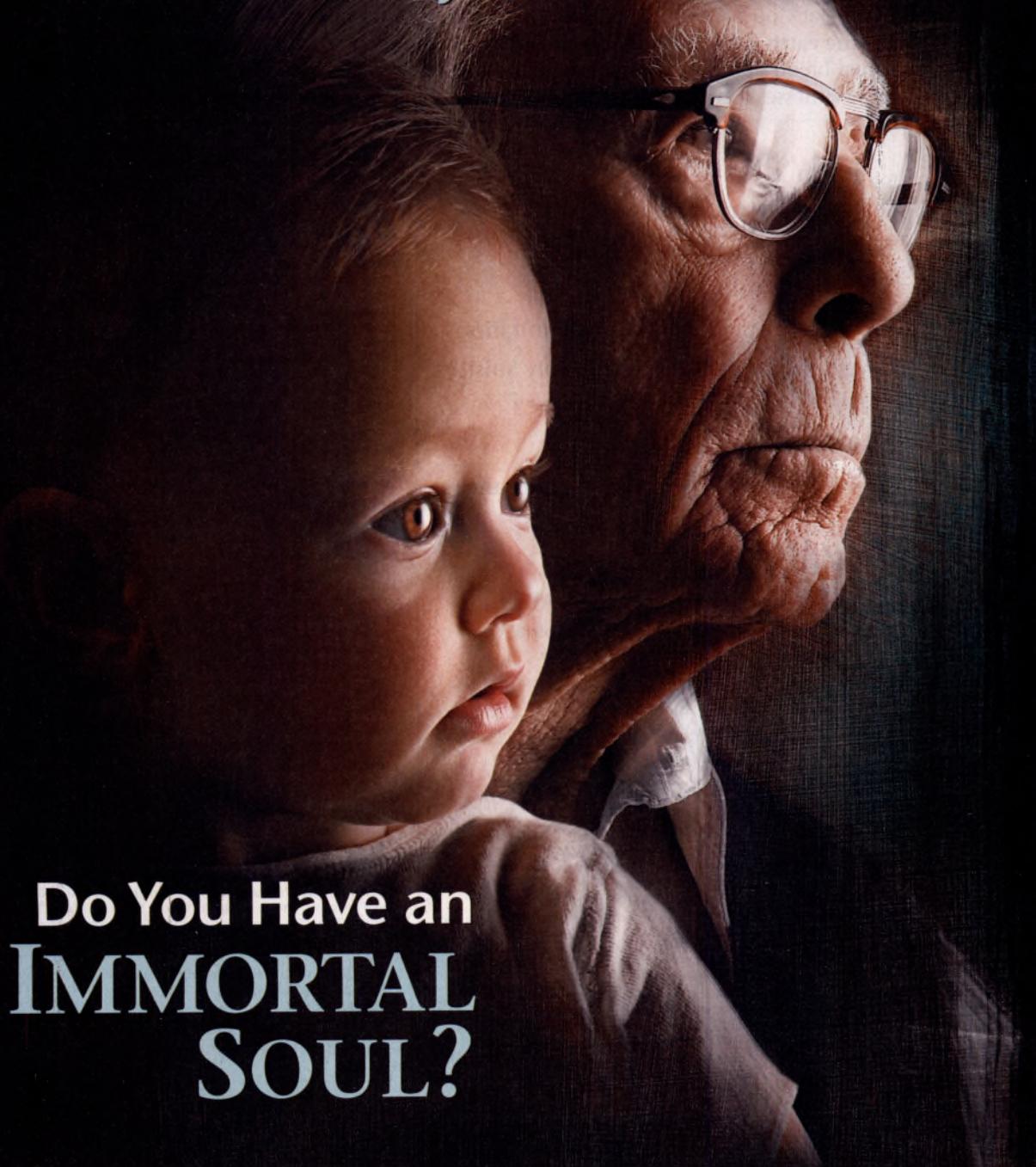




JULY 15, 2007

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Do You Have an
**IMMORTAL
SOUL?**



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 fellow men 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.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Do You Have an Immortal Soul?
- 6 "Go Wash in the Pool of Siloam"
- 8 "Wisdom Is for a Protection"
- 13 Barzillai—A Man Aware of His Limitations
- 16 Have You Sinned Against the Holy Spirit?
- 21 Will You "Keep Walking by Spirit"?
- 26 Questions From Readers
- 27 Awaiting Jehovah's Day With Endurance
- 32 "A Faithful Witness in the Skies"

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

AUGUST 20-26:

- Have You Sinned Against the Holy Spirit?
Page 16. Songs to be used: 161, 152.

AUGUST 27-SEPTEMBER 2:

- Will You "Keep Walking by Spirit"?
Page 21. Songs to be used: 106, 163.

SEPTEMBER 3-9:

- Awaiting Jehovah's Day With Endurance.
Page 27. Songs to be used: 155, 182.

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Do You Have an Immortal Soul?

Are we just flesh and blood? Or are we more than the sum total of the elements of which we are made? Are we here today and gone tomorrow? Or does some invisible part of us go on living after death?

THOUGH world religions have developed a bewildering array of beliefs about the Hereafter, most of them agree on one basic idea: Something inside a person is immortal and goes on living after death. Many people believe that this "something" is a soul. What do you believe? Are we part flesh and part soul? What is a soul? Do humans have an immortal soul? How vital that we know the truth about what we are!

"The Man Came to Be a Living Soul"

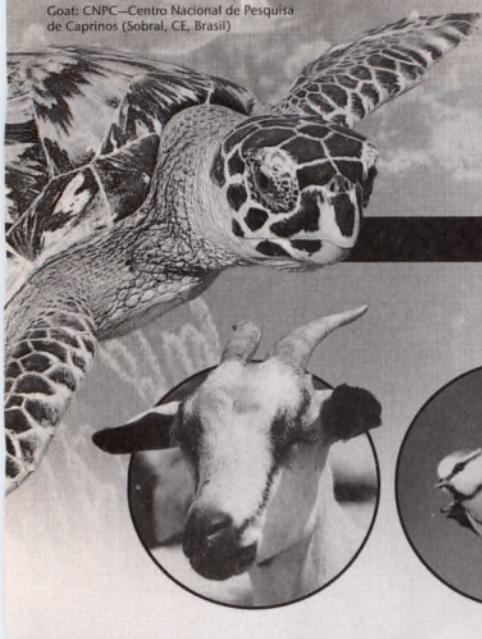
Is "soul" a part of man that separates from the body at death and goes on living? According to the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, "often the soul is equated with the total person." For instance, Genesis 2:7 states: "Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to



blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul." The first man, Adam, was a soul.

The understanding that the word "soul" can mean the whole person is supported by other scriptures. For example, the Bible speaks of a soul's doing work. (Leviticus 23:30) The soul is spoken of as being impatient, irritated, sleepless, fearful, and depressed. (Judges 16:16; Job 19:2; Psalm 119:28; Acts 2:43; 1 Thessalonians 5:14) Referring to a soul as a person, Romans 13:1 states: "Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities." And at 1 Peter 3:20, we read: "In Noah's days, . . . a few people, that is, eight souls, were carried safely through the water." Nothing in these scriptures indicates that the soul is some immaterial entity that lives on after death.

They are all souls



What about animals and plants? Are they souls? Consider how the Bible describes the creation of animals. “Let the waters swarm forth a swarm of living souls,” God commanded. On the next creative day, God said: “Let the earth put forth living souls according to their kinds, domestic animal and moving animal and wild beast of the earth according to its kind.” (Genesis 1:20, 24) Therefore, all living creatures—human or animal—are souls. Scripturally, plants are not referred to as souls.

The word “soul” is used in yet another sense. At Job 33:22, we read: “His soul draws near to the pit, and his life to those inflicting death.” Here, the terms “soul” and “life” are used in parallel, one amplifying the meaning of the other. “Soul,” then, can also refer to the life that one enjoys as a living soul, or person. Hence, the Scriptures refer to Moses’ enemies who were seeking to take his life as “all the men who were hunting for [his] soul.” (Exodus 4:19) And concerning Jesus Christ, the Bible says: “The Son of man came . . . to give his soul [life] a ransom in exchange for many.”—Matthew 20:28.

The Bible’s definition of “soul” is simple and consistent. The word can refer to a human or an animal or to the life that a creature enjoys as a living soul. As we will see, this understanding harmonizes with what the Bible says happens to the soul at death.

'The Soul That Is Sinning Will Die'

The Bible states: “The soul that is sinning—it itself will die.” (Ezekiel 18:4) The distressed prophet Elijah “began to ask that his soul might die.” (1 Kings 19:4) Likewise, Jonah “kept asking that his soul might die.” (Jonah 4:8) Yes, the soul dies when the person dies; it is not immortal. Since a person is a soul, to say that someone died is to say that his soul died.

But what about Bible texts that speak of the going out and the coming back of the soul? Concerning what happened to Rachel when she gave birth to a son, the Bible says: “As her soul was going out (because she died) she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.” (Genesis 35:18) And referring to the resurrection of a widow’s son, 1 Kings 17:22 states: “Jehovah lis-

tened to Elijah's voice [in prayer], so that the soul of the child came back within him and he came to life." Do these passages indicate that the soul is some invisible, shadowy part that can escape from or enter a body?

Well, remember that one meaning of the word "soul" is "life." Hence, Rachel's soul was going out in that her life was going out. In fact, some Bibles render the phrase "her soul was going out" as "her life was ebbing away" (*Knox*) and "she breathed her last" (*Jerusalem Bible*). Similarly, in the case of the widow's son, it was life that returned to the boy.—1 Kings 17:23.

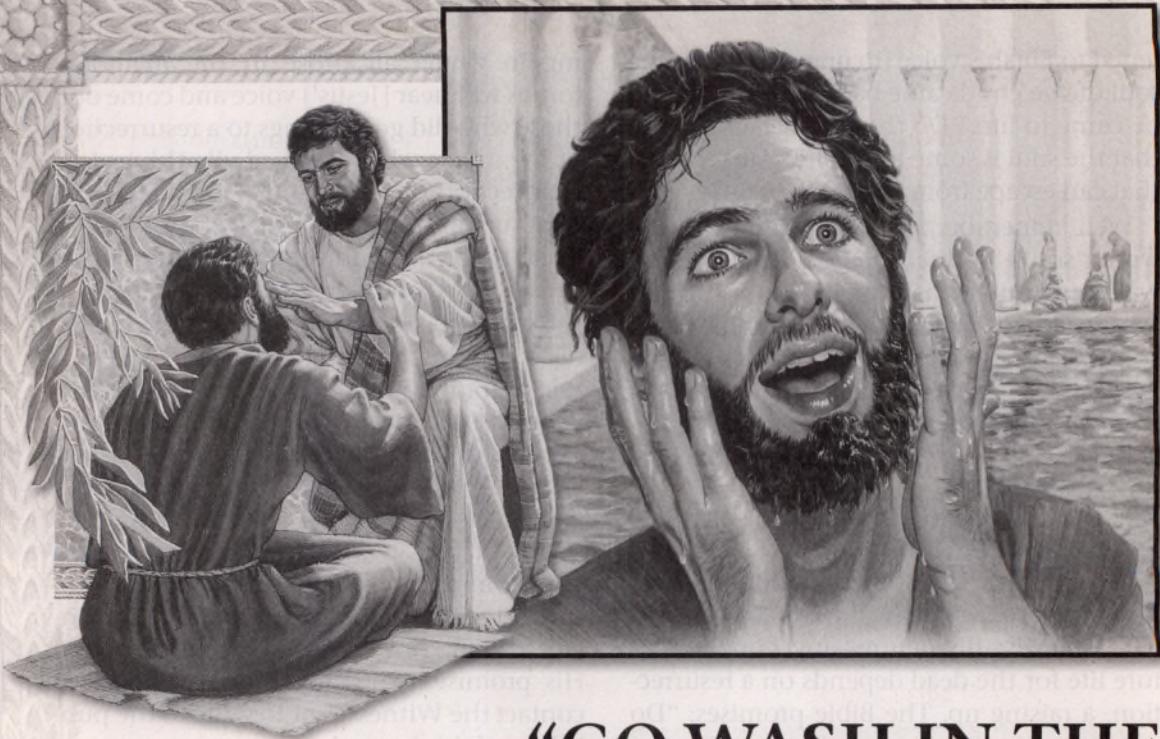
What Man Is

Clearly, the Bible shows what man is. He does not have a soul; he is a soul. Because of what man is—his nature—any hope for future life for the dead depends on a resurrection, a raising up. The Bible promises: "Do not marvel at this, because the hour is com-

ing in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear [Jesus'] voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28, 29) That sure promise of a resurrection—not the teaching of the immortality of the soul—is the basis for real hope for the dead.

How vital it is to gain accurate knowledge of what the resurrection is and what it means for mankind! Also essential is knowledge of God and Christ, for in prayer Jesus said: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) Jehovah's Witnesses in your community will be happy to assist you in studying the Bible so that you can increase your knowledge of God, his Son, and His promises. You have our invitation to contact the Witnesses or to write to the publishers of this journal.





"GO WASH IN THE POOL OF SILOAM"

After treating a blind man with softened clay, Jesus said to him: "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." The man complied and "came back seeing." (John 9:6, 7) Where was the Pool of Siloam? A recent archaeological discovery casts new light on its location.

Many tourists have visited a site in Jerusalem known as the Pool of Siloam, believing that it is the actual pool mentioned at John 9:7. The site is located at the end of Hezekiah's tunnel—a 1,750-foot-long water tunnel constructed in the eighth century B.C.E. This pool, though, dates from the fourth century C.E. It was built by Byzantine "Christians" who mistakenly assumed that the

pool mentioned in John's Gospel would have been located at the end of this tunnel.

In 2004, however, archaeologists found what they concluded was the Pool of Siloam as it existed when Jesus was on earth. It is located a few hundred feet southeast of the site that was mistakenly thought to be the Pool of Siloam. How did they discover it? The city authorities needed to repair a sewer pipe in the area, so they sent in workers with heavy equipment. An archaeologist working nearby watched the digging operation and saw two steps appear. The work was halted, and the Israeli Antiquities Authority approved an excavation of the area. One

side of the pool, about 225 feet in length, and two corners have already been excavated.

Some coins found during the excavation date back to the second, the third, and the fourth years of the Jewish revolt against Rome. That revolt took place between 66 and 70 C.E. The coins give evidence that the pool was in use until 70 C.E. when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. The journal *Biblical Archaeology Review* concludes: "The pool was therefore used until the end of the revolt, after which it was abandoned. This area, the lowest spot in all Jerusalem, was not inhabited again until the Byzantine peri-

od. Every year the winter rains flowing down the valley deposited another layer of mud in the pool. And after the Roman destruction of the city, the pool was no longer cleaned. Over the centuries a thick layer of mud accumulated and the pool gradually disappeared. The archaeologists found it under nearly 10 feet of mud in places."

Why are sincere Bible students interested in the location of the Pool of Siloam? Because this helps them to get a better understanding of the geography of first-century Jerusalem, so often mentioned in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life and ministry.

Newly discovered Pool of Siloam



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"WISDOM IS FOR A PROTECTION"

THE getting of wisdom is O how much better than gold! And the getting of understanding is to be chosen more than silver," states Proverbs 16:16. Why is wisdom so valuable? Because "wisdom is for a protection the same as money is for a protection; but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom itself preserves alive its owners." (Ecclesiastes 7:12) How, though, does wisdom preserve alive its owners?

Acquiring godly wisdom, that is, gaining accurate knowledge of God's Word, the Bible, and acting in harmony with it, helps us to walk in the way Jehovah approves. (Proverbs 2:10-12) King Solomon of ancient Israel says: "*The highway of the upright ones is to turn away from bad. One who is safeguarding his way is keeping his soul.*" (Proverbs 16:17) Yes, wisdom delivers its owners from bad



ways and preserves them alive! The concise, wise sayings at Proverbs 16:16-33 show the positive effect that godly wisdom can have on our disposition, speech, and actions.*

"Be Lowly in Spirit"

Wisdom personified is portrayed as saying: "Self-exaltation and pride . . . I have hated." (Proverbs 8:13) Pride and wisdom are poles apart. We need to act with wisdom and be careful not to develop a haughty, or arrogant, disposition. Especially should we be on guard if we have enjoyed success in some areas of life or are entrusted with a position of responsibility in the Christian congregation.

"Pride is before a crash," warns Proverbs 16:18, "and a haughty spirit before stumbling." Consider the greatest crash in the universe—the fall of a perfect spirit son of God who made himself Satan the Devil. (Genesis 3:1-5; Revelation 12:9) Did he not manifest a haughty spirit prior to his crash? The Bible points to this when it says that a newly converted man should not be appointed to an office of oversight in the Christian congrega-

*Why is wisdom
much better
than gold?*



* For a discussion of Proverbs 16:1-15, see pages 17-20 of the May 15, 2007, issue of *The Watchtower*.

tion "for fear that he might get puffed up with pride and fall into the judgment passed upon the Devil." (1 Timothy 3:1, 2, 6) How important it is to guard against feeding the pride of others as well as allowing it to develop in us!

"Better is it to be lowly in spirit with the meek ones than to divide spoil with the self-exalted ones," states Proverbs 16:19. That this is good admonition is shown in the case of King Nebuchadnezzar of ancient Babylon. He proudly set up an immense image—perhaps representing himself—on the plain of Dura. The statue may have been mounted on a very high pedestal so that it reached a height of 90 feet. (Daniel 3:1) This towering monument was meant to be an impressive symbol of Nebuchadnezzar's empire. While high and lofty things—such as that statue as well as obelisks, steeples, and skyscrapers—may impress humans, this is not the case with God. The psalmist sang: "Jehovah is high, and yet the humble one he sees; but the lofty one he knows only from a distance." (Psalm 138:6) In fact, "what is lofty among men is a disgusting thing in God's sight." (Luke 16:15) Better it is for us to "be led along with the lowly things" than for us to "be minding lofty things."—Romans 12:16.

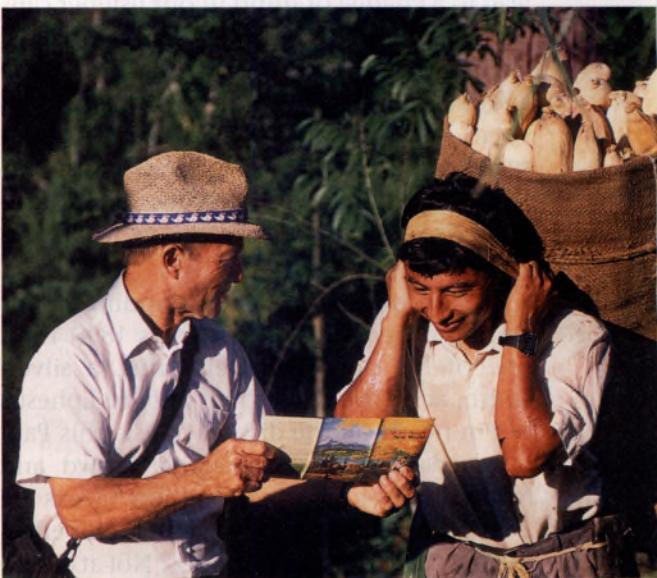
Speak With "Insight" and "Persuasiveness"

How does acquiring wisdom affect our speech? The wise king tells us: "*He that is showing insight in a matter will find good, and happy is he that is trusting in Jehovah. The one that is wise in heart will be called understanding, and he that is sweet in his lips adds persuasiveness. To its owners insight is a well of life; and the discipline of the foolish ones is foolishness. The heart of the wise one causes his mouth to show insight, and to his lips it adds persuasiveness.*"—Proverbs 16:20-23.

Wisdom helps us speak with insight and persuasiveness. Why? Because a person who is wise at heart tries to "find good" in a matter and 'trusts in Jehovah.' When we endeavor to find good in others, we are more likely to speak well of them. Rather than being harsh or confrontational, our words are sweet and persuasive. Insight into the circumstances of others helps us to understand the extent of hardship they may be experiencing and how they are coping with it.

Speech influenced by wisdom is also vital when it comes to our Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. When we teach God's Word to others, our objective is not merely to convey Scriptural information. Our goal is to reach the heart of individuals. This calls for adding persuasiveness to our lips. The apostle Paul urged his associate Timothy to continue in the things he had been "persuaded to believe."—2 Timothy 3:14, 15.

What adds persuasiveness to your lips when you are in the ministry?





"A good-for-nothing man is digging up what is bad"

The Greek word for "persuade" has the meaning of "bringing about a change of mind by the influence of reason or moral considerations," says *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W. E. Vine. Coming up with convincing arguments that lead to a change of mind in our listener calls for insight into his or her thinking, interests, circumstances, and background. How can we gain such insight? The disciple James answers: "Be swift about hearing, slow about speaking." (James 1:19) By drawing the listener out and carefully paying attention to what he says, we can get to know what he is at heart.

The apostle Paul was outstanding in his ability to persuade others. (Acts 18:4) Even one of his opposers, Demetrius, a silversmith, acknowledged: "Not only in Ephesus but in nearly all the district of Asia this Paul has persuaded a considerable crowd and turned them to another opinion." (Acts 19:26) Did Paul take personal credit for his effectiveness in the preaching work? Not at all. He

considered his preaching to be "a demonstration of [God's] spirit and power." (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5) We too have the help of Jehovah's holy spirit. Because we trust in Jehovah, we are confident of his help as we endeavor to speak with insight and persuasiveness in our ministry.

No wonder that "the one that is wise in heart" is called "intelligent" or "discerning"! (Proverbs 16:21, *An American Translation; New International Version*) Yes, insight is "a well of life" to those who have it. But what about the foolish? They 'despise wisdom and discipline.' (Proverbs 1:7) What results do they reap by rejecting discipline from Jehovah? As noted above, Solomon says: "The discipline of the foolish ones is foolishness." (Proverbs 16:22) They receive further discipline, often in the form of severe chastisement. The foolish may also bring upon themselves hardship, shame, disease, and even untimely death.

Pointing further to the wholesome effect that wisdom has on our speech, the king of Israel says: "*Pleasant sayings are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and a healing to the bones.*" (Proverbs 16:24) As honey is sweet and provides quick refreshment to a hungry person, pleasant sayings are encouraging and refreshing. Honey also has health-giving and curative properties and is good for a person. So are pleasant sayings; they are healthful spiritually.—Proverbs 24:13, 14.

Beware of 'a Way That Seems Upright'

"There exists a way that is upright before a man," says Solomon, *"but the ways of death are the end of it afterward."* (Proverbs 16:25) This is a warning against false reasoning and the pursuit of a course opposed to divine law. A certain path may seem right from a fleshly standpoint but may really be against the righteous principles of God's Word. Moreover, Satan may promote such decep-

tion so that a person is urged along in a course he believes to be right, whereas it actually leads to death.

There can be no better protection against self-deception than a heart that is wise and understanding and a conscience that is enlightened by the knowledge of God's Word. When it comes to making decisions in life—whether in the matter of morals or worship or anything else—the best way to guard against self-delusion is to be guided by God's standards of good and bad.

"The Laboring Man's Appetite Labors for Him"

"The soul of the hard worker has worked hard for him," continues the wise king, *"because his mouth has pressed him hard."* (Proverbs 16:26) Solomon is saying that a worker's desire for food 'can work hard for him' because his hunger 'presses him,' or motivates him. *An American Translation* reads: "The laboring man's appetite labors for him; for his hunger urges him on." Normal desire, such as our appetite for food,

can motivate us to be productive. Such a desire is constructive. However, what if proper desire is allowed to become so excessive that it turns into greed? The results are similar to what happens when a campfire used to cook food becomes a full-blown forest fire. Greed is desire out of control and is destructive. Realiz-

ing the danger, a wise person keeps even his wholesome desires in check.

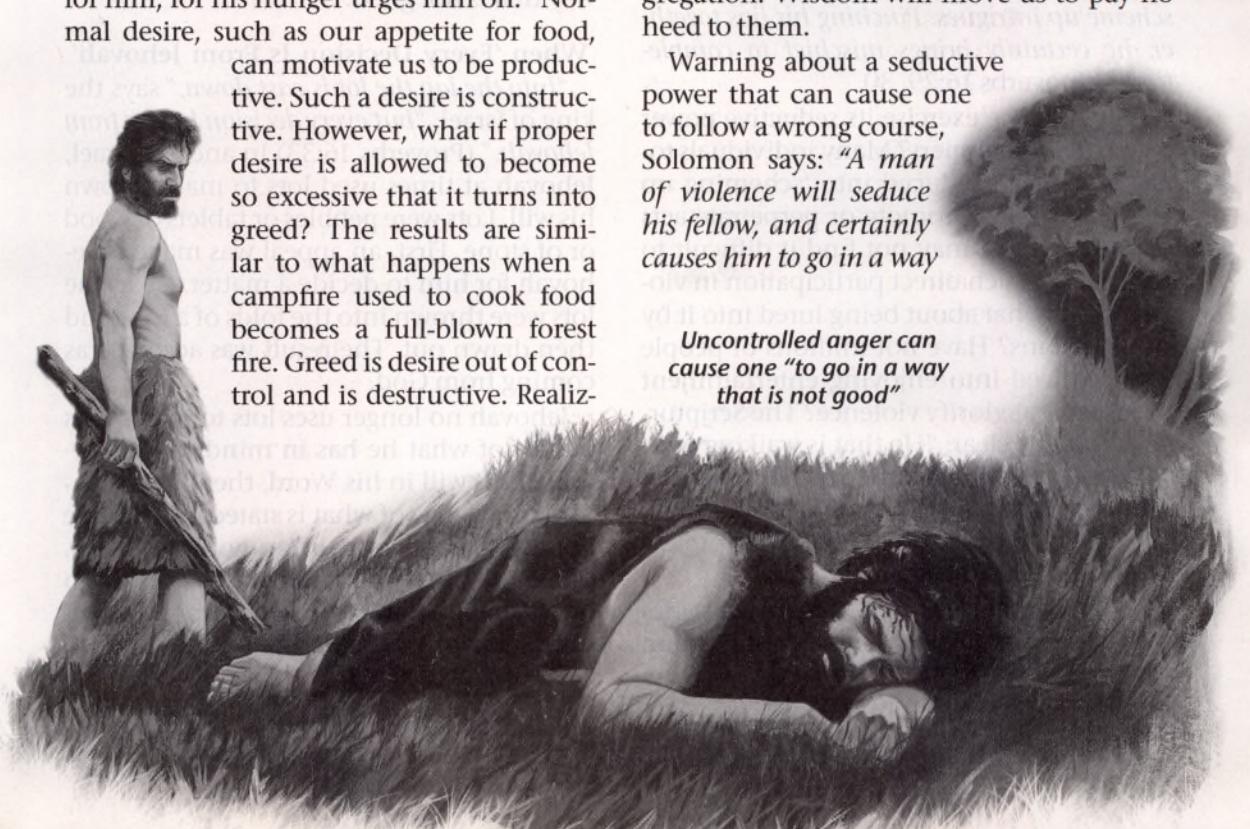
Do Not "Go in a Way That Is Not Good"

The words coming from our mouth can be as destructive as a blazing fire. Describing the ruinous effect of searching out the faults of others and broadcasting them, Solomon says: *"A good-for-nothing man is digging up what is bad, and upon his lips there is, as it were, a scorching fire. A man of intrigues keeps sending forth contention, and a slanderer is separating those familiar with one another."*—Proverbs 16:27, 28.

A man who tries to scorch his fellow man's reputation is "good-for-nothing." We should try to look for the good in others and say things that build respect for them. And what about lending an ear to those who spread harmful gossip? Their words can easily arouse groundless suspicions, separating friends and causing division within the congregation. Wisdom will move us to pay no heed to them.

Warning about a seductive power that can cause one to follow a wrong course, Solomon says: *"A man of violence will seduce his fellow, and certainly causes him to go in a way*

Uncontrolled anger can cause one "to go in a way that is not good"



Violence has the power to seduce

and understanding and 'has not gone in a way that is not good'? A life spent in the way of righteousness is beautiful in God's eyes and is deserving of respect. "*Gray-headedness is a crown of beauty when it is found in the way of righteousness,*" says Proverbs 16:31.

On the other hand, there is nothing beautiful about uncontrolled anger. Adam and Eve's firstborn son, Cain, "grew hot with great anger" at his brother Abel and 'proceeded to assault him and kill him.' (Genesis 4:1, 2, 5, 8) While there may be times when we rightly feel angry, we must be on guard against allowing our anger to get out of control. Proverbs 16:32 clearly states: "*He that is slow to anger is better than a mighty man, and he that is controlling his spirit than the one capturing a city.*" Uncontrolled anger is a sign neither of strength nor of virtue. It is a weakness that can 'cause one to go in a way that is not good.'

that is not good. He is blinking with his eyes to scheme up intrigues. Pinching his lips together, he certainly brings mischief to completion."—Proverbs 16:29, 30.

Can violence exercise its seductive power over true worshippers? Many individuals today have been seduced into 'scheming up intrigues.' They promote or perpetrate acts of violence. We may not find it difficult to stay clear of such direct participation in violence. But what about being lured into it by subtle means? Have not millions of people been enticed into enjoying entertainment or sports that glorify violence? The Scriptural warning is clear: "He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly." (Proverbs 13:20) What protection godly wisdom affords!

What can be said of a person who has spent a lifetime in the company of wisdom

When 'Every Decision Is From Jehovah'

"*Into the lap the lot is cast down,*" says the king of Israel, "*but every decision by it is from Jehovah.*" (Proverbs 16:33) In ancient Israel, Jehovah at times used lots to make known his will. Lots were pebbles or tablets of wood or of stone. First, an appeal was made to Jehovah for him to decide a matter. Next, the lots were thrown into the folds of a robe and then drawn out. The result was accepted as coming from God.

Jehovah no longer uses lots to inform his people of what he has in mind. He has revealed his will in his Word, the Bible. Accurate knowledge of what is stated in the Bible is fundamental to gaining godly wisdom. Therefore, we should not let a single day go by without reading from the inspired Scriptures.—Psalm 1:1, 2; Matthew 4:4.



BARZILLAI

A Man Aware of His Limitations

WHY should I become a burden to you?" The 80-year-old man who said this to Israel's King David was Barzillai. The Bible says that he was "a very great man," doubtless because of his wealth. (2 Samuel 19:32, 35) Barzillai lived in the land of Gilead, a mountainous region east of the Jordan River.—2 Samuel 17:27; 19:31.

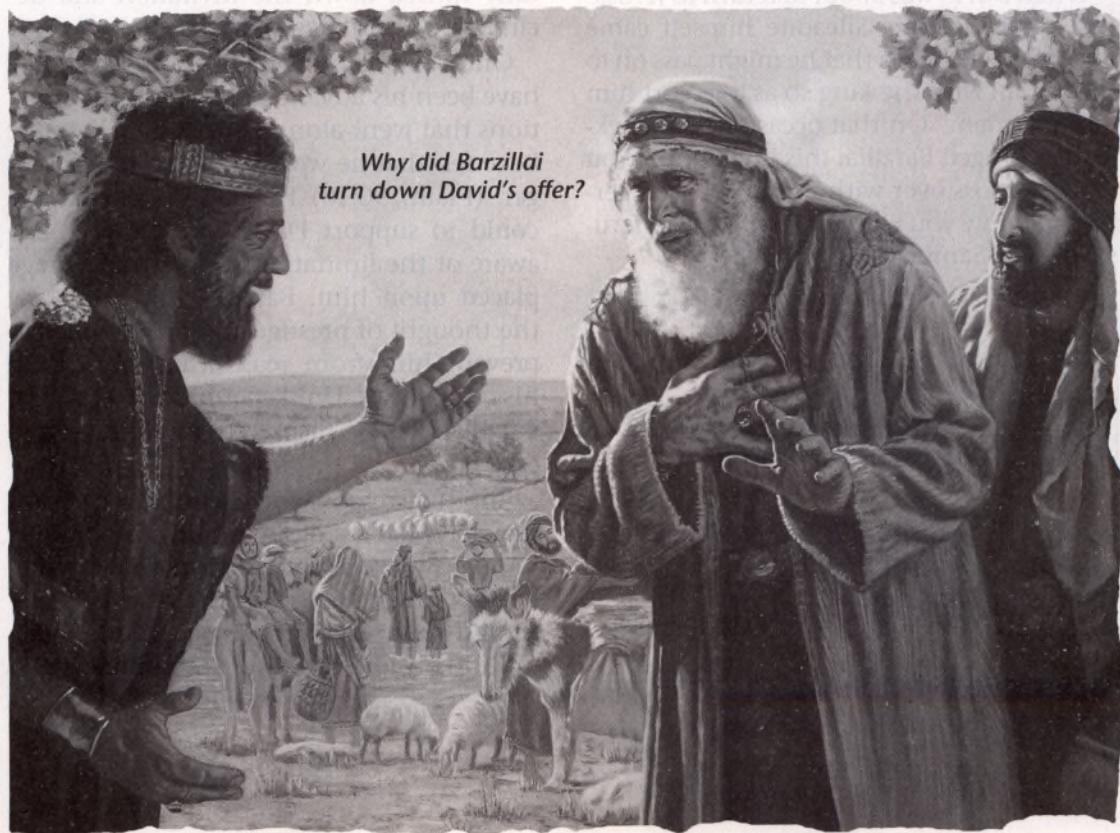
Under what circumstances did Barzillai say what he did to David? And why did this elderly man speak in such a way?

Rebellion Against the King

David was in danger. His son Absalom had usurped the throne after "stealing the

hearts of the men of Israel." It was clear that Absalom would spare no one who was loyal to his father. So David and his servants left Jerusalem. (2 Samuel 15:6, 13, 14) When David arrived at Mahanaim, an area east of the Jordan, Barzillai helped him.

Barzillai and two other men generously placed many provisions at David's disposal. These three loyal subjects showed that they understood his dire situation when they said of David and his men: "The people are hungry and tired and thirsty in the wilderness." Barzillai, Shobi, and Machir did all they could to satisfy those needs by supplying David and his men with beds, wheat,



barley, flour, roasted grain, broad beans, lentils, honey, butter, sheep, and other provisions.—2 Samuel 17:27-29.

Helping David was risky. It was unlikely that Absalom would leave unpunished anyone who supported the rightful king. In showing loyalty to David, therefore, Barzillai was being courageous.

The Situation Is Reversed

Soon thereafter, Absalom's rebel forces encountered David's men. A battle took place in the forest of Ephraim, probably in the vicinity of Mahanaim. Absalom's army was defeated, "and the slaughter there turned out to be great on that day." Although Absalom tried to escape, he soon met his death.—2 Samuel 18:7-15.

Once again, David was Israel's unchallenged king. No longer did his followers have to live as fugitives. Moreover, their loyalty to David earned them his respect and gratitude.

When David was about to return to Jerusalem, "Barzillai the Gileadite himself came down from Rogelim that he might pass on to the Jordan with the king so as to escort him to the Jordan." On that occasion, David extended to aged Barzillai this invitation: "You yourself cross over with me, and I shall certainly supply you with food with me in Jerusalem."—2 Samuel 19:15, 31, 33.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

True Spirituality
—How Can You Find It?

Two "Miracles" at One Convention
in Georgia

Are You "Rich Toward God"?

Undoubtedly, David had greatly appreciated Barzillai's help. It does not seem that the king merely wanted to return the favor by providing material necessities. Wealthy Barzillai did not need that kind of assistance. David may have wanted him at the royal court because of that aged man's admirable qualities. Having a permanent place there would have been an honor, allowing Barzillai to enjoy the privileges of the king's friendship.

Modesty and Realism

Responding to King David's invitation, Barzillai said: "What are the days of the years of my life like, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am eighty years old today. Could I discern between good and bad, or could your servant taste what I ate and what I drank, or could I listen anymore to the voice of male and female singers?" (2 Samuel 19:34, 35) Thus, Barzillai respectfully turned down the invitation and declined a fine privilege. But why?

One reason for Barzillai's decision may have been his advanced age and the limitations that went along with it. Barzillai may have felt that he would not live much longer. (Psalm 90:10) He had done what he could to support David, but he was also aware of the limitations that advanced age placed upon him. Barzillai did not allow the thought of prestige and prominence to prevent him from realistically evaluating his capabilities. Unlike ambitious Absalom, Barzillai wisely displayed modesty.—Proverbs 11:2.

Another reason for Barzillai's decision may have been a desire that his limitations in no way hinder the activity of the divinely appointed king. Barzillai asked: "Why should your servant become a burden anymore to my lord the king?" (2 Samuel 19:35)

Although he still supported David, Barzillai likely believed that a younger man could carry out assignments more effectively. Presumably referring to his own son, Barzillai said: "Here is your servant Chimham. Let him cross over with my lord the king; and you do to him what is good in your eyes." Instead of being offended, David accepted this suggestion. Before crossing the Jordan, in fact, David "kissed Barzillai and blessed him."—2 Samuel 19:37-39.

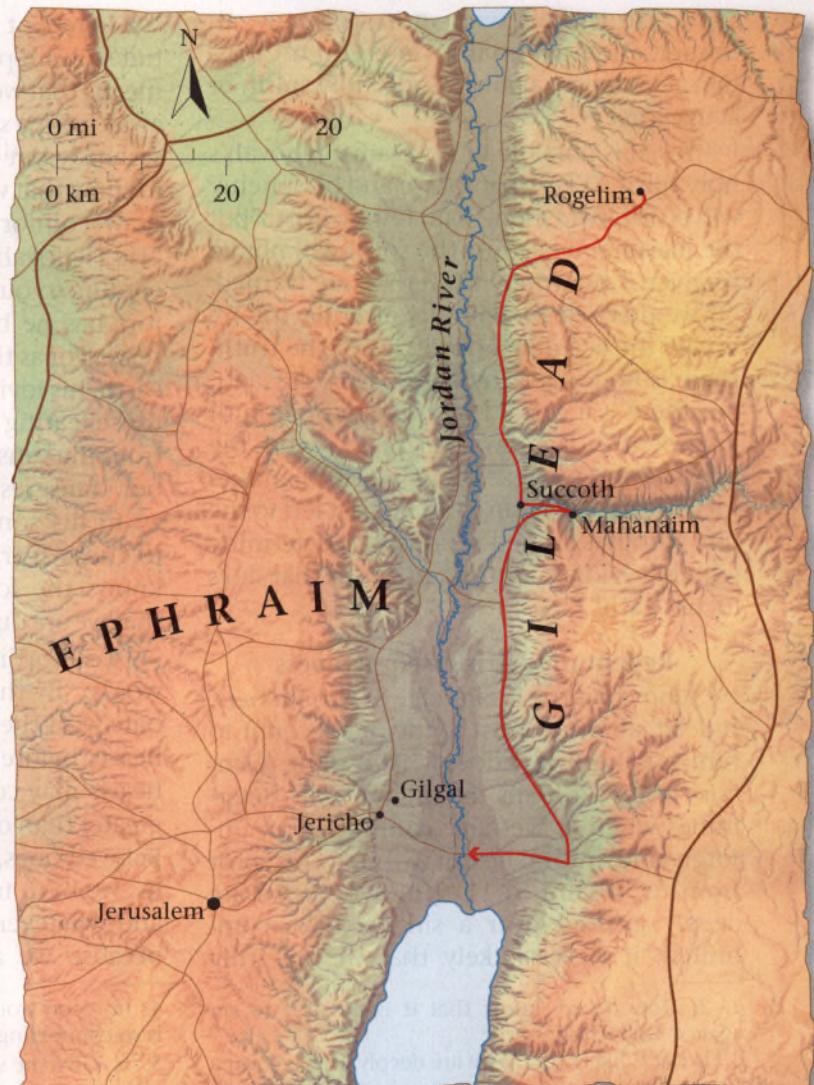
Balance Needed

The account of Barzillai highlights the need for balance. On the one hand, we should not turn down a service privilege or avoid reaching out for it because we want a quiet life or feel incapable of shouldering responsibility. God can make up for our deficiency if we rely on him for strength and wisdom.—Philippians 4:13; James 4:17; 1 Peter 4:11.

On the other hand, we need to recognize our limitations. For example, perhaps a Christian is already very busy in spiritual activities. He realizes that by accepting further privileges, he would risk neglecting such Scriptural responsibilities as providing for his family. In such a situation, would it not be an indication of modesty

and reasonableness on his part for him to decline additional privileges at present?—Philippians 4:5; 1 Timothy 5:8.

Barzillai provides a fine example, and we would do well to meditate on it. He was loyal, courageous, generous, and modest. Above all, Barzillai was determined to put God's interests ahead of his own.—Matthew 6:33.



Eighty-year-old Barzillai made a tiring journey in order to assist David

HAVE YOU SINNED AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT?

"There is a sin that does incur death."—1 JOHN 5:16.

"I HAVE been obsessed with the thought that I have sinned against the holy spirit." So wrote a woman in Germany, although she was serving God. Can a Christian actually sin against God's holy spirit, or active force?

² Yes, it is possible to sin against Jehovah's holy spirit. "Every sort of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men," said Jesus Christ, "but the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven." (Matthew 12:31) We are warned: "If we practice sin willfully after having received the accurate knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins left, but there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment." (Hebrews 10:26, 27) And the apostle John wrote: "There is a sin that does incur death." (1 John 5:16) But is it left to the one who has sinned seriously to determine whether he has committed "a sin that does incur death"?

Repentance Brings Forgiveness

³ Jehovah is the final Judge of wrongdoers. Indeed, all of us must render an account to him, and he always does what is right. (Genesis 18:25; Romans 14:12) Jehovah determines whether we have committed an unforgivable sin, and he can withdraw his spirit from us. (Psalm 51:11) However, if we are deeply grieved over a sin we have committed, it is very likely that we are truly

1, 2. How do we know that it is possible to sin against God's holy spirit?

3. What is likely true if we are deeply grieved over a sin we have committed?

repentant. What, though, is genuine repentance?

⁴ To repent means that we change our attitude toward past or intended wrongdoing. It means that we feel sorrow or regret and turn away from a sinful course. If we have sinned seriously but have taken the necessary steps to show that we have really repented, we can draw comfort from the psalmist's words: "He [Jehovah] has not done to us even according to our sins; nor according to our errors has he brought upon us what we deserve. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, his loving-kindness is superior toward those fearing him. As far off as the sunrise is from the sunset, so far off from us he has put our transgressions. As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him. For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust."—Psalm 103:10-14.

⁵ Comforting, too, are the apostle John's words: "By this we shall know that we originate with the truth, and we shall assure our hearts before him as regards whatever our hearts may condemn us in, because God is greater than our hearts and knows all things. Beloved ones, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have freedom of speech toward God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we are observing his command-

4. (a) How would you define repentance? (b) What is so comforting about Psalm 103:10-14?

5, 6. Give the substance of 1 John 3:19-22, and explain the meaning of the apostle's words.

ments and are doing the things that are pleasing in his eyes.”—1 John 3:19-22.

⁶ We “know that we originate with the truth” by the fact that we display brotherly love and do not make a practice of sinning. (Psalm 119:11) If we feel condemned for some reason, we do well to remember that “God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.” Jehovah shows us mercy because he is aware of our “unhypocritical brotherly affection,” our battle against sin, and our efforts to do his will. (1 Peter 1:22) Our heart will “not condemn us” if we trust in Jehovah, display brotherly love, and are not guilty of practicing deliberate sin. We will have “freeness of speech toward God” in

odds⁶ with better-sounding ones, nothing worse! **SE-1** right? *Those who said that Jesus performed miracles with Satan's power sinned against God's holy spirit*

prayer, and he will answer us because we observe his commandments.

They Sinned Against the Spirit

⁷ What sins are not forgiven? To answer this question, let us consider some Biblical examples. This should prove comforting to us if we are repentant but are still sorely distressed over our serious errors. We will see that it is not so much a matter of what kind of sin a person has committed; rather, it is the motive, the heart condition, and the degree of willfulness involved that determines whether a sin is forgivable or not.

7. What determines whether a sin is forgivable or not?



⁸ First-century Jewish religious leaders who maliciously opposed Jesus Christ were sinning against the holy spirit. They saw God's spirit at work in Jesus as he performed miracles that honored Jehovah. Yet, these enemies of Christ attributed this power to Satan the Devil. According to Jesus, those who thus blasphemed against God's holy spirit were thereby committing a sin that would not be forgiven in the present "system of things nor in that to come."—Matthew 12:22-32.

⁹ Blasphemy is defamatory, injurious, or abusive speech. Since the holy spirit has God as its Source, saying things against his spirit is the same as speaking against Jehovah. Unrepentantly resorting to speech of that kind is unforgivable. Jesus' words about such sin show that Jesus is referring to those who will-

8. How did some first-century Jewish religious leaders sin against the holy spirit?

9. What is blasphemy, and what did Jesus say about it?

fully oppose the operation of God's holy spirit. Because Jehovah's spirit was at work in Jesus but his opposers ascribed this power to the Devil, they sinfully blasphemed against the spirit. Hence, Jesus declared: "Whoever blasphemes against the holy spirit has no forgiveness forever, but is guilty of everlasting sin."—Mark 3:20-29.

¹⁰ Consider also the case of Judas Iscariot. He pursued a dishonest course, stealing from the money box entrusted to his care. (John 12:5, 6) Judas later went to the Jewish rulers and arranged to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Yes, Judas felt remorse after the betrayal, but he never repented of his deliberate sin. Consequently, Judas is not worthy of a resurrection. Jesus therefore called him "the son of destruction."—John 17:12; Matthew 26:14-16.

10. Why did Jesus call Judas "the son of destruction"?

Although he denied Jesus, Peter did not commit an unforgivable sin



They Did Not Sin Against the Spirit

¹¹ Occasionally, Christians who have confessed their serious sin and who have received spiritual help from congregation elders may still be plagued by concern over past transgressions of God's law. (James 5: 14) If we are personally troubled in this way, very likely we will benefit from considering what the Scriptures say about those whose sins were forgiven.

¹² King David sinned gravely in connection with Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah. Having seen this beautiful woman bathing as he looked down from his nearby rooftop, David had her brought to his palace and had sexual relations with her. Later informed that she was pregnant, he schemed to have her husband, Uriah, sleep with her to cover up the adultery. When that plot failed, the king arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle. Thereafter, Bath-sheba became David's wife and bore him a child who died.—2 Samuel 11: 1-27.

¹³ Jehovah handled matters involving David and Bath-sheba. God forgave David, apparently taking into account such factors as his repentance and the Kingdom covenant made with him. (2 Samuel 7:11-16; 12:7-14) Bath-sheba evidently had a repentant attitude, for she was privileged to become the mother of King Solomon and an ancestress of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 1:1, 6, 16) If we have sinned, it is good to remember that Jehovah takes note of our repentant attitude.

¹⁴ The extent of Jehovah's forgiveness is also illustrated in the case of King Manasseh of Judah. He did what was bad in Jehovah's eyes. Manasseh set up altars to Baal, wor-

11-13. How did King David sin in connection with Bath-sheba, and what comfort may be drawn from the way God dealt with them?

14. How is the extent of God's forgiveness illustrated in King Manasseh's case?

shipped "all the army of the heavens," and even built altars to false gods in two temple courtyards. He made his sons pass through the fire, encouraged spiritistic practices, and caused the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem "to do worse than the nations that Jehovah had annihilated from before the sons of Israel." The warnings delivered by God's prophets were not heeded. Eventually, the king of Assyria took Manasseh captive. While in captivity, Manasseh repented and humbly kept praying to God, who forgave him and restored him to the kingship in Jerusalem, where he promoted true worship.—2 Chronicles 33:2-17.

¹⁵ Centuries later, the apostle Peter sinned grievously by denying Jesus. (Mark 14:30, 66-72) However, Jehovah forgave Peter "in a large way." (Isaiah 55:7) Why? Because Peter was genuinely repentant. (Luke 22:62) There was clear evidence of God's forgiveness when on the day of Pentecost, Peter was privileged to give a bold witness about Jesus. (Acts 2:14-36) Is there any reason to believe that God would be less forgiving toward truly repentant Christians today? "If errors were what you watch, O Jah, O Jehovah, who could stand?" sang the psalmist, "for there is the true forgiveness with you." —Psalm 130:3, 4.

Allaying Fear About Sin

¹⁶ The foregoing examples should help to allay our anxiety about having sinned against the holy spirit. They show that Jehovah does forgive repentant sinners. Of prime importance is earnest prayer to God. If we have sinned, we can plead for forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice, Jehovah's mercy, our inherited imperfection,

15. What incident in the apostle Peter's life shows that Jehovah forgives "in a large way"?

16. Under what circumstances does God grant forgiveness?

and our record of faithful service. Knowing Jehovah's undeserved kindness, we can seek forgiveness, confident that it will be granted.
—Ephesians 1:7.

¹⁷ What if we have sinned but are unable to pray because our sin has made us spiritually sick? In this regard, the disciple James wrote: "Let [such a person] call the older men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, greasing him with oil in the name of Jehovah. And the prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well, and Jehovah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him."—James 5:14, 15.

¹⁸ Even if a wrongdoer is at the time unrepentant and he is expelled from the congregation, his sin is not necessarily unforgivable. Concerning a disfellowshipped anointed wrongdoer in Corinth, Paul wrote: "This rebuke given by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary now, you should kindly forgive and comfort him, that somehow such a man may not be swallowed up by his being overly sad." (2 Corinthians 2:6-8; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5) To be restored spiritually, however, erring ones need to accept the Bible-based spiritual help of Christian elders and give evidence of true

17. What should be done if we have sinned and need spiritual help?

18. Why is a person's sin not necessarily unforgivable even if he is expelled from the congregation?

What Is Your Reply?

- Why can we say that it is possible to sin against the holy spirit?
- What does it mean to repent?
- Who sinned against the spirit when Jesus was on earth?
- How can anxiety about having committed an unforgivable sin be overcome?

repentance. They must "produce fruits that befit repentance."—Luke 3:8.

¹⁹ What might contribute to the feeling that we have sinned against the holy spirit? Overconscientiousness or a weak physical condition may be factors. In such a case, prayer and added rest may be helpful. Especially should we not let Satan discourage us, so that we stop serving God. Since Jehovah has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, he surely takes no delight in the loss of any of his servants. So if we fear that we have sinned against the spirit, we should continue feeding on God's Word, including such comforting portions as the Psalms. We need to keep on attending congregation meetings and sharing in the Kingdom-preaching work. Doing so will help us to be "healthy in faith" and free from anxiety over the possibility of having committed the unforgivable sin.—Titus 2:2.

²⁰ Any who fear that they have sinned against the holy spirit might ask themselves: 'Have I blasphemed against the holy spirit? Did I genuinely repent of my sin? Do I have faith in God's forgiveness? Am I an apostate who has rejected spiritual light?' Very likely, such individuals will realize that they have not blasphemed against God's holy spirit, nor have they become apostates. They are repentant, and they have abiding faith in Jehovah's forgiveness. If so, they have not sinned against Jehovah's holy spirit.

²¹ What a blessing it is to be certain that we have not sinned against the holy spirit! Related to this matter, however, are questions to be considered in the next article. For instance, we might ask ourselves: 'Am I really being led by God's holy spirit? Is its fruitage evident in my life?'

19. What can help us to remain "healthy in faith"?
20. What reasoning may help a person to see that he has not sinned against the holy spirit?
21. The next article will deal with what questions?

WILL YOU “KEEP WALKING BY SPIRIT”?

“Keep walking by spirit and you will carry out no fleshly desire at all.”—GALATIANS 5:16.

THREE is a way to dispel anxiety about sinning against Jehovah's holy spirit. It is by doing what the apostle Paul said: “Keep walking by spirit and you will carry out no fleshly desire at all.” (Galatians 5:16) If we let God's spirit guide us, we will not be overcome by improper fleshly desires.—Romans 8:2-10.

² As we “keep walking by spirit,” God's active force will motivate us to obey Jehovah. We will display godly qualities in our ministry, in the congregation, at home, and elsewhere. The spirit's fruitage will be evident in our dealings with our marriage mate, our children, our fellow believers, and others.

³ Living “as to the spirit from the standpoint of God” enables us to desist from sin. (1 Peter 4:1-6) If we are under the spirit's influence, we will certainly not commit an unforgivable sin. But in what other fine ways will we be affected if we keep on walking by spirit?

Remain Close to God and Christ

⁴ Because we walk by holy spirit, we are able to maintain a close relationship with God and his Son. Writing about spiritual gifts, Paul told fellow believers in Corinth: “I would have you [former idolaters] know that nobody when speaking by God's spirit says:

1. How can anxiety about sinning against the spirit be dispelled?
- 2, 3. If we keep walking by spirit, how will we be affected?
- 4, 5. How does walking by spirit affect our view of Jesus?

‘Jesus is accursed!’ and nobody can say: ‘Jesus is Lord!’ except by holy spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:1-3) Any spirit that moves people to pronounce a curse upon Jesus must originate with Satan the Devil. As Christians walking by holy spirit, though, we are convinced that Jehovah raised Jesus from the dead and made him higher than all other creation. (Philippians 2:5-11) We have faith in Christ's ransom sacrifice and accept Jesus as the Lord appointed over us by God.

⁵ Certain professed Christians of the first century C.E. denied that Jesus came in the flesh. (2 John 7-11) Accepting that false viewpoint caused some to repudiate the true teachings about Jesus, the Messiah. (Mark 1:9-11; John 1:1, 14) Walking by holy spirit prevents us from succumbing to such apostasy. But only by remaining spiritually vigilant can we continue to enjoy Jehovah's undeserved kindness and “go on walking in the truth.” (3 John 3, 4) Let us therefore be determined to reject all apostasy so that we can maintain a strong relationship with our heavenly Father.

⁶ Paul listed apostate idolatry and sects among such “works of the flesh” as fornication and loose conduct. But he explained: “Those who belong to Christ Jesus impaled the flesh together with its passions and desires. If we are living by spirit, let us go on walking orderly also by spirit.” (Galatians 5:19-21, 24, 25) What qualities

6. What qualities does God's spirit produce in those walking by spirit?

does God's active force produce in those who live and walk by spirit? "The fruitage of the spirit," wrote Paul, "is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22, 23) Let us consider these aspects of the spirit's fruitage.

"Be Loving One Another"

⁷ Love—one aspect of the spirit's fruitage—often involves strong affection and unselfish concern for others, coupled with warm attachment to them. The Scriptures say that "God is love" because he is the very epitome of that quality. The great love of God and his Son for mankind is exemplified in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. (1 John 4:8; John 3:16; 15:13; Romans 5:8) As Jesus' followers, we are identified by the love we have for one another. (John 13:34, 35) In fact, we are commanded to "be loving one another." (1 John 3:23) And Paul says that love is long-suffering and kind. It is not jealous, and it does not brag, behave indecently, or look for its own interests. Love does not become provoked or keep account of the injury. It rejoices with the truth, not over unrighteousness. Love bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things. Moreover, it never fails.—1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

⁸ If we allow God's spirit to produce love within us, that quality will exist in our relationships with God and neighbor. (Matthew 22:37-39) "He who does not love remains in death," wrote the apostle John. "Everyone who hates his brother is a manslayer, and you know that no manslayer has everlasting life remaining in him." (1 John 3:14, 15) A manslayer could find safety in an Israelite city of refuge only if he did not hate the one slain. (Deuteronomy 19:4, 11-13) If we are led

7. What is love, and what are some of its characteristics?

8. Why should we show love for fellow worshippers of Jehovah?

by holy spirit, we will show love for God, fellow worshippers, and others.

"The Joy of Jehovah Is Your Stronghold"

⁹ Joy is a state of great happiness. Jehovah is "the happy God." (1 Timothy 1:11; Psalm 104:31) The Son delights to do his Father's will. (Psalm 40:8; Hebrews 10:7-9) And "the joy of Jehovah is [our] stronghold."—Nehemiah 8:10.

¹⁰ God-given joy brings us deep satisfaction when we do the divine will even in times of hardship, sorrow, or persecution. What happiness "the very knowledge of God" brings us! (Proverbs 2:1-5) Our joyous relationship with God is based on accurate knowledge and faith in him and in Jesus' ransom sacrifice. (1 John 2:1, 2) Being part of the only true international brotherhood is another source of joy. (Zephaniah 3:9; Haggai 2:7) Our Kingdom hope and the grand privilege of declaring the good news make us joyful. (Matthew 6:9, 10; 24:14) So does the prospect of everlasting life. (John 17:3) Since we have such a grand hope, we should be "nothing but joyful."—Deuteronomy 16:15.

Be Peaceable and Long-Suffering

¹¹ Peace—another aspect of the spirit's fruitage—is a state of tranquillity and freedom from disturbance. Our heavenly Father is the God of peace, and we are given the assurance: "Jehovah himself will bless his people with peace." (Psalm 29:11; 1 Corinthians 14:33) Jesus told his disciples: "I leave you peace, I give you my peace." (John 14:27) How would that help his followers?

¹² The peace that Jesus gave his disciples calmed their hearts and minds and allayed their fears. Especially did they have peace

9, 10. What is joy, and what are some reasons to be joyful?

11, 12. (a) How would you define peace? (b) What effect does godly peace have on us?

when they received the promised holy spirit. (John 14:26) Under the spirit's influence and in answer to our prayers today, we enjoy the incomparable "peace of God," which puts our heart and mind at rest. (Philippians 4: 6, 7) Moreover, Jehovah's spirit helps us to be calm and peaceable with fellow believers and others.—Romans 12:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:13.

¹³ Long-suffering is related to peaceableness, for it is our patient endurance of provocation or wrong in hopes of improvement in the situation. God is long-suffering. (Romans 9:22-24) Jesus also manifests this quality. We can be recipients of it, for Paul wrote: "The reason why I was shown mercy was that by means of me as the foremost case Christ Jesus might demonstrate all his long-suffering for a sample of those who are going to rest their faith on him for everlasting life."—1 Timothy 1:16.

13, 14. What is long-suffering, and why should we display it?

¹⁴ The quality of long-suffering helps us to endure when others say or do unkind or thoughtless things. Paul urged fellow Christians: "Be long-suffering toward all." (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Since all of us are imperfect and make mistakes, surely we want people to be patient with us, to be long-suffering when we err in our dealings with them. Let us therefore make it a point to "be long-suffering with joy."—Colossians 1:9-12.

Display Kindness and Goodness

¹⁵ Kindness is displayed when we show interest in others by means of friendly and helpful words and acts. Jehovah is kind, and so is his Son. (Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 10:1) Kindness is expected of servants of God and Christ. (Micah 6:8; Colossians 3:12) Even some lacking a personal relationship with God have shown "extraordinary human kindness." (Acts 27:3; 28:2) Surely, then, we

15. Define kindness, and cite examples of it.

*Jehovah's holy spirit promotes love
for our fellow believers*



can display kindness if we "keep walking by spirit."

¹⁶ Kindness can be shown even if we have justifiably become angry because of someone's hurtful words or inconsiderate actions. "Be wrathful, and yet do not sin," said Paul. "Let the sun not set with you in a provoked state, neither allow place for the Devil. . . . Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another just as God also by Christ freely forgave you." (Ephesians 4:26, 27, 32) It is especially fitting to display kindness toward those experiencing trials. Of course, a Christian elder would not be showing kindness if he failed to give Scriptural counsel just to avoid hurting the feelings of someone clearly in danger of abandoning the course of "goodness and righteousness and truth."—Ephesians 5:9.

¹⁷ Goodness is virtue, moral excellence, or the quality or state of being good. God is good in the absolute sense. (Psalm 25:8; Zechariah 9:17) Jesus is virtuous and has the quality of moral excellence. Yet, he would not accept "Good" as a title when he was called "Good Teacher." (Mark 10:17, 18) This was evidently because he recognized God as the pinnacle of goodness.

¹⁸ Our ability to do good is hindered because of inherited sin. (Romans 5:12) Nevertheless, we can display this quality if we pray that God 'teach us goodness.' (Psalm 119:66) Paul told fellow believers in Rome: "I myself also am persuaded about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are also full of goodness, as you have been filled with all knowledge." (Romans 15:14) A Christian overseer must be "a lover of goodness." (Titus 1:7, 8) If we are led by God's spirit, we will become known for

16. What are some circumstances that should move us to show kindness?

17, 18. How is goodness defined, and what role should this quality play in our life?

goodness, and Jehovah will 'remember us for the good we do.'—Nehemiah 5:19; 13:31.

"Faith Without Hypocrisy"

¹⁹ Faith—also part of the spirit's fruitage—"is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld." (Hebrews 11:1) If we have faith, we are certain that everything Jehovah promises is as good as done. The convincing evidence of unseen realities is so strong that faith is said to be equivalent to that evidence. For instance, the existence of created things convinces us that there is a Creator. That is the kind of faith we will display if we keep walking by spirit.

²⁰ Lack of faith is "the sin that easily entangles us."

19. Define faith, in keeping with Hebrews 11:1.

20. What is "the sin that easily entangles us," and how can we avoid it and the works of the flesh?

Show kindness through helpful words and deeds



gles us." (Hebrews 12:1) We need to rely on God's spirit in order to avoid works of the flesh, materialism, and false teachings that can destroy faith. (Colossians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10; 2 Timothy 4:3-5) God's spirit produces in Jehovah's present-day servants faith like that of pre-Christian witnesses and others of Bible record. (Hebrews 11:2-40) And our own "faith without hypocrisy" may well bolster the faith of others.—1 Timothy 1:5; Hebrews 13:7.

Exhibit Mildness and Self-Control

²¹ Mildness is gentleness in temperament and behavior. One of God's attributes is mildness of temper. We know this because Jesus, who was a mild-tempered man, perfectly reflected Jehovah's personality. (Matthew 11:28-30; John 1:18; 5:19) What, then, is required of us as God's servants?

²² As Christians, we are expected to 'exhibit mildness toward all men.' (Titus 3:2) We display mildness in our ministry. Those with spiritual qualifications are counseled to readjust an erring Christian "in a spirit of mildness." (Galatians 6:1) All of us can contribute to Christian unity and peace by displaying "lowliness of mind and mildness." (Ephesians 4:1-3) We can exhibit mildness if we consistently walk by spirit and exercise self-control.

²³ Self-control enables us to keep our thoughts, speech, and actions in check. Jehovah "kept exercising self-control" in dealing with the Babylonian desolaters of Jerusalem. (Isaiah 42:14) His Son 'left us a model' by exercising self-control during his sufferings. And the apostle Peter counseled fellow Christians to 'supply to their knowledge self-control.'—1 Peter 2:21-23; 2 Peter 1:5-8.

21, 22. How is mildness defined, and why should we display it?

23, 24. What is self-control, and how does it help us?

²⁴ Christian elders are expected to be self-controlled. (Titus 1:7, 8) Actually, all who are led by holy spirit can exercise self-control and can thus avoid immorality, vulgar speech, or anything else that could result in Jehovah's disapproval. If we allow God's spirit to produce self-control within us, this will be apparent to others because of our godly speech and conduct.

Go On Walking by Spirit

²⁵ If we walk by spirit, we will be zealous Kingdom proclaimers. (Acts 18:24-26) We will be pleasant associates, and especially will people of godly devotion delight in our company. As those who are guided by holy spirit, we will also be sources of spiritual encouragement to fellow worshippers of Jehovah. (Philippians 2:1-4) Is that not what all Christians want to be?

²⁶ In this world under Satan's control, it is not easy to walk by spirit. (1 John 5:19) Nevertheless, millions are doing so today. If we trust in Jehovah with all our heart, we will enjoy life now and will be able to keep on walking forever in the righteous ways of the loving Provider of holy spirit.—Psalm 128:1; Proverbs 3:5, 6.

25, 26. How will walking by spirit affect our present relationships and our future prospects?

What Is Your Reply?

- How does "walking by spirit" affect our relationship with God and his Son?
- The fruitage of the holy spirit consists of what qualities?
- What are some ways to display the fruitage of God's spirit?
- How does walking by spirit affect our present life and our future prospects?

Questions From Readers

Since the harvest officially began when all male Israelites were attending the Festival of Unfermented Cakes, who harvested the firstfruits of the barley that were brought to the sanctuary?

The Mosaic Law instructed the Israelites: "Three times in the year every male of yours should appear before Jehovah your God in the place that he will choose: in the festival of the unfermented cakes and in the festival of weeks and in the festival of booths." (Deuteronomy 16:16) From the time of King Solomon onward, the place of God's choosing was the temple in Jerusalem.

The first of the three festivals was held in early spring. Called the Festival of Unfermented Cakes, it began the day after the Passover observance took place on Nisan 14 and continued for seven days until Nisan 21. The second day of the festival, Nisan 16, marked the start of the first harvest of the year based on the sacred calendar. On that day, the high priest was to take "a sheaf of the firstfruits" of the barley harvest and wave it "to and fro before Jehovah" at the sanctuary. (Leviticus 23:5-12) Since all the males were required to be present at the Festival of Unfermented Cakes, who harvested this offering?

The command to offer the firstfruits of the harvest to Jehovah during the Festival of Unfermented Cakes was given to the entire nation. Each individual was not required to start the harvest and bring firstfruits for himself to the sanctuary. Rather, the nation was com-

manded to do so representatively. Hence, the cutting of the sheaf for the Festival of Unfermented Cakes could be done by a delegation sent to a nearby barley field. Commenting on this, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* states: "If the barley was ripe it was taken from the vicinity of Jerusalem; otherwise it could be brought from anywhere in Israel. It was reaped by three men, each with his own scythe and basket." A sheaf of barley would then be brought to the high priest, who offered it to Jehovah.

The requirement to offer firstfruits of the harvest gave the Israelites an excellent opportunity to express their appreciation for God's blessing on their land and harvest. (Deuteronomy 8:6-10) More than that, though, the ceremonial offering was "a shadow of the good things to come." (Hebrews 10:1) Significantly, Jesus Christ was resurrected on Nisan 16 of 33 C.E., the day for offering the firstfruits of the harvest to Jehovah. Concerning Jesus, the apostle Paul wrote: "Christ has been raised up from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep in death. . . . But each one in his own rank: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who belong to the Christ during his presence." (1 Corinthians 15:20-23) The sheaf of firstfruits that the high priest waved to and fro before Jehovah foreshadowed the resurrected Jesus Christ—the first one ever to be raised from the dead to everlasting life. Jesus thus opened the way for the liberation of mankind from sin and death.

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AWAITING JEHOVAH'S DAY WITH ENDURANCE

"Supply to your faith . . . endurance."—2 PETER 1:5, 6.

JEHOVAH'S great day is very near. (Joel 1:15; Zephaniah 1:14) As Christians determined to maintain our integrity to God, we eagerly await that time when Jehovah's sovereignty will be vindicated. Meanwhile, we face hatred, reproach, persecution, and death for our faith. (Matthew 5:10-12; 10:22; Revelation 2:10) This calls for endurance—the ability to withstand adversity. The apostle Peter urges us: "Supply to your faith . . . endurance." (2 Peter 1:5, 6) We need endurance, for Jesus said: "He that has endured to the

end is the one that will be saved."—Matthew 24:13.

² We also experience illness, bereavement, and other trials. How pleased Satan would be if our faith were to give out! (Luke 22:31, 32) With Jehovah's support, we can endure various trials. (1 Peter 5:6-11) Consider some real-life experiences that prove that we can wait for Jehovah's day with endurance and undiminished faith.

Illness Has Not Stopped Them

³ God does not now cure us miraculously, but he does give us the fortitude to endure illness. (Psalm 41:1-3) "For as long as I can recall," said Sharon, "the wheelchair has been my constant companion. From birth on, cerebral palsy robbed me of childhood joys." Learning about Jehovah and his promises of perfect health gave Sharon hope. Although she speaks and walks with difficulty, she finds joy in the Christian ministry. Some 15 years ago, she said: "My health may continue to fail, but my trust in God and my relationship with him are my lifelines. How happy I am to be among Jehovah's people and to have his unfailing support!"

⁴ The apostle Paul urged Christians in Thessalonica to "speak consolingly to the depressed souls." (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Such factors as grave disappointment can cause depression. In 1993, Sharon wrote: "Feeling like an utter failure, I . . .

^{3, 4}. Give an example to show that we can serve Jehovah faithfully despite illness.



plunged into a three-year period of deep depression. . . . Comfort and counsel came from the elders. . . . Through *The Watchtower*, Jehovah tenderly provided insight into severe depression. Yes, he does care for his people and understands our feelings." (1 Peter 5:6, 7) Sharon is still serving God faithfully as she awaits Jehovah's great day.

⁵ Some Christians suffer considerable stress because of past experiences in life. Harley saw heavy combat in World War II and had nightmares about warfare. While asleep, he would scream: "Watch out! Look out!" Upon awakening, he would be soaking wet with perspiration. However, he was able to pursue a godly life, and in time the intensity and frequency of such dreams diminished.

⁶ One Christian diagnosed with bipolar disorder found it very difficult to preach from door to door. He persisted, however, because he realized that the ministry means life for him and for those responding favorably. (1 Timothy 4:16) Sometimes he could not bring himself to the point of ringing the doorbell, but he said: "After a while, I would be able to bring my emotions under control, go to the next door, and try again. By continuing to share in the ministry, I maintained reasonable spiritual health." Attending meetings was also a challenge, but this brother was convinced of the value of spiritual association. Therefore, he made the effort required to be present.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

⁷ Some Christians have phobias—excessive fears of certain situations or objects. For instance, they may be afraid to speak in public or even to attend a meeting. Imagine how hard it is for them to comment at Christian

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5. What proof is there that Christians can endure considerable stress?
 6. How did one Christian face emotional problems?
 7. Although some are afraid to speak in public or to attend a meeting, how do they show endurance?

meetings or to give a talk in the Theocratic Ministry School! Yet, they are enduring, and we greatly appreciate their presence and participation.

⁸ More rest and sleep may help a person to endure emotional difficulties. Medical help may be advisable. Especially effective, however, is prayerful reliance on God. "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you," says Psalm 55:22. "Never will he allow the righteous one to totter." By all means, then, "trust in Jehovah with all your heart."—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Enduring Bereavement

⁹ When death separates family members, such great loss can result in deep sorrow. Abraham wept over the death of his beloved wife, Sarah. (Genesis 23:2) Even the perfect man Jesus "gave way to tears" when his friend Lazarus died. (John 11:35) So it is natural to experience sadness when death claims someone you love. However, Christians know that there will be a resurrection. (Acts 24:15) Hence, they do not "sorrow just as the rest also do who have no hope."—1 Thessalonians 4:13.

¹⁰ How can we cope with bereavement? Perhaps an illustration will be helpful. We do not usually experience prolonged sadness when a friend goes on a journey, since we expect to see him again when he returns. Taking a similar view of the death of a faithful Christian may lessen our grief because we know that he is in line for a resurrection.—Ecclesiastes 7:1.

¹¹ Complete reliance on "the God of all comfort" will help us to endure bereavement. (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) So will reflecting

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8. What is especially effective when coping with emotional difficulties?
 - 9-11. (a) What can help us to endure sorrow when a loved one dies? (b) How can Anna's example help us to endure bereavement?

on what was done by the first-century widow Anna. She became a widow after only seven years of marriage. But at the age of 84, she was still rendering sacred service to Jehovah at the temple. (Luke 2:36-38) Such a devout life undoubtedly helped her to cope with grief and loneliness. Regular participation in Christian activities, including the Kingdom-preaching work, can help us to endure the effects of bereavement.

Dealing With Various Trials

¹² Some Christians must endure trials related to family life. For instance, if a mate commits adultery, what devastating effects that can have! Because of the shock and grief, the betrayed marriage partner may be unable to sleep and may weep uncontrollably. Performing simple tasks may be so stressful that mistakes are made or accidents occur. The innocent mate may be unable to eat, may lose weight, and may become emotionally troubled. It may be difficult to engage in Chris-

12. Some Christians have endured what trial related to family life?

tian activities. And how greatly the children may be affected!

¹³ When we experience such trials, Jehovah provides the help we need. (Psalm 94:19) God hears the prayers of his people, as shown in King Solomon's prayer at the inauguration of Jehovah's temple. Solomon prayed to God: "Whatever prayer, whatever request for favor there may occur on the part of any man or of all your people Israel, because they know each one the plague of his own heart, and they actually spread out their palms to this house, then may you yourself hear from the heavens, your established place of dwelling, and you must forgive and act and give to each one according to all his ways, because you know his heart (for you yourself alone well know the heart of all the sons of mankind); to the end that they may fear you all the days that they are alive upon the surface of the ground that you gave to our forefathers."—1 Kings 8:38-40.

13, 14. (a) What encouragement do you get from Solomon's prayer at the inauguration of the temple? (b) Why do we pray for holy spirit?

*Reliance on Jehovah
enables us to endure
bereavement*



¹⁴ It can be especially helpful to keep on praying for holy spirit. (Matthew 7:7-11) The fruitage of the spirit includes such qualities as joy and peace. (Galatians 5:22, 23) What relief is felt when our heavenly Father answers our prayers—joy replaces grief, and peace takes the place of anguish!

¹⁵ A certain amount of anxiety is to be expected when we must endure great stress. But at least some of this concern may be allayed if we bear in mind these words of Jesus: "Stop being anxious about your souls as to what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your bodies as to what you will wear. . . . Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and [God's] righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:25, 33, 34) The apostle Peter urges us to 'throw all our anxiety upon God, because he cares for us.' (1 Peter 5:6, 7) It is proper to make efforts to solve a problem. After we have done what we can, however, worry cannot take the place of prayer. "Roll upon Jehovah your way, and rely upon him, and he himself will act," sang the psalmist.—Psalm 37:5.

¹⁶ Paul wrote: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4: 6, 7) Naturally, imperfect descendants of Adam cannot be totally free of anxiety. (Romans 5:12) The Hittite wives of Esau "were a source of bitterness of spirit" to Esau's godly parents, Isaac and Rebekah. (Genesis 26:34, 35) Illness must have caused anxiety for such Christians as Timothy and Trophimus.

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15. What scriptures can help to allay our anxiety?
 - 16, 17. (a) Why are we not entirely free of anxiety?
(b) What will we experience if we apply Philippians 4:6, 7?

(1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20) Paul had anxiety for fellow believers. (2 Corinthians 11:28) But the "Hearer of prayer" is always there for those who love him.—Psalm 65:2.

¹⁷ As we await Jehovah's day, we have support and comfort from "the God of peace." (Philippians 4:9) Jehovah is "merciful and gracious," he is "good and ready to forgive," and 'he remembers that we are dust.' (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 86:5; 103:13, 14) So let us 'make our petitions known to him,' for this will result in our having "the peace of God"—tranquillity that surpasses human comprehension.

¹⁸ When our prayers are answered, we know that God is with us. After Job endured his trials, he said: "In hearsay I have heard about you [Jehovah], but now my own eye does see you." (Job 42:5) With the eye of understanding, faith, and gratitude, we can reflect on God's dealings with us and can "see" him as never before. How such intimacy brings us peace of heart and mind!

¹⁹ If we 'throw all our anxiety on Jehovah,' we can endure trials with an inner calm that guards our heart and mental powers. Deep in our figurative heart, we will experience freedom from uneasiness, fear, and alarm. Our mind will not be unsettled by perplexity or anxiety.

²⁰ The disciple Stephen displayed tranquillity when enduring a severe test of his faith. Before he gave a final witness, all those in the Sanhedrin "saw that his face was as an angel's face." (Acts 6:15) His countenance was tranquil—like that of an angel, a messenger

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18. As noted at Job 42:5, how is it possible to "see" God?
 19. What will happen if we 'throw all our anxiety on Jehovah'?
 - 20, 21. (a) Stephen's case provides what evidence of tranquillity when experiencing persecution?
(b) Cite a modern-day example of calmness when enduring trials.



Heartfelt prayer helps us to endure tests of faith

of God. After Stephen exposed their guilt in Jesus' death, the judges "felt cut to their hearts and began to gnash their teeth at him." "Full of holy spirit," Stephen "gazed into heaven and caught sight of God's glory and of Jesus standing at God's right hand." Strengthened by that vision, Stephen proved faithful to death. (Acts 7:52-60) Although we do not have visions, we can have God-given tranquillity when persecuted.

²¹ Consider the sentiments of certain Christians who suffered death at Nazi hands during World War II. Relating his experience in court, one said: "The death sentence was decreed. I listened, and then after I had spoken the words, 'Be thou faithful unto death,' and a few other words of our Lord, it was all over. . . . But never mind that now. For I have such peace, such tranquillity, that you can't possibly imagine!" A young Christian facing death by beheading wrote his parents: "It is already past midnight. I still have time to change my mind. Ah! could I be happy again in this world after I had denied our Lord?

Surely not! But now you have the assurance that I leave this world in happiness and peace." There is no doubt that Jehovah supports his loyal servants.

You Can Endure!

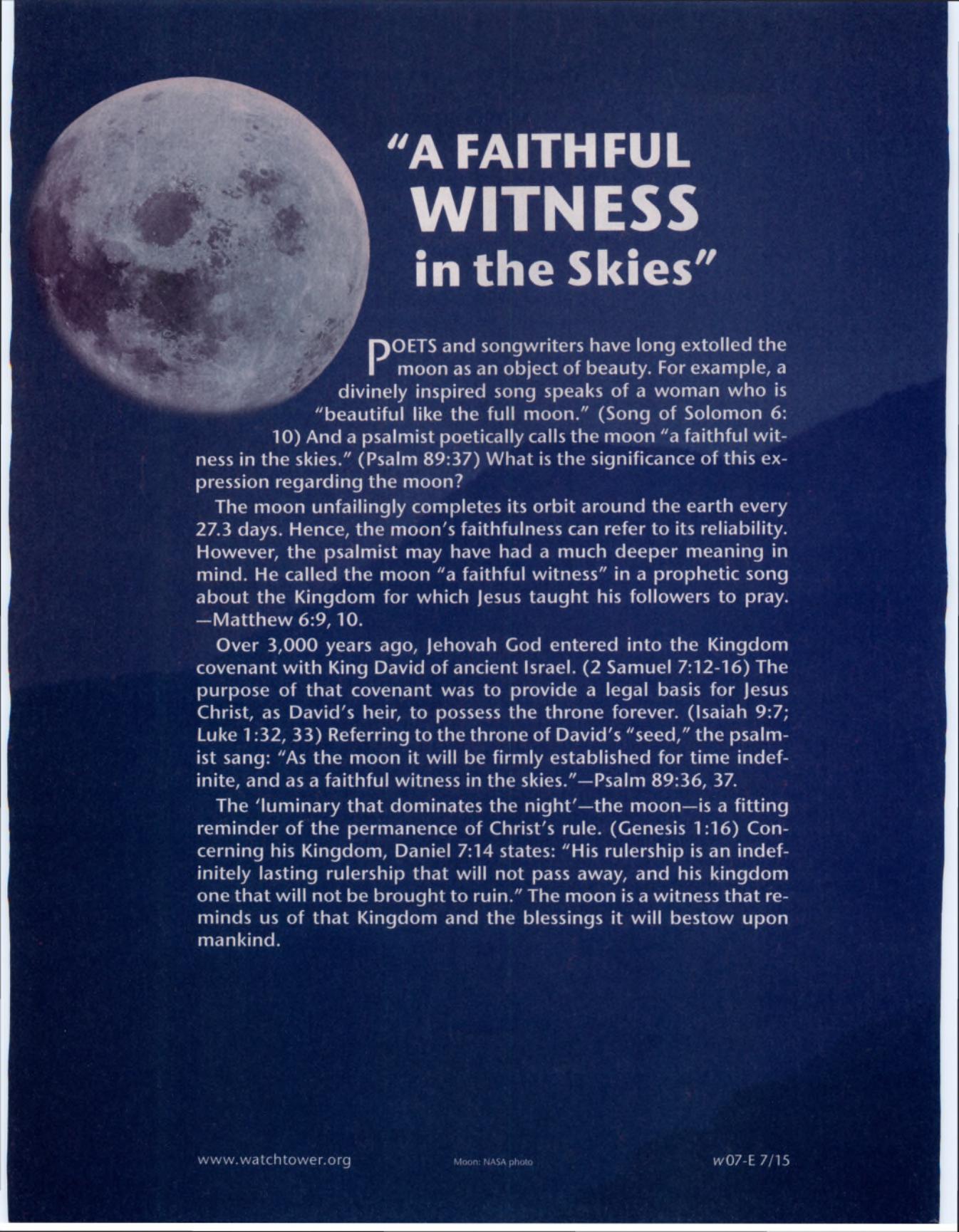
²² You may not face certain challenges we have considered. Yet, God-fearing Job was right when he said: "Man, born of woman, is short-lived and glutted with agitation." (Job 14:1) Perhaps you are a parent who is working hard to give your children spiritual guidance. They must endure trials at school, but how happy you are when they take a firm stand for Jehovah and his righteous principles! Possibly you are experiencing hardships and temptations in the workplace. These and other situations can be endured, however, because 'Jehovah daily carries the load for you.'—Psalm 68:19.

²³ You may think of yourself as just an average person, but bear in mind that Jehovah will never forget your work and the love you show for his holy name. (Hebrews 6:10) With his help, you can endure tests of faith. So keep the doing of God's will in your prayers and plans. Then you can be confident of divine blessing and support as you await Jehovah's day with endurance.

22, 23. Of what can you be sure as you await Jehovah's day with endurance?

How Would You Respond?

- Why do Christians need endurance?
- What can help us to endure illness and bereavement?
- How does prayer help us to endure trials?
- Why is it possible to await Jehovah's day with endurance?



"A FAITHFUL WITNESS in the Skies"

POETS and songwriters have long extolled the moon as an object of beauty. For example, a divinely inspired song speaks of a woman who is "beautiful like the full moon." (Song of Solomon 6: 10) And a psalmist poetically calls the moon "a faithful witness in the skies." (Psalm 89:37) What is the significance of this expression regarding the moon?

The moon unfailingly completes its orbit around the earth every 27.3 days. Hence, the moon's faithfulness can refer to its reliability. However, the psalmist may have had a much deeper meaning in mind. He called the moon "a faithful witness" in a prophetic song about the Kingdom for which Jesus taught his followers to pray.

—Matthew 6:9, 10.

Over 3,000 years ago, Jehovah God entered into the Kingdom covenant with King David of ancient Israel. (2 Samuel 7:12-16) The purpose of that covenant was to provide a legal basis for Jesus Christ, as David's heir, to possess the throne forever. (Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:32, 33) Referring to the throne of David's "seed," the psalmist sang: "As the moon it will be firmly established for time indefinite, and as a faithful witness in the skies."—Psalm 89:36, 37.

The 'luminary that dominates the night'—the moon—is a fitting reminder of the permanence of Christ's rule. (Genesis 1:16) Concerning his Kingdom, Daniel 7:14 states: "His rulership is an indefinitely lasting rulership that will not pass away, and his kingdom one that will not be brought to ruin." The moon is a witness that reminds us of that Kingdom and the blessings it will bestow upon mankind.