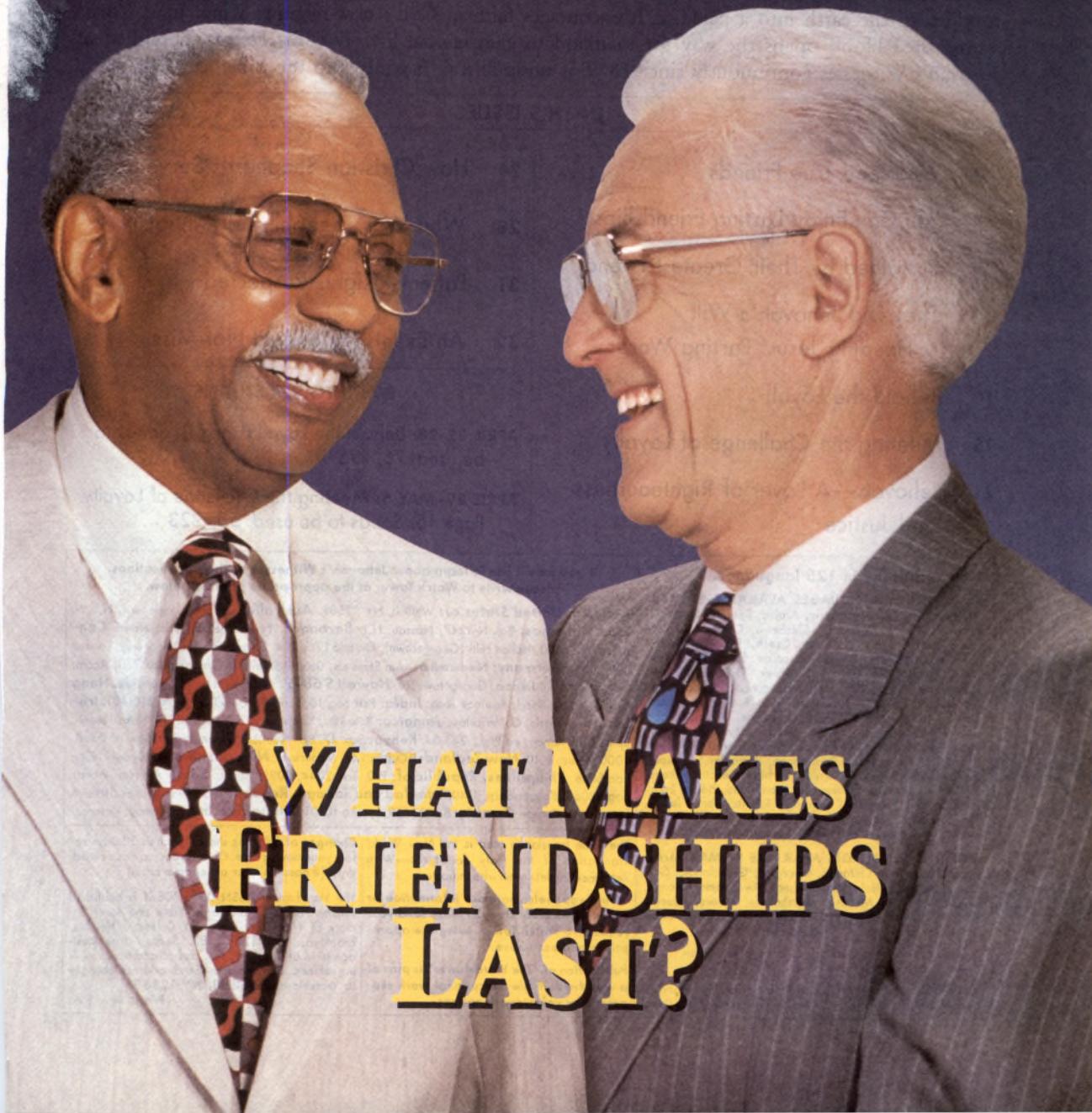


THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

MARCH 15, 1996



**WHAT MAKES
FRIENDSHIPS
LAST?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

March 15, 1996

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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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We Need True Friends

JENNY and Sue are having an animated conversation. Smiles flash, eyes brighten—everything in their manner reveals intense interest in what the other person has to say. Though of different backgrounds, they obviously have a lot in common and have much respect for each other.

Elsewhere, Eric and Dennis are working together on a project, one of many over the years. They are relaxed, and laughter comes easily. As the conversation flows into serious subjects, they candidly exchange opinions. They respect each other. Like Jenny and Sue, Eric and Dennis are true friends.

These descriptions may warm your heart, making you think about your own friends. On the other hand, they may make you yearn for such friendships. You too can have them!

Why We Need True Friends

Healthy friendships are essential to our mental and physical well-being. When we are feeling lonely, however, this does not mean that there is something wrong with us. Some researchers say that loneliness is a hunger, a natural indicator that we need companionship. In any event, just as food lessens or removes hunger, the right kind of friendships can diminish loneliness or even make it vanish. Furthermore, having good friends who value us is not an unattainable luxury.

Humans were created with a need for companionship. (Genesis 2:18) The Bible



says that a true friend, or companion, "is born for when there is distress." (Proverbs 17:17) Hence, genuine friends should be able to ask each other for help when it is needed. But friendship means more than just having someone to turn to or being a companion in work or play. Good friends bring out the best in one another. Proverbs 27:17 says: "By iron, iron itself is sharpened. So one man sharpens the face of another." As a piece of iron can be used to sharpen a blade made of the same metal, one friend may succeed in sharpening the intellectual and spiritual state of another. If disappointments depress us, a friend's sympathetic look and Scriptural encouragement can be very uplifting.

In the Bible, friendship is associated with love, familiarity, confidentiality, and companionship. Friendships may involve neighbors, workmates, and so forth. Some also count certain relatives among their closest friends. For many today, however, true friends are difficult to find and to keep. Why is this so? Can you enjoy true and lasting friendships?

You Can Enjoy Lasting Friendships

THREE are barriers to friendships. In fact, the Bible foretold that in these "last days" there would be a lack of love, natural affection, and loyalty. (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Matthew 24:12) These conditions have brought with them an unprecedented plague of loneliness. One person said: "It's like Noah's ark in my neighborhood. If you're not a couple, you can't come aboard." All the blame for this cannot be laid upon each lonely individual. In some parts of the world, challenges to lasting friendships include such things as people moving more frequently, families breaking up, impersonal and dangerous cities, and a noticeable decrease in free time.

A modern-day city dweller may come in contact with more people in a week than an 18th-century villager saw in a year or even a lifetime! Yet, relationships today are often superficial. Many immerse themselves in constant socializing and attempts to have a good time. We must admit, though, that empty merrymaking with badly chosen associates is like using thorns for fuel. Says Ecclesiastes 7:5, 6: "Better is it to hear the rebuke of someone wise than to be the man hearing the song of the stupid ones. For as the sound of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of the stupid one; and this too is vanity." Thorns briefly make a bright and noisy fire, but it does not have enough substance to keep us warm. Likewise, noisy, laughing companions may distract us momentarily, but they will not eliminate all loneliness and satisfy our need for true friends.

Solitude differs from loneliness. Some solitude is necessary for us to refresh ourselves and thus have more to offer as a

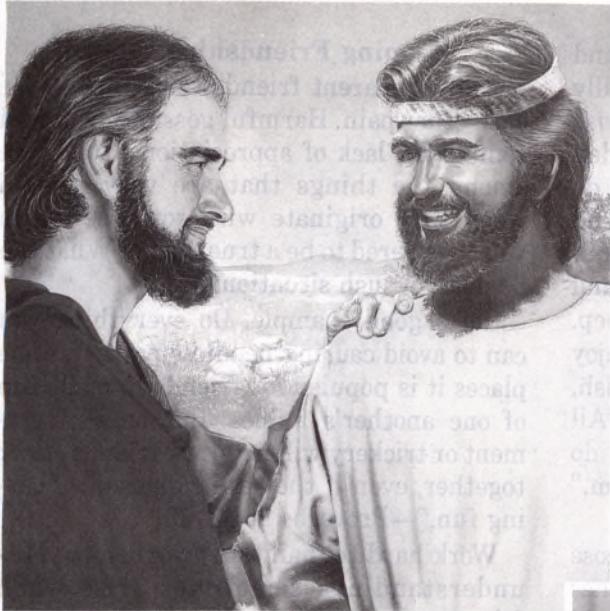
friend. When faced with loneliness, many immediately turn to some form of electronic entertainment. One study found that one of the most common reactions to loneliness is watching television. Yet, the researchers concluded that prolonged television viewing is one of the *worst* things we can do when we are lonely. It promotes passivity, boredom, and fantasy, becoming a poor substitute for face-to-face interaction with other people.

Actually, solitude can be very valuable if we use our time alone constructively. We may do this by reading, writing letters, making things, and resting. Constructive solitude includes praying to God, studying the Bible, and meditating on it. (Psalm 63:6) These are ways to draw closer to Jehovah God, the one who would be our greatest Friend.

Biblical Examples of Friendships

Although it is good to be friendly with many people, the Bible reminds us that "there exists a friend sticking closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24) All of us need a few intimate friends who truly care about us, whose friendships give us joy, strength, and peace. While such true friendships may be uncommon today, some ancient examples are especially noted in the Bible. For instance, there was the outstanding friendship between David and Jonathan. What can we learn from it? Why did their friendship last?

For one thing, David and Jonathan held important interests in common. Above all, they shared a deeply felt devotion to Jehovah God. Upon noting David's faith in God



David and Jonathan enjoyed true friendship, and so can we

and his actions in defense of Jehovah's people, "Jonathan's very soul became bound up with the soul of David, and Jonathan began to love him as his own soul." (1 Samuel 18:1) Mutual love for God, then, helps to bind friends to each other.

Jonathan and David were strong individuals who lived by godly principles. They could therefore respect each other. (1 Samuel 19: 1-7; 20:9-14; 24:6) We are indeed blessed if we have godly friends who are governed by Scriptural principles.

Other factors contributed to the friendship of David and Jonathan. Their relationship was honest and forthright, and each one took the other into his confidence. Jonathan loyally put David's interests ahead of his own. He was not jealous because David had been promised the kingship; rather, Jonathan supported him emotionally and spiritually. And David accepted his help. (1 Samuel 23:16-18) In Scripturally appropriate ways, David and Jonathan



made known their feelings for each other. Their godly friendship was based on true appreciation and affection. (1 Samuel 20:41; 2 Samuel 1:26) It was unbreakable because both men remained faithful to God. Putting such principles into practice can help us to build and keep true friendships.

How to Cultivate Friendships

Are you looking for true friends? You may not have to look far. Some among your own

regular contacts could be your friends, and they may need your friendship. Especially with respect to fellow Christians, it is wise to apply the apostle Paul's advice to "widen out." (2 Corinthians 6:11-13) However, do not fret if every attempt to make a friend does not result in a deep bond. It usually takes time to develop a friendship, and not every relationship will be equally deep. (Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2, 6) Of course, to enjoy genuine friendships, we must be unselfish, and we need to follow Jesus' counsel: "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them." —Matthew 7:12.

Who need your friendship? Besides those of your own age, what about younger ones or older people? The friendships of David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi, and Paul and Timothy all involved some spread in age. (Ruth 1:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 4:17) Can you extend your friendship to widows and other unmarried people? Think, too, about those who are new to your area. They may have given up the association of most or all of their friends by moving or changing their way of life. Do not wait for others to seek you out. If you are a Christian, make lasting friendships by applying Paul's counsel: "In brotherly love have tender affection for one another. In showing honor to one another take the lead."—Romans 12:10.

We can think of friendships as a form of giving. Jesus said that if we practice giving, people will give to us. He also pointed out that there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving. (Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35) Have you met people of diverse backgrounds? The international conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses have proved that people of varied cultures can form true and lasting friendships when they have the worship of God in common.

Keeping Friendships Intact

Sadly, apparent friends sometimes cause each other pain. Harmful gossip, a betrayed confidence, lack of appreciation—these are among the things that are very painful when they originate with someone whom you considered to be a true friend. What can be done in such situations?

Set a good example. Do everything you can to avoid causing needless pain. In some places it is popular for friends to make fun of one another's foibles. But harsh treatment or trickery will not draw friends closer together, even if they are supposedly "having fun."—Proverbs 26:18, 19.

Work hard to maintain friendships. Misunderstandings sometimes arise when friends expect too much of each other. A friend who is sick or is preoccupied because of a grave problem will probably not be able to show as much warmth as usual. At such times, then, try to be understanding and supportive.

Resolve problems quickly and kindly. Do so privately if possible. (Matthew 5:23, 24; 18:15) Make sure your friend knows that you want to maintain a good relationship. Sincere friends forgive each other. (Colossians 3:13) Will you be that kind of friend—one sticking closer than a brother?

Reading and thinking about friendships is only a start. If we are experiencing loneliness, let us take appropriate action, and we will not be lonely for long. If we reach out, we can make true friends. With some of them, we will form a special bond. But nobody can take the place of God, the greatest Friend. Only Jehovah can know, understand, and support us completely. (Psalm 139:1-4, 23, 24) Moreover, his Word holds out a marvelous hope for the future—a new world where it will be possible to have true friends forever.—2 Peter 3:13.

Sustained by Their Greatest Friend

ONE friendship especially sustains Jehovah's Witnesses. It is their precious relationship with their greatest Friend, Jehovah God. (Compare James 2:23.) He supports them during great tests of faith.

The Witnesses' record of integrity under totalitarian regimes has been praised by many observers. One of them is Jiří Krupička, a doctor of philosophy and natural sciences who emigrated from Czechoslovakia in 1968 after spending many years in Communist concentration camps. In his book *Renesance rozumu* (Renaissance of Intellect), he comments on the suffering and the steadfastness of Witnesses imprisoned for their neutrality.

Under the Communist government, many Witnesses were sentenced to prison because of their faith. Though imprisoned, they refused to mine uranium for war purposes. (Isaiah 2:4) Krupička describes a scene he witnessed at one of these mines in 1952. He saw two figures standing like icy statues in the severe winter weather. Metal barrels covered their heads and upper bodies.

Krupička writes: "They had been standing out there in prison rags since early morning. How could they manage to stand so long on frozen legs? By power of faith. The barrels were old and rusty. A cruel hand rammed them on their heads and shoulders so forcefully that the jagged rim cut through the jacket and into the skin of one of the men, and blood was dripping from his sleeve.

"The guard halted our column in front of them, and the commander gave us a short talk. Refusing to work, he said, is rebellion and is punished accordingly. No

sentimental baloney about war and killing will help these objectors, these enemies of socialism."

The commander picked up a metal bar and struck one of the barrels. The man in it collapsed with the barrel still covering his head. What happened next is deeply engraved in Krupička's memory.

He states: "There was singing coming from inside the drums. Soft sounds, a whispered prayer to God, who can hear anything from anywhere—even attempted singing from the inside of old, rusty uranium barrels. He hears it louder than a chorale sung in a large cathedral."

On September 1, 1993, the work of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Czech Republic received official legal recognition. The Czech Witnesses now rejoice to carry on their Christian educational work in freedom. Yes, they are delighted to tell others about Jehovah, their greatest Friend.



Conventioners in the Czech Republic

Heeding Jesus' Parting Words

ON THE evening of Nisan 14, 33 C.E., Jesus Christ and his 11 faithful apostles reclined at a table in an upper room in Jerusalem. Aware that his death was imminent, he told them: "I am with you a little longer." (John 13:33) In fact, Judas Iscariot was already on his way to conspire with wicked men who wanted to have Jesus killed.

No one in that upper room sensed the urgency of the situation more than Jesus did. He well knew that he was about to suffer. Jesus also knew that his apostles would abandon him on that very night. (Matthew 26:31; Zechariah 13:7) Since this was Jesus' last opportunity before his death to speak with his apostles, we can be sure that his parting words focused on matters of utmost importance.

"Keep Doing This in Remembrance of Me"

With his faithful apostles, Jesus instituted a new observance that would replace the Jewish Passover. The apostle Paul called it "the Lord's evening meal." (1 Corinthians 11:20) Taking a loaf of unleavened bread, Jesus said a prayer. He then broke the loaf and gave the bread to his apostles. "Take, eat. This means my body," he said. Then he took a cup of wine, offered a prayer of thanks and gave it to the apostles, saying: "Drink out of it, all of you; for this means my 'blood of the covenant,' which is to be poured out in behalf of many for forgiveness of sins."—Matthew 26:26-28.

What was the significance of this event? As Jesus indicated, the bread represented his

sinless body. (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22, 24) The wine symbolized Jesus' shed blood, which would make possible the forgiveness of sins. His sacrificial blood would also validate the new covenant between Jehovah God and 144,000 humans, who would eventually rule with Jesus in heaven. (Hebrews 9:14; 12:22-24; Revelation 14:1) By inviting his apostles to partake of this meal, Jesus indicated that they would share with him in the heavenly Kingdom.

Regarding this commemorative meal, Jesus commanded: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19) Yes, the Lord's Evening Meal would be an annual event, just as the Passover had been. While the Passover commemorated the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the Lord's Evening Meal would focus on a much greater deliverance—that of redeemable mankind from enslavement to sin and death. (1 Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 1:7) Furthermore, those partaking of the emblematic bread and wine would be reminded of their future privileges as kings and priests in God's heavenly Kingdom.—Revelation 20:6.

The death of Jesus Christ was truly the most important event in human history. Those who appreciate what Jesus did obey his command regarding the Lord's Evening Meal: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." Jehovah's Witnesses commemorate Jesus' death each year on the date corresponding to Nisan 14. In 1996 this date falls on April 2, after sunset. You are warmly invited to attend at a Kingdom Hall in your area.



'I Give You a New Commandment'

Besides instituting the Lord's Evening Meal, Jesus had some parting counsel for his apostles. Despite their fine training, these men had much to learn. They did not fully discern God's purpose for Jesus, for them, or for the future. But Jesus did not try to clarify all these matters at this time. (John 14:26; 16:12, 13) Instead, he spoke about something of great importance. "I am giving you a new commandment," he said, "that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another." Jesus then added: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves."—John 13:34, 35.

In what way was this "a new commandment"? Well, the Mosaic Law commanded: "You must love your fellow as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18) However, Jesus called upon his followers to show self-sacrificing love that would go to the point of giving one's life in behalf of fellow Christians. Of course, the 'law of love' would also apply in less critical circumstances. In all situations a follower of

Jesus Christ would take the initiative to display love by helping others spiritually and otherwise.—Galatians 6:10.

On this last night of Jesus' earthly life, love prompted Jesus to pray to Jehovah God on behalf of his disciples. In part, he prayed: "They are in the world and I am coming to you. Holy Father, watch over them on account of your own name which you have given me, in order that they may be one just as we are." (John 17:11) It is noteworthy that in this plea to his Father, Jesus prayed for the loving unity of his followers. (John 17:20-23) They needed to 'love one another just as Jesus loved them.'—John 15:12.

The faithful apostles heeded Jesus' parting words. We too should comply with his commands. In these critical "last days," love and unity among true worshipers is more important than ever before. (2 Timothy 3:1) Indeed, true Christians obey Jesus' commandments and display brotherly love. This includes obeying his command to observe the Lord's Evening Meal.

BEHOLD THE LOYAL!

"Who will not really fear you, Jehovah, and glorify your name, because you alone are loyal?"—REVELATION 15:4.

JOSEPH F. RUTHERFORD, who succeeded C. T. Russell as president of the Watch Tower Society in 1917, began his remarks at Russell's memorial service by saying: "Charles Taze Russell was loyal to God, loyal to Christ Jesus, loyal to the cause of Messiah's kingdom. He was loyal to the core—yea, loyal even unto death." Truly, that was a fine tribute to make to a faithful servant of Jehovah God. No greater tribute could we pay to any individual than to say that he met the challenge of loyalty, that he was loyal—loyal to the core.

² Loyalty presents a challenge. Why? Because loyalty clashes with self-interest. Chief among those disloyal to God are the clergy of Christendom. Then, too, never has there been such widespread disloyalty as in the marital relationship today. Adultery is commonplace. Disloyalty is also rampant in the business world. Regarding this, we are told: "Many managers and professionals . . . believe that only saps and suckers are loyal to their companies today." People who are "too loyal" are looked down upon. "Your first and only loyalty should be to yourself" is the way a president of a management consulting and executive search firm put it. To speak of loyalty to oneself is to prostitute the mean-

ing of the word. It reminds us of what is stated at Micah 7:2: "The loyal one has perished from the earth."

³ On a much more significant scale, Satan and his demons are arrayed against us, determined to make us disloyal to God. That is why Christians are told at Ephesians 6:12: "We have a wrestling, not against blood and flesh, but against the governments, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." Yes, we need to heed the warning: "Keep your senses, be watchful. Your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone."—1 Peter 5:8.

⁴ Also making loyalty difficult are the selfish tendencies we have inherited from our parents, as mentioned at Genesis 8:21: "The inclination of the heart of man is bad"—and selfish—"from his youth up." All of us have the problem that the apostle Paul confessed that he had: "The good that I wish I do not do, but the bad that I do not wish is what I practice."—Romans 7:19.

Loyalty Is Something Special

⁵ "Loyalty" is a very special word. Thus *Insight on the Scriptures* states: "There appear to be no English words that exactly express the full meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words, but 'loyalty,' in-

1. What testimony did J. F. Rutherford give as to the loyalty of his predecessor, C. T. Russell?
- 2, 3. (a) Why does loyalty present a challenge? (b) Who are also arrayed against true Christians in their efforts to be loyal?

4. What tendencies make being loyal so difficult?
- 5, 6. What can be said as to what loyalty is, and how has it been defined?

cluding, as it does, the thought of devotion and faithfulness, when used in connection with God and his service, serves to give an approximation.* Regarding "loyalty" *The Watchtower* once stated: "Faithfulness, duty, love, obligation, allegiance. What do these words have in common? They are different facets of loyalty." Yes, ever so many virtues are but different facets of loyalty. It is indeed noteworthy how often loyalty and righteousness are linked in the Scriptures.

⁶ Helpful also are the following definitions: 'Loyalty may indicate a continuing, reliable faithfulness and allegiance, secure against wavering or temptation.' 'Loyalty implies faithfulness to one's pledged word or continued allegiance to the institution or the principles to which one feels himself morally bound; the term suggests not only adherence but resistance to being lured and persuaded away from that adherence.' Thus, people who continue faithful in spite of tests, opposition, and persecution deserve to be termed "loyal."

⁷ In this connection, however, it might be well to illustrate a distinction that can be made between loyalty and faithfulness. In the western United States, there is a geyser that erupts just about every hour. It is so regular that it has been called Old Faith-

* A two-volume Bible encyclopedia published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

7. What distinction can be made between loyalty and faithfulness?

ful. The Bible speaks of such inanimate things as the moon as being faithful, for it is dependable. Psalm 89:37 speaks of the moon as "a faithful witness in the skies."

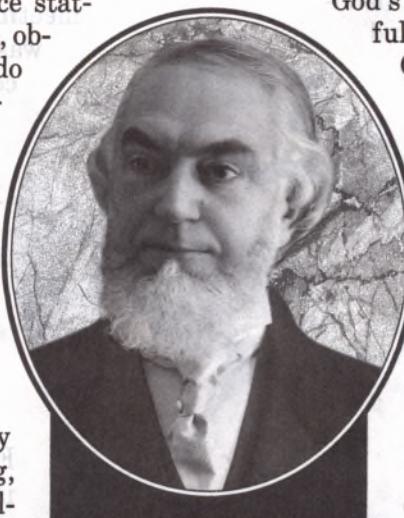
God's words are said to be faithful. Revelation 21:5 says: "The One seated on the throne said: 'Look! I am making all things new.' Also, he says: 'Write, because these words are faithful and true.'" All of these are faithful, dependable, but they are not capable of any attachment or moral qualities, such as loyalty.

Jehovah, the Preeminently Loyal One

⁸ Without the shadow of a doubt, Jehovah God is the finest example of loyalty. Jehovah has been loyal to the human race, even providing

his Son so that humans may receive everlasting life. (John 3:16) At Jeremiah 3:12, we read: "Do return, O renegade Israel," is the utterance of Jehovah. 'I shall not have my face drop angrily upon you people, for I am loyal.' Further testifying to Jehovah's loyalty are the words recorded at Revelation 16:5: "You, the One who is and who was, the loyal One, are righteous." Then again, at Psalm 145:17, we are told: "Jehovah is righteous in all his ways and loyal in all his works." In fact, Jehovah is so outstanding in his loyalty that Revelation 15:4 states: "Who will not really fear you, Jehovah, and glorify your name, because you alone are loyal?" Jehovah God is loyal to the superlative degree.

8. What Scriptural testimony identifies the finest example of loyalty?



Charles Taze Russell

⁹ The history of the nation of Israel in particular contains abundant testimony to Jehovah's loyalty to his people. In the days of the Judges, Israel fell away from true worship time and again, but Jehovah repeatedly felt regret and saved them. (Judges 2:15-22) Throughout the five centuries that Israel had kings, Jehovah showed his loyalty to that nation.

¹⁰ Jehovah's loyalty caused him to be patient with his people, as noted at 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16: "Jehovah the God of their forefathers kept sending against them by means of his messengers, sending again and again, because he felt compassion for his people and for his dwelling. But they were continually making jest at the messengers of the true God and despising his words and mocking at his prophets, until the rage of Jehovah came up against his people, until there was no healing."

¹¹ Because Jehovah is supremely loyal, the apostle Paul could write, as recorded at Romans 8:38, 39: "I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor governments nor things now here nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creation will be able to separate us from God's love that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes, Jehovah assures us: "I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5) Truly, it is a

9, 10. What record of loyalty did Jehovah make in his dealings with the nation of Israel?

11. What assurance or comfort does Jehovah's loyalty give us?

comfort to know that Jehovah God is always loyal!

Jesus Christ, the Loyal Son

¹² Perfectly imitating Jehovah in meeting the challenge of loyalty was and is Jesus Christ. Well could the apostle Peter quote

Psalm 16:10 and apply it to Jesus Christ at Acts 2:27: "You will not leave my soul in Hades, neither will you allow your loyal one to see corruption." Jesus Christ is deservedly designated the "loyal one." Through and through, he is loyal to his Father and to God's promised Kingdom. Satan first tried to break Jesus' integrity by using temptations, appeals to self-interest. Failing

in that, the Devil resorted to persecution, finally causing Jesus' death on the execution stake. Never did Jesus swerve as to his loyalty to his heavenly Father, Jehovah God.—Matthew 4:1-11.

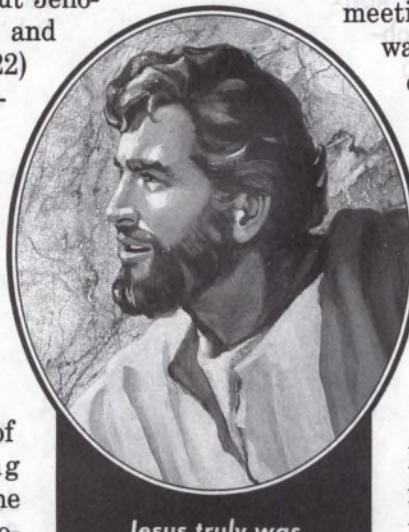
¹³ Jesus Christ has been loyal to his followers in keeping with the promise recorded at Matthew 28:20: "Look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." In fulfillment of that promise, he has been loyally exercising leadership over his congregation from Pentecost 33 C.E. to the present time.

Imperfect Humans Who Were Loyal

¹⁴ Now, what about imperfect humans? Can they be loyal to God? We have the

12, 13. What testimony do we have as to the loyalty of God's Son?

14. What example of loyalty did Job set?



*Jesus truly was
Jehovah's "loyal one"*

outstanding case of Job. Satan made the issue clear-cut in his case. Was Job loyal to Jehovah God, or was he serving him only because of self-interest? Satan boasted that he could turn Job away from Jehovah by making trouble for Job. When Job had lost all his possessions, all his children, and even his health, his wife urged him: "Curse God and die!" But Job was loyal, for he said to her: "As one of the senseless women speaks, you speak also. Shall we accept merely what is good from the true God and not accept also what is bad?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 2:9, 10) In fact, to his would-be comforters, Job said: "Though he [God] slay me, yet will I hope in him." (Job 13:15, *New International Version*) No wonder Job received Jehovah's approval! Hence, Jehovah told Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger has grown hot against you and your two companions, for you men have not spoken concerning me what is truthful as has my servant Job."—Job 42:7, 10-16; James 5:11.

¹⁵ All the men and women of faith described in Hebrews chapter 11 can be spoken of as loyal ones. They were not only faithful but also loyal in the face of pressures. Thus, we read of those "who through faith . . . stopped the mouths of lions, stayed the force of fire, escaped the edge of the sword . . . Yes, others received their

15. What Scriptural testimony do we have as to the loyalty of many servants of Jehovah God?



Job, though imperfect, proved loyal to God

trial by mockings and scourgings, indeed, more than that, by bonds and prisons. They were stoned, they were tried, they were sawn asunder, they died by slaughter with the sword, they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, while they were in want, in tribulation, under ill-treatment."

—Hebrews 11:33-37.

¹⁶ The Christian Greek Scriptures also provide the striking example of the apostle Paul. Well could he say to the Thessalonian Christians regarding his ministry: "You are witnesses, God is also, how loyal and righteous and unblamable we proved to be to you believers." (1 Thessalonians 2:10) We have further proof of Paul's loyalty in his words

recorded at 2 Corinthians 6:4, 5, where we read: "In every way we recommend ourselves as God's ministers, by the endurance of much, by tribulations, by cases of need, by difficulties, by beatings, by prisons, by disorders, by labors, by sleepless nights, by times without food." All of this testifies to the apostle Paul's having self-respect because he was loyal.

Loyal Ones in Modern Times

¹⁷ Coming to modern times, we have the fine example already considered in our introduction. Note what is stated in the book *Worldwide Security Under the Prince of Peace*, on page 146 under

16. What example of loyalty did the apostle Paul furnish?

17. What words of J. F. Rutherford showed his determination to be loyal?

the subheading "Loyalty During Time of Imprisonment." There it is said: "Displaying loyalty to Jehovah's organization during his time of imprisonment, the president of the Watch Tower Society, Joseph F. Rutherford, on December 25, 1918, wrote the following: 'Because I refused to compromise with Babylon, but faithfully tried to serve my Lord, I am in prison, for which I am thankful. . . . I would far prefer His approval and smile and be in prison, than to compromise with or yield to the Beast and be free and have the plaudits of the whole world.'"¹⁸

¹⁸ We have excellent examples of loyalty in many other Christians who have endured persecution. Among such loyal

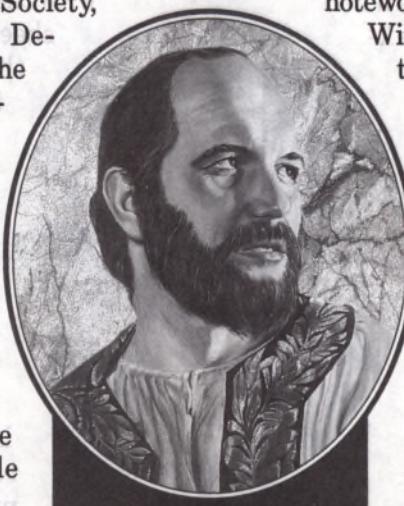
individuals are German Witnesses of Jehovah during the Nazi regime, as portrayed in the video *Purple Triangles*, widely distributed in the English language. Also noteworthy are many loyal African Witnesses of Jehovah, such as those in Malawi. There, one prison guard testified to the loyalty of the Witnesses, saying: "They will never compromise. They just increase."

¹⁹ One cannot read the recent *Yearbooks of Jehovah's Witnesses* without being impressed by the loyalty displayed by true Christians, such as those in Greece, Mozambique, and Poland. Many of them suffered excruciating torture; others were murdered. Page 177 of the 1992

Yearbook displays pictures of nine Christian men in Ethiopia who met the challenge of loyalty to the point of being murdered. As Jehovah's Witnesses, are we not glad to have so many fine examples to spur us on to meet the challenge of loyalty?

²⁰ By loyally resisting temptations and pressures, we build up our self-respect. So, then, on whose side of the issue of loyalty do we want to be found? By meeting the challenge of loyalty, we take Jehovah God's side of the issue and prove Satan the Devil to be the base, gross liar that he is! We thereby gain the approval of our Maker, Jehovah God, and the reward of everlasting life in happiness. (Psalm 37:29; 144:15b) What it takes to meet the challenge of loyalty will be considered next.

²⁰ What follows if we remain loyal?



Paul set a fine example of loyalty to Jehovah

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

18, 19. What sterling examples of loyalty in modern times do we have?

How Would You Answer?

- Why does being loyal present a challenge?
- Why can it be said that "loyalty" is a very special word?
- What Scriptural examples do we have of imperfect humans who were loyal?
- What fine modern-day examples of loyalty do we have?

MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF LOYALTY

"Put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty."—EPHESIANS 4:24.

MEETING the challenge of loyalty has many facets. Most important is meeting the challenge of loyalty to Jehovah God. Truly, in view of who Jehovah is and what he has done for us, and because of our dedication to him, we owe him loyalty. How do we manifest loyalty to Jehovah God? A primary way is by being loyal to Jehovah's righteous principles.

² To meet that challenge, we must heed the words found at 1 Peter 1:15, 16: "In accord with the Holy One who called you, do you also become holy yourselves in all your conduct, because it is written: 'You must be holy, because I am holy.'" Loyalty to Jehovah God will cause us to obey him at all times, bringing our thoughts, words, and actions into harmony with his holy will. It means preserving a good conscience, as we are commanded at 1 Timothy 1:3-5: "Really the objective of this mandate [not to teach different doctrine or pay attention to false stories] is love out of a clean heart and out of a good conscience and out of faith without hypocrisy." True, none of us are perfect, but we should be trying to do our very best, should we not?

³ Loyalty to Jehovah will keep us from selfishly compromising righteous principles. Indeed, loyalty will keep us from be-

1. Why do we owe Jehovah God loyalty?
- 2, 3. What relationship is there between loyalty and righteousness?

ing one thing on the inside and another on the outside. Loyalty is what the psalmist had in mind when he sang: "Instruct me, O Jehovah, about your way. I shall walk in your truth. Unify my heart to fear your name." (Psalm 86:11) Loyalty requires what has well been described as "obedience to the unenforceable."

⁴ Loyalty to Jehovah God will also keep us from doing anything that would bring reproach upon his name and Kingdom. For example, two Christians once got into such difficulty with each other that they improperly resorted to a worldly law court. The judge asked, 'Are both of you Jehovah's Witnesses?' Evidently he could not understand what they were doing in court. What a reproach that was! Loyalty to Jehovah God would have caused those brothers to heed the counsel of the apostle Paul: "Really, then, it means altogether a defeat for you that you are having lawsuits with one another. Why do you not rather let yourselves be wronged? Why do you not rather let yourselves be defrauded?" (1 Corinthians 6:7) Certainly, the course of loyalty to Jehovah God is to suffer personal loss rather than bring reproach upon Jehovah and his organization.

⁵ Loyalty to Jehovah God also involves not yielding to the fear of man. "Trembling

- 4, 5. Loyalty will make us careful, lest we do what?

at men is what lays a snare, but he that is trusting in Jehovah will be protected." (Proverbs 29:25) Thus, we do not compromise when faced with persecution, but we follow the example set by Jehovah's Witnesses in the former Soviet Union, in Malawi, in Ethiopia, and in ever so many other lands.

⁶ If we are loyal to Jehovah God, we will avoid making friends with all who are his enemies. That is why the disciple James wrote: "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4) We want to have the loyalty that King David evidenced when he said: "Do I not hate those who are intensely hating you, O Jehovah, and do I not feel a loathing for those revolting against you? With a complete hatred I do hate them. They have become to me real enemies." (Psalm 139:21, 22) We do not want to fraternize with any willful sinners, for we have nothing in common with them. Would not loyalty to God keep us from socializing with any such enemies of Jehovah, whether in person or through the medium of television?

Coming to Jehovah's Defense

⁷ Loyalty will move us to come to the defense of Jehovah God. What a fine example of that we have in Elihu! Job 32:2, 3 tells us: "The anger of Elihu . . . came to be hot. Against Job his anger blazed over his declaring his own soul righteous rather than God. Also, against his three companions his anger blazed over the fact that they had not found an answer but they pro-

6. Loyalty will keep us from associating with whom?

7. Loyalty will help us to do what regarding Jehovah, and how did Elihu do this?

ceeded to pronounce God wicked." In Job chapters 32 through 37, Elihu comes to the defense of Jehovah. For example, he said: "Have patience with me a little while, and I shall declare to you that there are yet words to say for God. . . . To my Fashioner I shall ascribe righteousness. . . . He will not take away his eyes from anyone righteous."—Job 36:2-7.

⁸ Why is there a need to come to Jehovah's defense? Today, our God Jehovah is blasphemed in ever so many ways. It is claimed that he does not exist, that he is a part of a Trinity, that he torments people eternally in a burning hell, that he weakly is trying to convert the world, that he does not care about mankind, and so forth. We demonstrate our loyalty to him by coming to his defense and proving that Jehovah does exist; that he is a wise, just, almighty, and loving God; that he has a time for everything; and that when his due time comes, he will bring an end to all evil and make the whole earth a paradise. (Ecclesiastes 3:1) This requires that we make use of every opportunity to bear witness to Jehovah's name and Kingdom.

Loyalty to Jehovah's Organization

⁹ We now come to the matter of being loyal to Jehovah's visible organization. Certainly, we owe loyalty to it, including "the faithful and discreet slave," through which the Christian congregation is fed spiritually. (Matthew 24:45-47) Suppose that something appears in Watch Tower publications that we do not understand or agree with at the moment. What will we do? Take offense and leave the organi-

8. Why do we need to come to Jehovah's defense?

9. Over what matters have some betrayed their lack of loyalty?



Loyalty to members of the congregation will keep elders from revealing confidential matters

zation? That is what some did when *The Watch Tower*, many years ago, applied the new covenant to the Millennium. Others took offense at what *The Watchtower* once said on the issue of neutrality. If those who stumbled over these matters had been loyal to the organization and to their brothers, they would have waited on Jehovah to clarify these matters, which he did in his due time. Thus, loyalty includes waiting patiently until further understanding is published by the faithful and discreet slave.

¹⁰ Loyalty to Jehovah's visible organization also means having nothing to do with

10. Loyalty will keep us from being curious about what?

apostates. Loyal Christians will not be curious about what such people have to say. True, those being used by Jehovah God to direct his work on earth are not perfect. But what does God's Word tell us to do? Leave God's organization? No. Brotherly affection should keep us loyal to it, and we should continue to "love one another intensely from the heart."—1 Peter 1:22.

Loyalty to Loyal Elders

¹¹ When something is said or done in the congregation that we have difficulty understanding, loyalty will keep us from

11. Loyalty will help us guard against what negative thinking?



Loyalty to one's mate strengthens the marriage bond

judging motives and will help us to take the position that perhaps it is a matter of judgment. Is it not far better to dwell on the good qualities of the appointed elders and other fellow believers rather than on their shortcomings? Yes, we want to guard against all such negative thinking, for it is related to being disloyal! Loyalty will also help us to obey Paul's directive "to speak injuriously of no one."—Titus 3:1, 2.

¹² Loyalty presents particular challenges

12, 13. What particular challenges do elders have to face?

to elders. One of these challenges is the matter of confidentiality. A member of a congregation may confide in an elder. Loyalty to that one will keep the elder from violating the principle of confidentiality. He will heed the counsel at Proverbs 25:9: "Do not reveal the confidential talk of another." That means not even to his own wife!

¹³ Elders also have other tests of loyalty to meet. Will they be men pleasers, or will they courageously and mildly assist those who need correction, even if they are blood relatives or close friends? Loyalty

to Jehovah's organization will cause those of us who are elders to try to help any who need spiritual assistance. (Galatians 6:1, 2) Though we will be kind, loyalty will make us candid with our fellow elder, just as Paul spoke to the apostle Peter candidly. (Galatians 2:11-14) On the other hand, overseers want to be careful, lest by acting unwisely or showing partiality or in some other way abusing their authority, they make it difficult for those in their charge to be loyal to God's organization.—Philippians 4:5.

¹⁴ There are other aspects to the matter of meeting the challenge of loyalty to the congregation and its elders. If there are somewhat troubled conditions in the congregation, this gives us opportunity to display loyalty to Jehovah and to those representing him. (See *The Watchtower*, June 15, 1987, pages 15-17.) When there has been a disfellowshipping, loyalty requires that we back up the elders, not trying to second-guess whether there were sufficient reasons for the action taken.

¹⁵ Loyalty to the congregation also calls on us to support all five weekly meetings to the extent of our circumstances and ability. Loyalty requires that we not only attend them regularly but also prepare for them and make upbuilding comments as opportunity affords.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

Marital Loyalty

¹⁶ To whom else do we owe loyalty? If we are married, in view of our marriage vows, we have to meet the challenge of being loyal to our marriage mate. Loyalty to our mate will keep us from making the mistake of being nicer to other women or men

14, 15. What factors might test the loyalty of members of the congregation?

16, 17. What challenges to loyalty do married Christians have to face?

than we are to our own wife or husband. Loyalty to our mate also requires that we do not betray to outsiders the weaknesses or shortcomings of our mate. It is easier to complain to others than it is to work hard to keep open the lines of communication with our spouse, which we should do in harmony with the Golden Rule. (Matthew 7:12) Actually, the marital state presents a real challenge to our Christian loyalty.

¹⁷ To meet this challenge of loyalty, not only must we avoid being guilty of gross misconduct but we must also guard our very thoughts and feelings. (Psalm 19:14) For instance, if our deceitful hearts are greedy for pleasure and excitement, it is so easy for us to go selfishly from admiring to desiring. Urging marital fidelity, King Solomon counsels husbands figuratively to 'drink water out of their own cistern.' (Proverbs 5:15) And Jesus said: "Everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28) Husbands indulging themselves in pornographic material run the risk of being induced to commit adultery, thus cheating on their wives and being disloyal to them. By the same token, a wife caught up in the spirit of soap operas dealing with adulterous episodes could be tempted to become disloyal to her husband. By being truly loyal to our mate, however, we strengthen the marriage bond, and we help each other in our efforts to please Jehovah God.

Aids to Keeping Loyal

¹⁸ What will help us to meet the challenge of loyalty in these four areas: loyalty to Jehovah, to his organization, to the

18. Appreciation of what will help us to be loyal?

congregation, and to our marriage mate? One aid is appreciating that meeting the challenge of loyalty is bound up with the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty. Yes, by remaining loyal we show that we view Jehovah as Universal Sovereign. Thus we can also have self-respect and the hope of everlasting life in Jehovah's new world. We can help ourselves to stay loyal by considering fine examples of loyalty, from Jehovah on down to those mentioned in the Bible and in our Watch Tower publications, including *Yearbook* accounts.

¹⁹ Strong faith in Jehovah God and fear of displeasing him will help us to meet the challenge of loyalty. We strengthen our faith in and fear of Jehovah by diligently studying God's Word and by engaging in the Christian ministry. This will help us to act in harmony with Paul's counsel recorded at Ephesians 4:23, 24: "You should be made new in the force actuating your mind, and should put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty."

19. What role does faith play in our being loyal?

How Would You Answer?

- In what ways can we meet the challenge of loyalty to God?
- What does loyalty to Jehovah's organization require of us?
- How can elders meet the challenge of loyalty?
- What challenge involving loyalty must married Christians meet?
- What qualities will help us to meet the challenge of loyalty?

²⁰ Appreciation of Jehovah's qualities helps us to be loyal. Above all, unselfish love for our heavenly Father and gratitude for all that he has done for us, loving him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength will help us to be loyal to him. Furthermore, having the love that Jesus said would identify his followers will help us to be loyal to all Christians in the congregation and in our family. To put it another way, it is actually a matter of being either selfish or unselfish. Disloyalty means being selfish. Loyalty means being unselfish.—Mark 12:30, 31; John 13:34, 35.

²¹ To sum up: Loyalty is the sterling quality manifested by Jehovah God, by Jesus Christ, and by all of Jehovah's true servants. To have a good relationship with Jehovah God, we must meet the challenge of loyalty to him by living up to his righteous requirements, by having nothing to do with his enemies, and by coming to Jehovah's defense in witnessing formally and informally. We must also meet the challenge of being loyal to Jehovah's visible organization. We must be loyal to our congregations and loyal to our marriage mates. By meeting the challenge of loyalty successfully, we will be sharing in the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty, and will be taking his side of the issue. Thereby we will win his favor and will receive the prize of everlasting life. What the apostle Paul said about godly devotion can also be said about our meeting the challenge of loyalty. It is beneficial both for the life now and for that which is to come.—Psalm 18:25; 1 Timothy 4:8.

20. Above all, what quality will help us to be loyal to Jehovah and to all others to whom we owe loyalty?

21. How can the matter of meeting the challenge of loyalty be summarized?

JEHOVAH

A Lover of Righteousness and Justice

A YOUNG girl in Sarajevo asks herself why the children of her city must endure so much suffering. "We haven't done anything. We are innocent," she says. Distraught Argentinean mothers have visited a public square in Buenos Aires for some 15 years, in protest over the disappearance of their sons. An African named Emmanuel, whose mother and three sisters were brutally murdered during an outbreak of ethnic violence, insists: "Everyone must receive his just reward . . . We want justice."

Justice is one of Jehovah God's principal attributes. "All his ways are justice," says the Bible. Indeed, Jehovah is "a lover of righteousness and justice." (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 33:5) To know God well, we must understand his sense of justice and learn to imitate it.—Hosea 2:19, 20; Ephesians 5:1.

Our concept of justice has probably been molded by what humans consider this quality to be. In some parts of the world, justice is often portrayed as a blindfolded woman holding a sword and a pair of scales. Human justice is supposed to be impartial, that is, blind to wealth or influence. It should carefully weigh in the scales the guilt or innocence of the accused. With its sword, justice should protect the innocent and punish wrongdoers.

The book *Right and Reason—Ethics in Theory and Practice* says that "justice is connected with law, obligation, rights, and duties, and measures out its awards according to equality or merit." But Jehovah's justice goes much farther than that. We can

see this by considering the deeds and qualities of Jesus Christ, who is so much like his heavenly Father.—Hebrews 1:3.

The words of Isaiah 42:3 were applied to Jesus by the Gospel writer Matthew, who stated: "No bruised reed will he crush, and no smoldering flaxen wick will he extinguish, until he sends out justice with success." Jesus declared a comforting message to people who were like a bruised reed that was bent over and even trampled. They were like a lamp's smoldering wick, as though their last spark of life had nearly been extinguished. Instead of figuratively crushing bruised reeds and quenching smoldering wicks, Jesus pitied the afflicted, taught and healed them, and made clear to them the justice of Jehovah God. (Matthew 12:10-21) As Isaiah's prophecy foretold, that kind of justice inspired hope.

Mercy and Jehovah's Justice

Mercy is an intrinsic part of God's justice. This came to the fore when Jesus was on earth. He perfectly represented God's standards of justice and righteousness. However, the Jewish scribes and Pharisees sought to attain righteousness by following a rigid code of laws—most of their own making. Their legalistic justice usually eliminated mercy. Many clashes between Jesus and the Pharisees revolved around this issue: What is true justice and righteousness?—Matthew 9:10-13; Mark 3:1-5; Luke 7:36-47.

Jesus illustrated how to treat others in a just and righteous way. A man versed in the

Law once asked Jesus what was necessary in order to inherit everlasting life. In response Jesus asked him a question and commended him when he replied that the two most important laws were to love God with one's whole heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself. The man then asked: "Who really is my neighbor?" Jesus replied by relating the illustration of the neighborly Samaritan.—Luke 10:25-37.

Jehovah's righteousness and merciful justice were exemplified in Jesus' illustration of the Samaritan. By unselfishly helping an injured man whom he did not know, the Samaritan did something upright, just, and merciful. Jesus himself showed the same spirit when on earth. He was righteous and just. Moreover, he gave his life for needy people, for sinful and imperfect mankind subject to suffering, sickness, and death. The apostle Paul linked righteousness with the ransom provision. He wrote: "As through one trespass the result to men of all sorts was condemnation, likewise also through one act of justification [or, "one righteous act," footnote] the result to men of all sorts is a declaring of them righteous for life." (Romans 5:18) This "one righteous act" was God's way of saving obedient mankind from the disastrous consequences of Adam's sin, for which they were not directly responsible.

God's justice sought to redeem sinful humans and to uphold righteous principles at the same time. To ignore sin would have been both unjust and unloving, for it would have encouraged lawlessness. On the other hand, if God's justice had been limited to meting out either a reward or a punishment, mankind's situation would have been hopeless. According to the Bible, "the wages sin pays is death" and "there is not a righteous man, not even one." (Romans 3:10; 6:23) At great personal cost to himself and to

his beloved Son, Jehovah provided a propitiatory sacrifice for sins.—1 John 2:1, 2.

The ransom shows that divine justice is interwoven with principled love (Greek, *a·ga'pe*). Indeed, God's justice is the out-working of his righteous principles—a reflection of what he stands for morally. When exercised by God, therefore, *a·ga'pe* is love on which divine justice is based. (Matthew 5:43-48) So if we really comprehend Jehovah's justice, we will have absolute trust in his judicial decisions. As "the Judge of all the earth," he always does what is right. —Genesis 18:25; Psalm 119:75.

Imitate Jehovah's Justice

The Bible exhorts us to "become imitators of God." (Ephesians 5:1) This means imitating his justice as well as his love. Since we are imperfect, however, our ways are not as lofty as those of Jehovah God. (Isaiah 55:8, 9; Ezekiel 18:25) So how can we prove to be lovers of righteousness and justice? By putting on "the new personality, which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Ephesians 4:24) Then we will love what God loves and hate what he hates. "True righteousness" shuns violence, immorality, uncleanness, and apostasy, for these violate what is holy. (Psalm 11:5; Ephesians 5:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:16, 17) Godly justice also moves us to show sincere interest in others.—Psalm 37:21; Romans 15:1-3.

Moreover, if we appreciate the merciful nature of God's justice, we will not be inclined to judge spiritual brothers or sisters. How could we possibly understand them as well as Jehovah does? Would we not judge them from our own biased viewpoint? Thus, Jesus warned: "Stop judging that you may not be judged; for with what judgment you are judging, you will be judged; and with the measure that you are mea-

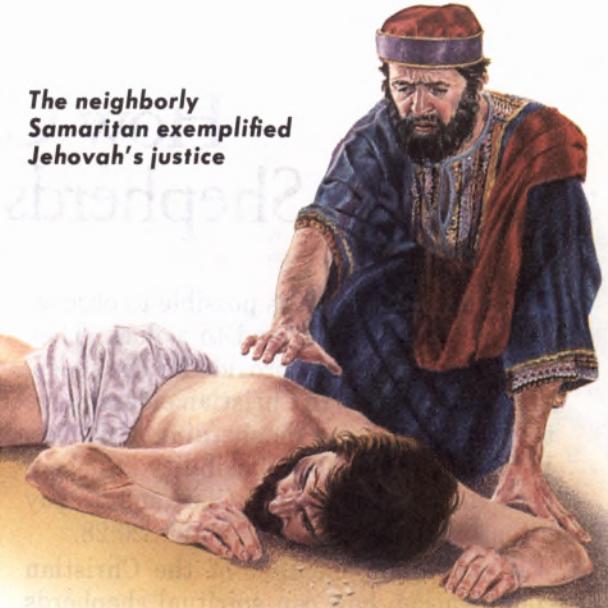
suring out, they will measure out to you. Why, then, do you look at the straw in your brother's eye, but do not consider the rafter in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Allow me to extract the straw from your eye'; when, look! a rafter is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First extract the rafter from your own eye, and then you will see clearly how to extract the straw from your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:1-5) An honest appraisal of our own imperfections will hold us back from making judgments that Jehovah would consider unrighteous.

Appointed congregation elders are obliged to judge in cases of serious wrongdoing. (1 Corinthians 5:12, 13) When doing so, they remember that God's justice seeks to extend mercy where possible. If there is no basis for it—as in the case of unrepentant sinners—mercy cannot be extended. But the elders do not expel such a wrongdoer from the congregation out of vindictiveness. They hope that the disfellowshipping action itself will bring him to his senses. (Compare Ezekiel 18:23.) Under Christ's headship, the elders serve in the interests of justice, and this includes being like "a hiding place from the wind." (Isaiah 32:1, 2) They must therefore show impartiality and reasonableness.—Deuteronomy 1:16, 17.

Jesus had pity for afflicted people, who were like bruised reeds



**The neighborly
Samaritan exemplified
Jehovah's justice**



Sow Seeds in Righteousness

While we await God's righteous new world, we must "seek righteousness" in order to enjoy divine favor. (Zephaniah 2:3; 2 Peter 3:13) This idea is beautifully expressed in these words, found at Hosea 10:12: "Sow seed for yourselves in righteousness; reap in accord with loving-kindness. Till for yourselves arable land, when there is time for searching for Jehovah until he comes and gives instruction in righteousness to you."

In our daily lives, we have many opportunities to 'sow seeds in righteousness,' just as Jesus illustrated with his parable of the neighborly Samaritan. Jehovah will ensure that we "reap in accord with loving-kindness." If we keep on walking in the "path of justice," we will continue to receive instruction in righteousness under Kingdom rule. (Isaiah 40:14) As time passes, we will doubtless come to appreciate even more fully that Jehovah is a lover of righteousness and justice.—Psalm 33:4, 5.

How Christian Shepherds Serve You

IN MANY places it is possible to observe how shepherds attend to a flock. They lead, protect, and provide for the sheep. This is of interest to Christian elders, since their work includes shepherding activities. Indeed, it is their responsibility "to shepherd the congregation of God" and "to pay attention to all the flock."—Acts 20:28.

If you are a member of the Christian congregation, how can spiritual shepherds serve you? And how should you react to their efforts in your behalf? Why does the congregation need their help?

Protection Against What?

In ancient times lions and other wild animals put flocks in danger and preyed upon individual sheep. Shepherds had to provide protection. (1 Samuel 17:34, 35) Well, Satan the Devil "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone." (1 Peter 5:8) He wrathfully wages war not only against Jehovah's earthly organization as a whole but also against each individual servant of God. What is Satan's aim? He wants to discourage Jehovah's people and even prevent them from 'observing the commandments of God' and carrying out "the work of bearing witness to Jesus."—Revelation 12:17.

Jehovah charged the governmental shepherds of ancient Israel with neglect because his sheep had become "food for every wild beast of the field." (Ezekiel 34:8) However, Christian elders have a heartfelt desire to protect those in the congregation so that no one is lost through neglect or because of the influence of Satan, the world, or apostate "wolves." (Acts 20:29, 30) How do the shepherds help all members of the flock to keep their senses and be watchful? One means is by giving well-prepared Scriptural talks from the Kingdom Hall platform. Another is by positive, encouraging conversations before and after the meetings. Still another effective means is by visiting the "sheep" personally at home. (Compare Psalm 95:7.)



Christian shepherds provide spiritual protection

But what is a shepherding call? How should such a visit be carried out? And who ought to be visited?

What Is a Shepherding Call?

A shepherding call is not merely a social visit with conversation about trivialities. One elder observed: "Most publishers thoroughly enjoy reading a scripture or discussing a particular Bible character. Of course, the elder does not do all the talking. The Kingdom publisher being visited normally enjoys expressing his thoughts on the Bible, and doing this strengthens his own faith. The elder might take along a *Watchtower* or *Awake!* magazine so as to discuss an upbuilding article. Perhaps this spiritual discussion is what distinguishes a shepherding call from a social call."

Another experienced elder commented: "Prior to the visit, the elder spends some time thinking about the publisher he is to call on. What could build the publisher up? Sincere commendation is an essential part of shepherding calls, for it strengthens a person to endure." Yes, a shepherding call is more than simply a friendly visit that anyone in the congregation might make.

Why Does a Shepherd Visit You?

When an elder visits a home, he is prepared to encourage fellow believers and help them to be firm in the faith. (Romans 1:11) So when one or two elders wish to visit you, how do you react? Said one traveling overseer: "If shepherding calls are made only when something is not quite right, initial reaction to the proposed visit may be, 'What have I done wrong?'" Loving spiritual shepherds imitate Jehovah, who took care of the psalmist and always 'refreshed his soul,' especially in times of distress and special need.—Psalm 23:1-4.

The objective of a shepherding call is 'to build up, not to tear down.' (2 Corinthians 13:10) Encouraging, indeed, are words of appreciation for the endurance, the zeal, and the faithful work of the one visited. One elder observed: "On a shepherding call, it is not good to give the impression that one has come with the intention of discovering and discussing problems. Of course, the publisher himself might want to talk about some particular difficulty. And if a sheep is limping or isolating himself from the rest of the flock, the elder needs to do something to help."

Christian shepherds will undoubtedly take special care of any who are like those described in these words: "The lost one I [Jehovah] shall search for, and the dispersed one I shall bring back, and the broken one I shall bandage and the ailing one I shall strengthen." (Ezekiel 34:16) Yes, sheep may need to be sought after, brought back, bandaged, or strengthened. Israel's shepherds neglected these responsibilities. Performing such work requires that a shepherd come close to a certain sheep and attend to its needs. Basically, this should be a distinguishing feature of each shepherding call today.

Healthy Sheep Need Care

Should we conclude that present-day spiritual shepherds need not show particular attentiveness to healthy sheep? Well, when a literal sheep gets into trouble, helping it is much easier if it has confidence in the shepherd. One handbook observes that "sheep are naturally shy of humans, and gaining their trust is not always easy." Among other things, the same book suggests this basic guideline for winning the confidence of sheep: "Speak to the animals regularly. They get used to the voice, which

reassures them. Visit the sheep in the pasture often.”—*Alles für das Schaf. Handbuch für die artgerechte Haltung* (Everything for the Sheep. Handbook on How to Keep Them Properly).

Personal contact is therefore necessary if a trusting relationship is to exist between the shepherd and the sheep. The same is true in the Christian congregation. An elder noted: “Being known in the congregation as an elder who regularly visits the sheep makes it easier to call on one who has problems.” Hence, spiritual shepherds should not try to feed and care for the sheep exclusively at the Kingdom Hall. As far as circumstances allow, elders should get to know the sheep by making shepherding calls at their homes. One Christian recalls that when he was a newly appointed elder, the presiding overseer telephoned and asked him to visit and comfort a brother who had just lost his daughter in a dreadful road accident. The elder admits: “How awful I felt, since I had never called on the brother and did not even know where he lived! It was a relief when a mature elder offered to come with me.” Yes, elders assist one another on shepherding calls.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SHEPHERDING CALLS

- **Make an appointment:** It is usually good to make an appointment. If the elder plans to handle a serious problem, it would be proper to inform the publisher of this beforehand.
- **Preparation:** Consider the person’s nature and situation. Offer heartfelt commendation. Make it your aim to impart an encouraging, faith-strengthening “spiritual gift.”
—Romans 1:11, 12.
- **Whom to take along:** Another elder or a qualified ministerial servant.
- **During the visit:** The elder should be relaxed, loving, positive, and flexible. Inquire about the family, its well-being, and so forth. Listen carefully. If a serious problem surfaces, it may be best to arrange for a special shepherding call.
- **Duration of the call:** Keep to the agreed time, and leave while your host is still enjoying the visit.
- **Concluding the visit:** A prayer is appropriate and truly appreciated.—Philippians 4:6, 7.

Shepherding calls provide fine opportunities for spiritual encouragement



In preparing for and making certain shepherding calls, an elder may be joined by a ministerial servant who is reaching out for the "fine work" of an overseer. (1 Timothy 3:1, 13) How much a ministerial servant appreciates seeing how an elder serves the sheep on shepherding calls! Elders and ministerial servants thus get closer to all in the congregation, strengthening the bonds of Christian love and unity.—Colossians 3:14.

Planning Time for Shepherding Calls

When one body of elders left shepherding calls to the initiative of the Congregation Book Study conductors, all the publishers in some groups were visited within six months, whereas none were called on in other groups. This moved one elder to say: "It appears that some elders take the initiative and do a lot of shepherding work, but others need the encouragement of their fellow elders to do so." So some bodies of elders make arrangements for all publishers to be visited by shepherds within a definite period of time.

Of course, an elder or any other publisher can visit someone in the congregation without waiting for special arrangements to be made. Before making a shepherding call, one elder phones and says, "I call on one family each month. Can I visit you for an hour or so sometime next month? When would this suit you?"

Blessings of Shepherding Calls

As pressures from this wicked system continue to increase, encouraging visits by understanding shepherds become ever more beneficial. When all those in the flock are given encouragement and help through shepherding calls, each sheep feels safe and secure.

Concerning a congregation in which all Kingdom publishers were visited by shep-

herds regularly, it was reported: "The publishers became very positive about the shepherding calls. It was quite common for a publisher to approach one of the elders to ask when he would make another call, as the inquirer had enjoyed the upbuilding discussion during the previous visit. Shepherding calls were one factor that helped to improve the spirit of the congregation." Other reports indicate that when shepherds lovingly minister in such a way, the congregation can grow in love, unity, and warmth. What a blessing!

Christian shepherds call to promote the spiritual well-being of the sheep. Elders want to encourage and strengthen their fellow believers. If a serious problem requiring counsel should surface during a visit, it may be best to make arrangements for discussion at another time, especially if the elder is accompanied by a ministerial servant. In any case, a prayer to conclude the shepherding visit is appropriate.

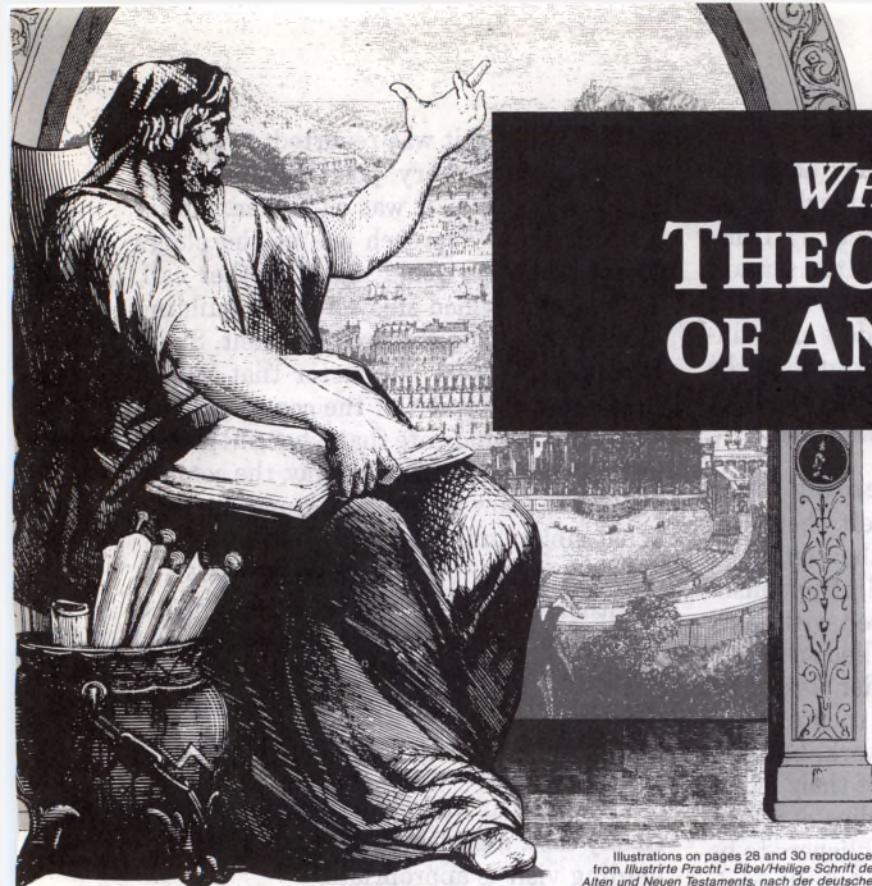
Does a spiritual shepherd want to call at your home in the near future? If that is so, be in happy anticipation of the encouragement that awaits you. He is coming to serve you and to strengthen you in your resolve to remain on the road leading to everlasting life.—Matthew 7:13, 14.

In Our Next Issue

Celebrate the Memorial Worthily

"Praise Jah, You People!"

Always Throw Your
Burden on Jehovah



WHO WAS THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH?

Illustrations on pages 28 and 30 reproduced from *Illustrierte Pracht-Bibel/Holige Schrift des Alten und Neuen Testaments, nach der deutschen Übersetzung D. Martin Luther's*

“YOU call me a Christian, as if this were a damning name to bear, I, for my part, avow that I am a Christian, and bear this name beloved of God, hoping to be serviceable to God.”

Theophilus thus introduces his three-part work entitled *Theophilus to Autolycus*. It is the beginning of his defense against second-century apostasy. Theophilus boldly identifies himself as a follower of Christ. He appears determined to conduct his affairs so as to become one “beloved of God,” in harmony with the Greek-language meaning of his name. Just who was Theophilus? When did he live? And what did he accomplish?

Personal History

Little is known of Theophilus’ personal history. He was raised by non-Christian

parents. Theophilus later converted to Christianity but only after a careful study of the Scriptures. He became bishop of the congregation in Syrian Antioch, known today as Antakya, in Turkey.

In harmony with Jesus’ command, first-century Christians preached among the Antiochian populace. Luke recorded their success, saying:

“The hand of Jehovah was with them, and a great number that became believers turned to the Lord.” (Acts 11:20, 21) As divinely directed, Jesus Christ’s followers became known as Christians. This term was first applied in Syrian Antioch. (Acts 11:26) In the first century C.E., the apostle Paul journeyed to Syrian Antioch, and it became his home base. Barnabas and Paul, accompanied by John Mark, embarked on their first missionary tour from Antioch.

Early Christians of Antioch must have been greatly encouraged by apostolic visits to their city. Their enthusiastic response to the truth of God’s Word was undoubtedly due in part to the faith-strengthening visits of the first-century representatives of the governing body. (Acts 11:22, 23) How encouraging it must have been for them to

see so many residents of Antioch dedicate their lives to Jehovah God! However, it was more than 100 years later that Theophilus lived in Antioch.

The historian Eusebius stated that Theophilus was the sixth bishop of Antioch, counting from the time of the apostles of Christ. Theophilus put into writing a considerable number of oral discussions and refutations against heresy. He is included among the dozen or so Christian apologists of his day.

A Look at His Writings

Responding to earlier dialogue, Theophilus writes to pagan Autolycus with these opening words: "A fluent tongue and an elegant style afford pleasure and such praise as vainglory delights in, to wretched men who have been corrupted in mind." Theophilus elucidates, saying: "The lover of truth does not give heed to ornamented speeches, but examines the real matter of the speech . . . You have assailed me with empty words, boasting of your gods of wood and stone, hammered and cast, carved and graven, which neither see nor hear, for they are idols, and the works of men's hands."—Compare Psalm 115:4-8.

Theophilus exposes the fallacy of idolatry. In his typical style of writing, he eloquently, although redundantly, endeavors to state the real nature of the true God. He expounds: "The appearance of God is ineffable and indescribable, and cannot be seen by eyes of flesh. For in glory He is incomprehensible, in greatness unfathomable, in height inconceivable, in power incomparable, in wisdom unrivalled, in goodness imitable, in kindness unutterable."

Adding to this description of God, Theophilus continues: "But he is Lord, because He rules over the universe; Father, because

he is before all things; Fashioner and Maker, because He is creator and maker of the universe; the Highest, because of His being above all; and Almighty, because He Himself rules and embraces all."

Next, focusing on specific accomplishments of God, Theophilus proceeds in a manner typical of his thorough and somewhat repetitious style, saying: "For the heavens are His work, the earth is His creation, the sea is His handiwork; man is His formation and His image; sun, moon, and stars are His elements, made for signs, and seasons, and days, and years, that they may serve and be slaves to man; and all things God has made out of things that were not into things that are, in order that through His works His greatness may be known and understood."

A further sampling of Theophilus' attack on the false gods of his day is observable in the following words to Autolycus: "The names of those whom you say you worship, are the names of dead men. . . . And what kind of men were they? Is not Saturn found to be a cannibal, destroying and devouring his own children? And if you name his son Jupiter, . . . how he was suckled by a goat . . . And his other deeds,—his incest, and adultery, and lust."

Broadening his scope, Theophilus reinforces his stand in opposition to pagan idolatry. He writes: "Should I further recount the multitude of animals worshipped by the Egyptians, both reptiles, and cattle, and wild beasts, and birds, and river-fishes . . . The Greeks and the other nations, they worship stones and wood, and other kinds of material substances." "But God, the living and true God, I worship," declares Theophilus.—Compare 2 Samuel 22:47; Acts 14:15; Romans 1:22, 23.

**Theophilus boldly refuted
arguments of Autolycus**



Valuable Testimony

The admonitions and exhortations in Theophilus' three-part work refuting Autolycus are multifaceted and detailed. Other writings of Theophilus were directed against Hermogenes and Marcion. He also penned books of instruction and edification, adding commentaries on the Gospels. However, only the three books to Autolycus, a single manuscript, have been preserved.

The first book is an apology written to Autolycus in defense of the Christian religion. The second book to Autolycus argues against popular heathen religion, speculation, philosophers, and poets. Heathen literature is compared with the Scriptures in Theophilus' third book.

At the inception of Theophilus' third

book, Autolycus was apparently still of the opinion that the Word of truth was an idle tale. Theophilus indicts Autolycus, claiming: "You endure fools gladly. Otherwise you would not have been moved by senseless men to yield yourself to empty words, and to give credit to the prevalent rumor."

What was that "prevalent rumor"? Theophilus reveals the source. Slanderous ones "with godless lips falsely accuse us, [we] who are worshippers of God, and are called Christians, alleging that the wives of us all are held in common and made promiscuous use of; and that we even commit incest with our own sisters, and, what is most impious and barbarous of all, that we eat human flesh." Theophilus labored to combat this grossly inaccurate pagan view of professed second-century Christians. He used the light of truth contained in God's inspired Word.—Matthew 5:11, 12.

Testifying to Theophilus' familiarity with God's Word is his frequent use of and reference to both Hebrew and Greek Bible texts. He was one of the earliest commentators on the Gospels. Theophilus' many references to the Scriptures provide a wealth of insight into the thinking prevalent in his time. He used his acquaintance with the inspired writings to exhibit their immense superiority over pagan philosophy.

The arrangement of Theophilus' material, his didactic tone and repetitive style may leave something to be desired in the minds of some. To what extent the foretold apostasy may have affected the accuracy of his views, we cannot presently say. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12) Nevertheless, by the time of his death, about 182 C.E., Theophilus had apparently become a tireless apologist, whose writings are of interest to genuine Christians of our modern age.

Patients' Rights Respected

'There is no way I can perform this surgery without blood. If you want to have the operation, you will have to consent to my method of treatment. Otherwise, you will have to find another doctor.'

THE doctor's words did not shake the faith of Cheng Sae Joo, one of Jehovah's Witnesses who lives in Thailand. Diagnosed with meningioma, a type of brain tumor, Cheng was in desperate need of surgery. But she was determined to obey the Bible's command: "Keep abstaining . . . from blood."—Acts 15:28, 29.

Cheng visited two other hospitals, preferring to be treated in her own country if possible. To her disappointment, doctors there also refused to perform surgery without blood. Finally, Cheng was put in touch with the Neurological Institute of the Tokyo Women's Medical College by Hospital Information Services (HIS) in Thailand. That hospital had treated more than 200 brain-tumor patients using the gamma knife, one of the newest developments in radiation therapy.

Arrangements were made for Cheng to stay with Japanese Witnesses living near the hospital. A group met her at the airport, including two of Jehovah's Witnesses who speak Thai and an HIS representative. After about a week of examinations, Cheng was admitted to the hospital where she underwent treatment with the gamma knife. The procedure took only about an hour. Out of the hospital the next day, Cheng was on her way back to Thailand the day after that.

"I never imagined that so much help could be provided through this arrangement," said Cheng. "I was really impressed by the love

that was shown as well as by the cooperation between the many parties concerned."

In reporting this news item, the Japanese newspaper *Mainichi Shimbun* commented: "Up until now, religious reasons for the refusal of blood transfusions have been highlighted. However, blood transfusions have side effects such as AIDS, the risk of viral infections such as hepatitis C, and allergies. For this reason there are patients who do not want blood transfusions regardless of their religious belief."

The newspaper further stated: "Many patients who refused blood transfusions have been forced to change hospitals, but there is a need for a change on the part of medical institutions toward respecting the will of the patient. Informed consent (a patient receiving a full explanation of what is involved and then agreeing to treatment) is required, and blood transfusion cases are no exception. It should be recognized that this is not an issue involving just a certain religion."

Like Cheng Sae Joo, many who prefer treatment without blood have to transfer to other hospitals. Nonetheless, they appreciate the efforts of doctors who are willing to respect their patients' rights.

Hospital Information Services was set up by Jehovah's Witnesses in branches of the Watch Tower Society to seek the cooperation of physicians who respect their beliefs. Throughout the world, HIS builds working relationships with hospitals, physicians, health-care workers, lawyers, and judges.



AN EVENT
You Should Not Miss

"Every good gift and every perfect present" comes down from God, our heavenly Father. (James 1:17) The greatest gift that God has given to fallen mankind is the provision for their recovery by means of his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus' death as our Ransomer makes possible everlasting life on a paradise earth. At Luke 22:19, we are commanded to memorialize his death.

