife has counterparts in nearly every major world religion and in some minor ones as well." Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Jains, and Taoists believe in a hell of one sort or another.

Hell, though, has acquired another image in modern thinking. "While the traditional infernal imagery still attracts a following," states the aforementioned magazine, "modern visions of eternal perdition as a particularly unpleasant solitary confinement are beginning to emerge, suggesting that hell may not be so hot after all."

The Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica* observed: "It is misleading . . . to think that God, by means of demons, inflicts fearful torments on the damned like that of fire." It added: "Hell exists, not as a place but as a state, a way of being of the person who suffers the pain of the deprivation of God." Pope John Paul II said in 1999: "Rather than a place, hell indicates the state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God, the source of all life and joy." As to the images of hell as a fiery place, he said: "They show the complete frustration and emptiness of life without God." Had the pope described hell in terms of "flames and a red-suited devil with a pitchfork," church historian Martin Marty said, "people wouldn't take it seriously."

Similar changes are taking place in other denominations. A report by the doctrine commission of the Church of England said: "Hell is not eternal torment, but it is the final and irrevocable choosing of that which is opposed to God so completely and so absolutely that the only end is total non-being."

The catechism of the United States Episcopal Church defines hell as "eternal death in our rejection of God." A growing number of people, says *U.S. News & World Report*, are promoting the idea that "the end of the wicked is destruction, not eternal suffering. . . .

[They] contend that those who ultimately reject God will simply be put out of existence in the 'consuming fire' of hell."

Although the modern-day trend is to get away from the fire and brimstone mentality, many continue to adhere to the belief that hell is a literal place of torment. "Scripture clearly speaks of hell as a physical place of fiery torment," says Albert Mohler of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in

Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A. And the report *The Nature of Hell*, prepared by the Evangelical Alliance Commission, states: "Hell is a conscious experience of rejection and torment." It adds: "There are degrees of punishment and suffering in hell related to the severity of sins committed on earth."

Again, is hell a fiery place of eternal torment or of annihilation? Or is it simply a state of separation from God? What really is hell?

A Brief History of Hellfire

WHEN did professed Christians adopt the belief in hellfire? Well after the time of Jesus Christ and his apostles. "The *Apocalypse of Peter* (2nd century C.E.) was the first [apocryphal] Christian work to describe the punishment and tortures of sinners in hell," states the French *Encyclopædia Universalis*.

Among the early Church Fathers, however, there was disagreement over hell. Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Cyprian believed that hell was a fiery place. Origen and theologian Gregory of Nyssa thought of hell as a place of separation from God—of spiritual suffering. Augustine of Hippo, on the other hand, held that suffering in hell was both spiritual and sensory—a view that gained acceptance. "By the fifth century the stern doc-

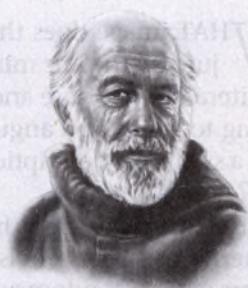
trine that sinners will have no second chance after this life and that the fire which will devour them will never be extinguished was everywhere paramount," wrote Professor J.N.D. Kelly.

In the 16th century, such Protestant reformers as Martin Luther and John Calvin understood the fiery torment of hell to be figurative of spending eternity separated from God. However, the idea of hell as a place of torment returned in the following two centuries. Protestant preacher Jonathan Edwards used to strike fear in the hearts of 18th-century Colonial Americans with graphic portrayals of hell.

Shortly thereafter, though, the flames of hell began to flicker and fade. "The 20th century was nearly the death of hell," states *U.S. News & World Report*.



Justin Martyr believed that hell was a fiery place



Augustine of Hippo taught that suffering in hell was spiritual and physical

What Really Is Hell?

WHATEVER image the word "hell" brings to your mind, hell is generally thought of as a place of punishment for sin. Concerning sin and its effect, the Bible says: "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned." (Romans 5:12) The Scriptures also state: "The wages sin pays is death." (Romans 6:23) Since the punishment for sin is death, the fundamental question in determining the true nature of hell is: What happens to us when we die?

Does life of some kind, in some form, continue after death? What is hell, and what kind of people go there? Is there any hope for those in hell? The Bible gives truthful and satisfying answers to these questions.

Life After Death?

Does something inside us, like a soul or a spirit, survive the death of the body? Consider how the first man, Adam, came to have life. The Bible states: "Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life." (Genesis 2:7) Though breathing sustained his life, putting "the breath of life" into his nostrils involved much more than simply blowing air into his lungs. It meant that God put into Adam's lifeless body the spark of life—"the force of life," which is active in all earthly creatures. (Genesis 6:17; 7:22) The Bible refers to this animating force as "spirit." (James 2:26) That spirit can be compared to the electric current that acti-

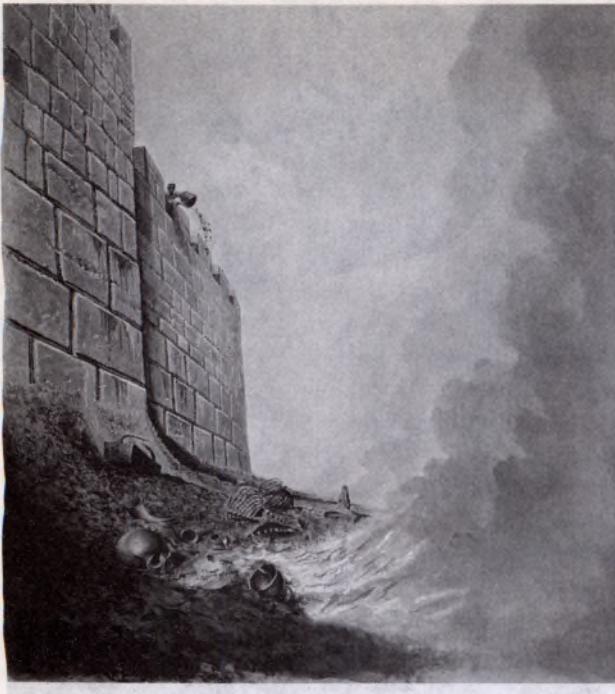


Job prayed for protection in hell

vates a machine or an appliance and enables it to perform its function. Just as the current never takes on the features of the equipment it activates, the life-force does not take on any of the characteristics of the creatures it animates. It has no personality and no thinking ability.

What happens to the spirit when a person dies? Psalm 146:4 says: "His spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish." When a person dies, his impersonal spirit does not go on existing in another realm as a spirit creature. It "returns to the true God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7) This means that any hope of future life for that person now rests entirely with God.

The ancient Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato held that a soul inside a person survives death and never dies. What does the Bible teach about the soul? Adam "came to be a living soul," says Genesis 2:7. He did not



Fiery Gehenna—a symbol of eternal destruction

receive a soul; he was a soul—a whole person. The Scriptures speak of a soul's doing work, craving food, being kidnapped, experiencing sleeplessness, and so forth. (Leviticus 23:30; Deuteronomy 12:20; 24:7; Psalm 119:28) Yes, man himself is a soul. When a person dies, that soul dies.—Ezekiel 18:4.

What, then, is the condition of the dead? When pronouncing sentence upon Adam, Jehovah stated: "Dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19) Where was Adam before God formed him from the dust of the ground and gave him life? Why, he simply did not exist! When he died, Adam returned to that state of complete absence of life. The condition of the dead is made clear at Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, where we read: "The dead know nothing . . . In the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom." (New International Version) Scripturally, death is a state of nonexistence. The dead have no awareness, no feelings, no thoughts.

Unending Torment or Common Grave?

Since the dead have no conscious existence, hell cannot be a fiery place of torment where the wicked suffer after death. What, then, is hell? Examining what happened to Jesus after he died helps to answer that question. The Bible writer Luke recounts: "Neither was [Jesus] forsaken in Hades [hell, King James Version] nor did his flesh see corruption."^{*} (Acts 2:31) Where was the hell to which even Jesus went? The apostle Paul wrote: "I handed on to you . . . that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, yes, that he has been raised up the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4) So Jesus was in hell, the grave, but he was not abandoned there, for he was raised up, or resurrected.

Consider also the case of the righteous man Job, who suffered much. Wishing to escape his plight, he pleaded: "Who will grant me this, that thou mayest protect me in hell [Sheol], and hide me till thy wrath pass?"[#] (Job 14:13, Douay Version) How unreasonable to think that Job desired to go to a fiery-hot place for protection! To Job, "hell" was simply the grave, where his suffering would end. The Bible hell, then, is the common grave of mankind where good people as well as bad ones go.

Hellfire—All-Consuming?

Could it be that the fire of hell is symbolic of all-consuming, or thorough, destruction? Separating fire from Hades, or hell, the Scriptures say: "Death and Hades were hurled into

* In the King James Version, the Greek word *Hades* is rendered "hell" in each of its ten occurrences in the Christian Greek Scriptures. The rendering at Luke 16:19-31 mentions torment, but the entire account is symbolic in meaning. See chapter 88 of *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

[#] The Hebrew word *Sheol* occurs 65 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and is rendered "hell," "grave," and "pit" in the King James Version.

the lake of fire." "The lake" mentioned here is symbolic, since death and hell (Hades) that are thrown into it cannot literally be burned. "This [lake of fire] means the second death"—death from which there is no hope of coming back to life.—Revelation 20:14.

The lake of fire has a meaning similar to that of "the fiery Gehenna [hell fire, *King James Version*]" that Jesus spoke of. (Matthew 5:22; Mark 9:47, 48) Gehenna occurs 12 times in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and it refers to the valley of Hinnom, outside the walls of Jerusalem. When Jesus was on earth, this valley was used as a garbage dump, "where the dead bodies of criminals, and the carcasses of animals, and every other kind of filth was cast." (*Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*) The fires were kept burning by adding sulfur to burn up the refuse. Jesus used that valley as a proper symbol of everlasting destruction.

As does Gehenna, the lake of fire symbolizes eternal destruction. Death and Hades are "hurled into" it in that they will be done away with when mankind is freed from sin and the condemnation of death. Willful, unrepentant sinners will also have their "portion" in that lake. (Revelation 21:8) They too will be annihilated forever. On the other hand, those in God's memory who are in hell—the common grave of mankind—have a marvelous future.

*'Those in the memorial tombs
will come out'*

Hell Emptied!

Revelation 20:13 states: "The sea gave up those dead in it, and death and Hades gave up those dead in them." Yes, the Bible hell will be emptied. As Jesus promised, "the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear [Jesus'] voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) Although no longer presently existing in any form, millions of dead ones who are in Jehovah God's memory will be resurrected, or brought back to life, in a restored earthly paradise.—Luke 23:43; Acts 24:15.

In the new world of God's making, resurrected humans who comply with his righteous laws will never need to die again. (Isaiah 25:8) Jehovah "will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." In fact, "the former things [will] have passed away." (Revelation 21:4) What a blessing is in store for those in hell—"the memorial tombs"! This blessing indeed is reason enough for us to take in more knowledge of Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ.—John 17:3.



"Let Us Work What Is Good Toward All"

TO PREACH and teach the good news of God's Kingdom was Jesus' primary activity. (Mark 1:14; Luke 8:1) Since Christ's followers desire to imitate him, they view the work of teaching the Bible's message about God's Kingdom to be their foremost activity in life. (Luke 6:40) It is indeed heartwarming for Jehovah's Witnesses to see how the Kingdom message brings lasting refreshment to those who accept it—just as it did when Jesus was on earth.—Matthew 11:28-30.

Besides teaching God's Word, Jesus performed other good works, such as healing the sick and feeding the hungry. (Matthew 14:14-21) Similarly, Jehovah's Witnesses supplement their Bible teaching work with deeds that help people in need. After all, the Scriptures equip Christians "for every good work" and urge them to do "what is good toward all."—2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Galatians 6:10.

"Our Brothers Were There"

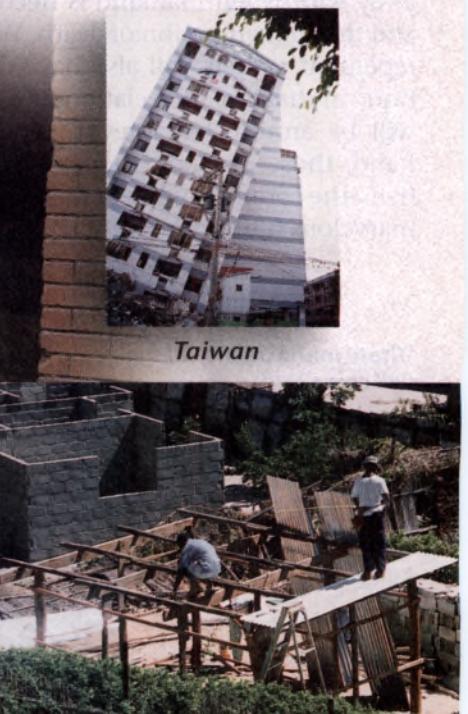
In September 1999, Taiwan was rocked by a devastating earthquake. A few months later, torrential rains and avalanches caused one of the worst natural disasters in Venezuela's history. More recently, severe floods ravaged the country of Mozambique. In all three instances, Jehovah's Witnesses quickly arrived on the scene with supplies of food, water, medicine, clothing, tents, and cooking equipment for victims. Volunteers with medical skills set up makeshift infirmaries to treat the injured, and volunteer construction workers built new houses for ones left homeless.

Victims were touched by the timely help they received. "When we were most desperate, our brothers were there," says Malyori, whose home was razed by an avalanche in Venezuela. Af-

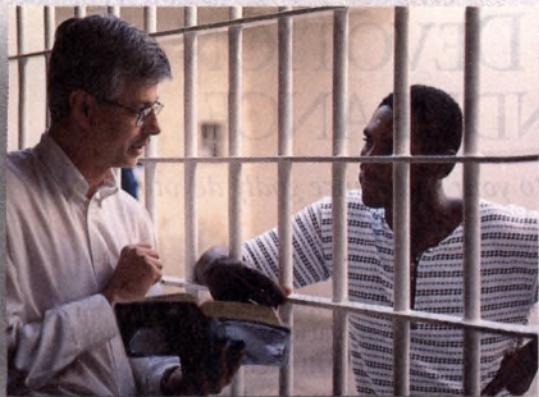
Venezuela



Taiwan



Mozambique



ter volunteers constructed a brand-new home for her family, Malyori exclaimed: "We can never thank Jehovah enough for all that he has done for us!" And when flood victims in Mozambique received the keys to their newly built homes, the entire group burst out singing the Kingdom song "Jehovah Is Our Refuge."*

Helping needy ones was refreshing for the volunteers as well. "It felt good to be of use to these brothers who had suffered so much," remarked Marcelo, who served as a nurse in a refugee camp in Mozambique. Huang, a volunteer in Taiwan, remarked: "It was a great joy to share in delivering food and tents to the brothers in need. It was faith strengthening."

A Volunteer Program That Works

Voluntary work has also brought spiritual refreshment to tens of thousands of prisoners worldwide. How? In recent years, Jehovah's Witnesses have provided Bible literature for over 30,000 individuals detained in some 4,000 prisons in the United States alone. In addition, where possible, Witnesses personally visit prisons to study the Bible with inmates and to conduct Christian meetings. Do the inmates benefit?

Some prisoners studying the Bible begin to



share the refreshing teachings of God's Word with fellow inmates. As a result, in a number of prisons throughout the world there are now groups of inmates who worship Jehovah together. "Our group is thriving," reported a prison inmate in Oregon, U.S.A., in 2001. "We have 7 Kingdom publishers and are conducting 38 Bible studies. More than 25 people attend the public talk and *Watchtower Study*, and we had 39 in attendance at the Memorial [of Christ's death]. Three more persons will be baptized shortly!"

Benefits and Joys

Prison officials have noticed that this volunteer program works. What impresses officials most is the long-lasting benefit of this volunteer program. One report notes: "In the ten years that this program

has been in operation, not one released inmate who was baptized in prison as one of Jehovah's Witnesses has returned to prison—in contrast with the 50-60 percent return rate of other groups." Moved by the results attained by Witness volunteers, a prison chaplain in Idaho said in a letter to the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses: "While I personally do not agree with your theology, I am very impressed with your organization."

Helping those in prison also proves to be rewarding for the volunteers. After conducting a meeting with a group of inmates who sang a Kingdom song for the first time, a volunteer wrote: "It was encouraging to observe 28 men joining in singing praises to Jehovah. And they sang out loudly! What a privilege to be present on such an occasion!" A volunteer visiting prisons in Arizona said: "What a blessing it has been to share in this special work!"

Witness volunteers around the world readily agree with Jesus, who said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) They also confirm that following the Bible's admonition to do good toward all is refreshing indeed.—Proverbs 11:25.

* See song number 85 in the book *Sing Praises to Jehovah*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

ADD GODLY DEVOTION TO YOUR ENDURANCE

"Supply to your faith . . . endurance, to your endurance godly devotion."

—2 PETER 1:5, 6.

GROWING up is important to a child, but more than physical growth is desired. Mental and emotional growth are also expected. In time, the child will set aside its immature ways and blossom into a full-grown man or woman. The apostle Paul referred to this when he wrote: "When I was a babe, I used to speak as a babe, to think as a babe, to reason as a babe; but now that I have become a man, I have done away with the traits of a babe."—1 Corinthians 13:11.

² Paul's words make an important point about spiritual growth. Christians need to progress from being spiritual babes to being those "full-grown in powers of understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:20) They should reach out and seek to attain "the measure of stature that belongs to the fullness of the Christ." Then they will not be "babes, tossed about as by waves and carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching."—Ephesians 4:13, 14.

³ How can we become full-grown spiritually? While physical growth progresses almost automatically under normal circumstances, spiritual growth takes deliberate effort. It begins with taking in accurate knowledge of God's Word and acting in harmony with what we learn. (Hebrews 5:14; 2 Peter 1:3) In turn, this enables us to display godly qualities.

1, 2. (a) What kind of growth is expected in the case of a child? (b) How important is spiritual growth?

3, 4. (a) What must we do to become full-grown spiritually? (b) What godly qualities should we display, and how important are they?

As with physical growth and its related aspects, growth in various godly qualities usually takes place simultaneously. The apostle Peter wrote: "By your contributing in response all earnest effort, supply to your faith virtue, to your virtue knowledge, to your knowledge self-control, to your self-control endurance, to your endurance godly devotion, to your godly devotion brotherly affection, to your brotherly affection love."—2 Peter 1:5-7.

⁴ Each quality that Peter lists is vital, and none can be omitted. He adds: "If these things exist in you and overflow, they will prevent you from being either inactive or unfruitful regarding the accurate knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:8) Let us focus on the need to add godly devotion to our endurance.

The Need for Endurance

⁵ Both Peter and Paul link godly devotion with endurance. (1 Timothy 6:11) Having endurance means more than just bearing up under hardship and remaining resolute. It involves patience, courage, and steadfastness, not losing hope when faced with trials, obstacles, temptations, or persecution. As those living with "godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus," we expect to be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12) We must endure if we are to prove our love for Jehovah and develop the qualities needed for salvation. (Romans 5:3-5; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8; James 1:3, 4, 12) Without endurance, we will not gain everlasting life.—Romans 2:6, 7; Hebrews 10:36.

5. Why do we need endurance?

⁶ No matter how well we start out, what ultimately counts is that we have endurance. Said Jesus: "He that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved." (Matthew 24:13) Yes, we must endure to the end, whether that is to the end of our present life or to the end of this wicked system of things. In either case, we must maintain our integrity to God. Without adding godly devotion to our endurance, however, we cannot please Jehovah, and we will not gain everlasting life. But what is godly devotion?

What Godly Devotion Means

⁷ Godly devotion is personal reverence, worship, and service to Jehovah God out of loyalty to his universal sovereignty. To practice godly devotion with respect to Jehovah, we need accurate knowledge of him and his ways. We should want to know God personally, intimately. This will move us to develop a heartfelt attachment to him, one that is manifested by our actions and way of life. We should desire to be as much like Jehovah as possible—to copy his ways and reflect his qualities and personality. (Ephesians 5:1) Indeed, godly devotion motivates us to want to please God in all we do.—1 Corinthians 10:31.

⁸ In order to practice true godly devotion, we must worship Jehovah exclusively, allowing nothing else to occupy his position in our hearts. As our Creator, he has a right to our exclusive devotion. (Deuteronomy 4:24; Isaiah 42:8) Nevertheless, Jehovah does not force us to worship him. He desires our willing devotion. It is our love for God, based on accurate knowledge of him, that moves us to clean up our lives and make an unreserved dedication to him and then to live up to it.

6. Enduring to the end means doing what?
7. What is godly devotion, and what does it impel us to do?
8. How do godly devotion and exclusive devotion work hand in hand?

Build a Relationship With God

⁹ After symbolizing our dedication to God by getting baptized, we still need to build an ever closer personal relationship with him. Our desire to do this and to serve Jehovah faithfully therefore moves us to continue studying his Word and meditating on it. As we allow God's spirit to operate on our minds and hearts, our love for Jehovah deepens. Our relationship with him continues to be the most important thing in our lives. We regard Jehovah as our best Friend and want to please him at all times. (1 John 5:3) Our delight in our pleasant relationship with God grows, and we are grateful that he lovingly instructs us and corrects us where needed.

—Deuteronomy 8:5.

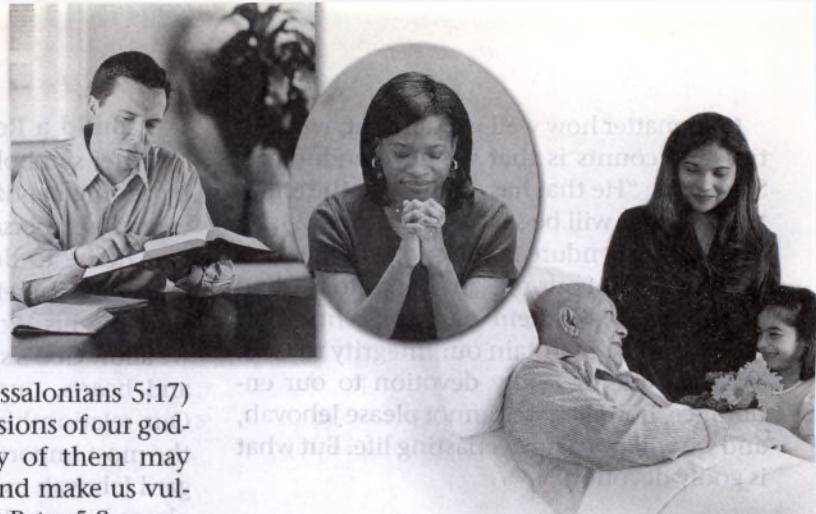
¹⁰ Unless we constantly take steps to strengthen our precious relationship with Jehovah, it can fade. If that happened, it would not be God's fault, for "he is not far off from each one of us." (Acts 17:27) How happy we are that Jehovah does not make approach to him difficult! (1 John 5:14, 15) Of course, we must work to maintain a close personal relationship with Jehovah. However, he helps us to draw close to him by giving us all the provisions we need to build and maintain godly devotion. (James 4:8) How can we make full use of all these loving provisions?

Keep Spiritually Strong

¹¹ Our deep-rooted love for God will motivate us to demonstrate the depth of our godly devotion, in line with Paul's counsel: "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) Doing this requires that we maintain a good routine of regular Bible

- 9, 10. How can we build and maintain a close relationship with God?
11. What are some expressions of our godly devotion?

**Godly devotion
is displayed
in many ways**



study, meeting attendance, and participation in the field ministry. We can also keep close to Jehovah by 'praying incessantly.' (1 Thessalonians 5:17) These are meaningful expressions of our godly devotion. Neglecting any of them may bring on spiritual sickness and make us vulnerable to Satan's devices.—1 Peter 5:8.

¹² Keeping spiritually strong and active also helps us to face the many trials that beset us. Trials may come from sources that can sorely test us. Indifference, opposition, and persecution can be harder to endure when they originate with close family members, relatives, or neighbors. Insidious pressures to compromise our Christian principles may arise at our workplace or in school. Discouragement, sickness, and depression can weaken us physically and make it more difficult to cope with tests of faith. But we can successfully cope with all trials if we persevere "in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah." (2 Peter 3:11, 12) And we can maintain our joy in doing so, confident of God's blessing.—Proverbs 10:22.

¹³ Although Satan targets those practicing godly devotion, we need not be fearful. Why? Because "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial." (2 Peter 2:9) To endure trials and experience such deliverance, we must "repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires and . . . live with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion amid this present system of things." (Titus 2:12) As Christians, we must be on

12. How can we successfully cope with trials?
13. What must we do if we are to keep on practicing godly devotion?

guard so that any weakness involving fleshly desires and activities does not encroach on our godly devotion and destroy it. Let us now consider some of these threats.

Beware of Threats to Godly Devotion

¹⁴ *Materialism is a snare to many.* We may deceive even ourselves, "thinking that godly devotion is a means of [material] gain." Thus, we could be emboldened to take improper advantage of the trust shown by fellow believers. (1 Timothy 6:5) We might even wrongly conclude that it is all right to press a prosperous Christian for a loan that we are unlikely to be able to repay. (Psalm 37:21) But it is godly devotion, not the acquisition of material things, that "holds promise of the life now and that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:8) Since 'we brought nothing into the world and cannot carry anything out,' let us more intently pursue "godly devotion along with self-sufficiency" and allow ourselves to be 'content with sustenance and covering.'—1 Timothy 6:6-11.

¹⁵ *The pursuit of pleasure can crowd out godly devotion.* Could it be that we need to make immediate adjustments in this regard? Granted, some benefits are derived

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14. What should we remember if we are enticed by the snare of materialism?
15. What can we do if the pursuit of pleasure is threatening to crowd out our godly devotion?



from bodily training and recreation. Yet, such rewards are small compared with everlasting life. (1 John 2:25) Today, many are “lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power,” and we need to turn away from such individuals. (2 Timothy 3:4, 5) Those who place emphasis on godly devotion are “safely treasuring up for themselves a fine foundation for the future, in order that they may get a firm hold on the real life.”—1 Timothy 6:19.

¹⁶ *Alcohol and drug abuse, immorality, and sinful cravings can destroy our godly devotion.* Succumbing to these can prevent us from living up to God’s righteous requirements. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 2 Corinthians 7:1) Even Paul had to endure a continuing conflict with the sinful flesh. (Romans 7:21-25) Strong measures are needed to wipe out wrong desires. For one thing, we must be determined to remain morally clean. Paul tells us: “Deaden . . . your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:5) Deadening our body members as re-

spects such sinful things requires determination so as to eliminate them, wiping them out. Earnest prayer for God’s help will enable us to repudiate wrong desires and pursue righteousness and godly devotion amid this wicked system of things.

¹⁷ *Discouragement can weaken our endurance and have a detrimental effect on our godly devotion.* Many of Jehovah’s servants have experienced discouragement. (Numbers 11:11-15; Ezra 4:4; Jonah 4:3) Especially can discouragement have a devastating effect on us if it is accompanied by resentment because we feel slighted or have been strongly chastised or disciplined. Reproof and discipline, however, are evidence of divine interest and loving concern. (Hebrews 12:5-7, 10, 11) Discipline should be considered not simply punishment but a means of training us in the way of righteousness. If we are humble, we will appreciate and accept counsel, realizing that “the reproofs of discipline are the way of life.” (Proverbs 6:23) This can help us to make fine spiritual progress in pursuing godly devotion.

¹⁸ *Misunderstandings and personal offenses may pose a challenge to our godly devotion.*

16. What sinful cravings keep some from living up to God’s righteous requirements, and how can we gain the mastery over these desires?

17. How should we view discipline?

18. What responsibility do we have when it comes to personal offenses?

They may cause anxiety or move some to take the unwise step of isolating themselves from their spiritual brothers and sisters. (Proverbs 18:1) But it is good to remember that bearing grudges or harboring ill will toward others can detrimentally affect our relationship with Jehovah. (Leviticus 19:18) In fact, "he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot be loving God, whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:20) In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stressed the need to take immediate steps to resolve personal difficulties. He told his listeners: "If, then, you are bringing your gift to the altar and you there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away; first make your peace with your brother, and then, when you have come back, offer up your gift." (Matthew 5:23, 24) An apology may help to heal a wound caused by unkind words or actions. A breach can be healed and peaceful relations restored if we ask forgiveness and admit that we handled matters improperly. Jesus also gave other counsel on handling difficulties. (Matthew

How Would You Answer?

- Why is endurance important?
- What is godly devotion, and how is it manifested?
- How can we build and maintain a close relationship with God?
- What are some threats to our godly devotion, and how can we avoid them?

18:15-17) How happy we are when efforts to resolve problems meet with success!—Romans 12:18; Ephesians 4:26, 27.

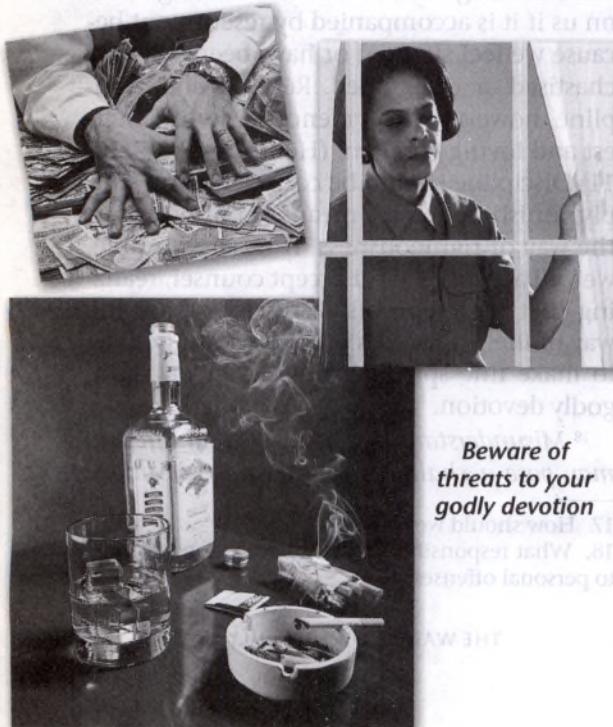
Follow Jesus' Example

19 Trials will certainly beset us, but they do not have to sidetrack us from the race for everlasting life. Remember that Jehovah can deliver us out of trial. As we "put off every weight" and "run with endurance the race that is set before us," let us "look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus." (Hebrews 12:1-3) Closely scrutinizing Jesus' example and endeavoring to imitate him in word and deed will help us to cultivate godly devotion and display it in greater measure.

20 Endurance and godly devotion work together in helping to make our salvation sure. By displaying these precious qualities, we can carry on faithfully in our sacred service to God. Even when under trial, happiness will be ours as we experience Jehovah's tender affection and blessing because we have endured and are practicing godly devotion. (James 5:11) Moreover, Jesus himself assures us: "By endurance on your part you will acquire your souls."—Luke 21:19.

19. Why is it so important to imitate Jesus' example?

20. What rewards result from pursuing endurance and godly devotion?



CHRISTIANS WORSHIP WITH SPIRIT AND TRUTH

"God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth."
—JOHN 4:24.

JEHOVAH'S only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, left no doubt about worship that pleases his heavenly Father. While giving a heart-warming witness to a Samaritan woman at a well near the city of Sychar, Jesus said: "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, because salvation originates with the Jews. Nevertheless, the hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him. God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth." (John 4:22-24) How are we to understand those words?

² The Samaritans had false religious views. They accepted as inspired only the first five books of the Holy Scriptures—and these just in their own recension, called the Samaritan Pentateuch. Whereas the Samaritans did not really know God, the Jews had been entrusted with Scriptural knowledge. (Romans 3:1, 2) It was possible for faithful Jews and others to enjoy Jehovah's favor. But what would this require of them?

1. What kind of worship pleases God?
2. On what did the Samaritans base their worship?



³ To please Jehovah, what did Jews, Samaritans, and others of the past have to do? They had to worship him "with spirit and truth." So must we. Although service to God must be spirited, or zealous, and motivated by a heart filled with love and faith, worshiping God with spirit especially requires that we have his holy spirit resting upon us and allow ourselves to be guided by it. Through study and application of God's Word, our spirit, or mental disposition, must be attuned to his. (1 Corinthians 2:8-12)

For our worship to be acceptable to Jehovah, it must also be rendered to him with truth. It must conform to what God's Word, the Bible, reveals about him and his purposes.

Truth Can Be Found

⁴ Certain students of philosophy have developed the view that ultimate truth is not within the reach of mankind. In fact, Swedish author Alf Ahlberg wrote: "Many philosophical questions are of such a nature that it is not possible to give a definite answer to them." Although some say that there is only

3. What is required in order to worship God "with spirit and truth"?
4. How do some view truth?

relative truth, is that really so? Not according to Jesus Christ.

⁵ Let us imagine ourselves as observers of the following scene: It is early in the year 33 C.E., and Jesus is standing before Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. Jesus tells Pilate: "For this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." Pilate asks: "What is truth?" But he does not wait for Jesus' further comment.—John 18:36-38.

⁶ "Truth" has been defined as "the body of real things, events, and facts." (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*) However, did Jesus bear witness to truth in general? No. He had specific truth in mind. He commissioned his followers to declare such truth, for he told them: "Make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in

5. Why did Jesus come into the world?
6. (a) How has "truth" been defined? (b) What commission did Jesus give his followers?



the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19, 20) Before the end of this system of things, Jesus' genuine followers would declare "the truth of the good news" earth wide. (Galatians 2:14) This would be done in fulfillment of Jesus' words: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) So it is vital that we identify those who are teaching all nations the truth by preaching the good news of the Kingdom.

How We Can Learn the Truth

⁷ Jehovah is the Source of spiritual truth. In fact, the psalmist David called Jehovah "the God of truth." (Psalm 31:5; 43:3) Jesus acknowledged that his Father's word is truth, and he also declared: "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by Jehovah.' Everyone that has heard from the Father and has learned comes to me." (John 6:45; 17:17; Isaiah 54:13) Clearly, then, those searching for the truth must be taught by Jehovah, the Grand Instructor. (Isaiah 30:20, 21) Truth seekers need to acquire "the very knowledge of God." (Proverbs 2:5) And Jehovah has lovingly taught or conveyed the truth in various ways.

⁸ For example, it was through angels that God transmitted the Law to the Israelites. (Galatians 3:19) In dreams, he promised blessings to the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob. (Genesis 15:12-16; 28:10-19) God even spoke from heaven, as when Jesus was bap-

7. How would you prove that Jehovah is the Source of truth?
8. In what ways has God taught or conveyed the truth?

Jesus told Pilate: 'I have come to bear witness to the truth'

*Can you explain why Jesus said:
'I am the truth'?*

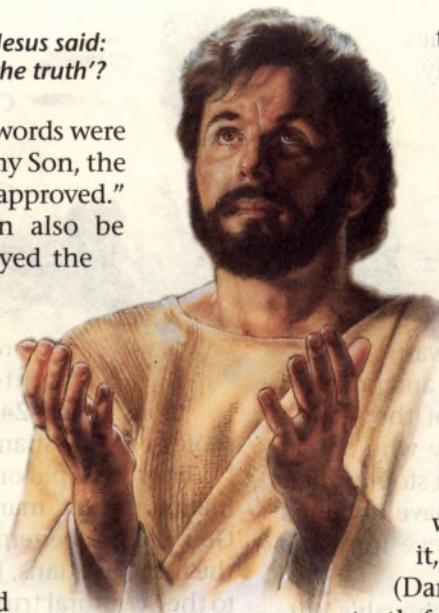
tized and these thrilling words were heard on earth: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved." (Matthew 3:17) We can also be grateful that God conveyed the truth by inspiring the Bible writers. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) By learning from God's Word, then, we can have "faith in the truth."—2 Thessalonians 2:13.

The Truth and God's Son

⁹ Especially has God used his Son, Jesus Christ, to reveal the truth to mankind. (Hebrews 1:1-3) In fact, Jesus spoke the truth as no other man ever had. (John 7:46) Even after his ascension to heaven, he revealed the truth from his Father. For instance, the apostle John received "a revelation by Jesus Christ, which God gave him, to show his slaves the things that must shortly take place."—Revelation 1:1-3.

¹⁰ Jesus told Pontius Pilate that He had come to the earth to bear witness to the truth. During his ministry, Jesus revealed that such truth related to the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty by means of God's Kingdom with Christ as King. But bearing witness to the truth required more of Jesus than preaching and teaching. Jesus made that truth become reality by fulfilling it. Accordingly, the apostle Paul wrote: "Let no man judge you in eating and drinking or in respect of a festival or of an observance of the new moon or of a sabbath; for those things are a shadow of the

9. How has God used his Son to reveal the truth?
10, 11. (a) The truth to which Jesus bore witness is related to what? (b) How did Jesus make the truth become reality?



things to come, but the reality belongs to the Christ."—Colossians 2:16, 17.

¹¹ One way in which the truth became reality was by Jesus' foretold birth in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4-11) The truth also became reality at the fulfillment of Daniel's prophetic words about the Messiah's appearance at the end of 69 'weeks of years.' That took place when Jesus presented himself to God at baptism and was anointed with holy spirit, right on schedule, in 29 C.E. (Daniel 9:25; Luke 3:1, 21, 22)

The truth further became reality by Jesus' enlightening ministry as a Kingdom proclaimer. (Isaiah 9:1, 2, 6, 7; 61:1, 2; Matthew 4:13-17; Luke 4:18-21) It also became reality by his death and resurrection.—Psalm 16:8-11; Isaiah 53:5, 8, 11, 12; Matthew 20:28; John 1:29; Acts 2:25-31.

¹² Since the truth centered on Jesus Christ, he could say: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) People are set free spiritually when they put themselves "on the side of the truth" by accepting Jesus' role in God's purpose. (John 8:32-36; 18:37) Because sheeplike ones accept the truth and follow Christ in faith, they will receive everlasting life.—John 10:24-28.

¹³ The body of truth delivered by Jesus and his inspired disciples constitutes the true Christian faith. Those "obedient to the faith" thus "go on walking in the truth." (Acts 6:7; 3 John 3, 4) So, then, who walk in the truth today? Who really are teaching all nations

12. Why could Jesus say, 'I am the truth'?
13. We will examine Scriptural truth in what three areas?

the truth? In addressing such questions, we will focus on the early Christians and examine Scriptural truth relating to (1) beliefs, (2) manner of worship, and (3) personal conduct.

The Truth and Beliefs

¹⁴ Jehovah's written Word was highly esteemed by the early Christians. (John 17:17) It was their standard regarding beliefs and practices. Clement of Alexandria of the second and third centuries said: "They who are laboring after excellency will not stop in their search after truth, until they have obtained proof of that which they believe from the Scriptures themselves."

¹⁵ Like the early Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses esteem the Bible highly. They believe that "all Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching." (2 Timothy 3:16) So let us consider a few beliefs of the early Christians in the light of what Jehovah's present-day servants have learned because they use the Bible as their principal textbook.

The Truth About the Soul

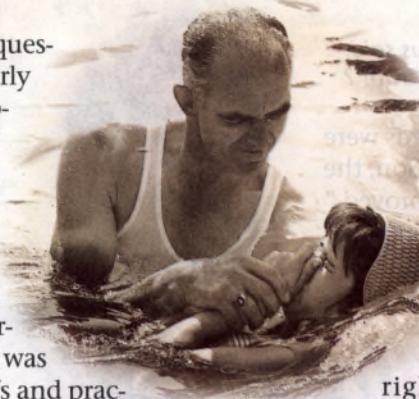
¹⁶ Because they believed what is said in the Scriptures, the first Christians taught the truth about the soul. They knew that "man came to be a living soul" when God created him. (Genesis 2:7) Moreover, they acknowledged that the human soul dies. (Ezekiel 18:4; James 5:20) They also knew that 'the dead are conscious of nothing at all.'—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10.

¹⁷ Yet, Jesus' early disciples had the sure hope that the dead in God's memory would be resurrected, or restored to life. That belief

14, 15. What would you say about the attitude of the early Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses toward the Scriptures?

16. What is the truth about the soul?
17. How would you explain the hope for the dead?

What is the truth about Christian baptism?



was well-expressed by Paul, who declared: "I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) Even at a later time, professed Christian Minucius Felix wrote:

"Who is so stupid or senseless as to venture to maintain that man, originally formed by God, cannot be remade by him anew?" Like the first Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses hold to the Scriptural truth about the human soul, death, and the resurrection. Let us now consider the identity of God and Christ.

The Truth and the Trinity

¹⁸ The early Christians did not view God, Christ, and the holy spirit as a Trinity. Says *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*: "Neither the word Trinity nor the explicit doctrine appears in the New Testament, nor did Jesus and his followers intend to contradict the Shema [a Hebrew prayer] in the Old Testament: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord' (Deut. 6:4)." Christians did not worship the Roman triad or any other gods. They accepted Jesus' statement that Jehovah alone is to be worshiped. (Matthew 4:10) Moreover, they believed Christ's words: "The Father is greater than I am." (John 14:28) Witnesses of Jehovah hold the same views today.

¹⁹ Jesus' early followers drew clear distinctions between God, Christ, and the holy spirit. In fact, they baptized disciples (1) in the name of the Father, (2) in the name of the Son, and (3) in the name of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)

18, 19. Why can it be said that the Trinity is not a Scriptural teaching?

Son, and (3) in the name of the holy spirit, not in the name of a Trinity. Jehovah's Witnesses similarly teach Scriptural truth and therefore differentiate between God, his Son, and the holy spirit.—Matthew 28:19.

The Truth and Baptism

²⁰ Jesus commissioned his followers to make disciples by teaching people the truth. To qualify for baptism, they need a basic knowledge of the Scriptures. For instance, they must acknowledge the position and authority of the Father and of his Son, Jesus Christ. (John 3:16) Baptismal candidates also need to understand that the holy spirit is not a person but is God's active force.—Genesis 1:2, footnote.

²¹ The early Christians baptized only informed and repentant individuals unreservedly dedicated to God to do his will. Jews and proselytes who assembled in Jerusalem at Pentecost 33 C.E. already had a knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. Upon hearing the apostle Peter speak about Jesus the Messiah, about 3,000 "embraced his word heartily" and "were baptized."—Acts 2:41; 3:19–4:4; 10:34–38.

²² Christian baptism is for believers. People in Samaria accepted the truth, and "when they believed Philip, who was declaring the good news of the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ, they proceeded to be baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8:12) As a devout proselyte who had knowledge of Jehovah, the Ethiopian eunuch first accepted Philip's statements about the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy, and then he got baptized. (Acts 8:34–36) Later, Peter told Cornelius and other Gentiles that "the man that fears [God] and works righteousness is acceptable to him" and that everyone putting

20. What knowledge is needed by baptismal candidates?

21, 22. Why would you say that baptism is for believers?

faith in Jesus Christ receives forgiveness of sins. (Acts 10:35, 43; 11:18) All of this harmonizes with Jesus' command to 'make disciples, teaching them to observe all the things he had commanded.' (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8) Jehovah's Witnesses hold to the same standard, accepting for baptism only those who have a basic knowledge of the Scriptures and who have made a dedication to God.

²³ Total immersion in water is the proper form of baptism for believers. After Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, he came "up out of the water." (Mark 1:10) The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized in "a body of water." He and Philip "went down into the water" and then came "up out of" it. (Acts 8:36–40) Scriptural association of baptism with symbolic burial also indicates complete submersion in water.—Romans 6:4–6; Colossians 2:12.

²⁴ *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* says: "The descriptions of specific New Testament baptisms indicate that the person being baptized was dipped under the water." According to the French work *Larousse du XX^e Siècle* (Paris, 1928), "the first Christians received baptism by immersion everywhere where water was found." And the book *After Jesus—The Triumph of Christianity* notes: "In its

23, 24. What is the proper form of Christian baptism?

How Would You Respond?

- What kind of worship does God require?
- How did the truth become reality by means of Jesus Christ?
- What is the truth about the soul and death?
- How is Christian baptism performed, and what is required of baptismal candidates?

most basic form, [baptism] called for a confession of faith by the candidate, followed by complete immersion in water in the name of Jesus."

- ²⁵ The foregoing points regarding the
25. What will be discussed in the following article?

Bible-based beliefs and practices of the first Christians are merely examples. It would be possible to cite other parallels between their beliefs and those of Jehovah's Witnesses. In the following article, we will discuss additional ways to identify those who are teaching people the truth.

THEY KEEP ON WALKING IN THE TRUTH

"No greater cause for thankfulness do I have than these things, that I should be hearing that my children go on walking in the truth."

—3 JOHN 4.

JEHOVAH approves only of those worshiping him "with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) They obey the truth, accepting the entire body of Christian teachings based on God's Word. This "truth of the good news" focuses on Jesus Christ and the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty by means of the Kingdom. (Galatians 2:14) God lets "an operation of error" go to those preferring falsehood, but salvation depends on having faith in the good news and walking in the truth.—2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Ephesians 1:13, 14.

² Kingdom proclaimers are "fellow workers in the truth." Like the apostle John and his friend Gaius, they resolutely hold to the truth and walk in it. With Gaius in mind, John wrote: "No greater cause for thankfulness do I have than these things, that I should be hearing that my children go on walking in the truth." (3 John 3-8) Even if el-

derly John did not introduce Gaius to the truth, the apostle's advanced age, Christian maturity, and fatherly affection made it fitting that this apparently younger man be viewed as one of John's spiritual children.

The Truth and Christian Worship

³ To learn the truth, early Christians met as congregations, often in private homes. (Romans 16:3-5) They thereby received encouragement and incited one another to love and fine works. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Regarding professed Christians of later times, Tertullian (c.155-after 220 C.E.) wrote: "We meet to read the books of God . . . With those holy words we feed our faith, we lift up our hope, we confirm our confidence."—*Apology*, chapter 39.

⁴ Singing was likely a part of early Christian meetings. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) Professor Henry Chadwick writes that the

1. On what does "the truth of the good news" focus?
2. For what was the apostle John especially thankful, and what was the nature of his relationship with Gaius?

3. What was the purpose and benefit of meetings held by the early Christians?
4. Singing has played what role at Christian meetings?



Christian meetings have always been a blessing to those walking in the truth

second-century critic Celsus found the apparently melodic chants used by professed Christians "so beautiful that he actually represented their emotive effect." Chadwick adds: "Clement of Alexandria is the earliest Christian writer to discuss what kind of music is appropriate for Christian use. He directs that it should not be the kind associated with erotic dance music." (*The Early Church*, pages 274-5) Just as the first Christians evidently sang when they met together, so Jehovah's Witnesses often sing Bible-based songs that include powerful anthems lauding God and the Kingdom.

⁵ In the early Christian congregations, overseers taught the truth, and ministerial servants assisted fellow believers in various ways. (Philippians 1:1) A governing body that relied on God's Word and holy spirit provided spiritual guidance. (Acts 15:6, 23-31) Religious titles were not used because Jesus had commanded his disciples: "Do not you be called Rabbi, for one is your teacher,

5. (a) How was spiritual direction provided in early Christian congregations? (b) How have true Christians applied Jesus' words recorded at Matthew 23: 8, 9?

whereas all you are brothers. Moreover, do not call anyone your father on earth, for one is your Father, the heavenly One." (Matthew 23:8, 9) In these and many other respects, there are parallels between the early Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Persecuted for Preaching the Truth

⁶ Although they proclaimed the peaceful Kingdom message, the early Christians were persecuted, even as Jesus had been. (John 15: 20; 17:14) Historian John L. von Mosheim called first-century Christians "a set of men of the most harmless inoffensive character, who never harboured in their minds a wish or thought inimical to the welfare of the state." Dr. Mosheim stated that what "irritated the Romans against the Christians, was the simplicity of their worship, which resembled in nothing the sacred rites of any other people." He added: "They had no sacrifices, temples, images, oracles, or sacerdotal orders; and this was sufficient to bring upon them the reproaches of an ignorant multitude, who imagined that there could be

6, 7. Although they proclaim a peaceful message, how have true Christians been treated?

no religion without these. Thus they were looked upon as a sort of atheists; and, by the Roman laws, those who were chargeable with atheism were declared the pests of human society.”

⁷ Priests, artisans, and others making their living from idolatry incited the populace against the Christians, who did not engage in idolatrous practices. (Acts 19:23-40; 1 Corinthians 10:14) Tertullian wrote: “They take the Christians to be the cause of every disaster to the State, of every misfortune of the people. If the Tiber reaches the walls, if the Nile does not rise to the fields, if the sky doesn’t move or the earth does, if there is famine, if there is plague, the cry is at once: ‘The Christians to the lion!’” Regardless of the consequences, true Christians ‘guard themselves from idols.’—1 John 5:21.

The Truth and Religious Observances

⁸ Those walking in the truth avoid unscriptural observances because ‘light has no sharing with darkness.’ (2 Corinthians 6:14-18) For instance, they do not celebrate Christmas, held on December 25. “No one knows the exact date of Christ’s birth,” admits *The World Book Encyclopedia*. *The Encyclopedia Americana* (1956 Edition) states: “Saturnalia, a Roman feast celebrated in mid-December, provided the model for many of the merry-making customs of Christmas.” M’Clintock and Strong’s *Cyclopædia* notes: “The observance of Christmas is not of divine appointment, nor is it of N[ew] T[estament] origin.” And the book *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* observes: “The flocks . . . passed the winter under cover; and from this alone it may be seen that the traditional date for Christmas, in the winter, is unlikely to be right, since the Gospel says that the shepherds were in the fields.”—Luke 2:8-11.

8. Why is Christmas not celebrated by those walking in the truth?

⁹ Easter supposedly commemorates the resurrection of Christ, but reputable sources link it with false worship. *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* says that Easter was “originally the spring festival in honor of the Teutonic goddess of light and spring known in Anglo-Saxon as Eastrē,” or Eostre. In any case, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th Edition) states: “There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament.” Easter was not an early Christian observance and is not celebrated by Jehovah’s people today.

¹⁰ Jesus did not command his followers to commemorate either his birth or his resurrection, but he did institute the Memorial of his sacrificial death. (Romans 5:8) Indeed, this is the only event he commanded his disciples to observe. (Luke 22:19, 20) Also called the Lord’s Evening Meal, this annual event is still being observed by Jehovah’s Witnesses.—1 Corinthians 11:20-26.

The Truth Declared Throughout the Earth

¹¹ Those who know the truth consider it a privilege to devote their time, energy, and other resources to the work of preaching the good news. (Mark 13:10) Early Christian preaching activity was supported by voluntary donations. (2 Corinthians 8:12; 9:7) Wrote Tertullian: “Even if there is a chest of a sort, it is not made up of money paid in entrance-fees, as if religion were a matter of contract. Every man once a month brings some modest coin—or whenever he wishes, and only if he does wish, and if he can; for nobody is compelled; it is a voluntary offering.”—*Apology*, chapter 39.

9. Why have past and present servants of Jehovah avoided Easter celebrations?
10. What observance did Jesus institute, and who have kept it properly?
- 11, 12. How have those walking in the truth always supported their preaching activity?



Jesus commanded his followers to observe the Memorial of his sacrificial death

¹² The global Kingdom-preaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses also is supported by voluntary donations. Besides the Witnesses, grateful interested people count it a privilege to support this activity with their contributions. Here, too, a similarity exists between the first Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Truth and Personal Conduct

¹³ As ones walking in the truth, early Christians complied with the apostle Peter's counsel: "Maintain your conduct fine among the nations, that, in the thing in which they are speaking against you as evildoers, they may as a result of your fine works of which they are eyewitnesses glorify God in the day for his inspection." (1 Peter 2:12) Jehovah's Witnesses take those words to heart.

¹⁴ Even after apostasy had made inroads, nominal Christians avoided immoral activities. W. D. Killen, professor of ecclesiastical history, wrote: "In the second and third centuries the playhouse in every large town was a centre of attraction; and whilst the actors were generally persons of very loose morals, their dramatic performances were perpetually pandering to the depraved appetites of the age. . . . All true Christians viewed the theatre

13. As regards their conduct, what counsel of Peter is heeded by Jehovah's Witnesses?

14. What is the Christian view of immoral entertainment?



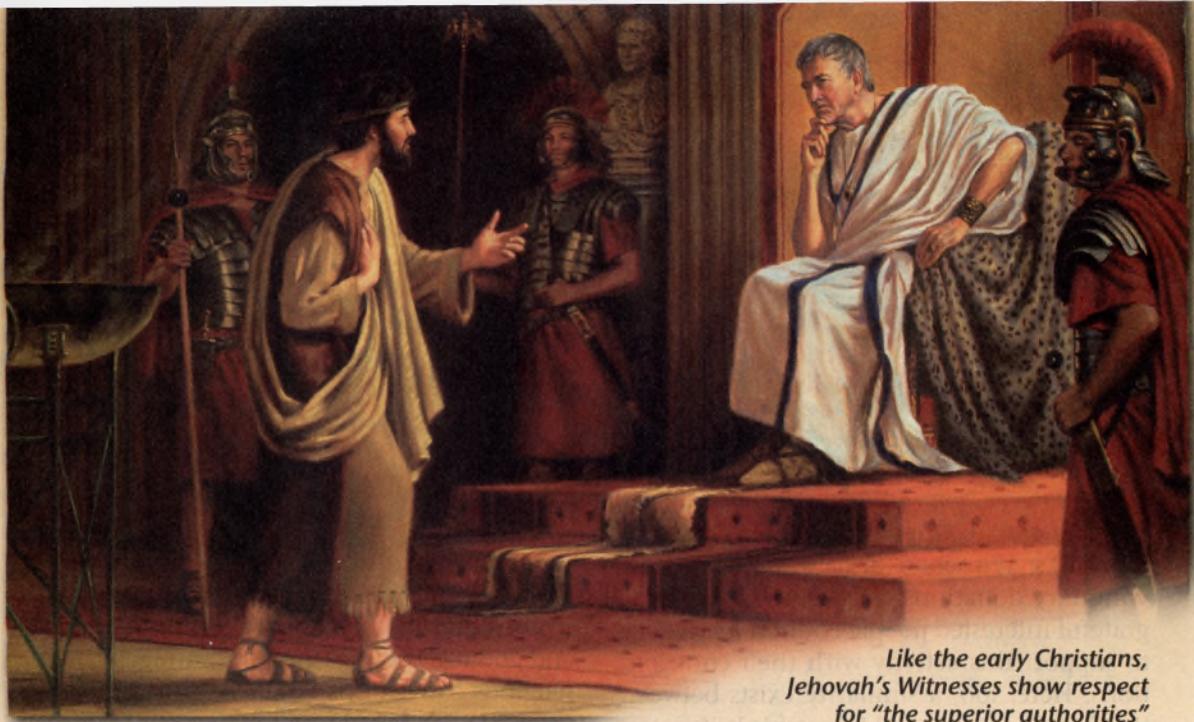
with disgust. . . . They recoiled from its obscenity; and its constant appeals to the gods and goddesses of heathenism outraged their religious convictions." (*The Ancient Church*, pages 318-19) Jesus' true followers today also avoid obscene and morally degrading forms of entertainment.—Ephesians 5:3-5.

The Truth and "the Superior Authorities"

¹⁵ Despite the fine conduct of the early Christians, most Roman emperors misjudged them. Historian E. G. Hardy says that the emperors viewed them as "somewhat contemptible enthusiasts." Correspondence between Governor Pliny the Younger of Bithynia and Emperor Trajan shows that ruling classes were generally unaware of the true nature of Christianity. How do Christians view the State?

¹⁶ Like Jesus' early followers, Jehovah's Witnesses are in relative subjection to governmental "superior authorities." (Romans 13: 1-7) If there is a conflict between a human demand and the divine will, they take the stand: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29) Says the book *After*

15, 16. Who are "the superior authorities," and how have they been regarded by those walking in the truth?



*Like the early Christians,
Jehovah's Witnesses show respect
for "the superior authorities"*

Jesus—The Triumph of Christianity: “While Christians may not have engaged in emperor worship, they were not rabble-rousers, and their religion, while odd and at times offensive from the pagan point of view, posed no real threat to the empire.”

¹⁷ Early Christians were advocates of God’s Kingdom, even as the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob exercised faith in that promised ‘city made by God.’ (Hebrews 11:8-10) Like their Master, Jesus’ disciples were “no part of the world.” (John 17:14-16) And as regards human warfare and strife, they had pursued peace by ‘beating their swords into plowshares.’ (Isaiah 2:4) Noting an interesting parallel, lecturer in church history Geoffrey F. Nuttall commented: “The early Christian attitude to war was more like that of the people who call themselves Jehovah’s Witnesses than it is comfortable for us to suppose.”

17. (a) The early Christians were advocates of what government? (b) How have true followers of Christ applied the words of Isaiah 2:4 in their lives?

¹⁸ As neutral individuals in subjection to “the superior authorities,” the first Christians were no threat to any political entities, and neither are Jehovah’s Witnesses. “It takes a bigoted and paranoid imagination to believe that the Jehovah’s Witnesses pose any kind of threat to any political regime,” wrote a North American editorialist. “They are as non-subversive and peace-loving as a religious body can be.” Enlightened authorities know that they have nothing to fear from Witnesses of Jehovah.

¹⁹ One way in which the early Christians showed respect for “the superior authorities” was by paying their taxes. Writing to Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161 C.E.), Justin Martyr held that Christians paid their taxes “more readily than all men.” (*First Apology*, chapter 17) And Tertullian told Roman rulers that their tax collectors owed “a debt of

18. Why has no government any reason to fear Jehovah’s Witnesses?

19. Regarding taxes, what can be said about the early Christians and Jehovah’s Witnesses?

gratitude to Christians" for their conscientious payment of taxes. (*Apology*, chapter 42) Christians benefited from the *Pax Romana*, or Roman Peace, with its law and order, good roads, and relatively safe maritime travel. Recognizing their debt to society, they heeded Jesus' words: "Pay back Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God." (Mark 12: 17) Jehovah's people today follow this counsel and have been praised for their honesty, as in the payment of taxes.—Hebrews 13:18.

The Truth—A Binding Tie

²⁰ Because they walked in the truth, the early Christians were bound together in a peaceful brotherhood, even as Jehovah's Witnesses are today. (Acts 10:34, 35) A letter printed in *The Moscow Times* said: "[Jehovah's Witnesses are] well known as very nice, kind, and meek people who are very easy to deal with, never put any pressure on other people and always seek peace in their relationship with others . . . There are no bribe-takers, drunkards or drug addicts among them, and the reason is very simple: They just try to be guided by their Bible-based convictions in everything they do or say. If all the people in the world at least tried to live according to the Bible the way Jehovah's Witnesses do, our cruel world would be absolutely different."

20, 21. With respect to a peaceful brotherhood, what has been true of both the early Christians and Jehovah's present-day servants?

How Would You Respond?

- In manner of worship, what similarity is there between the early Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses?
- What is the only religious observance kept by those walking in the truth?
- Who are "the superior authorities," and how do Christians view them?
- How is the truth a binding tie?

²¹ The *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* states: "The early church saw itself as one new humanity in which previously hostile groups, Jews and Gentiles, could live together in one body of peace." Jehovah's Witnesses also are a peace-loving international brotherhood—truly a new world society. (Ephesians 2:11-18; 1 Peter 5:9; 2 Peter 3:13) When the chief security officer of the Pretoria Show Grounds in South Africa saw how Witnesses of all races met there peacefully as convention delegates, he said: "Everyone was and is courteous, people speaking nicely to one another, the attitude displayed the past few days—it all testifies to the calibre of the members of your society, and that all live together like one happy family."

Blessed for Teaching the Truth

²² By their conduct and preaching activity, Paul and other Christians were "making the truth manifest." (2 Corinthians 4:2) Do you not agree that Jehovah's Witnesses are doing the same and are teaching all nations the truth? People throughout the earth are embracing true worship and are streaming to 'the mountain of Jehovah's house' in ever-increasing numbers. (Isaiah 2:2, 3) Every year, thousands are baptized in symbol of their dedication to God, resulting in the formation of many new congregations.

²³ Though of various backgrounds, Jehovah's people are united in true worship. The love they display identifies them as Jesus' disciples. (John 13:35) Can you see that 'God is really among them'? (1 Corinthians 14:25) Have you taken a stand with those teaching all nations the truth? If so, may you show lasting gratitude for the truth and be privileged to walk in it forever.

22. What has been happening because Christians have been making the truth manifest?

23. How do you view those who are teaching all nations the truth?

Questions From Readers

In what situations is it appropriate for a Christian woman to wear a head covering for spiritual reasons?

"Every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered shames her head," wrote the apostle Paul. Why? Because of the divine principle of headship: "The head of a woman is the man." Praying or preaching in the Christian congregation is normally the responsibility of a man. Hence, when a Christian woman cares for matters pertaining to worship that ordinarily would be performed by her husband or by a baptized man, she should wear a head covering.—1 Corinthians 11:3-10.

Situations in which a Christian woman ought to wear a head covering may arise in her marriage relationship. For example, when the family comes together for a Bible study or for a meal, the husband normally takes the lead in teaching them and in representing them in prayer to God. If he is an unbeliever, however, this responsibility may fall on his wife. Therefore, when praying aloud on behalf of herself and others or when conducting a Bible study with her children in the presence of her husband, a Christian sister rightly wears a head covering. If her husband is not present, the wife need not wear a head covering, since she is divinely authorized to teach the children.—Proverbs 1:8; 6:20.



*A head covering is
a sign of respect
for headship*



What, though, if a young son in the family is a dedicated, baptized servant of Jehovah God? Since the son is a member of the Christian congregation, he should receive instruction from its male members. (1 Timothy 2:12) If his father is a believer, the son should be taught by him. However, if the father is absent, then the mother should wear a head covering if she conducts a Bible study with the young baptized son and the other children. Whether she calls on the baptized son to pray at such a study or at mealtime is left to her discretion. She may feel that he is not yet sufficiently capable and may choose to offer prayer herself. If she chooses to pray on such an occasion, she should wear a head covering.

While sharing in certain congregation activities, Christian women may need to wear a head covering. At a midweek meeting for field service, for example, there may only be Christian sisters present, no baptized males. There may be other occasions when no baptized males are present at a congregation meeting. If a sister has to handle duties usually performed by a brother at a congregationally arranged meeting or meeting for field service, she should wear a head covering.

Must Christian women wear a head covering when giving oral or sign-language translation of Bible discourses or when publicly reading the paragraphs from a Bible study aid that is being used at a congregation meeting? No. Sisters handling these duties are not presiding or teaching. Similarly, no head covering is re-

quired for sisters taking part in demonstrations, relating experiences, or handling student talks in the Theocratic Ministry School.

While teaching within the congregation is to be done by baptized men, both men and women have the responsibility of preaching and teaching outside the congregation. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) So when a Christian woman is speaking to outsiders about God's Word in the presence of a male Witness of Jehovah, she would not need to wear a head covering.

However, the situation is different when a regular, scheduled Bible study is being conducted in a home and a dedicated, baptized male is present. This is a prearranged session of teaching where the one conducting the study actually presides. Under these circumstances, a study becomes an extension of the congregation. If a baptized female Witness conducts such a study with a baptized male Witness present, she would rightly wear a head covering. However, the dedicated brother should offer prayer. A sister would not pray in the presence of a dedicated brother unless there were some exceptional reason, such as the brother's having lost the physical power of speech.

A Christian sister may on occasion be accompanied on a Bible study by an unbaptized male Kingdom publisher. If she wishes, she may ask him to conduct the study. But since he could not properly represent the baptized sister in prayer to Jehovah, it would be proper for her to pray at the study. When conducting the study and when praying under these circumstances, the sister should cover her head. Even though the male publisher is not yet baptized, outsiders identify him with the congregation because of his preaching activity.

"The woman ought to have a sign of authority upon her head because of the angels," wrote the apostle Paul. Yes, Christian sisters have the privilege of being good examples to the millions of angels who loyally continue to subject themselves to Jehovah. How appropriate that godly women give due consideration to wearing a head covering when the occasion calls for it!

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Do Superstitions Control Your Life?

Yoga—Just an Exercise
or Something More?

Earnest Effort—When Is It Blessed
by Jehovah?

Sow Righteousness, Reap God's Loving-Kindness

ONE will positively fare badly because he has gone surely for a stranger, but the one hating handshaking is keeping carefree." (Proverbs 11:15) How convincingly this concise proverb encourages responsible action! Cosign a loan for a risky borrower and invite trouble. Avoid handshaking—a gesture that served as a signature to an agreement in ancient Israel—and remain free of monetary entrapment.

Clearly, the principle in operation here is: "Whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap." (Galatians 6:7) "Sow seed for yourselves in righteousness," stated the prophet Hosea, "reap in accord with loving-kindness." (Hosea 10:12) Yes, sow righteousness by doing things God's way, and reap his loving-kindness. Using this principle time and again, King Solomon of Israel forcefully encourages right action, upright speech, and a proper disposition. Closely examining his words of wisdom will indeed encourage us to sow seed for ourselves in righteousness.
—Proverbs 11:15-31.

Sow "Charm," Reap "Glory"

"A woman of charm is the one that takes hold of glory," says the wise king, "but the tyrants, for their part, take hold of riches." (Proverbs 11:16) This verse draws a contrast between the enduring glory that a woman of charm, "a gracious woman," may obtain and the transitory riches that a tyrant acquires.
—*An American Translation*.

How may one acquire charm that results in glory? "Safeguard practical wisdom and



*"Charm"
brought Abigail
"glory"*

thinking ability," counseled Solomon, "and they will prove to be . . . charm to your throat." (Proverbs 3:21, 22) And the psalmist spoke of 'charm being poured out upon the lips of a king.' (Psalm 45:1, 2) Yes, practical wisdom, thinking ability, and proper use of the tongue contribute to a person's value and charm. That certainly is true of a discreet woman. Abigail, the wife of foolish Nabal, is one example. She was "good in discretion and beautiful in form," and King David praised her for her "sensibleness." —1 Samuel 25:3, 33.

A godly woman who has true charm will surely receive glory. She will be well spoken of by others. If married, she will gain glory for herself in the eyes of her husband. In fact, she will bring glory to the entire family. And hers is not a fleeting glory. "A name is to be chosen rather than abundant riches; favor is better than even silver and gold." (Proverbs

22:1) The good name that she makes with God has permanent value.

The situation is the opposite with a tyrant, 'a ruthless man.' (Proverbs 11:16, *New International Version*) A tyrant is categorized with wicked men and those who are adversaries of Jehovah's worshipers. (Job 6:23; 27:13) Such a man 'does not set God in front of him.' (Psalm 54:3) By suppressing and taking selfish advantage of the innocent, such a person may "pile up silver like dust itself." (Job 27:16) Yet, at some point in time, he may lie down and not arise, and any day that he does open his eyes may be his last. (Job 27:19) All his wealth and accomplishments will then amount to nothing.—Luke 12:16-21.

What an important lesson Proverbs 11:16 teaches! By succinctly setting before us what charm and tyranny each will reap, the king of Israel urges us to sow righteousness.

"Loving-Kindness" Brings Rewards

Teaching yet another lesson in human relationships, Solomon says: "A man of loving-kindness is dealing rewardingly with his own soul, but the cruel person is bringing ostracism upon his own organism." (Proverbs 11:17) "The point of the proverb," says one scholar, "is that one's behaviour towards others, whether good or bad, has unintended or unexpected consequences for oneself." Consider a young woman named Lisa.* Although well-meaning, she is always late for her appointments. It is not unusual for her to be 30 minutes or more late for her arrangements to meet other Kingdom proclaimers for preaching activity. Lisa is not dealing rewardingly with herself. Can she blame others if they tire of losing valuable time and avoid making further appointments with her?

A perfectionist—someone who sets excessively high standards of accomplishment—is also cruel to himself. Always tirelessly striv-

ing to meet unattainable goals, he is setting himself up for exhaustion and disappointment. On the other hand, we deal rewardingly with ourselves when we set realistic and reasonable goals. Perhaps we are not as quick as others to grasp ideas. Or it may be that sickness or old age has imposed restraints upon us. Let us never become exasperated at our spiritual progress, but always continue to manifest reasonableness in dealing with our limitations. Happy we are when we 'do our utmost' within our capabilities.—2 Timothy 2:15; Philippians 4:5.

Going into further detail on how a righteous one benefits himself whereas the cruel person hurts himself, the wise king states: "*The wicked one is making false wages, but the one sowing righteousness, true earnings. The one firmly standing for righteousness is in line for life, but the one chasing after what is bad is in line for his own death. Those crooked at heart are something detestable to Jehovah, but the ones blameless in their way are a pleasure to him. Though hand be to hand, a bad person will not go unpunished; but the offspring of the righteous ones will certainly escape.*"—Proverbs 11:18-21.

In various ways these verses make this basic point: Sow righteousness and reap its reward. The wicked one may resort to deception or gambling in order to get something for nothing. Since such wages are false, he may be in for disappointment. The one doing an honest day's work brings in true earnings in that he has security. Having God's approval, the blameless one is in line for life. But how will a bad person fare? "Though hand be to hand" in scheming treachery, the wicked one will not escape punishment. (Proverbs 2:21, 22) What a fine exhortation to sow righteousness!

Real Beauty for the Sensible One

"*As a gold nose ring in the snout of a pig, so is a woman that is pretty but that is turning away*

* A substitute name is used here.

from sensibleness," continues Solomon. (Proverbs 11:22) Nose rings were a popular adornment during Bible times. A gold nose ring inserted through the side of the nose or through the septum separating the nostrils would be a readily noticeable piece of jewelry on a woman. How inappropriate such an exquisite ornament would be in the snout of a pig! It is similar with an outwardly beautiful person who lacks "sensibleness." Adornment just does not befit that one, whether female or male. It is out of place—not appealing at all.

Granted, concern over how we look to others is natural. But why be overly anxious or dissatisfied with our face or physical form? We have no control over many aspects of our features. And physical appearance is not everything. Is it not true that most of the people we like and admire are rather ordinary looking? Physical attractiveness is not the key to happiness. What really counts is the inward beauty of enduring godly qualities. May we then be sensible and cultivate such qualities.

"The Generous Soul Will Itself Be Made Fat"

"The desire of the righteous ones is surely good," states King Solomon, *"the hope of the wicked ones is fury."* Illustrating how this is so, he adds: *"There exists the one that is scattering and yet is being increased; also the one that is keeping back from what is right, but it results only in want."*—Proverbs 11:23, 24.

As we diligently scatter—impart to others—the knowledge of God's Word, we certainly improve our own grasp of its "breadth and length and height and depth." (Ephesians 3:18) The one letting his knowledge remain idle, on the other hand, is in danger of losing what he has. Yes, "he that sows sparingly will also reap sparingly; and he that sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."—2 Corinthians 9:6.

'The wicked one is making false wages, the righteous one true earnings'



"The generous soul will itself be made fat [prosperous]," continues the king, *"and the one freely watering others will himself also be freely watered."* (Proverbs 11:25) When we generously use our time and resources to advance true worship, Jehovah is well pleased with us. (Hebrews 13:15, 16) He will 'open the floodgates of the heavens and actually empty out upon us a blessing until there is no more want.' (Malachi 3:10) Just look at the spiritual prosperity of his servants today!

Giving yet another example of the contrasting desires of the righteous and of the wicked, Solomon says: *"The one holding back grain—the populace will execrate him, but there is a blessing for the head of the one letting it be bought."* (Proverbs 11:26) To buy up commodities when prices are low and hold them back till supplies shrink and prices soar can be profitable. Even though some good may result from limiting consumption and maintaining a reserve, people generally despise a person doing this because of his selfishness. On the other hand, the one who refrains from making large profits from an emergency wins people's favor.

Encouraging us to continue to desire what is good, or righteous, the king of Israel says:

"He that is looking for good will keep seeking goodwill; but as for the one searching for bad, it will come upon him. The one trusting in his riches—he himself will fall; but just like foliage the righteous ones will flourish."—Proverbs 11:27, 28.

The Righteous One Is Winning Souls

Illustrating how foolish action results in bad consequences, Solomon states: "As for anyone bringing ostracism upon his own house, he will take possession of wind." (Proverbs 11:29a) Achan's wrongdoing 'brought ostracism upon him,' and both he and members of his family were stoned to death. (Joshua, chapter 7) Today, the head of a Christian household and others in his family may get involved in wrongdoing that results in their being disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation. By personally failing to comply with God's commandments and by tolerating serious wrongdoing within his family, a man brings ostracism upon his own house. He and perhaps others in his family are excluded from Christian association as unrepentant wrongdoers. (1 Corinthians 5:11-13) And what will he acquire? Only wind—something lacking any real substance or value.

'Sow bountifully, reap bountifully'



"A foolish person will be a servant to the one wise in heart," continues the verse. (Proverbs 11:29b) Since a foolish person lacks practical wisdom, he cannot be trusted with great responsibility. Moreover, his mismanagement of his personal affairs may cause him to become obligated to another individual in some way. Such an unwise one may well become "a servant to the one wise in heart." Clearly, then, it is vital that we use good judgment and practical wisdom in all our dealings.

"The fruitage of the righteous one is a tree of life," the wise king assures us, "*and he that is winning souls is wise.*" (Proverbs 11:30) How does this happen? Well, by his speech and conduct, a righteous person brings spiritual nourishment to others. They are encouraged to serve Jehovah and may eventually receive the life that God makes possible.

'The Sinner Will Be Rewarded Even More'

How persuasively the aforementioned proverbs exhort us to sow righteousness! Applying in yet another way the principle that "whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap," Solomon states: "*Look! The righteous one—in the earth he will be rewarded. How much more should the wicked one and the sinner be!*"—Proverbs 11:31.

Even though a righteous person makes the effort to do what is right, he at times errs. (Ecclesiastes 7:20) And for his mistakes he will be "rewarded" by receiving discipline. What, though, of the wicked person who deliberately chooses a bad course and makes no effort to turn to the way of uprightness? Does he not deserve a greater 'reward'—a severe punishment? "If the righteous man is being saved with difficulty," wrote the apostle Peter, "where will the ungodly man and the sinner make a showing?" (1 Peter 4:18) Let us, therefore, be determined always to sow seed for ourselves in righteousness.

Altar to an Unnamed Deity

THE apostle Paul visited Athens, Greece, in about 50 C.E. There he saw an altar dedicated to an unknown god and later mentioned it while giving a fine witness regarding Jehovah.

In opening his discourse on Mars' Hill, or the Areopagus, Paul said: "Men of Athens, I behold that in all things you seem to be more given to the fear of the deities than others are. For instance, while passing along and carefully observing your objects of veneration I also found an altar on which had been inscribed 'To an Unknown God.' Therefore what you are unknowingly giving godly devotion to, this I am publishing to you."—Acts 17:22-31.

Although that Athenian altar has never been found, similar altars existed in other parts of Greece. For instance, the second century Greek geographer Pausanias mentioned altars of "gods Named Unknown" at Phaleron, not far from Athens. (*Description of Greece*, Attica I, 4) According to the same work, at Olympia there was "an altar of the Unknown gods."—Eleia I, XIV, 8.

In his work *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (VI, III), Greek writer Philostratus (c. 170-c. 245 C.E.) said that at Athens "altars are set up in honour even of unknown gods." And in *Lives of Philosophers* (1.110), Diogenes Laertius (c. 200-250 C.E.) wrote that "nameless altars" could be seen in different parts of Athens.

The Romans also erected altars to unnamed deities. Shown here is one dating from the first or second century B.C.E. and preserved at the Palatine Antiquarium in Rome, Italy. Its Latin inscription indicates that this altar was consecrated either to "a god or a goddess"—a phrase often found in prayers or dedicatory formulas both in inscriptions and in literary texts."

"The God that made the world and all the things in it" is still unknown to many. But as Paul told the Athenians, this God—Jehovah—"is not far off from each one of us."—Acts 17:24, 27.



Altar: Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma

