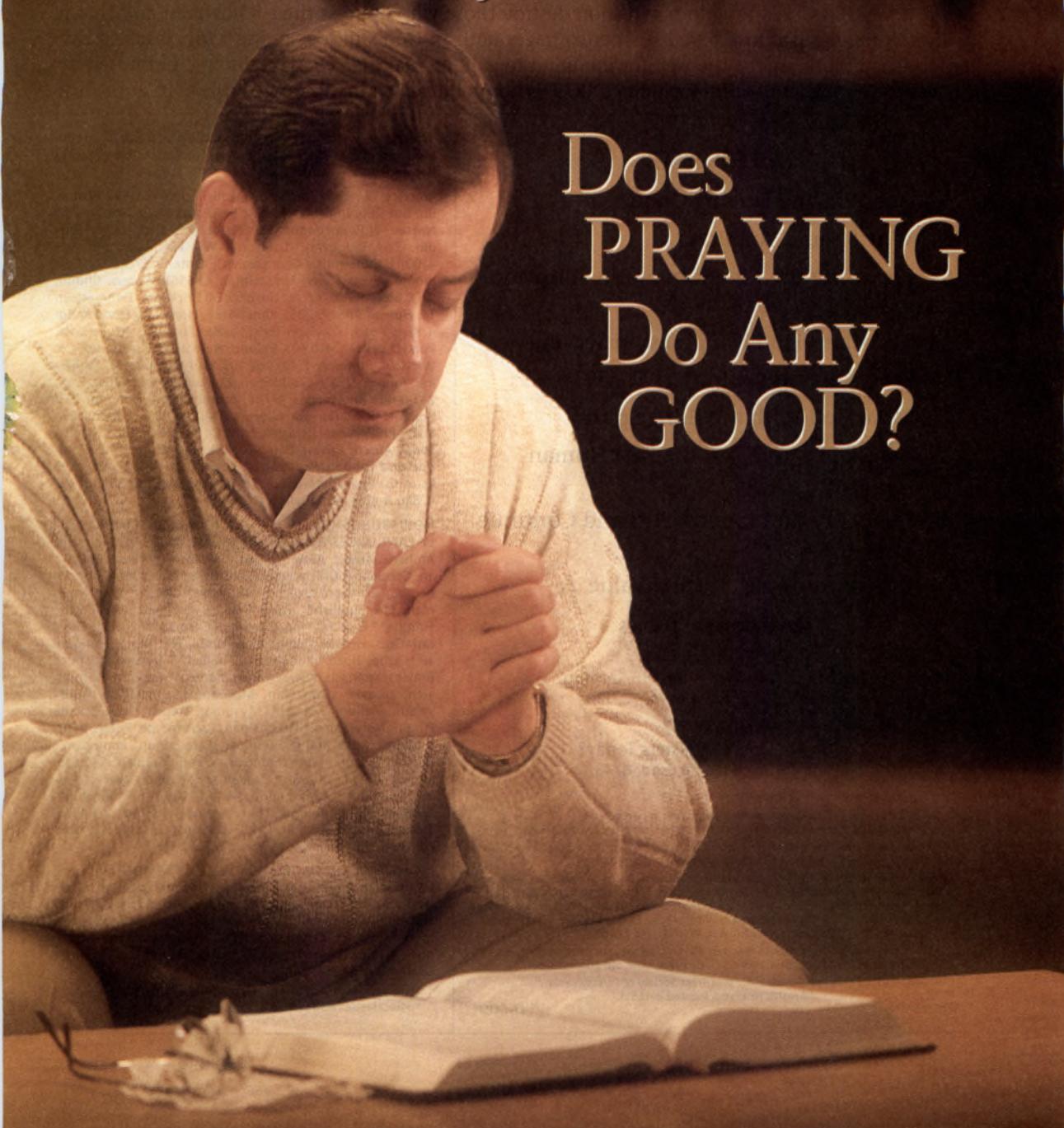


THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

NOVEMBER 15, 2000

Does
PRAYING
Do Any
GOOD?





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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Does PRAYING Do Any GOOD?



AT ONE time or another, nearly everyone feels the need to pray. In fact, people of almost every religious persuasion pray earnestly. For instance, thousands of times a day, a Buddhist may repeat the prayer "I place my faith in Amida Buddha."

In view of the problems that persist earth wide, it is reasonable to ask: What do people expect to achieve by praying? Are all these prayers doing any good?

Why Do People Pray?

Many Orientals pray to their ancestors and to the gods of Shinto or Tao. They do so in hopes of passing examinations in school, reaping good crops, or warding off diseases. By their efforts, Buddhists hope to gain enlightenment. Hindus pray devoutly to their favorite gods and goddesses for knowledge, wealth, and protection.

Some Catholics hope to benefit mankind by devoting their lives as monks or nuns in closed monasteries or convents, praying continually. Millions of Catholics seek favors from Mary by saying memorized prayers, perhaps with the aid of rosary beads. In Oriental lands, many people use prayer wheels. Protestants repeat the words of the Lord's Prayer, though they may also express their feelings to God spontaneously. Many Jews travel great distances to pray at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, hoping for a restoration of the temple and a new age of prosperity and peace.

Though millions exert themselves in prayer, human society is increasingly plagued with problems of poverty, addiction, broken families, crime, and war. Could it be that all these people are not praying in the right way? For that matter, does anyone really hear prayers?

Does Anyone Hear Prayers?

Prayers cannot do any real good unless they are heard. When a person prays, he evidently believes that someone in the invisible spirit realm hears. However, prayers are not transmitted by mere sound waves. Many people believe that someone can even read the thoughts of the one praying. Who might that be?

Just how thoughts originate in the billions of neurons that compose the cerebral cortex of our brain is largely a mystery to researchers. Reasonably, though, the One who designed the brain can read such thoughts. That one is none other than our Creator, Jehovah God. (Psalm 83:18; Revelation 4:11) Prayers should be directed to him. But does Jehovah pay attention to all such prayers?

Are All Prayers Heard?

King David of ancient Israel was a man of prayer. As a divinely inspired psalmist, he sang: "O Hearer of prayer, even to you people of all flesh will come." (Psalm 65:2) Jehovah is able to understand prayers uttered in any of the thousands of languages spoken by mankind. The fact that no human mind could process so much information does not mean that God cannot pay attention to all who pray to him in an acceptable way.

Yet, Jesus Christ—also a man of prayer—revealed that not all prayers please God. Note what Jesus said about the then popular practice of repeating memorized prayers. According to the Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*, he stated:

"In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard." (Matthew 6:7) We cannot expect Jehovah to listen to prayers that do not express our true feelings.

Indicating why some prayers do not please God, a Bible proverb says: "He that is turning his ear away from hearing the law—even his prayer is something detestable." (Proverbs 28:9) Another proverb says: "Jehovah is far away from the wicked ones, but the prayer of the righteous ones he hears." (Proverbs 15:29) At a time when the leaders of ancient Judah bore heavy guilt, Jehovah declared: "When you spread out your palms, I hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I am not listening; with bloodshed your very hands have become filled."—Isaiah 1:1, 15.

The apostle Peter mentioned something else that could make prayers unacceptable to God. Peter wrote: "You husbands, continue dwelling in like manner with [your wives] according to knowledge, assigning them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one, since you are also heirs with them of the undeserved favor of life, in order for your prayers not to be hindered." (1 Peter 3:7) The prayers of a man who ignored such counsel might get no farther than the ceiling!

Clearly, certain requirements must be met if prayers are to be heard. However, many who pray show little concern about doing what God requires of us. That is why so much earnestness in prayer has not resulted in a better world.

What, then, does God require for our prayers to be heard? The answer has to do with our very reason for praying. In fact, if we want to know whether prayers do any good, we must understand their purpose. Why has Jehovah made it possible for us to speak to him?

WHY Should You PRAY?

“YOU do ask, and yet you do not receive, because you are asking for a wrong purpose . . . Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.” (James 4:3, 8) Those words of Jesus’ disciple James may well prompt us to consider our reasons for praying.

Prayer is not just a means of telling God what we need. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: “Your Father knows what things you are needing before ever you ask him.” Yet, Jesus also said: “Keep on asking, and it will be given you.” (Matthew 6:8; 7:7) So Jehovah does want us to tell him what we feel we need. But there is much more to prayer than that.

True friends do not communicate only when they need something. They are interested in each other, and their friendship grows when they express their feelings. Similarly, prayer has a greater purpose than merely asking for necessities. It affords opportunity to strengthen our relationship with Jehovah by expressing our heartfelt devotion to him.

Yes, God has granted us the privilege of prayer so that we might draw close to him. This can happen only if we express our own feelings to God instead of reciting memorized prayers. What a delight it is to talk to Jehovah in prayer! Moreover, a Bible proverb says:



"The prayer of the upright ones is a pleasure to him."—Proverbs 15:8.

"As for me, the drawing near to God is good for me," sang the psalmist Asaph. (Psalm 73:28) But to draw near to God, we must do more than pray. Notice how the following account indicates this:

"A certain one of [Jesus'] disciples said to him: 'Lord, teach us how to pray.' " In reply Jesus said: "Whenever you pray, say, 'Father, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come.'" (Luke 11:1, 2) Could we pray meaningfully in this way without first learning what God's name is and how it will be sanctified? And could we pray in harmony with these words of Jesus if we did not understand what God's Kingdom is? An understanding of these matters is available if we examine the Bible carefully. The knowledge thus gained will help us to know God and understand his ways. Furthermore, becoming acquainted with Jehovah God will make us feel closer and more devoted to him. In turn, this will help us to speak to him more freely in prayer.

Prayer Can Solve Problems

Developing a close relationship with Jehovah will help us to solve problems. Notice how this was so in each of the following circumstances. They illustrate that those praying were able to strengthen their relationship with Jehovah.

In Brazil a woman named Maria prayed to God for help. She had wanted to rebel against accepted standards of conduct partly because of the hypocrisy she saw in society. Maria had even left her husband, children, and home. She also started to use drugs. But when she failed to find happiness, she opened her heart to God and prayed for help.

Soon, two of Jehovah's Witnesses called and left with Maria an issue of *The Watchtower* containing material on the value of accepting divine guidance. It touched her heart, and she began studying the Bible with the

Witnesses that very day. This ultimately led to the restoration of her family life. As she learned about Jehovah, she wanted to express her love for him. "I made changes for the better," said Maria. "My husband and family at first objected to my study of the Bible. But as they saw the changes I was making, they began to encourage me." Later, Maria dedicated her life to the Hearer of prayer in order to serve him.

Although José had a beautiful wife and a thriving business in Bolivia, he was unhappy. An extramarital affair caused his wife to leave him. He drank excessively and felt useless. Says José: "I began praying with all my heart, asking what I should do to please God. Soon Jehovah's Witnesses visited my business place offering free home Bible studies, but I dismissed them. This happened three times. Every time I prayed for help, there they were. Finally, I resolved that I would listen the next time. I had read the Bible through and had many questions, but they always had answers that satisfied me. Learning about Jehovah gave me a new purpose in life, and my friends among the Witnesses were such encouraging examples! I left my girlfriend and my drinking companions. Before long, I was back with my wife and children. I was baptized early in 1999."

In Italy, Tamara's marriage was in trouble, so she prayed for wisdom. She had developed an aggressive attitude, having been beaten and thrown out of the family at age 14. Says Tamara: "I found a Bible and began to read it. One evening, I read that 'finding wisdom is like finding hidden treasures.' I prayed for that wisdom. (Proverbs 2:1-6) The next morning, Jehovah's Witnesses called. I began studying the Bible with them, but it took me some time to put what I learned into practice. Finally, I decided to follow the Christian way of life and was baptized. Now, along with my husband, I help others to benefit from God's wisdom."

Beatriz had been part of high society in Caracas, Venezuela. Yet, she found herself divorced and distressed. Desperate, she once spent hours in prayer. The next morning, the doorbell rang. Irritated, she looked through the peephole and saw two people with briefcases. She pretended not to be at home, but before the couple left, they pushed a handbill under the door. "Know Your Bible," it said. Could their visit be connected with her

Do you know why we should pray?



prayers the night before? She called for them to come back. Soon she was studying the Bible, and she later was baptized. Happy at last, Beatriz now teaches others about how to find happiness.

Carmen prayed concerning her struggle with poverty. She had ten children and a drunken husband, Rafael. "I tried to earn money washing clothes," said Carmen. But Rafael's drinking habit got worse. "It wasn't until we began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses that my husband began to change. We learned of the Kingdom promise—that Jehovah will soon rid the world of poverty and oppression. My prayers to God were finally answered!" Learning about Jehovah's ways helped Rafael to stop drinking, and he put on "the new personality." (Ephesians 4:24) He and his family were able to improve their standard of living. Says Rafael: "We may not be rich, and we do not own our own home, but we have the necessities of life, and we are happy."

When All Prayers Will Be Answered

Did praying do these people any good? Certainly! And did you notice that in most cases their prayers were answered when someone from the Christian congregation helped them to draw close to Jehovah God by studying the Bible?—Acts 9:11.

So, then, we have good reasons to pray. Soon now, the prayer for God's Kingdom to come and for his will to be done on earth will be answered. (Matthew 6:10) After God has cleansed our globe of those who oppose him, "the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah." (Isaiah 11:9) Then all those who love Jehovah will enjoy "the glorious freedom of the children of God"—and their prayers certainly will be answered.—Romans 8:18-21.

Preaching the Kingdom on the Altiplano in Peru

BETWEEN the eastern and western ranges of the Andes Mountains—where Bolivia and Peru meet—lies the Altiplano. Its name means “high plain,” or “plateau.” Most of it lies in Bolivia.

The Altiplano is 60 miles wide and over 600 miles long, and its average elevation is some 12,000 feet above sea level. Aboard a plane flying there from Peru’s coastal capital city, Lima, you pass snow-covered El Misti, a volcano that reaches through the clouds to an altitude of 19,101 feet. Towering to over 20,000 feet are the distant snowcapped peaks of Nevado Ampato and Nevado Coropuna. Coming suddenly into view is a vast plateau—southern Peru’s Altiplano.

The capital of the Peruvian Altiplano is Puno, situated at the northwest end of Lake Titicaca, the world’s highest navigable lake. Because the region is over two miles high, it takes a while for visitors to adjust to the thin air. Living by Lake Titicaca are the Quechua and Aymara Indians. Dressed in colorful red, green, or blue garments, they can be seen working on their chacras, or small farms. Though Spanish is the main language of Peru, Quechua and Aymara are also spoken on the Altiplano.

Spearheading the Preaching Work

Many of the humble, hardworking people speaking Quechua and Aymara have recently come to an accurate knowledge of Bible truth. This is largely because of Jehovah’s rich blessing on the zealous efforts of full-time Kingdom proclaimers serving as special pioneers.

For instance, special pioneers José and Silvia were assigned to the town of Putina, about



30 miles from Lake Titicaca. Within two months, Silvia was conducting 16 home Bible studies, and José, 14. In just six months, the number of congregation publishers increased from 23 to 41. Meanwhile, meeting attendance rose from 48 to a peak of 132.

“When starting congregation meetings in these isolated communities,” says José, “we found it practical to begin with the Public Meeting and the Congregation Book Study. This makes it easier for newly interested ones to begin attending meetings.”

Two sisters—one a pioneer—first brought the good news to the isolated community of Muñani, about 13 miles from Putina. There they started a Bible study with a blind man named Lucio.* He invited his brother Miguel, a lay Catholic missionary and community leader from a nearby area. When a friend asked Miguel why he went to Muñani every week, he said that it was to learn about Jehovah and his Word. The question then arose: “Why don’t we study the Bible here?” Because of the interest shown by people in Miguel’s community, the Witnesses soon arranged to hold meetings there.

Miguel began to share what he was learning with others. But what about his position as a lay Catholic missionary and deputy governor? In a meeting at the community hall, he announced his resignation as a Catholic missionary. Would another person be appointed? Someone in the audience said: “Why do we need another missionary when we are learning the truth?” Of course, this was a reference to the things taught

* Some substitute names have been used in this article.



by Jehovah's Witnesses. Another person added: "We are not in agreement that you resign by yourself. Why don't we all resign?" All in attendance then shouted in unison: "We all resign!"

Idols and crucifixes were discussed at a community meeting shortly thereafter. One man asked that all present read Deuteronomy 7:25, which says: "The graven images of their gods you should burn in the fire. You must not desire the silver and the gold upon them, nor indeed take it for yourself, for fear you may be ensnared by it; for it is a thing detestable to Jehovah your God."

The man then asked those in favor of burning all the idols to raise their hands. All hands went up immediately. (Acts 19:19, 20) Now 23 of the 25 families in the community are studying God's Word. Two persons are serving as unbaptized publishers, and five couples plan to legalize their marriage in order to have a clean standing before Jehovah.—Titus 3:1; Hebrews 13:4.

Teaching With Cassette Recordings

Since literacy is low on the Altiplano, Watch Tower videos

and cassette recordings in local languages are a great aid—even for conducting home Bible studies. With the help of an audio cassette, a special pioneer named Dora conducts studies in the brochure *What Does God Require of Us?* Playing one paragraph at a time, she asks the Bible student questions on the material just heard.

A local radio station regularly broadcasts segments of the *Require* brochure in the Quechua language. It does the same with portions of *Awake!* magazine in Spanish. Hence, many people recognize the Kingdom message and want to learn more when Jehovah's Witnesses call at their homes.

The Altiplano is far from the eyes of the world in general but not from God's sight. Thanks to Jehovah's love for mankind, many people living high on the Andean Altiplano are becoming part of the throng that glorifies his majestic house of true worship.—Haggai 2:7.



CHRISTIANS FIND HAPPINESS IN SERVING

"There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—ACTS 20:35.

DURING the last decades of the 1900's, the word "me-ism" was frequently heard. "Me-ism" means, in effect, "me first" and denotes an attitude combining selfishness and greed with a lack of concern for others. We can be sure that in the year 2000, me-ism is by no means dead. How many times do you hear the questions, "What is in it for me?" or, "What will I get out of it?" Such a selfish attitude is not conducive to happiness. It is the very opposite of the principle that Jesus stated: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—Acts 20:35.

² Is it true that giving brings greater happiness than receiving? Yes. Think of Jehovah God. With him is "the source of life." (Psalm 36:9) He provides everything we need to make us happy and productive. Indeed, he is the Source of "every good gift and every perfect present." (James 1:17) Jehovah, "the happy God," is constantly giving. (1 Timothy 1:11) He loves his human creation, to whom he gives so much. (John 3:16) Think, too, of a human family. If you are a parent, you know how many sacrifices, how much giving, it takes to raise a child. And for many years the child is unaware of the sacrifices you make. He takes them all for granted. Still, it makes you happy to see your child flourishing as a result of your unselfish giving. Why? Because you love him.

³ In a similar way, true worship is character-

1. What wrong attitude is prevalent today, and why is it detrimental?
2. How is it seen that giving brings happiness?
3. Why is it a delight to serve Jehovah and our fellow believers?

ized by giving that is based on love. Since we love Jehovah and we love our fellow believers, it is a delight to serve them, to give of ourselves to them. (Matthew 22:37-39) Any who worship with selfish motives end up with very little joy. But those who serve unselfishly, being more concerned with what they can give than with what they hope to receive, find happiness indeed. This truth is discerned by considering how certain Bible words related to our worship are used in the Scriptures. We will discuss three of these words in this and the following article.

Jesus' Public Service

⁴ In the original Greek, one important word having to do with worship is *lei-tourgi'a*, which

4. What is the nature of "public service" in Christendom?

Parents find great joy in giving



is translated “public service” in the *New World Translation*. In Christendom *lei-tour-gi'a* has given rise to the word “liturgy.”* However, the formalistic liturgies of Christendom are not a truly beneficial public service.

⁵ The apostle Paul used a Greek word related to *lei-tour-gi'a* with reference to Israel’s priests. He said: “Every priest takes his station from day to day to render public service [a form of *lei-tour-gi'a*] and to offer the same sacrifices often.” (Hebrews 10:11) Levite priests rendered a very valuable public service in Israel. They taught God’s Law and offered sacrifices that covered the sins of the people. (2 Chronicles 15:3; Malachi 2:7) When the priests and the people followed Jehovah’s Law, the nation had reasons to be joyful.—Deuteronomy 16:15.

⁶ Rendering public service under the Law was a real privilege for Israelite priests, but their service ceased to have any value when Israel was rejected because of unfaithfulness. (Matthew 21:43) Jehovah arranged for something far grander—the public service performed by Jesus, the great High Priest. Concerning him, we read: “He because of continuing alive forever has his priesthood without any successors. Consequently he is able also to save completely those who are approaching God through him, because he is always alive to plead for them.”—Hebrews 7:24, 25.

⁷ Jesus continues as priest forever, without successors. Thus, only he can save people completely. He performs that unparalleled public service, not in a man-made temple, but in the antitypical temple, Jehovah’s great arrangement for worship that went into operation in 29 C.E. Jesus now serves in the Most Holy of that temple, in heaven. He is “a public servant

* Christendom’s liturgies are generally either worship services or specific rituals, such as the Eucharist in the Roman Catholic Church.

5, 6. (a) What public service was performed in Israel, with what benefits? (b) What far grander public service replaced that performed in Israel, and why?

7. Why does Jesus’ public service bring unparalleled benefits?

[*lei-tour-gos*] of the holy place and of the true tent, which Jehovah put up, and not man.” (Hebrews 8:2; 9:11, 12) Lofty as Jesus’ position is, he is still “a public servant.” He uses his high authority to give, not to take. And such giving brings him joy. It is part of “the joy that was set before him” and that strengthened him to endure throughout his course on earth.—Hebrews 12:2.

⁸ There is another aspect of Jesus’ public service. Paul wrote: “Jesus has obtained a more excellent public service, so that he is also the mediator of a correspondingly better covenant, which has been legally established upon better promises.” (Hebrews 8:6) Moses mediated the covenant that was the basis of Israel’s relationship with Jehovah. (Exodus 19:4, 5) Jesus mediated a new covenant, which made possible the birth of a new nation, “the Israel of God,” composed of spirit-anointed Christians from many nations. (Galatians 6:16; Hebrews 8:8, 13; Revelation 5:9, 10) What an excellent public service that was! How happy we are to be acquainted with Jesus, a public servant through whom we can render acceptable worship to Jehovah! —John 14:6.

Christians Also Render Public Service

⁹ No human performs a public service as exalted as that of Jesus. When anointed Christians receive their heavenly reward, however, they take their place alongside Jesus and share in his public service as heavenly kings and priests. (Revelation 20:6; 22:1-5) Yet, Christians on earth do perform public service, and they find great joy in doing so. For example, when there was a food shortage in Palestine, the apostle Paul carried donations from brothers in Europe to help alleviate the distress of Jewish Christians in Judea. That was a public service. (Romans 15:27; 2 Corinthians 9:12) Today, Christians are happy to render a similar service,

8. How did Jesus perform a public service to replace the Law covenant?

9, 10. What are some types of public service performed by Christians?

giving prompt assistance when their brothers experience affliction, natural disasters, or other calamities.—Proverbs 14:21.

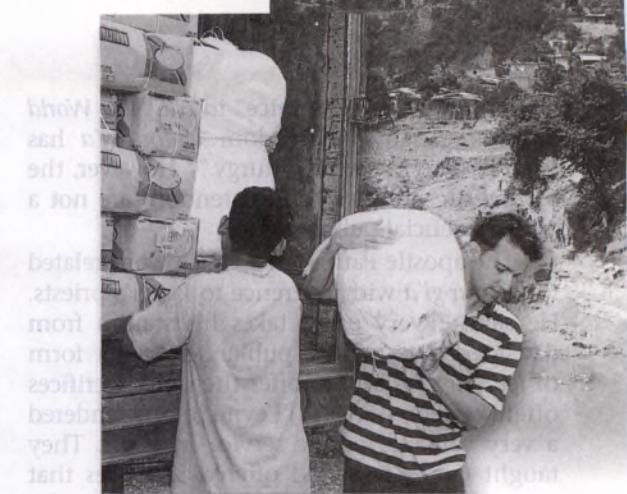
¹⁰ Paul referred to another public service when he wrote: “Even if I am being poured out like a drink offering upon the sacrifice and public service to which faith has led you, I am glad and I rejoice with all of you.” (Philippians 2:17) Paul’s hard work in behalf of the Philippians had been a public service rendered with love and diligence. A similar public service is being rendered today, especially by anointed Christians, who serve as “the faithful and discreet slave,” supplying spiritual food at the proper time. (Matthew 24:45-47) Further, as a group, these are “a holy priesthood,” commissioned “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” and to “declare abroad the excellencies of the one that called [them] out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:5, 9) Like Paul, they rejoice in such privileges even as they ‘pour themselves out’ in fulfilling their responsibilities. And their “other sheep” companions join them and support them in the work of telling mankind about Jehovah and his purposes.* (John 10:16; Matthew 24:14) What a grand and joyful public service that is!—Psalm 107:21, 22.

Render Sacred Service

¹¹ Another Greek word having to do with our worship is *la-trei'a*, translated “sacred service” in the *New World Translation*. Sacred service has to do with acts of worship. For example, the 84-year-old widow and prophetess Anna is described as “never missing from the temple, rendering sacred service [a Greek word related to *la-trei'a*] night and day with fastings and supplications.” (Luke 2:36, 37) Anna worshiped Jehovah with constancy. She is a fine example

* At Acts 13:2, it is reported that prophets and teachers in Antioch were “publicly ministering” (translating a Greek word related to *lei-tourgi'a*) to Jehovah. Likely, this public ministering included preaching to the public.

11. How did the prophetess Anna provide a fine example for all Christians?



for all of us—young and old, men and women. Even as Anna prayed to Jehovah earnestly and worshiped him regularly at the temple, our sacred service includes prayer and meeting attendance.—Romans 12:12; Hebrews 10:24, 25.

¹² The apostle Paul mentioned a major feature of our sacred service when he wrote: “God, to whom I render sacred service with my spirit in connection with the good news about his Son, is my witness of how without ceasing I always make mention of you in my prayers.” (Romans 1:9) Yes, the preaching of the good news is not only a public service to those who hear it but also an act of worship to Jehovah God. Whether we find a receptive ear or not, the preaching work is sacred service rendered to Jehovah. Our endeavoring to tell others about the fine qualities and beneficent purposes of our beloved heavenly Father certainly brings us great joy.—Psalm 71:23.

Where Do We Render Sacred Service?

¹³ To anointed Christians, Paul wrote: “Seeing that we are to receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us continue to have undeserved kindness, through which we may ac-

12. What is a major feature of our sacred service, and how is this also a public service?

13. What is the hope of those who render sacred service in the inner courtyard of Jehovah’s spiritual temple, and who rejoice with them?



Christians render public service when they assist others and when they proclaim the good news



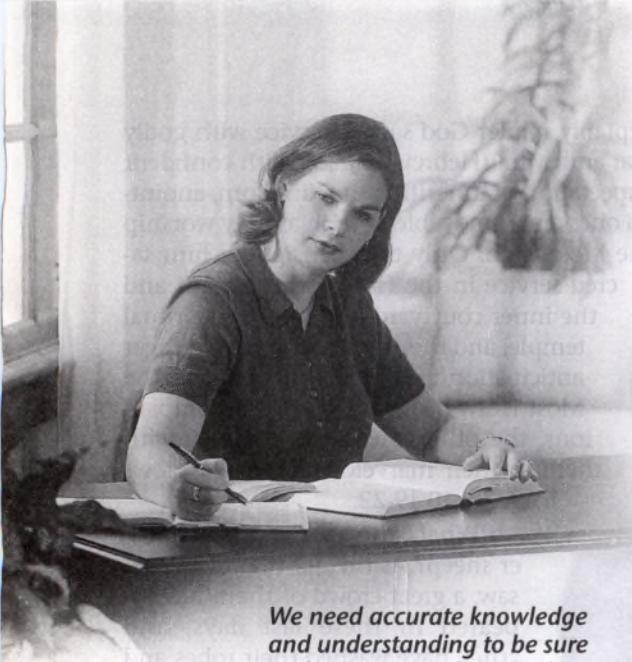
ceptably render God sacred service with godly fear and awe.” (Hebrews 12:28) With confident expectation of inheriting the Kingdom, anointed ones are unmovable in faith as they worship the Most High. Only they can render him sacred service in the Holy compartment and the inner courtyard of Jehovah’s spiritual temple, and they look forward with eager anticipation to serving with Jesus in the Most Holy, heaven itself. Their companions, the other sheep class, rejoice with them in their marvelous hope.—Hebrews 6:19, 20; 10:19-22.

¹⁴ What, though, of those other sheep? As the apostle John fore-saw, a great crowd of them has ap-peared in these last days, and “they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:14) This means that, like their anointed fel-low worshipers, they exercise faith in Jesus’ public service, his offering of his perfect human life in behalf of mankind. The other sheep also benefit from Jesus’ public service in that they are “laying hold of [Jehovah’s] covenant.” (Isaiah 56:6) No, they are not parties to the new covenant, but they lay hold of it in that they obey the laws related to it and cooperate with ar-rangements made through it. They associate with the Israel of God, feeding at the same spiritual table and working along with its mem-bers, praising God publicly and offering spiritual sacrifices that are pleasing to him.—Hebrews 13:15.

¹⁵ Thus, the great crowd are seen “standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes.” Further, “they are before the throne of God; and they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple; and the One seated on the throne will spread his tent over them.” (Revelation 7:9, 15) In Israel,

14. How does the great crowd benefit from Jesus’ public service?

15. Where does the great crowd render sacred service, and how does this blessing affect them?



*We need accurate knowledge
and understanding to be sure
that our sacred service is
acceptable to God*

proselytes worshiped in the outer courtyard of Solomon's temple. In a similar way, the great crowd worships Jehovah in the outer courtyard of his spiritual temple. Serving there causes them to rejoice. (Psalm 122:1) Even after the last of their anointed associates receives his heavenly inheritance, they will continue to render sacred service to Jehovah as his people.—Revelation 21:3.

Sacred Service That Is Unacceptable

¹⁶ In the days of ancient Israel, sacred service had to be rendered in harmony with Jehovah's laws. (Exodus 30:9; Leviticus 10:1, 2) Likewise today, there are requirements to observe if our sacred service is to be acceptable to Jehovah. That is why Paul wrote to the Colossians: "We . . . have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the accurate knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual comprehension, in order to walk worthily of Jehovah to the end of fully pleasing him as you go on bearing fruit in every good work

16. What warnings are given regarding sacred service?

and increasing in the accurate knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:9, 10) It is not up to us to determine the proper way to worship God. Accurate Scriptural knowledge, spiritual comprehension, and godly wisdom are vital. Otherwise, things can go terribly wrong.

¹⁷ Remember the Israelites in the days of Moses. We read: "God turned and handed them over to render sacred service to the army of heaven." (Acts 7:42) Those Israelites had seen Jehovah's powerful acts in their behalf. Yet, they turned to other gods when they thought this would be to their advantage. They were not loyal, and loyalty is a must if our sacred service is to be pleasing to God. (Psalm 18:25) True, few today would turn from Jehovah to worship stars or golden calves, but there are other forms of idolatry. Jesus warned against serving "Riches," and Paul called covetousness idolatry. (Matthew 6:24; Colossians 3:5) Satan promotes himself as a god. (2 Corinthians 4:4) Such kinds of idolatry are rampant and are a snare. Think, for example, of someone who claims to follow Jesus but whose real goal in life is to become wealthy or whose real trust is in himself and his own ideas. Who is he really serving? How different is he from the Jews of Isaiah's day who swore in Jehovah's name but credited his great acts to unclean idols?—Isaiah 48:1, 5.

17. (a) How was sacred service perverted in the days of Moses? (b) How could sacred service be misdirected today?

How Would You Answer?

- What grand public service did Jesus perform?
- What public service do Christians perform?
- What is Christian sacred service, and where is it performed?
- What must we acquire if our sacred service is to please God?

¹⁸ Jesus also warned: “The hour is coming when everyone that kills you will imagine he has rendered a sacred service to God.” (John 16:2) Saul, who became the apostle Paul, doubtless thought that he was serving God when he ‘approved the murder of Stephen’ and ‘breathed threat and murder against the disciples of the Lord.’ (Acts 8:1; 9:1) Today, some perpetrators of ethnic cleansing and genocide also claim to worship God. There are many people who claim to worship God, but their worship is really directed to the gods of nationalism, tribalism, wealth, self, or some other deity.

¹⁹ Jesus said: “It is Jehovah your God you

18. How has sacred service been wrongly performed in the past and today?

19. (a) How do we view our sacred service?
(b) What kind of sacred service will bring us joy?

must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.” (Matthew 4:10) He was speaking to Satan, but how vital it is that all of us heed his words! Rendering sacred service to the Sovereign Lord of the universe is an elevated, fear-inspiring privilege. And what can be said about performing public service that is linked to our worship? Doing this in behalf of our fellowman is a joyful work that brings great happiness. (Psalm 41:1, 2; 59:16) Still, such service brings real happiness only if it is offered wholeheartedly and in the right way. Who are really worshiping God properly? Whose sacred service does Jehovah accept? We can answer such questions if we consider the third Bible word that has to do with our worship. This we will do in the following article.

WHO ARE GOD'S MINISTERS TODAY?

“Our being adequately qualified issues from God, who has indeed adequately qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant.”—2 CORINTHIANS 3:5, 6.

IN THE first century of our Common Era, all Christians shared an important responsibility—the duty to preach the good news. All of them were anointed and were ministers of the new covenant. Some had additional responsibilities, such as teaching in the congregation. (1 Corinthians 12:27-29; Ephesians 4:11) Parents had weighty obligations within the family. (Colossians 3:18-21) But all shared in the basic and vital work of preaching. In the original Greek of the Christian Scriptures, this responsibility was a *di·a·ko·ni'a*—a service, or ministry. —Colossians 4:17.

1, 2. What responsibility did all first-century Christians share, but how did things change?

² As time went by, things changed. A class developed, known as the clergy, who reserved for themselves the privilege of preaching. (Acts 20:30) The clergy were a small minority of those calling themselves Christians. The great majority became known as the laity. While the laity have been taught that they have certain obligations, including the making of contributions for the upkeep of the clergy, most have become little more than passive listeners in the matter of preaching.

³ The clergy claim to be ministers (from

3, 4. (a) How do individuals in Christendom become ministers? (b) Who is considered a minister in Christendom, and why are things different among Jehovah's Witnesses?

minister, a Latin translation of *di-a'ko-nos*, “servant”).* For this, they graduate from colleges or seminaries and are ordained. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says: “‘Ordain’ and ‘ordination’ ordinarily refer to special status accorded ministers or priests through officially sanctioned rites, with associated emphasis on authority to proclaim the Word or to administer sacraments, or to do both.” Who ordains the ministers? *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* says: “In churches that have retained the historic episcopate, the ordaining minister is always a bishop. In Presbyterian churches, ordination is conferred by ministers of the presbytery.”

⁴ Hence, in the churches of Christendom, the privilege of being a minister has been severely restricted. Yet, this is not the case among Jehovah’s Witnesses. Why not? Because it was not that way in the first-century Christian congregation.

Who Really Are God’s Ministers?

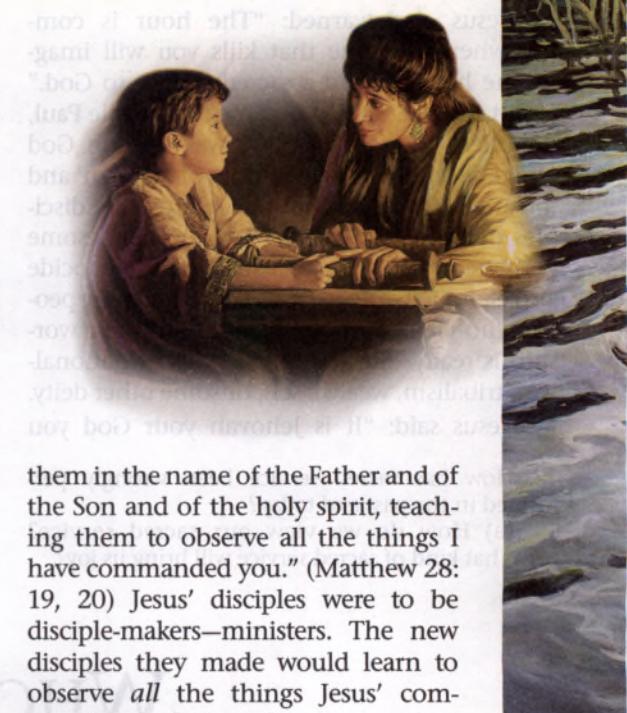
⁵ According to the Bible, all Jehovah’s worshipers—heavenly and earthly—are ministers. Angels ministered to Jesus. (Matthew 4:11; 26:53; Luke 22:43) Angels also “minister for those who are going to inherit salvation.” (Hebrews 1:14; Matthew 18:10) Jesus was a minister. He said: “The Son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister.” (Matthew 20:28; Romans 15:8) Therefore, since Jesus’ followers were to “follow his steps closely,” it is not surprising that they too must be ministers.—1 Peter 2:21.

⁶ Shortly before his ascension to heaven, Jesus said to his disciples: “Go . . . and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing

* The Greek word *di-a'ko-nos* is the source of the word “deacon,” an official in the church. In churches where women can be deacons, they might be called deaconesses.

5. According to the Bible, those serving as ministers include whom?

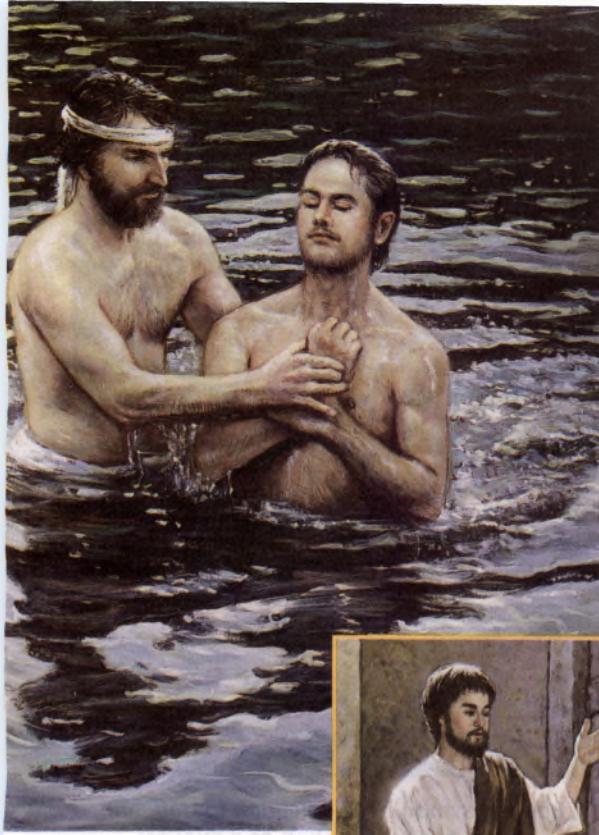
6. How did Jesus indicate that his disciples should be ministers?



them in 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) Jesus’ disciples were to be disciple-makers—ministers. The new disciples they made would learn to observe *all* the things Jesus’ commanded, including the command to go forth and make disciples. Man or woman, adult or child, a true disciple of Jesus Christ would be a minister.—Joel 2:28, 29.

⁷ In harmony with this, on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., all of Jesus’ disciples present, men and women, joined in telling forth “the magnificent things of God.” (Acts 2:1-11) Further, the apostle Paul wrote: “With the heart one exercises faith for righteousness, but with the mouth one makes public declaration for salvation.” (Romans 10:10) Paul addressed those words, not to a restricted clergy class, but “to all those who [were] in Rome as God’s beloved ones.” (Romans 1:1, 7) Similarly, all ‘the holy ones in Ephesus and faithful ones in union with Christ Jesus’ were to have their “feet shod with the equipment of the good news of peace.” (Ephesians 1:1; 6:15) And all those who heard the letter addressed to the Hebrews were

7, 8. (a) What scriptures show that all true Christians are ministers? (b) What questions are raised about ordination?



Timothy was taught God's Word from infancy. He became an ordained minister when he was baptized



to 'hold fast the public declaration of their hope without wavering.'—Hebrews 10:23.

⁸ When, though, does a person become a minister? In other words, when is he ordained? And who ordains him?

Ordination as a Minister—When?

⁹ As to when and by whom a person is ordained, consider the example of Jesus Christ. He did not have a certificate of ordination or

9. When was Jesus ordained, and by whom?

a degree from some seminary to prove that he was a minister, and he was not ordained by any man. Why can we say, then, that he was a minister? Because Isaiah's inspired words were fulfilled in him: "Jehovah's spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to declare good news." (Luke 4:17-19; Isaiah 61:1) Those words leave no doubt that Jesus was commissioned to tell forth good news. By whom? Since Jehovah's spirit anointed him for the work, Jesus was clearly ordained by Jehovah God. When did this happen? Jehovah's spirit actually came upon Jesus when he was baptized. (Luke 3:21, 22) Therefore, it was at his baptism that he was ordained.

¹⁰ What of Jesus' first-century followers? Their status as ministers also came from Jehovah. Paul said: "Our being adequately qualified issues from God, who has indeed adequately qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant." (2 Corinthians 3:5, 6) How does Jehovah qualify his worshipers to be ministers? Consider the example of Timothy, whom Paul called "God's minister in the good news about the Christ."—1 Thessalonians 3:2.

¹¹ The following words addressed to Timothy help us to understand how he became a minister: "You, however, continue in the things that you learned and were persuaded to believe, knowing from what persons you learned them and that from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through the faith in connection with Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:14, 15) The foundation of Timothy's faith, which would move him to make a public declaration, was knowledge of the Scriptures. Was personal reading all that was needed

10. By whom does a Christian minister become "adequately qualified"?

11, 12. How did Timothy make progress toward becoming a minister?

for this? No. Timothy needed help to gain accurate knowledge and spiritual understanding of what he read. (Colossians 1:9) Thus Timothy was "persuaded to believe." Since he had known the Scriptures "from infancy," his first instructors must have been his mother and grandmother, his father evidently not being a believer.—2 Timothy 1:5.

¹² However, more was involved in Timothy's becoming a minister. For one thing, his faith was strengthened by association with Christians in nearby congregations. How do we know? Because when Paul first met Timothy, the young man was "well reported on by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium." (Acts 16:2) Additionally, in those days certain brothers wrote letters to the congregations in order to strengthen them. And overseers visited them in order to build them up. Such provisions helped Christians like Timothy to progress spiritually.—Acts 15:22-32; 1 Peter 1:1.

¹³ In view of Jesus' command recorded at Matthew 28:19, 20, we can be sure that at some point Timothy's faith moved him to imitate Jesus and be baptized. (Matthew 3:15-17; Hebrews 10:5-9) This was a symbol of Timothy's whole-souled dedication to God. At his baptism Timothy became a minister. From then on, his life, his strength, and everything he had belonged to God. This was an integral part of his worship, "a sacred service." However, Timothy did not then rest on his laurels. He continued to grow spiritually, becoming a mature Christian minister. This occurred because of Timothy's close association with such mature Christians as Paul, his own personal study, and his zealous preaching activity.—1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 2:2; Hebrews 6:1.

¹⁴ Today, ordination for the Christian ministry is similar. One who is "rightly disposed for

13. When was Timothy ordained as a minister, and why would you say that his spiritual progress did not end there?

14. Today, how does someone "rightly disposed for everlasting life" make progress toward being a minister?



Baptism symbolizes dedication to God and marks one's ordination as a minister

"everlasting life" is helped to learn about God and his purposes by means of a Bible study. (Acts 13:48) The individual learns to apply Bible principles in his life and to pray meaningfully to God. (Psalm 1:1-3; Proverbs 2:1-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18) He associates with other believers and takes advantage of provisions and arrangements made by "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47; Proverbs 13:20; Hebrews 10:23-25) Thus he makes progress in a structured process of education.

¹⁵ Eventually, the Bible student, having developed a love of Jehovah God and a strong faith in the ransom sacrifice, wishes to dedicate himself completely to his heavenly Father. (John 14:1) He makes that dedication in personal prayer and then gets baptized as a public symbol of that private act. His baptism is

15. What happens when a person gets baptized? (See also footnote.)

his ordination ceremony because that is when he is recognized as a fully dedicated servant, a *di-a'ko-nos*, of God. He must remain separate from the world. (John 17:16; James 4:4) He has presented his whole self "a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God" without reserve or condition. (Romans 12:1)* He is *God's minister*, imitating Christ.

What Is the Christian Ministry?

¹⁶ What did the ministry of Timothy include? He had special duties as a traveling companion of Paul. And when he became an elder, Timothy worked hard at teaching and strengthening fellow Christians. But the central part of his ministry, as was the case with Jesus and Paul, was preaching the good news and making disciples. (Matthew 4:23; 1 Corinthians 3:5) Paul told Timothy: "You, though, keep your senses in all things, suffer evil, *do the work of an evangelizer*, fully accomplish your ministry."—2 Timothy 4:5.

¹⁷ It is similar with Christian ministers today. They engage in a public ministry, an evangelizing work, pointing others to salvation on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice and teaching meek ones to call on Jehovah's name. (Acts 2:21; 4:10-12; Romans 10:13) They prove from the Bible that the Kingdom is the only hope for suffering mankind and show that even now things are better if we live by godly principles. (Psalm 15:1-5; Mark 13:10) But a Christian minister does not preach a social gospel. Rather, he teaches that 'godly devotion holds promise of the life now and that which is to come.'—1 Timothy 4:8.

¹⁸ True, most ministers have additional ways

* While Romans 12:1 applies specifically to anointed Christians, the principle applies also to the "other sheep." (John 10:16) These 'join themselves to Jehovah to minister to him and to love the name of Jehovah, in order to become servants to him.'—Isaiah 56:6.

16. What were some of Timothy's responsibilities as a minister?

17, 18. (a) In what ministry do Christians engage? (b) How important is the preaching work to a Christian minister?

to serve, which may differ from one Christian to another. Many have family obligations. (Ephesians 5:21-6:4) Elders and ministerial servants have duties in the congregation. (1 Timothy 3:1, 12, 13; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:7) Many Christians help to construct Kingdom Halls. Some have the wonderful privilege of working as volunteers in one of the Watch Tower Society's Bethel homes. However, all Christian ministers share in the preaching of the good news. There are no exceptions. It is sharing in this work that identifies one publicly as a genuine Christian minister.

The Attitude of a Christian Minister

¹⁹ Most of Christendom's ministers expect to be given special respect, and they take such titles as "reverend" and "father." However, a Christian minister knows that Jehovah alone is worthy of reverence. (1 Timothy 2:9, 10) No Christian minister claims such lofty respect or aspires to special titles. (Matthew 23:8-12) He knows that the basic meaning of *di-a-ko-ni'a* is "service." The verb associated with it is sometimes used in the Bible with regard to personal services, such as waiting at tables. (Luke 4:39; 17:8; John 2:5) Even though its usage in relation to the Christian ministry is more elevated, a *di-a'ko-nos* is still a servant.

²⁰ No Christian minister therefore has reason to feel self-important. Genuine Christian ministers—even those with special responsibilities in the congregation—are humble slaves. Jesus said: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your minister, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave." (Matthew 20:26, 27) When showing his disciples the right attitude to cultivate, Jesus washed their feet, doing the work of the lowliest slave. (John 13:1-15) What a humble service! Hence, Christian ministers humbly serve Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 6:4; 11:23) They show lowliness of mind in serving one another. And when they preach the good

19, 20. What attitude must Christian ministers cultivate?



Christian ministers are willing to serve

news, they unselfishly serve their unbelieving neighbors.—Romans 1:14, 15; Ephesians 3:1-7.

Endure in the Ministry

²¹ For Paul, being a minister took endurance. He told the Colossians that he suffered much in order to preach the good news to them. (Colossians 1:24, 25) Because he endured, however, many accepted the good news and became ministers. They were begotten as sons of God and brothers of Jesus Christ, with the prospect of becoming spirit creatures alongside him in heaven. What a glorious reward for endurance!

²² Endurance is necessary today for those who are really God's ministers. Many strug-

21. How was Paul rewarded for enduring in the ministry?

22, 23. (a) Why do Christian ministers today need endurance? (b) What wonderful fruitage comes from Christian endurance?

gle daily with sickness or the pains of old age. Parents work hard—many of them without a mate—to raise their children. Courageously, children at school resist the wrong influences that surround them. Many Christians face bitter economic struggles. And many suffer persecution or face hardships because of today's "critical times hard to deal with"! (2 Timothy 3:1) Yes, the almost six million ministers of Jehovah today can say with the apostle Paul: "In every way we recommend ourselves as God's ministers, by the endurance of much." (2 Corinthians 6:4) Christian ministers do not give up. They are truly to be commended for their endurance.

²³ Moreover, as it did in Paul's case, endurance brings wonderful fruitage. By enduring, we preserve our close relationship with Jehovah and make his heart rejoice. (Proverbs 27:11) We strengthen our own faith and make disciples, adding to the Christian brotherhood. (1 Timothy 4:16) Jehovah has sustained his ministers and blessed their ministry during these last days. As a result, the final ones of the 144,000 have been gathered, and millions more have the confident hope of enjoying everlasting life on a paradise earth. (Luke 23:43; Revelation 14:1) Truly, the Christian ministry is an expression of Jehovah's mercy. (2 Corinthians 4:1) May all of us treasure it and be grateful that its fruitage will last forever.—1 John 2:17.

Can You Explain?

- What responsibility did all first-century Christians share?
- When and by whom is a Christian minister ordained?
- What attitude should a Christian minister cultivate?
- Why should a Christian minister endure in the face of difficulties?

Serve God With a Willing Spirit

"I WILL most gladly spend and be completely spent for your souls," wrote the apostle Paul. (2 Corinthians 12:15) What do these words tell you about the outlook and attitude that Jehovah's servants should try to cultivate? According to one Bible scholar, when Paul wrote those words to Christians in Corinth, he was saying: "I am willing to spend my strength, and time, and life, and all that I have for your welfare, as a father cheerfully does for his children." Paul was prepared to "be completely spent," or to "be exhausted and worn out," if that was what it would take to fulfill his Christian ministry.

Moreover, Paul did all of this "most gladly." He was "perfectly willing" to do so, says *The Jerusalem Bible*. What about you? Are you willing to spend your time, energy, talents, and resources serving Jehovah God and the interests of others, even if doing so means being "exhausted and worn out" at times? And would you do this "most gladly"?

They Refuse to Serve at All

Most individuals do not just hesitate to serve God but flatly refuse to do so. Their spirit is one of ingratitude, selfish independence, even rebellion. Satan enticed Adam and Eve into such a way of thinking. He wrongly said that they would "be like God, knowing good and bad"—able to decide for



Paul willingly served God to the best of his ability

themselves what is right and what is wrong. (Genesis 3:1-5) Those who have the same spirit today think that they should have complete freedom to do exactly what they desire without any obligation to God or interference from him. (Psalm 81:11, 12) They want to use all that they possess in the pursuit of their own personal interests. —Proverbs 18:1.

You probably do not share this extreme view. Likely you genuinely appreciate the gift of life you now enjoy and the even more wonderful prospect of living forever on a paradise earth. (Psalm 37:10, 11; Revelation 21:1-4) You may be deeply grateful to Jehovah for his goodness to you. But all of us need to be alert to the danger that Satan can distort our thinking in such a way that our service may actually become unacceptable to God. (2 Corinthians 11:3) How might this happen?

Willing Service Required

Jehovah wants willing, wholehearted service. He never forces us to do his will. It is Satan who will stop at nothing to pressure or entice people into doing his will. In connection with serving God, the Bible does speak of obligation, commandments, requirements, and so forth. (Ecclesiastes 12:13; Luke 1:6) Yet, our prime motive for serving God is that we love him.—Exodus 35:21; Deuteronomy 11:1.

Regardless of how much Paul spent himself in God's service, he knew that this would mean nothing at all 'if he did not have love.' (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) When Bible writers refer to Christians as slaves of God, they are not referring to abject servitude based on coercion. (Romans 12:11; Colossians 3:24) What is meant is *willing* subjection based on deep, heartfelt love for God and his Son, Jesus Christ.—Matthew 22:37; 2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 John 4:10, 11.

Our service to God must also reflect a deep love for people. "We became gentle in the midst of you, as when a nursing mother cherishes her own children," wrote Paul to the congregation in Thessalonica. (1 Thessalonians 2:7) In many lands today, mothers have a legal obligation to care for their children. But surely most mothers do not do this just to obey the law, do they? No. They do it because they cherish their children. Why, a nursing mother gladly makes huge sacrifices for her children! Because Paul had similar "tender affection" for those he ministered to, he was "well pleased" ("willing," *King James Version*; "delighted," *New International Version*) to use his very life in helping them. (1 Thessalonians 2:8) Love motivates us to copy Paul's example.—Matthew 22:39.

What About Reluctant Service?

Of course, we must not let love of self outweigh love of God and people. Otherwise, there is a real danger that we may render only halfhearted, reluctant service. We could even begin to develop some resentment, feeling upset that we cannot live our life purely according to our own desires. This happened to some Israelites who lost their love for God but still rendered some service to him out of a sense of duty. What was the result? Serving God became "a weariness" to them.—Malachi 1:13.

Any offerings made to God should always be "sound," without defect, the "best" available. (Leviticus 22:17-20; Exodus 23:19) Instead of

giving Jehovah the best of their animals, however, people in Malachi's day began to offer those they really did not want themselves. What was Jehovah's reaction? He told the priests: "When you present a blind animal for sacrificing [you say]: 'It is nothing bad.' And when you present a lame animal or a sick one: 'It is nothing bad.' Bring it near, please, to your governor. Will he find pleasure in you, or will he receive you kindly? . . . And you have brought something torn away, and the lame one, and the sick one; yes, you have brought it as a gift. Can I take pleasure in it at your hand?"—Malachi 1:8, 13.

How might this happen to any of us? Our sacrifices might become "a weariness" to us if we lack a truly willing heart and spirit. (Exodus 35:5, 21, 22; Leviticus 1:3; Psalm 54:6; Hebrews 13:15, 16) For example, does Jehovah get the leftovers of our time?

Can anyone seriously think that it would have been acceptable to God if a well-meaning family member or a zealous Levite somehow forced an unwilling Israelite to select his best animal for sacrifice when he really did not want to offer it? (Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:7, 8) Jehovah rejected such sacrifices and eventually the people who offered them.—Hosea 4:6; Matthew 21:43.

Delight to Do God's Will

To offer God service that he will accept, we must follow the example of Jesus Christ. "I seek, not my own will," he said, "but the will of him that sent me." (John 5:30) Jesus found great happiness in willingly serving God. Jesus fulfilled David's prophetic words: "To do your will, O my God, I have delighted."—Psalm 40:8.

Although Jesus delighted to do Jehovah's will, this was not always easy. Consider what happened just before his arrest, trial, and execution. While in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was "deeply grieved" and got "into an agony." So intense was the emotional pressure

that, as he prayed, "his sweat became as drops of blood falling to the ground."—Matthew 26:38; Luke 22:44.

Why did Jesus experience such agony? Certainly not because of self-interest or any reluctance to do God's will. He was prepared to die, even reacting strongly to Peter's words: "Be kind to yourself, Lord; you will not have this destiny at all." (Matthew 16:21-23) What concerned Jesus was how his death as a despised criminal

would affect Jehovah and His holy name. Jesus was aware that his Father would be greatly pained to see his beloved Son treated in such a barbaric fashion.

Jesus also understood that he was approaching a pivotal time in the outworking of Jehovah's purpose. Faithful adherence to God's laws would demonstrate beyond doubt that Adam could have made the same choice. Jesus' faithfulness would expose as entirely false Satan's assertion that humans under test would not willingly and faithfully serve God. By means of Jesus, Jehovah would ultimately crush Satan and remove the effects of his rebellion.—Genesis 3:15.

What an enormous responsibility rested on Jesus' shoulders! His Father's name, universal peace, and the salvation of the human family all depended on Jesus' faithfulness. Realizing this, he prayed: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me. Yet, not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39) Even under the severest stress, Jesus never faltered in his willingness to submit to his Father's will.

'The Spirit Is Eager, but the Flesh Is Weak'

Inasmuch as Jesus suffered intense emotional stress as he served Jehovah, we can expect Satan to exert pressure on us as God's



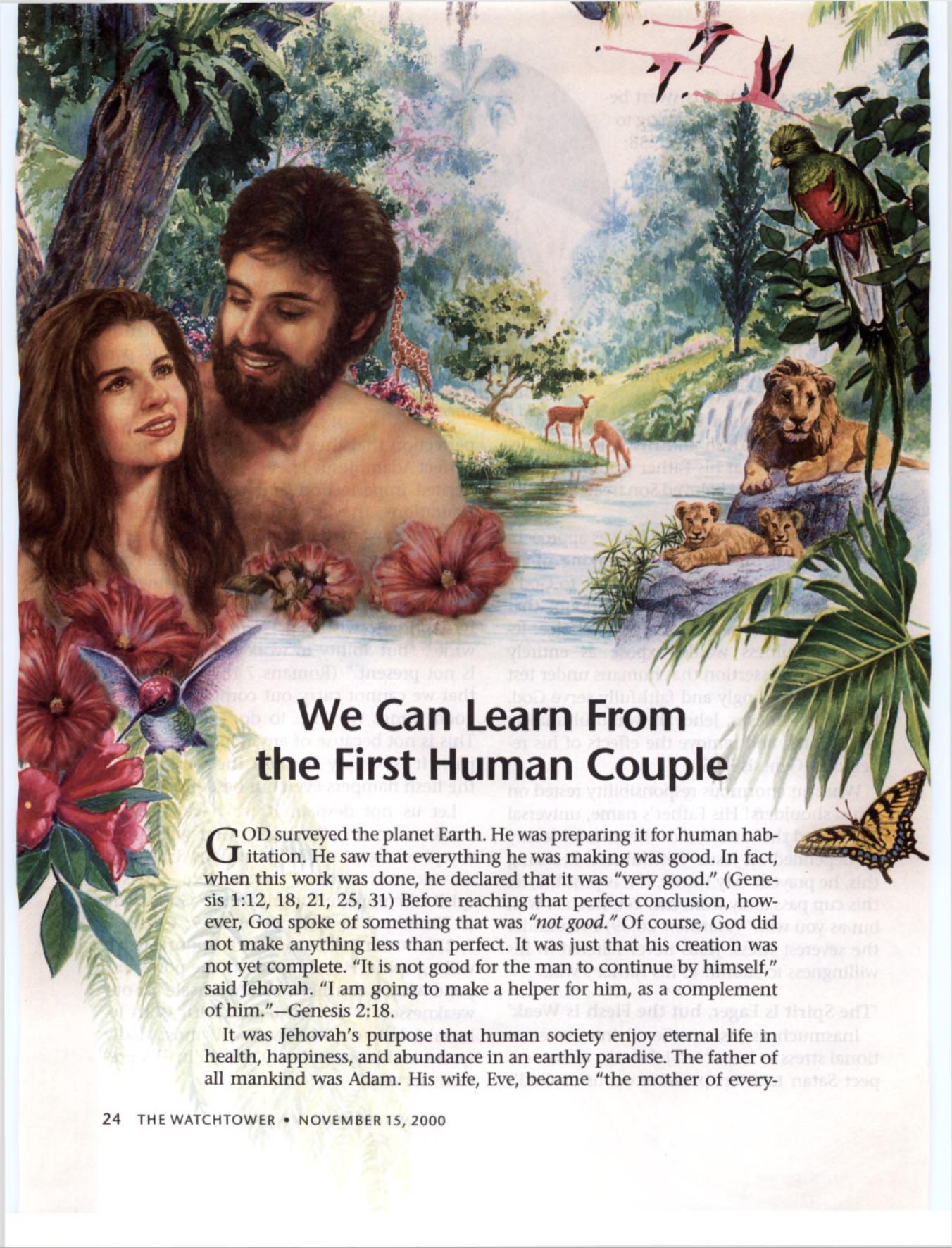
*Even under
the severest stress,
Jesus did his Father's will*

servants. (John 15:20; 1 Peter 5:8) Moreover, we are imperfect. So even if we willingly serve God, it will not be easy for us to do so. Jesus saw how his apostles struggled to do all that he asked them to do. That is why he said: "The spirit, of course, is eager, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41) There was nothing inherently weak in his perfect human flesh. However, he had in mind the weakness of his disciples' flesh, the im-

perfection that they had inherited from imperfect Adam. Jesus knew that because of inherited imperfection and resulting human limitations, they would have a struggle to do all they wanted to in Jehovah's service.

So, then, we may feel like the apostle Paul, who was deeply distressed when imperfection inhibited his ability to serve God fully. "Ability to wish is present with me," Paul wrote, "but ability to work out what is fine is not present." (Romans 7:18) We too find that we cannot carry out completely all the good things we wish to do. (Romans 7:19) This is not because of any reluctance on our part. It is simply because the weakness of the flesh hampers even our best efforts.

Let us not despair. If we have heartfelt readiness to do all we can, God will surely accept our service. (2 Corinthians 8:12) May we 'do our utmost' to imitate Christ's spirit of complete submission to God's will. (2 Timothy 2:15; Philippians 2:5-7; 1 Peter 4:1, 2) Jehovah will reward and support such a willing spirit. He will give us "the power beyond what is normal" to compensate for our weaknesses. (2 Corinthians 4:7-10) With Jehovah's help we, like Paul, will "most gladly spend and be completely spent" in His precious service.



We Can Learn From the First Human Couple

GOD surveyed the planet Earth. He was preparing it for human habitation. He saw that everything he was making was good. In fact, when this work was done, he declared that it was "very good." (Genesis 1:12, 18, 21, 25, 31) Before reaching that perfect conclusion, however, God spoke of something that was "*not good*." Of course, God did not make anything less than perfect. It was just that his creation was not yet complete. "It is not good for the man to continue by himself," said Jehovah. "I am going to make a helper for him, as a complement of him."—Genesis 2:18.

It was Jehovah's purpose that human society enjoy eternal life in health, happiness, and abundance in an earthly paradise. The father of all mankind was Adam. His wife, Eve, became "the mother of every-

one living." (Genesis 3:20) Though earth now teems with billions of their offspring, humans are far from perfect.

The story of Adam and Eve is well-known. But of what practical benefit is it to us? What can we learn from the experiences of the first human couple?

"Male and Female He Created Them"

When Adam was naming the animals, he saw that they had mates and that he did not. So when he set eyes on the beautiful creature that Jehovah had fashioned from his rib, he rejoiced. Realizing that she was uniquely a part of him, Adam exclaimed: "This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one will be called Woman, because from man this one was taken."—Genesis 2:18-23.

Man needed "a helper." Now he had one who was just right. Eve was perfectly suited to be Adam's complement—in caring for their garden home and the animals, in producing children, and in providing the intellectual stimulus and support of a true companion.—Genesis 1:26-30.

Jehovah supplied everything the couple could reasonably desire. By bringing Eve to her husband and thereby sanctioning their union, God founded the institutions of marriage and the family by which society was to be organized. The Genesis account states: "A man will leave his father and his mother and he must stick to his wife and they must become one flesh." And when Jehovah blessed the first married couple and told them to be fruitful, he clearly intended that every child be born into a caring family, with a father and a mother to look after it.—Genesis 1:28; 2:24.

"In God's Image"

Adam was a perfect son of God, made in His "image and likeness." But since "God is a Spirit," the resemblance could not be physical. (Genesis 1:26; John 4:24) The likeness lay in qualities that elevated man far above the ani-

mals. Yes, implanted in man from the beginning were the qualities of love, wisdom, power, and justice. He was endowed with free will and a capacity for spirituality. An innate moral sense, or conscience, enabled him to distinguish right from wrong. Man had intellectual capacity, enabling him to meditate on the reason for the existence of humans, to accumulate knowledge of his Creator, and to develop intimacy with that One. Thus equipped, Adam had all he needed to fulfill his role as administrator of God's earthly handiwork.

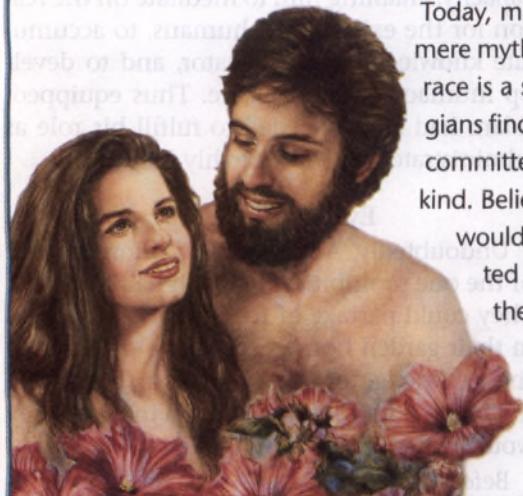
Eve Transgresses

Undoubtedly, Adam quickly informed Eve of the one prohibition Jehovah had imposed: They could partake of fruit from all the trees in their garden home except one—the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. They were not to eat from it. If they did, on that day they would die.—Genesis 2:16, 17.

Before long, an issue was raised regarding the forbidden fruit. Eve was accosted by a serpent, used as a mouthpiece by an invisible spirit. In apparent innocence, the serpent asked: "Is it really so that God said you must not eat from every tree of the garden?" Eve replied that it was permissible to eat the fruit of every tree except one. But then the serpent contradicted God, telling the woman: "You positively will not die. For God knows that in the very day of your eating from it your eyes are bound to be opened and you are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad." The woman began to see the prohibited tree in a different light. "The tree was good for food and . . . it was something to be longed for to the eyes." Thoroughly deceived, Eve broke God's law.—Genesis 3:1-6; 1 Timothy 2:14.

Was Eve's sin inevitable? By no means! Put yourself in her place. The serpent's claim completely distorted what God and Adam had said. How would you feel if a stranger charged someone you love and trust with dishonesty?

Adam and Eve —MERE MYTH?



Belief in an original paradise that was lost because of sin was widespread among the ancient Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, and others. Common to many accounts was a tree of life the fruit of which would confer eternal life on those partaking of it. So mankind remembers that something tragic happened in Eden.

Today, many dismiss the Bible account of Adam and Eve as mere myth. Yet, most scientists acknowledge that the human race is a single family with a common origin. Many theologians find it impossible to deny that the effects of original sin committed by a common ancestor were transmitted to mankind. Belief that man developed from more than one source would oblige them to say that an original sin was committed by several forefathers. In turn, this would compel them to deny that Christ, "the last Adam," redeemed mankind. But Jesus and his disciples did not face such a dilemma. They recognized that the Genesis account is factual.—1 Corinthians 15:22, 45; Genesis 1:27; 2:24; Matthew 19:4, 5; Romans 5:12-19.

Eve should have reacted differently, showing disgust and indignation, even refusing to listen. After all, who was the serpent to question God's righteousness and her husband's word? Out of respect for the principle of headship, Eve should have sought advice before making any decision. So should we if we are ever presented with information contrary to God-given instructions. Yet, Eve trusted the Tempter's words, desiring to be her own judge of what was good and what was bad. The more she toyed with the idea, the more it appealed to her. What an error she made by entertaining a wrong desire, instead of dismissing it from her mind or discussing matters with her family head!—1 Corinthians 11:3; James 1:14, 15.

Adam Listens to His Wife's Voice

Eve soon induced Adam to join her in sin. How are we to explain his limp acquies-

cence? (Genesis 3:6, 17) Adam faced a conflict of loyalties. Would he obey his Creator, who had given him everything, including his beloved mate, Eve? Would Adam seek God's direction on what he was to do now? Or would the man throw in his lot with his wife? Adam knew very well that what she hoped to gain by eating the forbidden fruit was illusory. The apostle Paul was inspired to write: "Adam was not deceived, but the woman was thoroughly deceived and came to be in transgression." (1 Timothy 2:14) So Adam deliberately chose to defy Jehovah. His fear of being separated from his wife was evidently greater than his faith in God's ability to remedy the situation.

Adam's act was suicidal. It also amounted to the murder of all the progeny that Jehovah mercifully allowed him to father, since all of them were born under sin's condemnation to death. (Romans 5:12) How great the cost of selfish disobedience!

The Consequences of Sin

The immediate effect of sin was shame. Instead of joyfully running to speak to Jehovah, the couple hid themselves. (Genesis 3:8) Their friendship with God was shattered. When questioned about what they had done, they showed no remorse, although both of them were aware that they had broken God's law. By eating the forbidden fruit, they turned their backs on divine goodness.

As a result, God indicated that increased pain would accompany childbearing. Eve would crave her husband, and he would dominate her. Her attempt to grasp independence thus resulted in the exact opposite. Adam would now eat the produce of the ground in pain. Instead of satisfying his hunger without toil in Eden, he would have to struggle to eke out an existence until he returned to the dust from which he had been made.—Genesis 3:16-19.

Finally, Adam and Eve were evicted from the garden of Eden. Jehovah said: "Here the man has become like one of us in knowing good and bad, and now in order that he may not put his hand out and actually take fruit also from the tree of life and eat and live to time indefinite . . ." "The sentence ends in mid-air," notes scholar Gordon Wenham, and we are left to supply the rest of God's thought—presumably, "let me expel him from the garden." Generally, a Bible writer reports God's complete thought. But here, continues Wenham, "the omission of the conclusion conveys the speed of God's action. He had hardly finished speaking before they were sent out of the garden." (Genesis 3:22, 23) With that, all communication between Jehovah and the first couple apparently ceased.

Adam and Eve did not die physically during that 24-hour day. However, they died in a spiritual sense. Irremediably alienated from the Source of life, they began a decline into

death. Imagine how bitter their first encounter with death must have been when their second son, Abel, was murdered by Cain, their firstborn!—Genesis 4:1-16.

After that, comparatively little is known about the first human couple. Their third son, Seth, was born when Adam was 130 years old. Adam died 800 years later, at the age of 930, after fathering "sons and daughters." —Genesis 4:25; 5:3-5.

A Lesson for Us

Besides revealing the cause of the degenerate condition of human society today, the account of the first married couple teaches a fundamental lesson. Any pretense of independence from Jehovah God is sheer folly. Those who are truly wise exercise faith in Jehovah and his Word, not in their supposed self-sufficiency of knowledge. Jehovah determines good and bad, and the essence of doing what is right is obeying him. Wrongdoing means violating his laws and ignoring his principles.

God offered and still offers all that mankind can possibly desire—everlasting life, freedom, satisfaction, happiness, health, peace, prosperity, and discovery of new things. Our enjoyment of all of this, however, requires recognition of our total dependence upon our heavenly Father, Jehovah.—Ecclesiastes 3:10-13; Isaiah 55:6-13.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Jehovah Empowers the Tired One

How You Can Make Friends

"You Do Not Know What Your Life Will Be Tomorrow"

"KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS AND CONTINUE LIVING"

HE WAS young, intelligent, "beautiful in form and beautiful in appearance." His employer's wife was sensuous and bold. Being irresistibly drawn to the young man, she daily tried to seduce him. "It happened that on this day as other days he went into the house to do his business, and there was none of the men of the house there in the house. Then she grabbed hold of him by his garment, saying: 'Lie down with me!'" But Joseph, the son of the patriarch Jacob, left his garment behind and fled from Potiphar's wife.—Genesis 39:1-12.

Of course, not everyone turns away from a tempting situation. For example, consider the case of a young man whom King Solomon of ancient Israel saw in the streets at night. Upon being seduced by a wayward woman, "all at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter."—Proverbs 7:21, 22, *New International Version*.

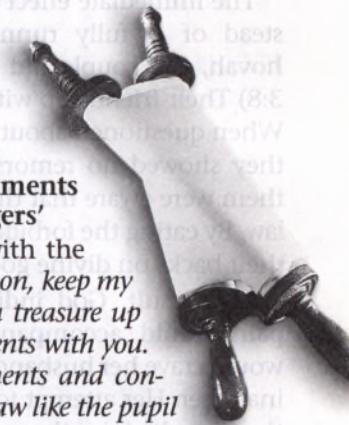
Christians are admonished to "flee from fornication." (1 Corinthians 6:18) To the young Christian disciple Timothy, the apostle Paul wrote: "Flee from the desires incidental to youth." (2 Timothy 2:22) When faced with situations suggestive of fornication, adultery, or other moral wrongs, we too must flee as decisively as Joseph did from Potiphar's wife. What will help us to be resolved to do that? In the 7th chapter of the Bible book of Proverbs, Solomon gives us some invaluable advice. He not only speaks of teachings that safeguard us from the wiles of immoral people but exposes their method of operation by vividly describing a scenario in which a young man is seduced by a loose woman.

'Tie My Commandments Upon Your Fingers'

The king begins with the fatherly advice: "*My son, keep my sayings, and may you treasure up my own commandments with you. Keep my commandments and continue living, and my law like the pupil of your eyes.*"—Proverbs 7:1, 2.

Parents, particularly fathers, have the God-given responsibility of teaching their children God's standards of good and bad. Moses exhorted fathers: "These words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart; and you must inculcate them in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up." (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) And the apostle Paul wrote: "You, fathers, do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) Hence, a parent's instructions that are to be treasured up, or highly valued, certainly include the reminders, the commandments, and the laws found in God's Word, the Bible.

Parental teaching may also include other regulations—family rules. These are for the good of the family members. True, depending on the needs, the rules may vary from one family to another. Parents, though, have the job of deciding what is best for their own family. And the rules they make are usually an expression of their genuine love and concern. The counsel to young ones is that they abide by these rules along with the Scriptural teachings received from their parents. Yes, there is



a need to treat such instructions "like the pupil of your eyes"—guarding them with utmost care. That is the way to avoid the deadly effect of ignoring Jehovah's standards and thus to "continue living."

"Tie them [my commandments] upon your fingers," continues Solomon, "and write them upon the tablet of your heart." (Proverbs 7:3) As fingers are prominently before our eyes and are vital in carrying out our purposes, the lessons learned from a Scriptural upbringing or the gaining of Bible knowledge are to be a constant reminder and guide in everything we do. We are to inscribe them upon the tablet of our heart, making them a part of our nature.

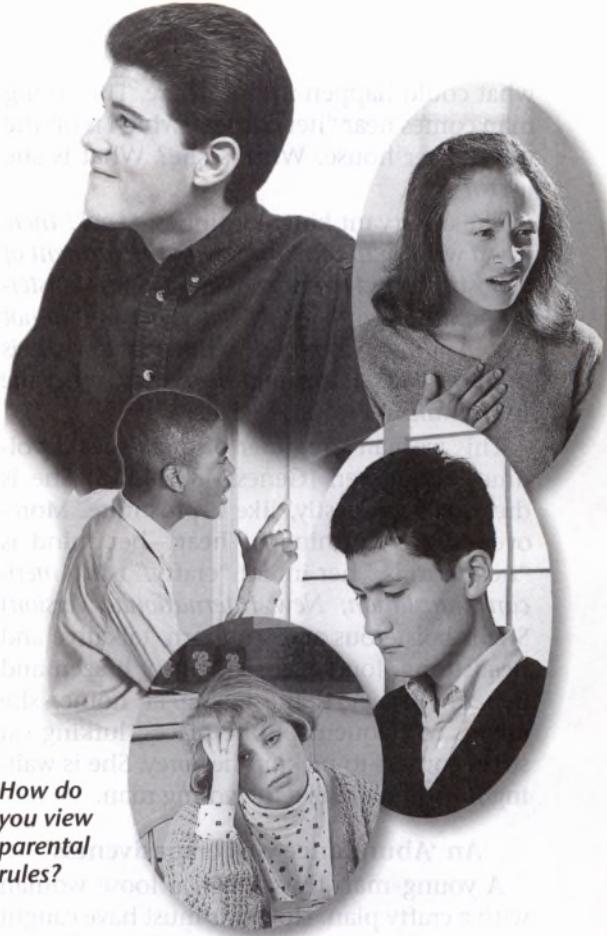
Not forgetting the importance of wisdom and understanding, the king exhorts: "Say to wisdom: 'You are my sister'; and may you call understanding itself 'Kinswoman.'" (Proverbs 7:4) Wisdom is the ability to put God-given knowledge to proper use. We should have affection for wisdom as for a dearly loved sister. What is understanding? It is the ability to see into a matter and get the sense of it by grasping the connections between its parts and the whole. Understanding must be as close to us as an intimate friend.

Why should we adhere to Scriptural training and cultivate closeness with wisdom and understanding? So as "to guard [ourselves] against the woman stranger, against the foreigner who has made her own sayings smooth." (Proverbs 7:5) Yes, doing so will protect us from the smooth and persuasive ways of a stranger, or foreigner—an immoral person.*

The Young Man Meets 'a Cunning Woman'

The king of Israel next describes a scene that he himself has observed: "At the window of my house, through my lattice I looked down,

* The word "stranger" was applied to those who alienated themselves from Jehovah by turning away from the Law. Thus, an immoral female, such as a prostitute, is referred to as a "woman stranger."



*How do
you view
parental
rules?*

that I might peer upon the inexperienced ones. I was interested in discerning among the sons a young man in want of heart, passing along on the street near her corner, and in the way to her house he marches, in the twilight, in the evening of the day, at the approach of the night and the gloom.—Proverbs 7:6-9.

The window through which Solomon looks out has a lattice—apparently a framework with laths and perhaps elaborate carvings. As the twilight fades, the darkness of the night pours into the streets. He catches sight of a young man who is particularly vulnerable. Lacking discernment, or good sense, he is in want of heart. Likely, he is aware of the type of neighborhood he has entered and

what could happen to him there. The young man comes near "her corner," which is on the way to her house. Who is she? What is she up to?

The observant king continues: "*Look! there was a woman to meet him, with the garment of a prostitute and cunning of heart. She is boisterous and stubborn. In her house her feet do not keep residing. Now she is outdoors, now she is in the public squares, and near every corner she lies in wait.*"—Proverbs 7:10-12.

This woman's manner of dress speaks volumes about her. (Genesis 38:14, 15) She is dressed immodestly, like a prostitute. Moreover, she is cunning of heart—her mind is "treacherous," her intent "crafty." (*An American Translation; New International Version*) She is boisterous and stubborn, talkative and headstrong, loud and self-willed, brazen and defiant. Rather than staying at home, she prefers to frequent public places, lurking on street corners to pick up her prey. She is waiting for someone like the young man.

An 'Abundance of Persuasiveness'

A young man thus meets a loose woman with a crafty plan. How this must have caught the attention of Solomon! He relates: "*She has grabbed hold of him and given him a kiss. She has put on a bold face, and she begins to say to him: 'Communion sacrifices were incumbent upon me. Today I have paid my vows. That is why I have come out to meet you, to look for your face, that I may find you.'*"—Proverbs 7:13-15.

The lips of this woman are smooth. Putting on a bold face, she utters her words confidently. Everything she says is carefully calculated to seduce the young man. By stating that she had made communion sacrifices that very day and paid her vows, she makes a display of righteousness, hinting that she is not lacking in spirituality. Communion sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem consisted of meat, flour, oil, and wine. (Leviticus 19:5, 6; 22:21;

Numbers 15:8-10) Since the offerer could take part of the communion sacrifice for himself and his family, she thus suggests that there is plenty to eat and drink at her house. The implication is clear: The young man would have a good time there. She has come out of her house specifically to look for him. How touching—if anyone could swallow such a story. "It is true she was out looking for someone," says one Bible scholar, "but did she really come looking just for this one special fellow? Only a fool—perhaps this one—would believe her."

After making herself appealing by the sight of her attire, by the sound of her flattering words, by the touch of her embrace, and by the taste of her lips, the seductress enlists the sense of smell. She says: "*With coverlets I have bedecked my divan, with many-colored things, linen of Egypt. I have besprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.*" (Proverbs 7:16, 17) She has aesthetically prepared her bed with colorful linen from Egypt and perfumed it with choice fragrances of myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

"Do come, let us drink our fill of love until the morning," she continues, *"do let us enjoy each other with love expressions."* The invitation is to something much more than a pleasant dinner for two. Her promise is that of enjoying sexual intimacy. To the young man, the appeal is adventurous and exciting! As further inducement, she adds: *"For the husband is not in his house; he has gone traveling on a way of some distance. A bag of money he has taken in his hand. On the day of the full moon he will come to his house."* (Proverbs 7:18-20) They would be perfectly safe, she assures him, for her husband is away on a business trip and is not expected back for some time. How talented she is at beguiling a young person! *"She has misled him by the abundance of her persuasiveness. By the smoothness of her lips she seduces him."* (Proverbs 7:21) It would take a man of Joseph's caliber to resist an ap-

Keeping God's commandments means life

peal this enticing. (Genesis 39:9, 12) Does this young man measure up?

'Like a Bull to the Slaughter'

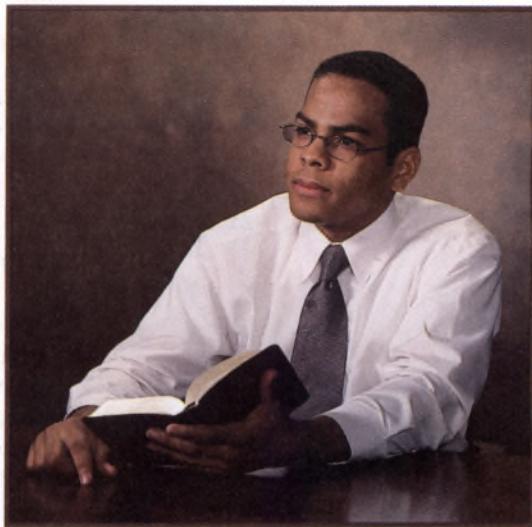
"All of a sudden he is going after her," reports Solomon, *"like a bull that comes even to the slaughter, and just as if fettered for the discipline of a foolish man, until an arrow cleaves open his liver, just as a bird hastens into the trap, and he has not known that it involves his very soul."*—Proverbs 7:22, 23.

The invitation proves to be irresistible to the young man. Throwing all good sense to the wind, he goes after her 'like a bull to the slaughter.' As a man in fetters cannot escape his punishment, so the young man is drawn into sin. He does not see the danger of it all until "an arrow cleaves open his liver," that is, until he receives a wound that can cause his death. The death may be physical in that he exposes himself to death-dealing sexually transmitted diseases.* The wound can also cause his spiritual death; "it involves his very soul." His entire being and his life are seriously affected, and he has gravely sinned against God. He thus hastens into the grip of death like a bird into a trap!

"Do Not Wander Into Her Roadways"

Drawing a lesson from what he has seen, the wise king urges: *"And now, O sons, listen to me and pay attention to the sayings of my mouth. May your heart not turn aside to her ways. Do not wander into her roadways. For many are the ones she has caused to fall down slain, and all those being killed by her are numerous. The ways to Sheol her house is; they are descending to the interior rooms of death."*—Proverbs 7:24-27.

* Some sexually transmitted diseases damage the liver. In advanced cases of syphilis, for example, bacterial organisms overwhelm the liver. And the organism responsible for gonorrhea can cause inflammation of the liver.



Clearly, the counsel of Solomon is to turn aside from the death-dealing ways of an immoral person and "continue living." (Proverbs 7:2) How timely this advice is for our day! Surely there is a need to avoid places frequented by those who are lying in wait to pick up prey. Why should you subject yourself to their tactics by going to such places? Indeed, why should you be the one "in want of heart" and wander into the roadways of a "foreigner"?

The "woman stranger" that the king saw enticed the young man with an invitation to "enjoy each other with love expressions." Have not many youths—especially girls—been exploited in a similar way? But consider: When someone tries to draw you into sexual misconduct, is it true love or selfish lust? Why would a man who genuinely loves a woman pressure her into violating her Christian training and conscience? "May your heart not turn aside" to such ways, admonishes Solomon.

The words of a seducer are usually smooth and well-calculated. Keeping wisdom and understanding at our side will help us to see through them. Never forgetting what Jehovah has commanded will safeguard us. Therefore, may we always strive to 'keep God's commandments and continue living,' even forever.—1 John 2:17.

INNER BEAUTY HAS LASTING VALUE

"A YOUNG MAN EQUATES BEAUTY WITH VIRTUE,"
OBSERVED A FAITHFUL ELDERLY CHRISTIAN.



Yes, man has long tended to place undue emphasis on external beauty, often leading to the misjudgment of inner values. Our Creator, however, looks at what we are deep inside, regardless of our outward appearance. In this way he sets the finest example of mature judgment. According to the Bible, God himself said: "Not the way man sees is the way God sees, because mere man sees what appears to the eyes; but as for Jehovah, he sees what the heart is."—1 Samuel 16:7.

God is the Source of true human beauty, and his Word reveals that when assessing a person's genuine merit, spiritual qualities count the most. The Bible states: "Charm may be false, and prettiness may be vain; but the woman that fears Jehovah is the one that procures praise for herself."

(Proverbs 31:30) Indeed, outer attractiveness may mask inner ugliness. (Esther 1:10-12;

Proverbs 11:22) Although physical beauty may fade with time, inner beauty—the qualities of the heart—can grow and last.

How wise it is, therefore, to cultivate such qualities as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, and self-control! (Galatians 5:22, 23) We can thus acquire inner beauty, which truly has lasting value.
—1 Peter 3:3, 4.