

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

AUGUST 1, 1997

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is packed with valuable information.  
It includes:  
• "How to Train Your Conscience,"  
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• "Is It Good to Give to Jehovah?"  
• "What Is Good About God?"  
• "Goodness from Jehovah"  
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## How to Train Your Conscience

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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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# CONSCIENCE

## A burden or an asset?

‘**M**Y CONSCIENCE is bothering me!’ From time to time, virtually all of us experience the pangs of conscience. Such feelings may range from simple uneasiness to agonizing pain. A stricken conscience can even trigger depression or a deep sense of failure.

Viewed from this perspective, then, is not the conscience a burden? Some may feel that it is. Previous generations of thinkers often regarded the conscience as an innate, inborn faculty. Many felt that it was a moral guide given directly by God himself. The conscience has thus been called “God’s presence in man,” “our original nature,” and even “the voice of God.”

In recent years, however, it has become popular to assert that conscience is mostly an *acquired* faculty—a product of parental and social conditioning. For example, some psychologists argue that a child learns to refrain from undesirable behavior mainly out of fear of punishment, believing that what we call conscience is simply the absorption of our parents’ personal values and beliefs. Others point to the role that society in general plays in transmitting values and standards. Some view pangs of conscience as nothing more than the conflict between what we would like to do and what an oppressive society demands that we do!

Theories notwithstanding, time and again people have stood up to parents, families, and whole societies because their conscience told them to do so. Some have even

been willing to sacrifice their life for the sake of conscience! And despite the profound differences among the world’s cultures, such actions as murder, theft, adultery, lying, and incest are almost universally viewed as wrong. Would this not argue that the conscience is innate, inborn?

### Conscience—The Bible’s View

The real authority on this subject is Jehovah God. After all, “it is he [God] that has made us, and not we ourselves.” (Psalm 100:3) He thoroughly understands our makeup. God’s Word, the Bible, explains that man was made in God’s “image.” (Genesis 1:26) Man was created with a sense of what is right and wrong; from the start, conscience was an inherent part of man’s nature.—Compare Genesis 2:16, 17.

The apostle Paul confirms this in his letter to the Romans, writing: “Whenever people of the nations that do not have [God’s] law do by nature the things of the law, these people, although not having law, are a law to themselves. They are the very ones who demonstrate the matter of the law to be written in their hearts, while their conscience is bearing witness with them and, between their own thoughts, they are being accused or even excused.” (Romans 2:14, 15) Note that many who had not been raised under the divine Law given to the Jews still followed some of the principles of God’s law, not by social pressure, but “by nature”!

Far from being a burden, then, the conscience is a divine gift, an asset. Granted,

it can cause us pain. But when properly heeded, it can also reward us with feelings of deep satisfaction and inner peace. It can guide, protect, and motivate us. *The Interpreter's Bible* comments: "Mental and emotional health can be preserved only as

the individual tries to close the gulf between what he does and what he feels he ought to do." How can one close that gulf? Is it possible to mold and train our conscience? These questions will be considered in the next article.

## How to train your CONSCIENCE

**A**CLEAN conscience is the best pillow." This old saying highlights an important fact: When we heed our conscience, we enjoy inner peace and harmony.

Not all choose to do so, however. Adolf Hitler declared himself on a mission to liberate man from the degrading chimera, or illusion, known as conscience. His reign of terror provides a chilling glimpse into just how cruel men can be when they repudiate their conscience. No less ruthless, though, are many of today's violent criminals—those who rape and murder without remorse. Increasing numbers of these perpetrators are of tender years. A book studying this phenomenon thus bore the subtitle *Children Without a Conscience*.

While most people would never think of committing a violent crime, many have no qualms about engaging in sexual immorality, lying, or cheating. Morals are in a global decline. Referring to the great apostasy from true worship, the apostle Paul wrote that some Christians would give in to the world's influence and thus become "marked in their conscience as with a branding iron." (1 Timothy 4:2) The threat of corruption is

even greater today during these "last days." (2 Timothy 3:1) Christians must therefore take pains to safeguard their conscience. We can do this by training and developing it.

### The Mind, the Heart, and Your Conscience

The apostle Paul said: "I am telling the truth in Christ; I am not lying, since my conscience bears witness with me in holy spirit." (Romans 9:1) The conscience therefore can be a witness bearer. It can examine a course of conduct and either approve or condemn it. Much of our sense of right and wrong has been placed in us by our Creator. Still, our conscience can be molded and trained. How? By our taking in accurate knowledge from God's Word. "Be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God," says the apostle Paul. (Romans 12:2) As you implant God's thoughts and will in your mind, your conscience begins to function in a more godly way.

Jehovah's Witnesses have helped millions around the world to 'take in knowledge of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ.' (John 17:3) Through their free home Bible study ar-

rangement, they teach honesthearted ones Jehovah God's standards on sex, alcoholic beverages, marriage, business dealings, and a host of other subjects.\* (Proverbs 11:1; Mark 10:6-12; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Ephesians 5:28-33) Taking in this "accurate knowledge" is an important step in developing a godly conscience. (Philippians 1:9) Of course, even after a Christian gains a mature understanding of the Bible, he must continue to feed his mind on God's Word regularly if his conscience is to stay healthy.—Psalm 1:1-3.

The Bible also links the conscience with the figurative heart, which involves our feelings and emotions. (Romans 2:15) Mind and heart must work together harmoniously if the conscience is to function properly. That means doing more than putting information into your mind. You must also mold your heart—your inner feelings, desires, and cravings. The book of Proverbs thus uses such expressions as "incline your heart," "set your heart," and "lead your heart." (Proverbs 2:2; 23:19; 27:23) One way to do so is through meditation and reflection on the Scriptures. "I shall certainly meditate on all your activity, and with your dealings I will concern myself," says Psalm 77:12. Meditating helps us to reach our innermost feelings and motives.

Suppose, for instance, that you have an unclean habit such as an addiction to tobacco. Like most people, you are no doubt well aware of its health risks. Still, despite the urgings of friends and family, you have found it difficult to quit. How could meditating on the Bible's message strengthen your conscience in this regard?

As an example, try meditating on the apostle Paul's words found at 2 Corinthi-

ans 7:1: "Therefore, since we have these promises, beloved ones, let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear." Get the sense of these words. Ask yourself, 'Just what are "these promises" to which Paul refers?' By reading the context, you will observe that the previous verses say: "'Get out from among them, and separate yourselves,' says Jehovah, 'and quit touching the unclean thing'; 'and I will take you in.' 'And I shall be a father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me,' says Jehovah the Almighty.'"—2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.

Paul's command to 'cleanse ourselves of defilement' now has added force! As a powerful incentive to doing so, God promises to 'take us in,' that is, put us under his protective care. 'Would I enjoy a close relationship with him—like that of a son or a daughter with a father?' you might ask yourself. Is not the thought of being 'taken in' or loved by a wise, loving God very appealing? If that thought seems foreign to you, observe the way loving fathers express love and affection to their children. Now imagine such a bond existing between you and Jehovah! The more you meditate on it, the more the desire for such a relationship grows.

But note: Closeness with God is possible only if you "quit touching the unclean thing." Ask yourself: 'Is not addiction to tobacco among the "unclean things" that God condemns? Would using it be a "defilement of flesh," exposing myself to all sorts of health dangers? Since Jehovah is a clean, or "holy," God, could he approve of my deliberately defiling myself in this way?' (1 Peter 1: 15, 16) Observe that Paul also warns against 'defilement of one's spirit,' or mental inclination. Ask yourself: 'Does this addiction dominate my thinking? Will I go to great lengths to satisfy my craving, perhaps at the expense of my health, my family, or even my

\* Feel free to contact the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses or to write the publishers of this magazine if you would be interested in having a free home Bible study.



**Reading and meditating on God's Word helps us train our conscience**

standing with God? To what extent have I allowed my addiction to tobacco to damage my life? Facing these painful questions may very well give you the courage to quit!

Of course, you may need help and support from others to gain the mastery over tobacco. Still, meditating on the Bible can do much to train and strengthen your conscience so as to free yourself from addiction.

### **When We Do Wrong**

In spite of our best efforts to do what is right, at times our imperfections get the better of us and we err. Our conscience will then bother us, but it is tempting to try to ignore it. Or we may become so discouraged that we want to give up all efforts to serve God. However, recall the case of King David. After he had committed adultery with Bath-sheba, his conscience struck him. He describes the torment he felt: "Day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My life's moisture has been changed as in the dry heat of summer." (Psalm 32:4) Painful? Indeed! Yet this godly sadness moved David to repent and

become reconciled to God. (Compare 2 Corinthians 7:10.) David's agonizing plea for forgiveness gives ample evidence of his sincere repentance. Because he responded to his conscience, David was helped to change and eventually regain his joy.—Psalm 51.

The same can happen today. Some studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses in times past but stopped when they learned that their lives were out of harmony with God's high standards. Perhaps they were living with a member of the opposite sex without the benefit of marriage or were slaves to unclean habits. Their conscience pained them!

If you are in such a situation, consider the words of the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost. When he exposed the sins of his Jewish countrymen, "they were stabbed to the heart." Rather than give up, they heeded Peter's counsel to repent, and they gained God's favor. (Acts 2:37-41) You can do the same! Instead of quitting the truth because your conscience pains you, let your conscience move you to 'repent and turn around.' (Acts 3:19) With determination and effort, you can make the changes needed to gain God's favor.

### **"Hold a Good Conscience"**

Whether you are just beginning to learn Jehovah's ways or have many years of experience as a mature Christian, Peter's admonition is appropriate: "Hold a good conscience." (1 Peter 3:16) It is an asset, not a burden. Train it by feeding your mind and heart on the wisdom contained in God's Word, the Bible. Heed your conscience when it warns you. Enjoy the inner peace of mind that obeying one's conscience can bring.

Admittedly, training and molding your conscience is not an easy task. However, you can pray to Jehovah God to assist you. With his help, you will be able to serve God "out of a good conscience and out of faith without hypocrisy."—1 Timothy 1:5.

# KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

## He Found a "Pearl of High Value"

"THE kingdom of the heavens is like a traveling merchant seeking fine pearls. Upon finding one pearl of high value, away he went and promptly sold all the things he had and bought it." With these words, Jesus illustrated the exceeding value of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 13:45, 46) Those who recognize the Kingdom's value often make great personal sacrifices in order to take hold of it. This is illustrated by the following experience from Pingtung County, Taiwan.

In 1991, Mr. and Mrs. Lin began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. When a local clergyman found out, he tried to get them to join his church. Since the Lins had a business selling pigs' and ducks' blood at the local market, they decided to ask the clergyman's view on the matter. "Everything that God has made can serve as man's food," he replied. The Witnesses, on the other hand, encouraged them to consider what God's Word has to say. They learned that Jehovah God views blood as sacred, for "the life of a creature is the blood." (Leviticus 17:10, 11, The New English Bible) True Christians therefore must "abstain . . . from blood." (Acts 15:20) As a result of examining the Scriptures on this subject, the Lins decided to stop selling blood, even though it accounted for much of their income. Within a short time, however, they faced a still greater test.

Prior to learning the truth, the Lins had planted 1,300 betel nut palms on their property. Although it would take five years for the trees to become profitable, once they were in full production, the Lins could expect to make \$77,000 per year. As the first harvesttime drew near, the Lins had to make an important decision. They had learned through their study of the Bible that Christians must cleanse themselves "of every defilement of flesh and spirit" by avoiding the

use of, or the promotion of, such unclean habits as smoking tobacco, abusing drugs, and chewing betel nut. (2 Corinthians 7:1) What would they do?

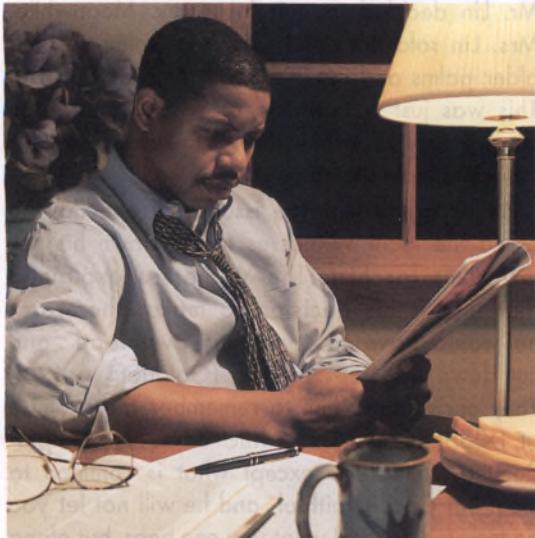
Under pressure from a troubled conscience, Mr. Lin decided to quit his study. Meanwhile, Mrs. Lin sold the betel nuts from some of their older palms and made a profit of over \$3,000. This was just a foretaste of what would soon come if they kept their trees. However, Mr. Lin's conscience continued to smite him.

He struggled with the issue until one day he asked the local Witnesses to cut down his betel palms for him. The Witnesses explained that it was his decision to make; therefore, he would have to 'bear his own load' and cut down the trees himself. (Galatians 6:4, 5) They encouraged him to remember the promise at 1 Corinthians 10:13, which says: "No temptation has taken you except what is common to men. But God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it." The Witnesses also reasoned with him, saying: "If we cut down your trees for you, you might regret it and blame us for the loss." A short time later, Mrs. Lin awoke to the sound of a chain saw. Her husband and children were cutting down the betel palms!

Mr. Lin found that Jehovah is true to His promise. He obtained work that left him with a clear conscience, enabling him to become a praiser of Jehovah. He was baptized at a circuit assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses in April 1996.

Yes, Mr. Lin in effect "sold all the things he had" and bought a "pearl of high value." Now he has the inestimable privilege of having a personal relationship with Jehovah God and serving His Kingdom interests.

# SERVING LOYALLY WITH JEHOVAH'S ORGANIZATION



LATE one evening an elder prepares a talk for a Christian meeting. He would like to stop and relax; instead, he keeps working, seeking Scriptural examples and illustrations that will reach hearts and encourage the flock. On the night of the meeting, a pair of exhausted parents in that same congregation would relish an evening at home; instead, they patiently get their children ready and go to the meeting. After the meeting, a group of Christians discuss the elder's part. One sister is tempted to mention that the same brother once hurt her feelings; instead, she speaks enthusi-

1. 2. What are some examples of loyalty that all of us may see in the congregation?

astically about one of the points that he made. Do you see the common thread running through these scenarios?

3. <sup>2</sup> That thread is loyalty. The elder loyally works to serve the flock of God; the parents loyally attend congregation meetings; the sister loyally supports the elders. (Hebrews 10:24, 25; 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2) Yes, in all aspects of life, we see God's people determined to serve loyally with Jehovah's organization.

4. When Jehovah looks down upon this corrupt world, he sees very little loyalty. (Micah 7:2) How his heart must respond with joy when he observes the loyalty of his people! Yes, your own loyalty delights him. However, it enrages Satan, the original rebel, and proves him a liar. (Proverbs 27:11; John 8:44) Expect that Satan will try to undermine your loyalty to Jehovah and to His earthly organization. Let us consider some ways in which Satan does this. Thus we may see better how we can stay loyal to the end. —2 Corinthians 2:11.

## Focusing on Imperfections Can Erode Loyalty

5. When a brother is in a position of responsibility, his faults may become more apparent. How easy it is to pick at 'a straw in

6. Why is it so important that we remain loyal to Jehovah's earthly organization?

7. (a) Why is it easy to take a negative view of those in authority? (b) How did Korah prove disloyal to Jehovah's organization?

our brother's eye while ignoring a rafter in our own! (Matthew 7:1-5) Dwelling on faults, though, can breed disloyalty. To illustrate, consider the contrast between Korah and David. Korah bore much responsibility, and he had probably been loyal for many years, but he became ambitious. He came to resent the authority of Moses and

Aaron, his first cousins. Though Moses was the meekest of men, Korah evidently began to look at him with critical eyes. He likely saw faults in Moses. Those faults, however, did not justify Korah's disloyalty to Jehovah's organization. He was destroyed from the midst of the congregation.—Numbers 12:3; 16:11, 31-33.

## Serving Loyally at Bethel

"Let all things take place decently and by arrangement." So wrote the apostle Paul. (1 Corinthians 14:40) Paul knew that for a congregation to function, there would be a need for "arrangement," for organization. Likewise today, the elders have to make decisions on practical matters, such as assigning congregation members to various book study locations, arranging meetings for field service, and checking territory coverage. Such arrangements may sometimes pose tests of loyalty. They are not divinely inspired commands, and they cannot meet the preferences of every individual.

Do you find it a challenge, at times, to be loyal to some of the practical arrangements made in the Christian congregation? If so, you may find the example of Bethel to be helpful. The name Bethel, a Hebrew term meaning "House of God," is given to all the 104 branches of the Watch Tower Society, including the U.S. headquarters.\* The volunteers who live and work at

Bethel complexes want these places to reflect reverence and awe for Jehovah. This requires loyalty on the part of each one.

Visitors to Bethel often remark about the orderliness and cleanliness they see there. The workers are organized and happy; their speech and manners and even their appearance reflect mature, Bible-trained Christian consciences. All members of a Bethel family loyally adhere to the standards of God's Word.

In addition, the Governing Body provides them with a manual entitled *Dwelling Together in Unity*, which kindly sets forth some practical arrangements needed for such a large family to work well together. (Psalm 133:1) For instance, it touches on rooming, meals, hygiene, dress and grooming, and similar matters. Bethel family members loyally support and adhere to such arrangements, even when their personal preferences might lead them in another direction. They view this manual, not as a mass of cold rules and regulations, but as a set of useful guidelines designed to promote unity and harmony. Overseers are loyal in upholding these Bible-based procedures, and they use them in a positive way to build up and encourage the Bethel family to pursue their sacred Bethel service.

\* These factory, office, and residential complexes do not constitute God's great spiritual temple, or house. God's spiritual temple is his arrangement for pure worship. (Micah 4:1) As such, it is not limited to any physical structure on the earth.

## The Loyalist and the Legalist

Back in 1916 the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* noted that "this distinction between the loyalist and the legalist may be found in all times and all places." It explained: "There is the legalist who does what he is told, breaks no rules; he keeps faith to the word that is written and can be read. There is the loyalist who does this but can . . . be counted on for more, who puts his whole mind into his duty, who forms his spirit in accordance with the spirit of the purpose to be served." Later, this same work observed: "To be loyal is to be much more than law-abiding. . . . The loyal man is distinguished from the law-abiding man as one who serves with whole heart and mind . . . No voluntary sins of commission, omission, or ignorance does he permit himself."

<sup>5</sup> David, on the other hand, served under King Saul. Once a good king, Saul had actually become wicked. David needed faith, endurance, and even some ingenuity to survive jealous Saul's attacks. Yet, when David had a chance to retaliate, he said that it was 'unthinkable, from Jehovah's standpoint,' that he commit a disloyal act against one whom Jehovah had anointed.—1 Samuel 26:11.

<sup>6</sup> When some who are taking the lead among us seem to err in judgment, speak with harsh words, or seem to show favoritism, will we complain about them, perhaps

5. Why might David have felt tempted to rebel against Saul?
6. Even if we perceive weaknesses and faults in the elders, what should we never do?

contributing to a critical spirit in the congregation? Will we stay away from Christian meetings as a form of protest? Surely not! Like David, we will never allow the faults of another to move us to be disloyal to Jehovah and his organization!—Psalm 119:165.

<sup>7</sup> The greatest human example of loyalty was Jesus Christ, described prophetically as Jehovah's "loyal one." (Psalm 16:10) The corrupt misuse of the temple in Jerusalem must have made loyalty a challenge. Jesus knew that the high priest's work and the sacrifices prefigured his own ministry and sacrificial death, and he knew how vital it was for people to learn from these. So he was full of righteous indignation when he saw that the temple had become "a cave of robbers." With God-given authority, he twice took steps to cleanse it.\*—Matthew 21:12, 13; John 2:15-17.

<sup>8</sup> Still, Jesus loyally supported the temple arrangement. From childhood, he attended the festivals at the temple and often taught there. He even paid the temple tax—although he was not really obligated to do so. (Matthew 17:24-27) Jesus commended the poor widow for putting "her whole living" into the temple treasury chest. Shortly thereafter, Jehovah permanently cast off that temple. But until then, Jesus was loyal

\* Jesus was courageous to attack such a profitable commercial concern. According to one historian, the temple tax had to be paid in a specific ancient Jewish coin. Many visitors to the temple would thus have needed to change their money in order to pay the tax. The money changers were allowed to charge a set fee for the exchange, and this generated large sums of money.

7. What are some corrupt practices that developed in connection with the temple in Jerusalem, and how did Jesus feel about this?
8. (a) How did Jesus show loyalty to the temple arrangement? (b) How can we show that we appreciate worshiping Jehovah with his clean organization?

to it. (Mark 12:41-44; Matthew 23:38) God's earthly organization today is far superior to the Jewish system with its temple. Granted, it is not perfect; that is why adjustments are made at times. But neither is it riddled with corruption, nor is Jehovah God about to replace it. Never should we allow any imperfections we perceive within it to embitter us or move us to adopt a critical, negative spirit. Let us, rather, imitate the loyalty of Jesus Christ.—1 Peter 2:21.

### Our Own Imperfections

<sup>9</sup> Satan also tries to promote disloyalty by exploiting our imperfections. His system of things plays on our weaknesses, tempting us to do what is wrong in Jehovah's eyes. Sadly, every year thousands succumb to immorality. Some compound this disloyalty by leading a double life, continuing in a course of wrongdoing while pretending to remain faithful Christians. In response to articles on this subject in the "Young People Ask . . ." series in *Awake!* magazine, one young woman wrote: "The articles were my life story." In secret, she had cultivated friendships with youths who had no love of Jehovah. The result? She writes: "My life went down to the bottom, and I got involved with immorality and had to be reproved. My relationship with Jehovah was damaged, and the trust from my parents and the elders was gone."\*

<sup>10</sup> This young woman got help from the elders and returned to loyal service to Jehovah. Tragically, though, many suffer worse consequences, and some never do return to the fold. How much better to be loyal

\* See the *Awake!* of December 22, 1993; January 8, 1994; and January 22, 1994.

9, 10. (a) How does Satan's system of things exploit our imperfections so as to lure us into disloyal conduct? (b) What should one do who has committed a serious sin?

and resist temptation in this wicked world! Heed the warnings from the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines on such matters as worldly association and debasing entertainment. May you at no time fall into disloyal conduct. But if you do, never pretend to be what you are not. (Psalm 26:4) Instead, get help. That is what Christian parents and elders are there for.—James 5:14.

<sup>11</sup> Our imperfections may endanger us in another way. Some who commit an act of disloyalty give up on trying to please Jehovah. Remember, David committed very serious sins. Yet, long after David's death, Jehovah remembered him as a faithful servant. (Hebrews 11:32; 12:1) Why? Because he never gave up trying to please Jehovah. Proverbs 24:16 says: "The righteous one may fall even seven times, and he will certainly get up." Surely, if we lapse into minor sins—yes repeatedly—because of some weakness we are fighting, we may still be righteous in Jehovah's eyes if we continue to "get up"—that is, sincerely repent and resume a course of loyal service.—Compare 2 Corinthians 2:7.

### Beware of Subtle Forms of Disloyalty!

<sup>12</sup> Disloyalty also comes in subtler forms. It may even masquerade as loyalty! For example, the Pharisees of Jesus' day probably thought of themselves as eminently loyal.\* But they failed to see the difference

\* Their fraternity descended from that of the Hasidim, a group that arose centuries earlier to combat Greek influence. The Hasidim took their name from the Hebrew word *chasi-dhim'*, meaning "loyal ones" or "pious ones." Perhaps they felt that scriptures mentioning Jehovah's "loyal ones" applied to them in some special way. (Psalm 50:5) They, and the Pharisees after them, were fanatic, self-appointed defenders of the letter of the Law.

11. Why would it be wrong to view ourselves as hopelessly bad, and what Bible precedent could help us to correct our view?

12. In the case of the Pharisees, how did a rigid, legalistic viewpoint lead to disloyalty?

between being loyal and being an unbending adherent to man-made rules, for they were rigid and harshly judgmental. (Compare Ecclesiastes 7:16.) In this they were actually disloyal—to the people they should have been serving, to the spirit of the Law they claimed to teach, and to Jehovah himself. Jesus, on the contrary, was loyal to the spirit of the Law, which was based on love. Thus he built up and encouraged people, just as the Messianic prophecies had foretold.—Isaiah 42:3; 50:4; 61:1, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Christians with a measure of authority benefit greatly from Jesus' model in this regard. For example, loyal parents know that they must discipline their children. (Proverbs 13:24) Yet they make sure that they do not exasperate their young ones with harsh discipline administered in anger or with a constant barrage of criticism. Children who feel that they can never please their parents or who feel that their parents' worship only seems to make them negative and critical may well become downhearted and, as a result, end up alienated from the true faith.—Colossians 3:21.

<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Christian elders and traveling overseers give attention to problems and dangers that the flock face. As loyal shepherds, they offer counsel when needed, making sure that they have all the facts first and carefully basing what they say on the Bible and on the Society's publications. (Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 18:13) They know, too, that the sheep are counting on them for spiritual upbuilding and feeding. So they seek to imitate Jesus Christ, the Fine Shepherd. They loyally minister to the

13. (a) How might Christian parents be disloyal? (b) Why should parents avoid being overly harsh, critical, or negative in disciplining their children?

14. How may Christian shepherds prove loyal to the flock they serve?

sheep week after week in Christian meetings—not tearing them down but, rather, building them up and strengthening their faith.—Matthew 20:28; Ephesians 4:11, 12; Hebrews 13:20, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Another subtle form of disloyalty is misplaced loyalty. True loyalty in the Biblical sense does not allow for our putting any allegiance ahead of our loyalty to Jehovah God. Many Jews in the first century stuck doggedly to the Mosaic Law and the Jewish system of things. Yet Jehovah's time had come to shift his blessing from that rebellious nation to the nation of spiritual Israel. Only a relatively few were loyal to Jehovah and adapted to this momentous change. Even among true Christians, some Judaizers insisted on going back to those "weak and beggarly elementary things" of the Mosaic Law, which had been fulfilled in Christ.—Galatians 4:9; 5:6-12; Philippians 3:2, 3.

<sup>16</sup> In contrast, Jehovah's people in modern times have proved themselves loyal through times of change. As the light of revealed truth continues to brighten, adjustments are made. (Proverbs 4:18) Recently, "the faithful and discreet slave" has helped us to refine our understanding of the term "generation" used at Matthew 24:34 and of the timing of the judgment of "the sheep" and "the goats" mentioned at Matthew 25:31-46, as well as of our view toward certain types of civilian service. (Matthew 24:45) No doubt some apostates would have been delighted if many of Jehovah's Witnesses had stuck rigidly to the previous understanding of such subjects and refused to progress. Nothing of the kind has happened. Why? Jehovah's people are loyal.

15. How did some in the first century show that they had misplaced loyalties?

16. How do loyal servants of Jehovah respond to adjustments?

<sup>17</sup> The matter of misplaced loyalties may hit closer to home, though. When a dear friend or even a family member chooses a course that violates Bible principles, we may feel that we are torn between loyalties. Naturally, we feel loyal to family members. But never should we put our allegiance to them ahead of our loyalty to Jehovah! (Compare 1 Samuel 23:16-18.) We would neither help wrongdoers to conceal a serious sin nor side with them against elders who are trying to 'readjust them in a spirit of mildness.' (Galatians 6:1) Doing so would be disloyalty to Jehovah, his organization, and a loved one. After all, to stand between a sinner and the discipline he needs is, in effect, to block an expression of Jehovah's love from reaching him. (Hebrews 12:5-7) Remember, too, that "the wounds inflicted by a lover are faithful." (Proverbs 27:6) Frank, loving counsel that is based on God's Word might wound the pride of an erring loved one, but it might prove lifesaving in the long run!

### Loyalty Stands Up to Persecution

<sup>18</sup> Sometimes Satan's attacks on our loyalty are direct. Consider the case of Naboth. When King Ahab pressured him to sell his vineyard, he replied: "It is unthinkable on my part, from Jehovah's standpoint, for me to give the hereditary possession of my forefathers to you." (1 Kings 21:3) Naboth was not being stubborn; he was being loyal. The Mosaic Law ordered that no Israelite sell a hereditary possession of land in perpetuity. (Leviticus 25:23-28) Naboth surely knew that this vicious king could have him killed, for Ahab had already let his wife, Jezebel,

17. How might loved ones put our loyalty to the test at times?

18, 19. (a) What did Ahab want of Naboth, and why did Naboth refuse? (b) Was Naboth's loyalty worth the price? Explain.

kill off many of Jehovah's prophets! Yet Naboth stood firm.—1 Kings 18:4.

<sup>19</sup> Loyalty sometimes exacts a price. Jezebel, with the help of some "good-for-nothing men," had Naboth framed for a crime he did not commit. As a result, he and his sons were executed. (1 Kings 21:7-16; 2 Kings 9:26) Does that mean that Naboth's loyalty was mistaken? No! Naboth is among the many loyal men and women who are 'alive' in Jehovah's memory right now, sleeping safely in the grave until the time of the resurrection.—Luke 20:38; Acts 24:15.

<sup>20</sup> The same promise gives assurance to Jehovah's loyal ones today. We know that our loyalty may cost us dearly in this world. Jesus Christ paid for his loyalty with his life, and he told his followers that they would be treated no better. (John 15:20) As his hope for the future sustained him, so we are sustained by ours. (Hebrews 12:2) Thus we can stay loyal in the face of all manner of persecution.

<sup>21</sup> True, relatively few of us today suffer such direct attacks on our loyalty. But God's

20. How can hope help us to maintain our loyalty?

21. What assurances does Jehovah offer to his loyal ones?

### How Would You Answer?

- How can we avoid letting the imperfections of others lead us to disloyalty?
- In what ways might our own imperfections lead us into disloyal conduct?
- How can we resist the tendency to misplace our loyalties?
- What will help us to keep our loyalty even in times of persecution?

people may well face more persecution before the end comes. How can we be sure to maintain our loyalty? By keeping our loyalty now. Jehovah has given us a great commission—preaching and teaching about his Kingdom. Let us loyally keep at this vital work. (1 Corinthians 15:58) If we refuse to let human imperfections erode our loyalty

to Jehovah's organization and if we guard against such subtle forms of disloyalty as misplaced loyalties, then we will be better prepared should our loyalty be tested more severely. In any case, we may always rest assured that Jehovah is unfailingly loyal to his loyal servants. (2 Samuel 22:26) Yes, he will guard his loyal ones!—Psalm 97:10.

## LET YOUR BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE!

*"Let your brotherly love continue."*—HEBREWS 13:1.

IT IS dangerously cold outside, and the temperature is plummeting. The one source of heat in your house is a fire crackling in the fireplace. Lives depend on your keeping it going. Will you simply sit and watch as the flames die and the red glow of the coals fades to a dull, lifeless gray? Of course not. You tirelessly keep feeding it fuel to keep it alive. In a sense, each of us has a similar job when it comes to a far more important “fire”—the one that should burn in our hearts—love.

<sup>2</sup> We live at a time when, as Jesus long ago foretold, love is cooling off among professed Christians around the world. (Matthew 24:12) Jesus was referring to the most important kind of love, the love for Jehovah God and for his Word, the Bible. Other types of love are also on the wane. The Bible foretold that in “the last days,” many would

1. What would you do in order to keep a fire burning on a cold night, and what similar responsibility do all of us have?

2. (a) Why might it be said that love has grown cold in these last days? (b) How important is love to true Christians?

have “no natural affection.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) How true this is! The family should be a haven of natural affection, but even there, violence and abuse—sometimes terrifyingly brutal—have become commonplace. Yet, in this world’s cold climate, Christians are commanded not only to have love for one another but to have *self-sacrificing* love, putting others ahead of self. We are to display this love so plainly that it is visible to all, becoming the identifying mark of the true Christian congregation.—John 13:34, 35.

<sup>3</sup> The apostle Paul was inspired to command: “Let your brotherly love continue.” (Hebrews 13:1) According to one scholarly work, the Greek word here translated “brotherly love” (*phi-la-del-phi'a*) “refers to affectionate love, showing kindness, sympathy, offering help.” And what did Paul mean when he said that we should let such love continue? “It is never to grow cold,” the same work observes. So it is not enough to feel affection for our brothers; we must let

3. What is brotherly love, and what does it mean to let it continue?

it show. Further, we must make this love last, never letting it grow cold. Challenging? Yes, but Jehovah's spirit can help us to cultivate brotherly affection and to maintain it. Let us consider three ways to fuel the fire of this love in our hearts.

### Show Fellow Feeling

<sup>4</sup> If you want to have more love for your Christian brothers and sisters, you may first need to feel for them, to empathize with them in the trials and challenges they face in life. The apostle Peter suggested as much when he wrote: "All of you be like-minded, showing fellow feeling, having brotherly affection, tenderly compassionate, humble in mind." (1 Peter 3:8) The Greek word used here for showing "fellow feeling" denotes "suffering with." One authority on Biblical Greek says of this word: "It describes that state of mind which exists when we enter into the feelings of others *as if* they were our own." Hence, empathy is needed. A faithful, elderly servant of Jehovah once said: "Empathy is your pain in my heart."

<sup>5</sup> Does Jehovah have such fellow feeling? Absolutely. For instance, we read regarding the sufferings of his people Israel: "During all their distress it was distressing to him." (Isaiah 63:9) Jehovah did not merely see their troubles; he felt for the people. Just how intensely he feels is illustrated by Jehovah's own words to his people, recorded at Zechariah 2:8: "He that is touching you is touching my eyeball."<sup>\*</sup> One commentator

\* Some translations imply here that the one touching God's people is touching, not God's, but Israel's eye or even his *own*. This error came from some medieval scribes who, in their misguided efforts to emend passages they viewed as irreverent, changed this verse. They thereby obscured the intensity of Jehovah's personal empathy.

4. What is fellow feeling?
5. How do we know that Jehovah has fellow feeling?

notes regarding this verse: "The eye is one of the most intricate and delicate structures in the human frame; and the pupil of the eye—the opening by which the light of heaven enters for the purposes of vision—the most sensitive, as well as important, part of that structure. Nothing can more finely convey the idea of the exquisitely tender care of Jehovah for the objects of his love."

<sup>6</sup> Jesus too has always shown profound fellow feeling. He was repeatedly "moved with pity" over the plight of his fellow humans who were sick or troubled. (Mark 1: 41; 6:34) He indicated that when anyone fails to treat his anointed followers kindly, he feels as though he himself were receiving that treatment. (Matthew 25:41-46) And today as our heavenly "high priest," he is one who can "sympathize with our weaknesses."—Hebrews 4:15.

<sup>7</sup> "Sympathize with our weaknesses"—is that not a comforting thought? Surely, then, we want to do the same for one another. Of course, it is far easier to look for the weaknesses of another. (Matthew 7:3-5) But the next time a brother or a sister irritates you, why not try this? Imagine yourself in that person's circumstances, with that background, that personality, that set of personal faults to contend with. Can you be sure that you would not make the same mistakes—or perhaps even worse ones? Instead of expecting too much of others, we should show fellow feeling, which will help us to be reasonable like Jehovah, who 'remembers that we are dust.' (Psalm 103:14; James 3:17) He knows our limitations. He never expects more of us than we can reasonably do. (Compare 1 Kings 19:5-7.) Let us all extend such fellow feeling to others.

6. How has Jesus Christ shown fellow feeling?
7. How might fellow feeling help us when a brother or a sister irritates us?

<sup>8</sup> Paul wrote that the congregation is like a body with diverse members that must work together in unity. He added: "If one member suffers, all the other members suffer with it." (1 Corinthians 12:12-26) We need to suffer along with, or empathize with, those who are going through some ordeal. The elders take the lead in doing so. Paul also wrote: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I am not incensed?" (2 Corinthians 11:29) Elders and traveling overseers imitate Paul in this regard. In their talks, in their shepherding work, and even in their handling of judicial matters, they endeavor to show fellow feeling. Paul recommended: "Weep with people who weep." (Romans 12:15) When the sheep sense that the shepherds truly feel for them, grasp their limitations, and sympathize with the hardships they face, they are usually more willing to accept counsel, direction, and discipline. They attend meetings eagerly, confident that there they will find 'refreshment for their souls.'

—Matthew 11:29.

### Showing Appreciation

<sup>9</sup> A second way to fuel brotherly love is through appreciation. To appreciate others, we must focus on and value their good qualities and efforts. When we do so, we imitate Jehovah himself. (Ephesians 5:1) Daily he forgives us many minor sins. He even forgives serious sins as long as there is genuine repentance. Then once he forgives our sins, he does not dwell on them. (Ezekiel 33:14-16) The psalmist asked: "If errors were what you watch, O Jah, O Jehovah, who could stand?" (Psalm 130:3) What Jehovah focuses on are the good things that we do in serving him.—Hebrews 6:10.

8. How should we react when a brother or a sister is going through some hardship?
9. How does Jehovah show that he appreciates what is good in us?

### Love in Action

Some years ago, a man who had studied the Bible for a time with Jehovah's Witnesses was still somewhat skeptical about brotherly love. He knew that Jesus had said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:35) But he found it hard to believe. One day he got to see Christian love in action.

Though confined to a wheelchair, this man was traveling far from home. In Bethlehem, Israel, he attended a congregation meeting. There, an Arab Witness insisted that another Witness tourist stay with his family for the night, and this Bible student was included in the invitation. Before going to bed, the student asked his host for permission to go out onto the veranda in the morning to watch the sunrise. His host sternly warned him that he must not do that. The next day this Arab brother explained the reason. Through an interpreter, he said that if his neighbors knew that he had guests of a Jewish background—as was the case with this Bible student—they would burn his house to the ground with him and his family inside. Confused, the Bible student asked him, "Why, then, did you take such a risk?" Without the interpreter, the Arab brother looked him in the eye and simply said, "John 13:35."

The Bible student was deeply impressed with the reality of brotherly love. He was baptized shortly thereafter.

<sup>10</sup> It is particularly important to follow this example in the family. When parents show that they appreciate each other, they set the tone for the family. In this era of throwaway marriages, it is all too easy to take a spouse for granted and to magnify flaws and downplay good traits. Such negative thinking erodes marriage, turning it into a joyless burden. If your appreciation for your mate is on the wane, ask yourself, 'Is my spouse really without good qualities?' Think back on the reasons you fell in love and married. Have all those reasons for loving this unique person really vanished? Surely not; so work hard to appreciate the good in your mate, and put your appreciation into words.—Proverbs 31:28.

<sup>11</sup> Appreciation also helps marriage partners to keep their love free from hypocrisy. (Compare 2 Corinthians 6:6; 1 Peter 1:22.) Such love, fueled by heartfelt appreciation, will allow no room for cruelty behind closed doors, no room for words that hurt and humiliate, no room for the cold shoulder treatment wherein days may pass without a kind or civil word being spoken, and certainly no room for physical violence. (Ephesians 5:28, 29) A husband and wife who truly appreciate each other honor each other. They do so not only when they are in public but whenever they are within Jehovah's sight—in other words, all the time. —Proverbs 5:21.

<sup>12</sup> Children too need to feel appreciated. Not that parents should shower them with empty flattery, but they should

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10. (a) Why is it dangerous for marriage mates to lose appreciation for each other? (b) What should one do who is losing appreciation for a spouse?

11. If marital love is to be free from hypocrisy, what practices must be avoided?

12. Why should parents express appreciation for the good in their children?

mend their children's praiseworthy qualities and the genuine good that they do. Remember Jehovah's example in expressing his approval of Jesus. (Mark 1:11) Remember, too, Jesus' example as the "master" in a parable. He commended two 'good and faithful slaves' equally, even though there was a difference in what each one was given and a corresponding difference in what each one produced. (Matthew 25:20-23; compare Matthew 13:23.) Wise parents likewise find ways to express appreciation for each child's unique qualities, abilities, and accomplishments. At the same time, they try not to emphasize accomplishments so much that their children constantly feel driven to perform. They do not want their children to grow up exasperated or downhearted.—Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21.

<sup>13</sup> In the Christian congregation, elders and traveling overseers take the lead in showing appreciation for each individual member of the flock of God. Theirs is a difficult position, as they also bear the heavy responsibility to discipline in righteousness, to readjust erring ones in a spirit of mildness, and to offer strong counsel to those who need it. How do they balance these differing responsibilities?—Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 3:16.

<sup>14</sup> Paul's example is of great help. He was an outstanding teacher, elder, and shepherd. He had to deal with congregations that had severe problems, and he did not fearfully hold back from giving strong counsel when it was required. (2 Corinthians 7:8-11) An overview of Paul's ministry

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13. Who take the lead in showing appreciation for each congregation member?

14, 15. (a) How did Paul show balance in the matter of giving strong counsel? (b) How can Christian overseers balance the need to correct wrongs with the need to give commendation? Illustrate.



suggests that he used the rebuke sparingly—only when the situation made it necessary or advisable. In this he showed godly wisdom.

<sup>15</sup> If an elder's ministry before the congregation were likened to a piece of music, then rebuke and reprimand would be like a single note that fits into the whole. That note is fine in its place. (Luke 17:3; 2 Timothy 4:2) Imagine a song containing only that one note, repeated over and over again. It would quickly grate on our ears. In a similar vein, Christian elders try to round out their teaching and imbue it with variety. They do not limit it to the correcting of problems. Rather, its overall tone is positive. Like Jesus Christ, loving elders look first for the good to commend, not the fault to criticize. They appreciate the hard work their fellow Christians are doing. They are confident that by and large, each one is doing his best to serve Jehovah. And elders

readily put that feeling into words.—Compare 2 Thessalonians 3:4.

<sup>16</sup> Unquestionably, most of the Christians to whom Paul ministered sensed that he appreciated them and had fellow feeling for them. How do we know this? Look at how they felt about Paul. They did not fear him, even though he had great authority. No, he was beloved and approachable. Why, when he left one area, the elders 'fell upon his neck and tenderly kissed him!' (Acts 20:17, 37) How thankful elders—and all of us—should be that we have Paul's example to emulate! Yes, let us show appreciation for one another.

### Acts of Loving-Kindness

<sup>17</sup> One of the most potent fuels for broth-

16. What effect did Paul's appreciative and empathetic attitude have on his fellow Christians?
17. What are some good effects stemming from acts of kindness in the congregation?

erly love is a simple act of kindness. As Jesus said, "there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) Whether we give spiritually, materially, or of our time and energy, not only do we make others happy but we make ourselves happy as well. In the congregation, kindness is contagious. One kind act generates similar acts in turn. Before long, brotherly affection flourishes!—Luke 6:38.

<sup>18</sup> Jehovah urged his people Israel to display kindness. At Micah 6:8, we read: "He has told you, O earthling man, what is good. And what is Jehovah asking back from you but to exercise justice and to love kindness and to be modest in walking with your God?" What does it mean to "love kindness"? The Hebrew word used here for "kindness" (*che'sedh*) has also been translated into English as "mercy." According to *The Soncino Books of the Bible*, this word "denotes something more active than the abstract English word *mercy*. It means 'mercy translated into deeds,' the performance of personal acts of loving-kindness, not only to the poor and needy, but to all one's fellow-men." Thus another scholar says that *che'sedh* means "love translated into action."

<sup>19</sup> Our brotherly love is not theoretical, or abstract. It is a concrete reality. Hence, look for ways to do kind things for your brothers and sisters. Be like Jesus, who did not always just wait for people to approach him to ask for help but often took the initiative himself. (Luke 7:12-16) Think especially of those most in need. Does an elder-

18. What is the meaning of the "kindness" spoken of at Micah 6:8?

19. (a) In what ways might we take the initiative to show kindness to others in the congregation? (b) Give an example of how brotherly love has been shown to you.

ly or infirm person need a visit or perhaps some help with errands? Does a 'fatherless child' need some time and attention? Does a depressed soul need a listening ear or some consoling words? As we are able, let us make time for such acts of kindness. (Job 29:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; James 1:27) Never forget that in a congregation full of imperfect people, one of the most vital acts of kindness is forgiveness—freely letting go of resentment, even when there is a legitimate cause for complaint. (Colossians 3:13) A readiness to forgive helps to keep the congregation free of divisions, grudges, and feuds, which are like wet blankets that smother the fire of brotherly love.

<sup>20</sup> Let all of us be resolved to keep this vital fire of love burning in our hearts. Let us keep examining ourselves. Do we show fellow feeling for others? Do we show appreciation for others? Do we perform acts of kindness toward others? As long as we do, the fire of love will warm our brotherhood no matter how bitterly cold and unfeeling this world becomes. By all means, then, "let your brotherly love continue"—now and forever!—Hebrews 13:1.

20. How should all of us continue to examine ourselves?

### What Do You Think?

- What is brotherly love, and why must we let it continue?
- How does having fellow feeling help us to maintain our brotherly love?
- What role does appreciation play in brotherly love?
- How do acts of kindness cause brotherly love to flourish in the Christian congregation?

# PATIENTLY WAITING ON JEHOVAH FROM MY YOUTH ON

AS TOLD BY RUDOLF GRAICHEN



Like a lightning bolt, tragedy struck my family when I was just 12 years old. First, my father was thrown into prison. Then, my sister and I were forcefully taken away from home and sent to live with strangers. Later, my mother and I were arrested by the Gestapo. I went to prison, and she ended up in a concentration camp.

THAT sequence of events marked only the beginning of a period of painful persecution I suffered in my youth as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The infamous Nazi Gestapo and then the East German *Stasi* tried to break my integrity to God. Now, after 50 years of dedicated service to him, I can say as did the psalmist: "Long enough they have shown hostility to me from my youth; yet they have not prevailed over me." (Psalm 129:2) How thankful I am to Jehovah!

I was born on June 2, 1925, in the small town of Lucka near Leipzig, Germany. Even before I was born, my parents, Alfred and Teresa, recognized the ring of Bible truth in the publications of the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known. I re-

member every day looking at the pictures of Bible scenes hanging on the walls of our home. One picture showed the wolf and the lamb, the kid and the leopard, the calf and the lion—all in peace, being led by a little boy. (Isaiah 11:6-9) Such pictures made a lasting impression on me.

Whenever possible, my parents included me in congregation activities. For example, in February 1933, just a few days after Hitler took power, the "Photo-Drama of Creation"—with its slides, motion pictures, and recorded narration—was shown in our little town. How excited I was, a boy of merely seven years of age, riding through town in the back of a pickup truck as part of an advertising march for the "Photo-Drama"! On this and other occasions, the brothers made me

feel like a useful member of the congregation despite my young age. So from a very early age, I was taught by Jehovah and influenced by his Word.

### Trained to Trust in Jehovah

Because of strict Christian neutrality, Jehovah's Witnesses did not get involved in Nazi politics. As a result, in 1933 the Nazis passed laws prohibiting us from preaching, meeting, and even reading our own Bible literature. In September 1937 all the brothers in our congregation, including my father, were arrested by the Gestapo. That made me very sad. My father was sentenced to five years in prison.

Things became very difficult for us at home. But we quickly learned to trust in Jehovah. One day when I came home from school, my mother was reading *The Watchtower*. She wanted to fix me a quick lunch, so she laid the magazine on top of a small cupboard. After lunch, while we were putting the dishes away, there was a loud knock at the door. It was a policeman who wanted to search our apartment for Bible literature. I got very scared.

It was an unusually hot day. So the first thing the policeman did was to take off his helmet and place it on top of a table. He then proceeded with his search. While he was looking under the table, his helmet began to slide off. So my mother quickly grabbed the helmet and placed it on the cupboard right on top of *The Watchtower*! The policeman ransacked our apartment but did not find any literature. Of course, he never thought of looking under his helmet. When he was ready to leave, he mumbled an apology to my mother while reaching behind his back to grab his helmet. What a relief I felt!

Experiences like that prepared me for more difficult tests. For example, in school I was pressured to join the Hitler Youth orga-

nization, in which children were trained in military discipline and indoctrinated with Nazi philosophy. Some teachers had the personal goal to achieve 100-percent student participation. My teacher, Herr Schneider, must have felt that he was a complete failure because, unlike all the other teachers in my school, he was one student short of 100-percent participation. I was that student.

One day Herr Schneider announced to the entire class: "Boys, tomorrow we will go on a class outing." Everybody liked the idea. Then he added: "All of you should wear your Hitler Youth uniforms so that when we march through the streets, all can see that you are nice Hitler boys." The next morning all the boys showed up in their uniforms except me. The teacher called me to the front of the classroom and asked me: "Look around at the other boys and then look at yourself." He added: "I know that your parents are poor and cannot afford to buy you a uniform, but let me show you something." He brought me to his desk, opened a drawer, and said: "I want to give you this brand-new uniform. Isn't it beautiful?"

I would rather have died than put on a Nazi uniform. When my teacher saw that I had no intention of wearing it, he got angry, and the entire class booed me. Then he took

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us on the outing but tried to hide me by making me walk in the middle of all the other boys in their uniforms. However, many people in town could see me as I stood out among my classmates. Everybody knew that my parents and I were Jehovah's Witnesses. I am thankful to Jehovah for giving me the needed spiritual strength when I was young.

### The Persecution Intensifies

One day early in 1938, my sister and I were taken from school and transported by police car to a reform school in Stadtroda, about 50 miles away. Why? The courts had decided to remove us from the influence of our parents and turn us into Nazi children. Soon the personnel in charge of the reformatory noticed that my sister and I were respectful and obedient, although firm in our Christian neutrality. The director was so impressed that she wanted to meet my mother personally. An exception was made, and my mother was allowed to visit us. My sister, my mother, and I were so happy and thankful to Jehovah for granting us the opportunity to be together for mutual encouragement for an entire day. We really needed it.

We remained in the reformatory for about four months. Then we were sent to live with a family in Pahna. They were instructed to keep us away from our relatives. My mother was not even allowed to visit. Yet, on a couple of occasions, she found a way to contact us. Seizing those rare opportunities, my mother did the best she could to instill in us a determination to remain faithful to Jehovah, whatever tests and circumstances he would permit.—1 Corinthians 10:13.

And the tests did come. On December 15, 1942, when I was only 17 years old, I was picked up by the Gestapo and put in a detention center in Gera. About a week later, my mother too was arrested and joined me

in the same prison. Since I was still a minor, the courts could not try me. So my mother and I spent six months in detention while the courts waited for my 18th birthday. On the very day I turned 18, my mother and I were brought to trial.

Before I realized it, it was all over. Little did I know that I would not see my mother again. My last memory of her is seeing her sitting in court on a dark wooden bench right next to me. We were both pronounced guilty. I was sentenced to four years in prison and my mother to one and a half years.

In those days there were thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses held in prisons and camps. However, I was sent to a prison in Stollberg, where I was the only Witness. I spent over a year in solitary confinement, yet Jehovah was with me. The love I had cultivated for him in my youth was the key to my spiritual survival.

On May 9, 1945, after I had been in prison for two and a half years, we received good news—the war was over! On that day I was released. After a 70-mile walk, I arrived home, literally sick from exhaustion and starvation. It took me several months to regain my health.

As soon as I arrived, I was hit with much distressing news. First about my mother. After she had been in prison for one and a half years, the Nazis asked her to sign a document renouncing her faith in Jehovah. She refused. So the Gestapo took her to a women's concentration camp, in Ravensbrück. There she died of typhus just before the war ended. She was a very courageous Christian—a hard fighter who never gave up. May Jehovah remember her kindly.

There was also news about my older brother, Werner, who never made a dedication to Jehovah. He had joined the German army and was killed in Russia. My father? He did



(1) Serving today as an elder and pioneer, (2) with Patsy, just before our wedding, (3) in Herr Schneider's classroom, (4) my mother, Teresa, who died in Ravensbrück

come home, but sadly, he was one of the very few Witnesses who signed that infamous document renouncing their faith. When I got to see him, he appeared sullen and mentally disturbed.—2 Peter 2:20.

#### A Brief Period of Zealous Spiritual Activity

On March 10, 1946, I attended my first postwar assembly in Leipzig. What a thrill when it was announced that a baptism was

to take place that same day! Although I had dedicated my life to Jehovah many years before, this was my first opportunity to get baptized. I will never forget that day.

On March 1, 1947, after pioneering for one month, I was invited to Bethel in Magdeburg. The Society's offices were quite damaged from the bombing. What a privilege to help with the repair work! After that summer I was assigned to the city of Wittenberge as a special pioneer. Some months I

spent more than 200 hours preaching to others about the good news of God's Kingdom. How glad I was to be free again—no war, no persecution, no prisons!

Sad to say, that freedom did not last long. After the war Germany was divided, and the area where I lived fell under the control of the Communists. In September 1950 the East Germany secret police, known as the *Stasi*, began to arrest the brothers systematically. The charges against me were ridiculous. I was accused of being a spy for the American government. They sent me to the worst *Stasi* prison in the country, in Brandenburg.

### Support From My Spiritual Brothers

There the *Stasi* did not let me sleep during the day. Then they would interrogate me all night long. After I was subjected to this torture for a few days, things got worse. One morning, instead of returning me to my cell, they took me to one of their infamous *U-Boot Zellen* (known as submarine cells because of their location deep in a cellar). They opened an old, rusty iron door and asked me to step in. I had to step over a high threshold. When I put my foot down, I realized that the floor was entirely covered with water. The door was slammed closed with an awful squealing noise. There was no light and no window. It was pitch black.

Because of the several inches of water on the floor, I could not sit, lie down, or sleep. After waiting for what seemed an eternity, I was taken back for further interrogation under powerful lights. I do not know what was worse—to stand in water all day long in nearly complete darkness or to endure the painfully bright floodlights directed straight at me all night long.

On several occasions they threatened to shoot me. After some nights of interrogation, I was visited one morning by a high

Russian military officer. I had the opportunity to tell him that the German *Stasi* was treating me even worse than the Nazi Gestapo had. I told him that Jehovah's Witnesses were neutral under the Nazi government and were also neutral under the Communist government and that we did not meddle in politics anywhere in the world. In contrast, I said, many who were now *Stasi* officers had been members of the Hitler Youth organization, where they likely learned how to persecute innocent people brutally. As I was talking, my body was shivering from the cold, hunger, and exhaustion.

Surprisingly, the Russian officer did not get angry with me. On the contrary, he placed a blanket on me and treated me in a kind way. Shortly after his visit, I was returned to a more comfortable cell. A few days later, I was handed over to the German courts. While my case was still pending, I enjoyed the fine privilege of sharing a cell with five other Witnesses. After enduring much cruel treatment, how refreshing I found it to have the association of my spiritual brothers!—Psalm 133:1.

In court I was pronounced guilty of espionage and sentenced to four years in a penitentiary. That was considered a light sentence. Some of the brothers were sentenced to more than ten years. I was sent to a maximum security penitentiary. I think that not even a mouse was able to crawl in or out of that prison—so tight was the security. Yet, with Jehovah's help some brave brothers were able to smuggle in an entire Bible. It was taken apart and divided into individual books and circulated among the brothers who were prisoners.

How did we do it? It was very difficult. The only time we came in contact with one another was when we were taken to the showers every two weeks. On one occasion, while I was taking a shower, a brother whispered

in my ear that he had concealed some Bible pages in his towel. After my shower I was to grab his towel instead of mine.

One of the guards saw the brother whispering to me and beat him pretty badly with a billy club. I had to grab the towel quickly and mingle with the other prisoners. Thankfully I was not caught with the Bible pages. Otherwise our spiritual feeding program would have been jeopardized. We went through many similar experiences. Our Bible reading was always done in hiding and at great risk. The words of the apostle Peter, "Keep your senses, be watchful," were indeed very appropriate.

—1 Peter 5:8.

For some reason, the authorities decided to transfer some of us repeatedly from one penitentiary to another. Over a period of four years, I was transferred to about ten different penitentiaries. Yet, I was always able to find brothers. I grew to love all these brothers deeply, and it was with great sadness in my heart that I left them every time I was transferred.

Finally I was sent to Leipzig, and there I was released from prison. The prison guard that set me free did not say good-bye but, rather, "We will soon see you again." His wicked mind wanted me back behind bars. I often think of Psalm 124:2, 3, where it says: "Had it not been that Jehovah proved to be for us when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us up even alive, when their anger was burning against us."

### **Jehovah Delivers His Loyal Servants**

Now I was a free man again. My twin sister, Ruth, and Sister Herta Schlenzog were there at the gate waiting for me. During all these prison years, Herta had sent me a small package with food every month. I truly believe that without those little packages,

I would have died in prison. May Jehovah remember her kindly.

Since my release, Jehovah has blessed me with many privileges of service. I served again as a special pioneer, in Gronau, Germany, and as a circuit overseer in the German Alps. Later I was invited to enroll in the 31st class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead for missionaries. Our graduation took place at Yankee Stadium during the international assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1958. I had the privilege of addressing the big crowd of brothers and sisters and relating some of my experiences.

After the graduation I traveled to Chile to serve as a missionary. There I served again as a circuit overseer, in the southernmost part of Chile—I was literally sent to the ends of the earth. In 1962, I married Patsy Beutnagel, a lovely missionary from San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A. I enjoyed many wonderful years of service to Jehovah with her by my side.

In my more than 70 years of life, I have experienced many happy moments and many calamities. The psalmist said: "Many are the calamities of the righteous one, but out of them all Jehovah delivers him." (Psalm 34:19) In 1963, while still in Chile, Patsy and I experienced the tragic death of our baby girl. Later, Patsy got very sick, and we moved to Texas. When she was only 43 years old, she died, also under tragic circumstances. I often pray that Jehovah will kindly remember my lovely wife.

Now, although sickly and old, I enjoy the privilege of serving as a regular pioneer and an elder in Brady, Texas. True, life has not always been easy, and there may be other tests I am still to face. However, like the psalmist I can say: "O God, you have taught me from my youth on, and until now I keep telling about your wonderful works."—Psalm 71:17.



## Family Study That Brings Joy

*"By knowledge will the interior rooms be filled with all precious and pleasant things of value," says the Bible. (Proverbs 24:4) These precious things of value are not just material treasures but include true love, godly fear, and strong faith. Such qualities indeed create a rich family life. (Proverbs 15:16, 17; 1 Peter 1:7) To acquire them, though, we need to bring the knowledge of God into our households.*

THE family head has the responsibility of inculcating this knowledge in the members of the family. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; Ephesians 5:25, 26; 6:4) One of the finest ways of doing this is through a regular family study. How delightful this can be for the participants when the study is conducted in a way that is both instructive and enjoyable! Let us, then, consider

some essentials of conducting an effective family study.\*

A family study is most effective when it is regular. Left up to chance or to a spur-of-the-moment decision, it is likely to be infrequent at best. So you must 'buy out the time' for the study. (Ephesians 5:15-17)

\* Although many suggestions presented in this article pertain to helping children in a family study, the concepts apply also to a family study where there are no children.

Coming up with a regular time that is convenient for all can be a challenge. "We had difficulty keeping our family study regular," confesses one family head. "We tried different times until we finally found a time slot a little later in the evening that worked for us. Now our family study is regular."

Once you have a suitable time slot, be careful not to allow distractions to crowd out the study. "If visitors came while we were having a study," recalls Maria,\* now 33, "Daddy would invite them to wait until the study was over. And as for phone calls, he would simply tell the person that he would return the call later."

This, however, does not mean that there can be no room for flexibility. Emergencies or unforeseen occurrences may arise, and it may be necessary to cancel or postpone the study occasionally. (*Ecclesiastes 9:11*) But be careful not to allow any of these to derail your routine.—*Philippians 3:16*.

How long should a study last? Robert, who has successfully brought up a daughter and a son, says: "Our studies usually lasted an hour. When the children were young, we tried to hold their interest during the hour by considering a variety of things, such as a few paragraphs in the study article in *The Watchtower*, selected passages from the Bible, and portions of other publications." Maria remembers: "When my two sisters and I were very young, our study was about 20 minutes two or three times a week. As we grew older, our weekly family study lasted an hour or so."

### What Should We Study?

Contemplating this question when every-

\* Some of the names have been changed.

one is gathered around for a study would result in frustration and the loss of valuable study time. If that were the case, children would have nothing specific to look forward to and would soon lose interest. So select in advance one of the Society's publications to go through.

"The faithful and discreet slave" has provided an abundance of publications to choose from. (Matthew 24:45-47) Perhaps you can use a book that the family has not studied yet. And what a delight it is to consider selected portions from *Insight on the Scriptures* if these volumes are available in your language! For example, you could review the article on the Lord's Evening Meal during the weeks prior to the Memorial. Many families enjoy preparing the *Watchtower* Study for the week. But the secondary articles in *The Watchtower* also provide excellent material for study. The family head, who knows the spiritual needs of the family, is in the best position to decide which publications should be studied.

"We always studied a publication selected ahead of time," remembers Maria. "But when a question came up or a situation arose at school, then we would switch to the applicable information." Special concerns, such as the problems youths face at school, dating, extracurricular activities, and the like, do come up. When this happens, branch out into the articles or publications that deal with the problem at hand. If you see information in the latest issue of *The Watchtower* or *Awake!* that you would like to cover with the family right away, do not hesitate to arrange that. Of course, you would want to inform the family members of the change ahead of time.

But be sure to return to the scheduled material once the need is cared for.

### Keep the Atmosphere Tranquil

Learning occurs best under peaceful conditions. (James 3:18) So cultivate a relaxed, yet respectful, atmosphere. One family head in the United States says: "Whether we study in the living room or on the sun porch, we try to stay fairly close to each other rather than spread out in a large room. For us, this creates a warm feeling." And Maria recalls with great fondness: "My sisters and I were allowed to choose where in the house we would have the study that week. This made us feel comfortable." Keep in mind that proper lighting, a suitable seating arrangement, and cheerful and uncluttered surroundings all contribute to tranquillity. Having refreshments for the family after the study also helps make the evening enjoyable.

Some families even choose to include other families in their study on occasion, adding to the interest as well as the variety of comments. When new ones in the truth are invited to share in this arrangement, they can benefit from observing an experienced family head conduct a family study.

### Make the Bible Come Alive

Make study periods lively for the children, and they will eagerly look forward to them. You can do this by encouraging little children to draw pictures of Bible scenes. When appropriate, have children act out Bible events and dramas. With young children it is not necessary to stick to a formal question-and-answer method. Reading or telling stories about Bible characters is

an enjoyable way to inculcate godly principles. Robert, mentioned earlier, recalls: "Sometimes we would read Bible passages, taking turns, reading the various 'voice' parts by assignment." Children can be invited to choose the character they want to portray in the reading.

Using maps and charts will help older children visualize the areas and features of the land where events being discussed took place. Clearly, with a little imagination, a family study can be made lively and varied. And the children will form a longing for God's Word.—1 Peter 2:2, 3.

### Help Everyone to Participate

For children to enjoy the study, they must also feel involved. Getting children of different ages to participate, however, can be a challenge. But a Bible principle states: "He that presides, let him do it in real earnest." (Romans 12:8) Being enthusiastic helps, for enthusiasm is contagious.

Ronald involves his five-year-old daughter, Dina, by having her read subheadings in the study material and asking her to comment on the pictures. As the Memorial of Christ's death approached last year, he focused on the pertinent illustrations in the book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*.<sup>\*</sup> He notes: "This helped her to understand the significance of the event."

With his ten-year-old daughter, Misha, Ronald goes a step further. "Misha has progressed to the point where she can understand not just what the illustrations are but the meaning they portray," says Ronald. "So when considering the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*,<sup>\*</sup> we

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

concentrated on the meaning of the illustrations, and this has helped her."

As children grow into their teens, invite them to make practical application of the material under consideration. When questions come up during the study, assign research parts. Robert did that when his 12-year-old, Paul, asked about a newly formed school club involving the game Dungeons and Dragons. Paul and others in the family looked up information using the *Watchtower Publications Index*, and they reviewed it at their family study. "As a result," says Robert, "Paul quickly understood that the game was wrong for Christians."

Robert also assigned research at other times. His wife, Nancy, recalls: "When we researched the apostles of Jesus, each of us was assigned one apostle every week. How thrilling it was to see the children enthusiastically present their report at the family study!" Doing their own research and sharing the information with the family helps children 'grow up with Jehovah.'—1 Samuel 2:20, 21.

Asking questions—viewpoint as well as leading questions—is also a fine way to get children involved. The Master Teacher, Jesus, asked viewpoint questions, such as, "What do you think?" (Matthew 17:25) "When any of us had a question, our parents never answered us directly," remembers Maria. "They always asked leading questions, helping us to reason on the matter."

### Communicate—Do Not Irritate!

The joy of a family study is enhanced if all present can communicate their viewpoints and feelings without the fear of be-

ing ridiculed. But "good communication during a family study is possible only if the lines of communication are open at other times," says one father. "You cannot put it on just for the study period." By all means, avoid thoughtless comments that stab, such as, 'Is that all? I thought it was something important'; 'That is silly'; 'Well, what do you expect? You are just a child anyway.' (Proverbs 12:18) Be compassionate and merciful to your children. (Psalm 103:13; Malachi 3:17) Find pleasure in them, and support them as they endeavor to apply what they are learning.

The mood of the family study should be such that the child's mind is receptive to instruction. "When you start to correct children," explains one successful parent of four, "you have a somewhat hostile audience." In such an atmosphere, the information probably will not sink in. So avoid making the study periods sessions for discipline and punishment. If they are needed, administer these later and individually.

### The Effort Is Worthwhile

Building a spiritually rich family takes time and effort. But the psalmist declares: "Look! Sons are an inheritance from Jehovah; the fruitage of the belly is a reward." (Psalm 127:3) And the parents are entrusted with the responsibility of "bringing [children] up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) So develop the skills to conduct an effective and enjoyable family study. Do your best to provide "the unadulterated milk belonging to the word," so that your children may "grow to salvation."—1 Peter 2:2; John 17:3.

## *Books, Books, Books!*

"To the making of many books there is no end," wrote wise King Solomon of old. (Ecclesiastes 12:12) During 1995 close to one new book was published in Britain for every 580 of the population, making that country the world's leader in publishing new book titles. China, the most populated country, came in second with 92,972 editions compared with Britain's 95,015. Germany followed (67,206 titles), and then came the United States (49,276), with France next (41,234). "Much of Britain's lead over the world is accounted for simply because of the English language," notes *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper of London.

Reports indicate that the book-selling market has been on the decline for several years, and now only 80 percent of adults in Britain buy one or more books a year. But do people read all the books they buy?

One book that continues to be both widely distributed and read is the Bible, now available in parts or as a whole in over 2,120 languages. If you do not yet own a copy, contact the office of the Watch Tower Society nearest you to obtain one. If you possess a Bible, take it out and check the Scriptural references that appear in the articles in this magazine. Doing so, you will discover the Bible's life-giving knowledge.

## **QUESTIONS FROM READERS**

**Since Jehovah's Witnesses strive to be honest and they trust one another, why do they feel that it is important to make a written contract when there are business dealings between them?**

Their doing so is Scriptural, practical, and loving. How so? Well, let us consider those aspects of business contracts.

The Bible presents a written record of God's dealings with his covenant people, the Israelites. It includes business dealings involving true worshippers. Genesis chapter 23 contains one we might

consider. When his beloved Sarah died, Abraham wanted to obtain a burial place. He began dealing with Canaanites living near Hebron. Verses 7-9 show that he offered a clear price for the piece of land he wanted. Verse 10 proves this offer was made publicly, in the hearing of others at the city gate. Verse 13 shows that the owner offered to give the land to Abraham, but he responded that he would take the land only as a purchase. And verses 17, 18, and 20 explain that this is how it worked out, being confirmed "before the eyes of the sons of Heth among all those entering the gate of his city."

Would it be different, though, when the two having such a business dealing were both true worshipers? Chapter 32 of Jeremiah provides an answer. From verse 6 on, we see that Jeremiah was to purchase land from his cousin. Verse 9 shows that a fair price was agreed upon. Now read verses 10-12: "Then I [Jeremiah] wrote in a deed and affixed the seal and took witnesses as I went weighing the money in the scales. After that I took the deed of purchase, the one sealed according to the commandment and the regulations, and the one left open; and I then gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah the son of Mahseiah before the eyes of Hanamel the son of my paternal uncle and before the eyes of the witnesses, those writing in the deed of purchase, before the eyes of all the Jews who were sitting in the Courtyard of the Guard."

Yes, although Jeremiah was dealing with a fellow worshiper, even a relative, he went through some reasonable legal procedures. Two written records were made—one being left open for ready consultation, the second being sealed so as to provide back-up proof should there ever be any doubt about the accuracy of the open one. All of this was transacted, as verse 13 says, "before their eyes." So it was a public, witnessed, legal business dealing. Clearly, then, it is with Scriptural precedent that true worshipers handle matters in such a confirmed and documented way.

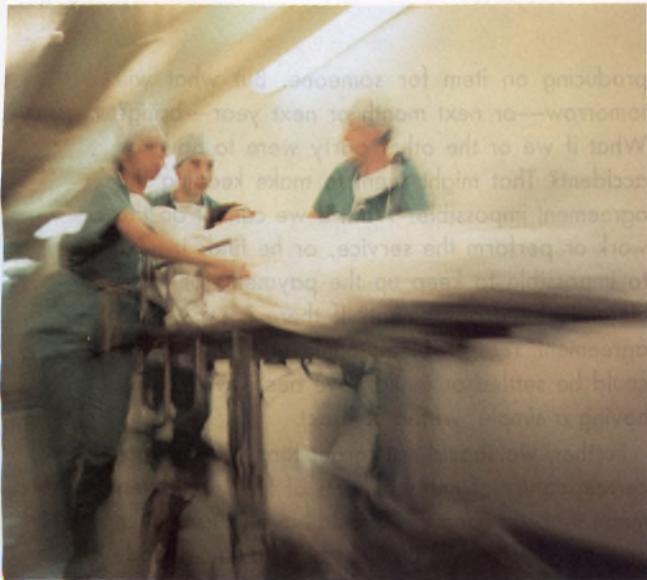
It is also practical. We know how true the saying is that "time and unforeseen occurrence befall them all." (Ecclesiastes 9:11) That includes devoted and faithful Christians. James 4:13, 14 puts it this way: "Come, now, you who say: 'Today or tomorrow we will journey to this city and will spend a year there, and we will engage in business and make profits,' whereas you do not know what your life will be tomorrow." Hence, we may begin a project, such as making a purchase, performing an agreed upon work or service, or

producing an item for someone. But what will tomorrow—or next month or next year—bring? What if we or the other party were to have an accident? That might seem to make keeping the agreement impossible. What if we cannot do the work or perform the service, or he finds it next to impossible to keep up the payments or keep his end of the agreement? If there is no written agreement, real problems could arise, ones that could be settled or could have been avoided by having a simple written contract.

Further, we should not forget that the very uncertain nature of many aspects of life might even mean that someone else would have to take over or settle our (or his) business affairs. James added in verse 14: "For you are a mist appearing for a little while and then disappearing." Realistically, we might die unexpectedly. A written agreement, a contract, could in practical terms allow others to carry on in handling matters should something unexpected occur on either side.

In a sense, this leads also to the third aspect—written contracts are loving. Certainly, if either party died or had an incapacitating accident, it would have been loving for a Christian to have provided a written record of his obligations or financial expectations. And rather than reflect distrust, it shows love for the brother with whom we are dealing to make a written contract that will state clearly and exactly what he is obliged to do or is in position to receive. This loving step will minimize any cause for hard feelings or resentment if one of the imperfect parties should forget some details or responsibilities. And who of us is not imperfect, forgetful, or prone to misunderstand details or intents?—Matthew 16:5.

There are other ways in which making written business agreements reflects love for our brother, our family, and for the congregation in general. But it should be clear that beyond being loving, such written records in adequate detail are practical and Scriptural.



**O**n April 16, 1996, the Supreme Court of Connecticut, U.S.A., upheld the right of Jehovah's Witnesses to refuse blood transfusions. This decision reversed an earlier trial court ruling.

In August 1994, Nelly Vega, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, began bleeding severely after giving birth to her first child. Efforts to stop her hemorrhaging proved ineffective. As Mrs. Vega's condition worsened, the hospital sought to obtain a court order authorizing a blood transfusion. Mrs. Vega had already signed a medical release instructing that no blood or blood derivatives be administered to her during her hospital stay, thereby absolving the hospital of any responsibility for the consequences of her decision. Nevertheless, the hospital argued that forcing a blood transfusion would be acting in the best interests of the newborn, who, the hospital urged, needed its mother. The trial court was also concerned that, aside

## Supreme Court of Connecticut Upholds Patient's Rights

from her blood loss, Mrs. Vega was a young, healthy woman. Thus, despite the protests of both Mrs. Vega's husband and her attorney, the court granted the order and transfusions were administered.

In time, the case was brought to the Supreme Court of Connecticut. There, it was unanimously decided that the action of the hospital violated Mrs. Vega's rights. The ruling stated: "The hearing before the trial court took place in the middle of the night, under extreme emergency conditions that were not conducive to the ability of either party to develop fully its arguments."

This ruling of the Supreme Court of Connecticut is significant for people other than Jehovah's Witnesses. "It's important for all patients who might not agree with their doctors' decisions," says Donald T. Ridley, Mrs. Vega's attorney. "The ruling will prevent hospitals from steamrolling over patients' values, whether religious or secular."