A black and white photograph showing the lower half of a person's body from the waist down. The person is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt with a small collar. They are also wearing dark trousers and shiny black dress shoes. Their hands are visible; the left hand is tucked into their trouser pocket, while the right hand holds a folded stack of US dollar bills, specifically a \$100 bill on top. The background is a textured, light-colored floor.

MAY 1, 2000

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

## Why So Much Corruption?

# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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# Why Is There So Much Corruption?

"YOU ARE NOT TO ACCEPT A BRIBE,  
FOR THE BRIBE BLINDS CLEAR-SIGHTED  
MEN AND CAN DISTORT  
THE WORDS OF RIGHTEOUS MEN."

—Exodus 23:8.

**T**HREE thousand five hundred years ago, the Law of Moses condemned bribery. Over the centuries since then, anti-corruption laws have proliferated. Nevertheless, legislation has not succeeded in curbing corruption. Millions of bribes change hands every day, and billions of people suffer the consequences.

Corruption has grown so widespread and sophisticated that it threatens to undermine the very fabric of society. In some countries almost nothing gets done unless a palm is greased. A bribe to the right person will enable one to pass an exam, get a driver's license, land a contract, or win a lawsuit. "Corruption is like a heavy pollution that weighs on people's spirits," laments Arnaud Montebourg, a Paris lawyer.

Bribery runs especially rampant in the world of commerce. Some companies allocate a third of all their profits just to pay off corrupt government bureaucrats. According to the British magazine *The Economist*, as much as 10 percent of the \$25 billion spent every year in international arms trade serves to bribe potential customers. As the scale of this corruption has increased, the consequences have become catastrophic. During the last decade,

"crony" capitalism—corrupt business practices that favor the privileged few who have good connections—is said to have ruined the economies of entire countries.

Inevitably, the ones who suffer most from corruption and the economic devastation it spawns are the poor—the ones who are rarely in a position to bribe anyone. As *The Economist* succinctly put it, "corruption is but one form of oppression." Can this type of oppression be overcome, or is corruption inescapable? To answer that question, we must first identify some of the fundamental causes of corruption.

## What Are the Causes of Corruption?

Why do people choose to be corrupt rather than honest? For some, being corrupt may be the easiest way—or indeed the only way—to get what they want. At times, a bribe may provide a convenient means of avoiding punishment. Many who observe that politicians, policemen, and judges seem to ignore corruption or even practice it themselves merely follow their example.

As corruption snowballs, it becomes more acceptable until it is finally a way of life. People with pitifully low wages come to feel that they have no option. They have to demand

bribes if they want to make a decent living. And when those who extort bribes or pay them to gain an unfair advantage go unpunished, few are prepared to swim against the tide. "Because sentence against a bad work has not been executed speedily, that is why the heart of the sons of men has become fully set in them to do bad," observed King Solomon.—Ecclesiastes 8:11.

Two powerful forces keep stoking the fires of corruption: selfishness and greed. Because of selfishness, corrupt people turn a blind eye to the suffering that their corruption inflicts on others, and they justify bribery simply because they benefit from it. The more material benefits they amass, the greedier those practitioners of corruption become. "A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver," observed Sol-

omon, "neither any lover of wealth with income." (Ecclesiastes 5:10) Granted, greed may be good for making money, but it invariably winks at corruption and illegality.

Another factor that should not be overlooked is the role of the invisible ruler of this world, whom the Bible identifies as Satan the Devil. (1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9) Satan actively promotes corruption. The biggest bribe on record was the one Satan offered to Christ. 'I will give you all the kingdoms of the world if you fall down and do an act of worship to me.'—Matthew 4:8, 9.

Jesus, however, was incorruptible, and he taught his followers to behave in a similar way. Could Christ's teachings be an effective tool for fighting corruption today? The following article will analyze this question.



## Fighting Corruption With the Sword of the Spirit

"PUT ON THE NEW PERSONALITY WHICH WAS CREATED ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL IN TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LOYALTY."

—Ephesians 4:24.

**A**T ITS height, the Roman Empire was the greatest human administration the world had ever seen. Roman legislation was so effective that it is still the basis of the legal code of many countries. Despite Rome's achievements, however, her legions were unable to conquer one insidious enemy: corruption. Finally, corruption hastened Rome's downfall.

The apostle Paul was one who suffered under corrupt Roman officials. Felix, the Roman governor who interrogated him, apparently recognized Paul's innocence. But Felix, one of

the most corrupt governors of his day, delayed Paul's trial, hoping that Paul would give him money to secure his release.—Acts 24:22-26.

Instead of bribing Felix, Paul spoke to him frankly about "righteousness and self-control." Felix did not change his ways, and Paul remained in prison rather than try to sidestep the legal process with a bribe. He preached a message of truth and honesty, and he lived accordingly. "We trust we have an honest conscience," he wrote to Jewish Christians, "as we wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things."—Hebrews 13:18.

Such a stand was in stark contrast with the morals of the time. Felix's brother Pallas was one of the richest men of the ancient world, and his wealth—calculated at \$45 million—was accumulated almost entirely by bribery and extortion. His fortune, however, pales into insignificance when compared with the billions of dollars some corrupt 20th-century rulers have hidden away in secret bank accounts. Clearly, only the naive would believe that today's governments have won the war against corruption.

Since corruption has remained entrenched for so long, must we assume that it is just part of human nature? Or can something be done to curb corruption?

### How Can Corruption Be Curbed?

The obvious first step in curbing corruption is to recognize that corruption is destructive and wrong, since it benefits the unscrupulous to the detriment of others. Some progress has undoubtedly been made in that direction. James Foley, U.S. deputy secretary of state, said: "We all recognize that the cost of bribery is high. Bribes undermine good governance, harm economic efficiency and development, distort trade, and penalize citizens around the world." Many would agree with him. On December 17, 1997, 34 major countries signed a "bribery convention" that is designed to "have a major impact on the global fight against corruption." The convention "makes it a crime to offer, promise or give a bribe to a foreign public official in order to obtain or retain international business deals."

Bribes for winning business contracts in other countries, however, are just the tip of the corruption iceberg. Eliminating corruption across the board requires a second, much more difficult step: a change of heart or, rather, a change of many hearts. People everywhere must learn to hate bribery and corruption. Only then will graft disappear. To this end, *Newsweek* magazine said that some feel

that governments should "encourage a general sense of civic virtue." Transparency International, an anticorruption lobbying group, likewise recommends that its supporters "inject a 'seed of integrity'" into the workplace.

The fight against corruption is a moral one that cannot be won by legislation alone or by "the sword" of legal penalties. (Romans 13:4, 5) Seeds of virtue and integrity have to be sown in people's hearts. This can best be achieved by use of what the apostle Paul described as "the sword of the spirit," God's Word, the Bible.—Ephesians 6:17.

### The Bible Condemns Corruption

Why did Paul refuse to condone corruption? Because he wanted to do the will of God, "who treats none with partiality nor accepts a bribe." (Deuteronomy 10:17) Moreover, Paul doubtless remembered the specific instruction found in the Law of Moses: "You must not be partial or accept a bribe, for the bribe blinds the eyes of wise ones and distorts the words of righteous ones." (Deuteronomy 16:19) King David likewise understood that Jehovah hates corruption, and he requested that God not count him among the sinners, "whose right hand is full of bribery." —Psalm 26:10.

Those who sincerely worship God have additional reasons for rejecting corruption. "By justice a king gives a country stability," wrote Solomon, "but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down." (Proverbs 29:4, *New International Version*) Justice—especially when practiced from the highest official down—brings stability, whereas corruption impoverishes a country. Interestingly, *Newsweek* pointed out: "In a system where everyone wants a piece of the corruption pie and knows how to get it, economies can simply implode."

Even when economies do not collapse completely, lovers of justice feel frustrated when corruption flourishes unchecked. (Psalm 73: 3, 13) Our Creator, the one who gave us our

inherent desire for justice, is also wronged. In the past, Jehovah has intervened to stamp out blatant corruption. For example, he bluntly told the inhabitants of Jerusalem why he would abandon them to their enemies.

Through his prophet Micah, God said: "Hear, please, this, you head ones of the house of Jacob and you commanders of the house of Israel, the ones detesting justice and the ones who make even everything that is straight crooked. Her own head ones judge merely for a bribe, and her own priests instruct just for a price, and her own prophets practice divination simply for money... Therefore on account of you men Zion will be plowed up as a mere field, and Jerusalem herself will become mere heaps of ruins." Corruption had devastated society in Israel, just as it corroded Rome centuries later. True to God's warning, about a century after Micah wrote those words, Jerusalem was destroyed and abandoned.—Micah 3:9, 11, 12.

No man or nation, however, needs to be corrupt. God encourages the wicked to leave their way of life and change their way of thinking. (Isaiah 55:7) He wants each and every one of us to replace greed with unselfishness and corruption with righteousness. "He that is defrauding the lowly one has reproached his Maker, but the one showing favor to the poor one is glorifying Him," Jehovah reminds us.—Proverbs 14:31.

### Successfully Fighting Corruption With Bible Truth

What can move a person to make such a change? The same force that moved Paul to renounce the life of a Pharisee to become a stalwart follower of Jesus Christ. "The word of God is alive and exerts power," he wrote. (Hebrews 4:12) Today, Scriptural truth still promotes honesty, even among those who have been deeply involved in corruption. Consider an example.

Not long after finishing his military service, Alexander, who is from Eastern Europe, joined

a gang that practiced racketeering, extortion, and bribery.\* "My assignment was to extort protection money from wealthy businessmen," he explains. "Once I had gained the confidence of a businessman, other members of our team threatened him with violence. I then offered to handle the matter—for a hefty price. My 'clients' thanked me for helping them deal with their problems, when I was actually the cause of them. Strange as it may seem, this was an aspect of the job that I liked.

"I also enjoyed the money and the excitement that this life-style offered me. I drove an expensive car, lived in a nice apartment, and I had the money to buy anything I wanted. People feared me, which gave me a sense of power. I somehow felt that nobody could touch me and that I was above the law. Any problems with the police could be solved either by an expert lawyer, who had ways of getting around the justice system, or by a bribe to the right person.

"However, loyalty rarely exists among those whose living depends on corruption. One of our gang took a dislike to me, and I found myself out of favor. Suddenly, I lost my flashy car, my money, my expensive girlfriend. I even got badly beaten up. This reversal made me think seriously about the purpose of life.

"A few months earlier, my mother had become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and I began to read their literature. The text at Proverbs 4:14, 15 really made me think: 'Into the path of the wicked ones do not enter, and do not walk straight on into the way of the bad ones. Shun it, do not pass along by it; turn aside from it, and pass along.' Passages such as this convinced me that those who want to lead a criminal life have no real future. I began to pray to Jehovah and to ask him to guide me in the right way. I studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, and finally, I dedicated my life to God. I have lived honestly ever since.

"Of course, living by honest standards has

\* His name has been changed.

meant earning a lot less money. But now I feel that I have a future, that my life has real meaning. I realize that my former life-style with all its expensive trappings was just like a house of cards waiting to collapse at any moment. Formerly, my conscience was insensitive. Now, thanks to my study of the Bible, it pricks me whenever I am tempted to be dishonest—even in small matters. I am trying to live in harmony with Psalm 37:3, which says: ‘Trust in Jehovah and do good; reside in the earth, and deal with faithfulness.’”

### “He Who Hates Bribes Will Live”

As Alexander discovered, Bible truth can move a person to overcome corruption. He made changes in harmony with what the apostle Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians: “Put away the old personality which conforms to your former course of conduct and which is being corrupted according to his deceptive desires; . . . 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. Wherefore, now that you have put away falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, because we are members belonging to one another. Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work, that he may have something to distribute to someone in need.” (Ephesians 4:22-25, 28) The very future of mankind depends on such transformations.

Left unchecked, greed and corruption can ruin the earth, just as they contributed to the ruin of the Roman Empire. Happily, though, the Creator of mankind does not plan to leave such matters to chance. He has determined “to bring to ruin those ruining the earth.” (Revelation 11:18) And Jehovah promises those who long for a world free from corruption that



*With the Bible’s help, we can cultivate “the new personality” and shun corruption*

shortly there will come “new heavens and a new earth . . . and in these righteousness is to dwell.”—2 Peter 3:13.

True, it may not be easy to live by honest standards today. Nevertheless, Jehovah assures us that in the long run, “a greedy man brings trouble to his family, but he who hates bribes will live.”\* (Proverbs 15:27, NIV) By renouncing corruption now, we show our sincerity when we pray to God: “Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.”—Matthew 6:10.

While we wait for that Kingdom to act, each one of us can ‘sow seed in righteousness’ by refusing to condone or practice corruption. (Hosea 10:12) If we do so, our lives too will testify to the power of the inspired Word of God. The sword of the spirit can conquer corruption.

\* Of course, there is a difference between a bribe and a tip. While a bribe is given to pervert justice or for other dishonest purposes, a tip is an expression of appreciation for services rendered. This is explained in “Questions From Readers” in the October 1, 1986, issue of *The Watchtower*.

# FIRMLY UPHOLD GODLY TEACHING

*"Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight."—PROVERBS 3:5, 6.*

PRESENTLY, there are about 9,000 daily newspapers in circulation worldwide. Every year some 200,000 new books are published in the United States alone. According to one estimate, by March of 1998, there were about 275 million Web pages on the Internet. This figure is said to be growing at a rate of 20 million pages per month. As never before, people have access to information on just about any subject. While this situation has its positive aspects, such a superabundance of information has caused problems.

<sup>2</sup> Some individuals have become information addicts, always feeding an insatiable desire to be up-to-date while neglecting more important things. Others acquire partial information about complex fields of knowledge and then view themselves as experts. Based on only a limited understanding, they may make crucial decisions that can cause harm to themselves or to others. And always present is the danger of exposure to false or inaccurate information. There is often no reliable way to verify that the flood of information is accurate and balanced.

<sup>3</sup> Curiosity has long been a human trait. The dangers of wasting too much time in the pursuit of useless or even harmful information were recognized back in the days of

1. How are we exposed to human knowledge as never before?
2. What problems can result from access to a superabundance of information?
3. What warnings regarding the pursuit of human wisdom are found in the Bible?

King Solomon. He said: "Take a warning: To the making of many books there is no end, and much devotion to them is wearisome to the flesh." (Ecclesiastes 12:12) Centuries later the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "Guard what is laid up in trust with you, turning away from the empty speeches that violate what is holy and from the contradictions of the falsely called 'knowledge.' For making a show of such knowledge some have deviated from the faith." (1 Timothy 6:20, 21) Yes, Christians today need to avoid unnecessary exposure to harmful ideas.

<sup>4</sup> Jehovah's people also do well to heed the words of Proverbs 3:5, 6: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." Trusting in Jehovah includes rejecting any idea that conflicts with God's Word, whether it stems from our own reasoning or from that of our fellowman. To protect our spirituality, it is vital that we train our perceptive powers so that we can identify harmful information and shun it. (Hebrews 5:14) Let us discuss some sources of such information.

## A World Overpowered by Satan

- <sup>5</sup> The secular world is a *prolific source*
4. What is one way we can manifest our trust in Jehovah and his teachings?
  5. What is one source of harmful ideas, and who is behind it?

**Many popular magazines and books conflict with our Christian values**

of harmful ideas. (1 Corinthians 3:19) Jesus Christ prayed to God regarding his disciples: "I request you, not to take them out of the world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one." (John 17:15) Jesus' request that his disciples be protected from "the wicked one" acknowledged the influence that Satan has in the world. Our being Christians does not automatically shield us from the bad influences of this world. John wrote: "We know we originate with God, but the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19) Especially during this final part of the last days, it is to be expected that Satan and his demons will saturate the world with harmful information.

<sup>6</sup> It is also to be expected that some of this harmful information may appear harmless. (2 Corinthians 11:14) Consider, for example, the world of entertainment, with its TV shows, movies, music, and printed page. Many agree that in more and more cases, certain forms of entertainment promote degrading practices, such as immorality, violence, and drug abuse. On first exposure to a form of entertainment that sinks to a new low, audiences may be shocked. But repeated exposure can desensitize one. Never should we view as acceptable or harmless entertainment that promotes harmful ideas.—Psalm 119:37.

<sup>7</sup> Consider another source of potentially damaging information—the flood of ideas published by some scientists and scholars who challenge the Bible's authenticity. (Compare James 3:15.) Such material appears fre-

6. How can the world of entertainment cause moral desensitization?

7. What kind of human wisdom can erode our confidence in the Bible?



quently in mainstream magazines and popular books, and it can erode confidence in the Bible. Some individuals take pride in weakening the authority of the Word of God with endless speculations. A similar danger existed in the days of the apostles, as is clear from the apostle Paul's words: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ."—Colossians 2:8.

**Enemies of the Truth**

<sup>8</sup> Apostates can present yet another threat to our spirituality. The apostle Paul foretold that apostasy would arise among professed Christians. (Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Thessalonians 2:3) In fulfillment of his words, after the death of the apostles, a great apostasy led to the development of Christendom. Today, there is no great apostasy taking place among God's people. Still, a few individuals have left our ranks, and some among them are bent on defaming Jehovah's Witnesses by spreading lies and misinformation. A few work with other groups in organized resistance to pure worship. In doing so, they side with the very first apostate, Satan.

8, 9. How is apostasy manifesting itself today?

*Christians can exchange ideas without becoming dogmatic*

<sup>9</sup> Some apostates are increasingly using various forms of mass communication, including the Internet, to spread false information about Jehovah's Witnesses. As a result, when sincere individuals do research on our beliefs, they may stumble across apostate propaganda. Even some Witnesses have unwittingly exposed themselves to this harmful material. In addition, apostates occasionally take part in television or radio programs. What is the wise course to follow in view of this?

<sup>10</sup> The apostle John directed Christians not to accept apostates into their homes. He wrote: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, never receive him into your homes or say a greeting to him. For he that says a greeting to him is a sharer in his wicked works." (2 John 10, 11) Avoiding all contact with these opponents will protect us from their corrupt thinking. Exposing ourselves to apostate teachings through the various means of modern communication is just as harmful as receiving the apostate himself into our homes. Never should we allow curiosity to lure us into such a calamitous course!—Proverbs 22:3.

### **Within the Congregation**

<sup>11</sup> Consider yet another possible source of harmful ideas. While not intending to teach falsehoods, a dedicated Christian can develop the habit of speaking thoughtlessly. (Proverbs 12:18) Because of our imperfect nature, all of us will at times transgress with our tongue. (Proverbs 10:19; James 3:8) Evidently,

10. What is the wise reaction to apostate propaganda?

11, 12. (a) What was a source of harmful ideas in the first-century congregation? (b) How did some Christians fail to be firm in upholding godly teachings?



in the apostle Paul's day, there were some in the congregation who failed to control their tongue and got involved in quibbling debates about words. (1 Timothy 2:8) There were others who thought too much of their own opinions and even went so far as to challenge the authority of Paul. (2 Corinthians 10:10-12) Such a spirit resulted in needless conflicts.

<sup>12</sup> Sometimes these disagreements escalated into "violent disputes about trifles," disrupting the peace of the congregation. (1 Timothy 6:5; Galatians 5:15) Of those who caused these arguments, Paul wrote: "If any man teaches other doctrine and does not assent to healthful words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor to the teaching that accords with godly devotion, he is puffed up with pride, not understanding anything, but being mentally diseased over questionings and debates about words. From these things spring envy, strife, abusive speeches, wicked suspicions."—1 Timothy 6:3, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Happily, in apostolic times the majority of Christians were faithful and remained focused on the work of declaring the good news of God's Kingdom. They were busy looking after "orphans and widows in their tribulation" and kept themselves "without spot from the world," not wasting their time on futile debates about words. (James 1:27) They avoided "bad associations" even within the Christian congregation in order to safeguard their spirituality.—1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Timothy 2:20, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the situations described in paragraph 11 are not typical of the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses today. Still, we do well to acknowledge the potential for such futile debates. Of course, it is normal to discuss Bible accounts or wonder about aspects of the promised new world that have not as yet been revealed. And there is nothing wrong with exchanging ideas on personal matters, such as dress and grooming or choice of entertainment. However, if we become dogmatic about our ideas and take offense when others do not agree with us, the congregation may end up becoming divided over minor issues. What begins as harmless small talk may become harmful indeed.

### Guarding Our Trust

<sup>15</sup> The apostle Paul warns: "The inspired utterance says definitely that in later periods of time some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to misleading inspired utterances and teachings of demons." (1 Timothy 4:1) Yes, harmful ideas pose a real threat. Understandably, Paul entreated his dear friend

13. What was the conduct of most Christians in the first century?

14. If we are not careful, how can the normal exchange of ideas degenerate into harmful arguments?

15. To what extent can the "teachings of demons" harm us spiritually, and what counsel is offered in the Scriptures?

Timothy: "O Timothy, guard what is laid up in trust with you, turning away from the empty speeches that violate what is holy and from the contradictions of the falsely called 'knowledge.' For making a show of such knowledge some have deviated from the faith."—1 Timothy 6:20, 21.

<sup>16</sup> How can we today benefit from this loving warning? Timothy was given a trust—something valuable to care for and protect. What was it? Paul explains: "Keep holding the pattern of healthful words that you heard from me with the faith and love that are in connection with Christ Jesus. This fine trust guard through the holy spirit which is dwelling in us." (2 Timothy 1:13, 14) Yes, Timothy's trust included the "healthful words," "the teaching that accords with godly devotion." (1 Timothy 6:3) In harmony with these words, Christians today are determined to protect their faith and the body of truth with which they have been entrusted.

<sup>17</sup> Guarding that trust includes cultivating such things as good Bible-study habits and perseverance in prayer, while working "what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Galatians 6:10; Romans 12:11-17) Paul further admonishes: "Pursue righteousness, godly devotion, faith, love, endurance, mildness of temper. Fight the fine fight of the faith, get a firm hold on the everlasting life for which you were called and you offered the fine public declaration in front of many witnesses." (1 Timothy 6:11, 12) Paul's use of such phrases as "fight the fine fight" and "get a firm hold" makes it clear that we must *actively* and *determinedly* resist spiritually harmful influences.

### The Need for Discernment

<sup>18</sup> Of course, in fighting the fine fight of the

16, 17. What has God entrusted to us, and how should we guard it?

18. How can we display Christian balance in our approach to secular information?

faith, discernment is needed. (Proverbs 2:11; Philippians 1:9) For instance, it would be unreasonable to distrust all secular information. (Philippians 4:5; James 3:17) Not all human ideas conflict with God's Word. Jesus alluded to the need for sick people to consult a qualified physician—a secular profession. (Luke 5:31) Despite the relatively primitive nature of medical treatment in Jesus' day, he acknowledged that there was some benefit to be derived from a physician's help. Christians today display balance in the matter of secular information, but they resist exposure to any that might be harmful to them spiritually.

<sup>19</sup> Discernment is also vital on the part of elders when called upon to assist those who speak unwisely. (2 Timothy 2:7) At times, congregation members may get caught up in disputes about trifles and speculative arguments. To protect the unity of the congregation, elders should be quick to address such problems. At the same time, they avoid imputing wrong motives to their brothers and are not overhasty to view them as apostates.

<sup>20</sup> Paul described the spirit in which assistance is to be given. He said: "Brothers, even

19, 20. (a) How do elders act with discernment when assisting those who speak unwisely? (b) How does the congregation deal with those who insist on promoting false teachings?

### What Did We Learn?

- How may secular wisdom pose a threat to our spirituality?
- What can we do to protect ourselves from harmful apostate information?
- What kind of speech should be avoided within the congregation?
- How is Christian balance displayed when dealing with today's superabundance of information?

though a man takes some false step before he is aware of it, you who have spiritual qualifications try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness." (Galatians 6:1) Speaking specifically about Christians who struggle with doubts, Jude wrote: "Continue showing mercy to some that have doubts; save them by snatching them out of the fire." (Jude 22, 23) Of course, if after repeated admonitions someone insists on promoting false teachings, elders need to take decisive action in order to protect the congregation.—1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 3:10, 11.

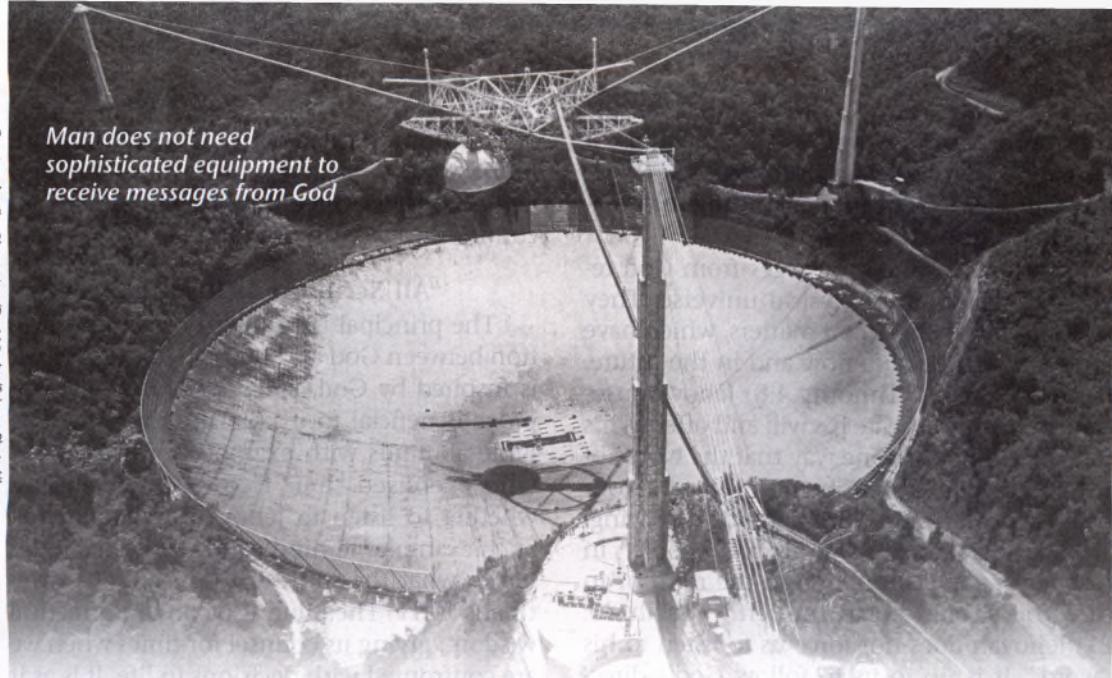
### Filling Our Minds With Praiseworthy Things

<sup>21</sup> The Christian congregation shuns harmful words that "spread like gangrene." (2 Timothy 2:16, 17; Titus 3:9) This is true whether such words reflect misleading secular "wisdom," the propaganda of apostates, or thoughtless talk within the congregation. While a healthy desire to learn new things can be beneficial, unbridled curiosity could expose us to harmful ideas. We are not ignorant of Satan's designs. (2 Corinthians 2:11) We know that he is making great efforts to distract us so as to slow us down in our service to God.

<sup>22</sup> As fine ministers, let us firmly uphold godly teaching. (1 Timothy 4:6) May we make wise use of our time by being selective about the information we choose to take in. Then we will not be easily shaken by Satan-inspired propaganda. Yes, let us keep considering "whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is." If we fill our minds and hearts with such things, the God of peace will be with us.—Philippians 4:8, 9.

<sup>21, 22.</sup> About what should we be selective, and with what should we fill our minds?

*Man does not need sophisticated equipment to receive messages from God*



## HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT HAS TO SAY

*"Your own ears will hear a word behind you saying: 'This is the way. Walk in it, you people,' in case you people should go to the right or in case you should go to the left."*—ISAIAH 30:21

THE island of Puerto Rico is the home of the world's largest and most sensitive single-dish radio telescope. For decades, scientists have been hoping to receive messages from extraterrestrial life, using this huge instrument. But no such messages have ever been received. Ironically, though, there are clear messages from outside the human realm that any of us can receive at any time—with out the use of sophisticated equipment. These come from a Source far loftier than any imagined extraterrestrial. Who is the Source of

1, 2. How has Jehovah communicated with humans throughout history?

such communications, and who are receiving them? What do the messages say?

<sup>2</sup> The Bible record contains several accounts of occasions when messages of divine origin were made audible to human ears. Sometimes these messages were delivered by spirit creatures serving as God's messengers. (Genesis 22:11, 15; Zechariah 4:4, 5; Luke 1:26-28) On three occasions, Jehovah's own voice was heard. (Matthew 3:17; 17:5; John 12:28, 29) God also spoke through human prophets, many of whom wrote down what he inspired them to say. Today, we have the Bible, which includes a written record of many of these

communications, as well as the teachings of Jesus and his disciples. (Hebrews 1:1, 2) Jehovah has indeed been transmitting information to his human creatures.

<sup>3</sup> All these inspired messages from God reveal little about the physical universe. They focus on more important matters, which have an impact on our life now and in the future. (Psalm 19:7-11; 1 Timothy 4:8) Jehovah uses them to communicate his will and offer us his guidance. They are one way that the words of the prophet Isaiah are being fulfilled: "Your own ears will hear a word behind you saying: 'This is the way. Walk in it, you people,' in case you people should go to the right or in case you should go to the left." (Isaiah 30:21) Jehovah does not force us to listen to his "word." It is up to us to follow God's direction and walk in his way. For that reason the Scriptures admonish us to listen to communications from Jehovah. In the book of Revelation, the encouragement to "hear what the spirit says" appears seven times.—Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Today, Jehovah does not speak to us directly from the heavenly realm. Even in Bible times, these supernatural communications were rare events, sometimes separated by centuries. Throughout history, Jehovah has most

3. What is the purpose of God's messages, and what is expected of us?

4. Is it reasonable in our day to expect God to communicate directly from heaven?

often communicated with his people in more indirect ways. Such is the case in our day. Let us consider three ways in which Jehovah communicates with us today.

### "All Scripture Is Inspired"

<sup>5</sup> The principal instrument of communication between God and humans is the Bible. It is inspired by God, and everything in it can prove beneficial to us. (2 Timothy 3:16) The Bible abounds with examples of real people who exercised their free will in deciding whether to listen to Jehovah's voice or not. Such examples remind us why it is vital to listen to what the spirit of God says. (1 Corinthians 10:11) The Bible also contains practical wisdom, giving us counsel for times when we are confronted with decisions in life. It is as if God were behind us, speaking in our ear the words: "This is the way. Walk in it."

<sup>6</sup> In order to hear what the spirit says through the pages of the Bible, we must read it regularly. The Bible is not just a well-written, popular book, one of many available today. The Bible is spirit-inspired and contains the thoughts of God. Hebrews 4:12 says: "The word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and their marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart." As we read the Bible, its contents pierce into our inner thoughts and motivations like a sword, revealing the degree to which our lives conform to God's will.

<sup>7</sup> The "thoughts and intentions of the heart" can change as time passes and as we are affected by our experiences in life—both pleasant and difficult. If we do not constant-

5. What is Jehovah's principal instrument of communication today, and how can we benefit from it?

6. Why is the Bible far superior to all other writings?

7. Why is Bible reading vital, and we are encouraged to engage in it how often?

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

The Gospels—History or Myth?

Pay Attention to God's Prophetic Word for Our Day

A Luxuriant Olive Tree in the House of God

ly study the Word of God, our thoughts, attitudes, and emotions will no longer be in harmony with godly principles. Hence, the Bible admonishes us: “Keep testing whether you are in the faith, keep proving what you yourselves are.” (2 Corinthians 13:5) If we are to continue hearing what the spirit says, we should heed the counsel to read God’s Word daily.—Psalm 1:2.

<sup>8</sup> An important reminder for Bible readers is this: Allow enough time to assimilate what you read! In an effort to comply with the counsel to read the Bible every day, we would not want to find ourselves rushing through several chapters without getting the sense of what we read. While reading the Bible regularly is vital, our motivation should not be solely to keep up with a schedule; we should have a genuine desire to learn about Jehovah and his purposes. In this regard, we may well use these words of the apostle Paul for self-examination. Writing to fellow Christians, he said: “I bend my knees to the Father, to the end that he may grant you . . . to have the Christ dwell through your faith in your hearts with love; that you may be rooted and established on the foundation, in order that you may be thoroughly able to grasp mentally with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness that God gives.”—Ephesians 3:14, 16-19.

8. What words of the apostle Paul help us to examine ourselves with regard to reading the Bible?

<sup>9</sup> Granted, some of us by nature do not enjoy reading, while others are avid readers. Regardless of our individual disposition, however, we can cultivate and deepen our desire to learn from Jehovah. The apostle Peter explained that we should have a longing for Bible knowledge, and he recognized that such a desire may have to be developed. He wrote: “As newborn infants, form a longing for the unadulterated milk belonging to the word, that through it you may grow to salvation.” (1 Peter 2:2) Self-discipline is vital if we are to “form a longing” for Bible study. Just as we can develop a liking for a new food after tasting it several times, our attitude toward reading and study can change for the better if we discipline ourselves to follow a regular routine.

### “Food at the Proper Time”

<sup>10</sup> Another avenue that Jehovah uses to speak to us today is identified by Jesus at Matthew 24:45-47. There he spoke of the spirit-anointed Christian congregation—“the faithful and discreet slave” appointed to provide spiritual “food at the proper time.” As individuals, the members of this class are Jesus’ “domestics.” These, along with “a great crowd” of “other sheep,” receive encouragement and guidance. (Revelation 7:9; John 10:16) Much of this food at the proper time comes in the form of printed publications, such as

9. How can we cultivate and deepen our desire to learn from Jehovah?

10. Who make up “the faithful and discreet slave,” and how is Jehovah using them today?

*Jehovah speaks to us through the Bible and by means of “the faithful and discreet slave”*



*The Watchtower*, the *Awake!*, and other publications. Additional spiritual food is dispensed in the form of talks and demonstrations at conventions, assemblies, and congregation meetings.

<sup>11</sup> The information provided by “the faithful and discreet slave” is designed to strengthen our faith and train our perceptive powers. (Hebrews 5:14) Such counsel may be general in nature so as to allow each one to make a personal application. From time to time, we also receive counsel that deals with specific aspects of our conduct. What attitude should we have if we are really listening to what the spirit says through the slave class? The apostle Paul answers: “Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive.” (Hebrews 13:17) True, all involved in this process are imperfect men. Still, Jehovah takes delight in using his human servants, though imperfect, to guide us in this time of the end.

### Guidance From Our Conscience

<sup>12</sup> Jehovah has given us another source of guidance—our conscience. He created man with an inner sense of right and wrong. It is part of our nature. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul explained: “Whenever people of the nations that do not have 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.

<sup>13</sup> Many who are not acquainted with Jeho-

11. How do we prove receptive to what the spirit has to say through “the faithful and discreet slave”?
- 12, 13. (a) What other source of guidance has Jehovah given to us? (b) What positive influence can the conscience have even on people who do not have an accurate knowledge of God’s Word?

vah can, to some extent, bring their thoughts and actions into harmony with godly principles of right and wrong. It is as if they were hearing a faint inner voice guiding them in the right direction. If this can be true of those who do not have accurate knowledge of God’s Word, how much more should that inner voice speak in the case of true Christians! Certainly, a Christian conscience that is refined by an accurate knowledge of God’s Word and that works in harmony with Jehovah’s holy spirit can provide trustworthy guidance.  
—Romans 9:1.

<sup>14</sup> A good conscience, one that is Bible-trained, can remind us of the way in which the spirit wants us to walk. There may be times when neither the Scriptures nor our Bible-based publications comment specifically on a particular situation in which we may find ourselves. Still, our conscience may sound a warning, cautioning us against a potentially harmful course. In such cases, ignoring the dictates of our conscience may, in effect, mean ignoring what Jehovah’s spirit says. On the other hand, by learning to rely on our trained Christian conscience, we can make good choices even when there is no specific direction in writing. It is vital to keep in mind, however, that when there is no divinely provided principle, rule, or law, it would be improper to impose the judgments of our own conscience on fellow Christians in what are purely personal matters.—Romans 14:1-4; Galatians 6:5.

<sup>15</sup> A clean, Bible-trained conscience is a good gift from God. (James 1:17) But we must protect this gift from corruptive influences if it is to function properly as a moral safety device. Local customs, traditions, and habits that conflict with God’s standards can, if followed, cause our conscience to malfunction

14. How can a Bible-trained conscience help us to follow the guidance of Jehovah’s spirit?
- 15, 16. What can cause our conscience to malfunction, and how can we prevent that from happening?

and fail to prod us in the right direction. We may prove unable to judge matters correctly and could even deceive ourselves into believing that a bad act is actually good.—Compare John 16:2.

<sup>16</sup> If we continue to ignore the warnings of our conscience, its voice will become weaker and weaker until we are morally unfeeling or insensitive. The psalmist spoke of such people when he said: "Their heart has become unfeeling just like fat." (Psalm 119:70) Some who ignore the proddings of their conscience lose the ability to think properly. They are no longer guided by godly principles and are unable to make proper decisions. To avoid such a situation, we should be sensitive to the leadings of our Christian conscience even when the issues in question seem minor.  
—Luke 16:10.

### **Happy Are Those Who Listen and Obey**

<sup>17</sup> As we establish a pattern of listening to 'the word behind us'—as it is provided through the Scriptures and the faithful and discreet slave—and as we heed the reminders of our Bible-trained conscience, Jehovah will bless us with his spirit. The holy spirit will, in turn, enhance our ability to receive and understand what Jehovah tells us.

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17. As we listen to 'the word behind us' and heed our Bible-trained conscience, how will we be blessed?

### **A Brief Review**

- Why does Jehovah communicate with his human creation?
- How can we benefit from a program of regular Bible reading?
- How should we respond to direction from the slave class?
- Why should we not ignore the dictates of a Bible-trained conscience?

<sup>18</sup> Jehovah's spirit will also embolden us to face difficult situations with wisdom and courage. As in the case of the apostles, God's spirit can stimulate our mental powers and help us always to act and speak in harmony with Bible principles. (Matthew 10:18-20; John 14:26; Acts 4:5-8, 13, 31; 15:28) The combination of Jehovah's spirit and our own personal efforts will bring us success as we make important decisions in life, giving us the courage to follow through on those decisions. For example, you may be considering adjusting your life-style to make more time for spiritual things. Or you may be faced with important, life-changing choices, such as selecting a mate, weighing a job offer, or buying a house. Rather than allowing our human emotions to be the sole factor in making our decisions, we should listen to what God's spirit has to say and act in harmony with its guidance.

<sup>19</sup> We truly appreciate the kind reminders and the counsel we receive from fellow Christians, including the elders. However, we need not always wait for others to bring matters to our attention. If we know the wise course to follow and what adjustments we need to make in our attitude and conduct in order to please God, let us act. Jesus said: "If you know these things, happy you are if you do them."  
—John 13:17.

<sup>20</sup> Clearly, in order to know how to please God, Christians do not need to hear a literal voice from heaven, nor do they need to receive an angelic visit. They are blessed with having God's written Word and loving guidance through his anointed class on earth. If they carefully heed this 'word behind them' and follow the guidance of their Bible-trained conscience, they will be successful in doing God's will. Then they will surely see the apostle John's promise fulfilled: "He that does the will of God remains forever."—1 John 2:17.

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- 18, 19. How can Jehovah's guidance benefit us in both our ministry and our personal life?  
20. What blessing comes to those who listen to 'the word behind them'?

## Happy Family Life Draws Others to God

**J**EHOVAH blessed Joseph with great wisdom and discernment. (Acts 7:10) As a result, Joseph's insight "proved to be good in the eyes of Pharaoh and of all his servants."—Genesis 41:37.

Similarly today, Jehovah gives his people insight and discernment through their study of the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) This wisdom and discernment produce good fruitage as Bible-based counsel is applied. Their good conduct has often 'proved to be good in the eyes of those who observe it,' as the following experiences from Zimbabwe illustrate.

- A woman had neighbors who were Jehovah's Witnesses. Although she did not like the Witnesses, she admired their conduct, especially their home-life. She observed that the husband and wife had a very good relationship and that their children were obedient. She particularly noted that the husband dearly loved his wife.

A common belief in some African cultures is that if a husband loves his wife, the wife must have used magic to "tame" him. So the woman approached the Witness wife and asked her: "Would you please give me the magic you gave to your husband so that my husband would love me as much as yours loves you?" The Witness answered: "Oh, yes, I will bring it to you tomorrow afternoon."

The next day, the sister visited her neighbor with her "magic." What was it? It was the Bible, along with the publication *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*. After considering information from the *Knowledge* book on the subject "Building a Family That Honors God," she said to the



woman: "This is the 'magic' that my husband and I use to 'tame' each other, and that is why we love each other very much." A Bible study was started, and the woman quickly progressed to the point of symbolizing her dedication to Jehovah by water immersion.

- Two special pioneers assigned to a small congregation near the northeastern border of Zimbabwe and Mozambique did not go out in the door-to-door ministry for two weeks. Why? Because people were coming to them to listen to what they had to say. One of the pioneers relates how this came about: "We were traveling nine miles to conduct a weekly home Bible study with an interested person. It was not easy for us to reach this area. We had to walk through mud, and we had to cross flooding rivers that came up to our necks. This involved balancing our clothes and shoes on our heads, navigating the river, and then getting dressed again on the other side.

"The interested person's neighbors were very impressed with our zeal. Among those who took notice was the leader of a local religious organization. He said to his followers: 'Don't you want to be zealous like those two young men who are Jehovah's Witnesses?' The next day, many of his followers came to our home to find out why we were so persistent. Additionally, over the next two weeks, we had so many visitors that we did not even have time to prepare food for ourselves!"

One of the individuals who visited the pioneers' home during this two-week period was the religious leader. Imagine the pioneers' joy when he accepted a home Bible study!

# Joyful Weddings THAT HONOR JEHOVAH

WELSH AND ELTHEA WERE MARRIED IN SOWETO, SOUTH AFRICA, IN 1985. NOW AND THEN THEY LOOK AT THEIR WEDDING ALBUM WITH THEIR DAUGHTER, ZINZI, AND RELIVE THAT JOYFUL DAY. ZINZI LOVES TO IDENTIFY THE WEDDING GUESTS AND ESPECIALLY ENJOYS PICTURES OF HER MOTHER DRESSED SO BEAUTIFULLY.

THE wedding started with a marriage talk given in a community hall in Soweto. Then a choir of Christian youths sang songs of praise to God in four-part harmony. Next, the guests enjoyed a meal while a music tape of Kingdom melodies played softly in the background. No alcoholic beverages were served, and there was no loud music or dancing. Instead, the guests enjoyed associating together and congratulating the couple. Altogether the proceedings lasted about three hours. "It was a wedding that will always bring me fond memories," recalled Raymond, a Christian elder.

At the time of their wedding, Welsh and Elthea were volunteer workers at the South Africa branch of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. They could not afford more than a modest wedding. Some Christians have chosen to leave the full-time ministry and get secular jobs in order to cover the expenses of an elaborate wedding. However, Welsh and Elthea have no regrets that they chose to have a modest wedding because it allowed them to continue serving God as full-time ministers until the birth of Zinzi.

What, though, if a couple should choose to have secular music and dancing at their wedding? What if they decide to provide wine or other alcoholic beverages? What if they can afford a large and elaborate wedding? How can they make sure that the event will

turn out to be a happy occasion that befits worshipers of God? Such questions need careful consideration, for the Bible commands: "Whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, do all things for God's glory." —1 Corinthians 10:31.

## Avoiding Revelry

It is hard to imagine a joyless wedding. There is a much greater danger in going to the other extreme and having too much unrestrained revelry. At many non-Witness weddings, things take place that dishonor God. For example, the use of alcohol to the point of intoxication is common. Sadly, this has even happened at some Christian weddings.

The Bible warns that "intoxicating liquor is boisterous." (Proverbs 20:1) The Hebrew word translated "boisterous" means to "make a loud noise." If alcohol can make one person noisy, imagine what it can do to a large crowd of people who get together and drink too much! Obviously, such occasions can easily degenerate into "drunken bouts, revelries, and things like these," which are listed in the Bible as "works of the flesh." Such practices disqualify any who are unrepentant from inheriting everlasting life under the rule of God's Kingdom.—Galatians 5:19-21.

The Greek word for "revelry" was used to describe a noisy street procession of semidrunk

youths who sang, danced, and played music. If alcohol flows too freely at a wedding, and if there is loud music and wild dancing, there is a real danger that the occasion will turn into something like a revelry. In such an atmosphere, weak ones may easily fall into temptation and commit other works of the flesh such as "fornication, uncleanness, loose conduct, [or succumb to] fits of anger." What can be done to prevent such works of the flesh from marring the joy of a Christian wedding? To answer that question, let us consider what the Bible says about a certain wedding.

### A Wedding That Jesus Attended

Jesus and his disciples were invited to attend a wedding in Cana of Galilee. They accepted the invitation, and Jesus even contributed to the joy of the occasion. When the wine ran short, he miraculously produced an extra supply of the finest quality. After the wedding, what remained over no doubt served the needs of the grateful bridegroom and his family for a time.—John 2:3-11.

There are several lessons we can learn from the wedding attended by Jesus. First, Jesus and his disciples did not crash the marriage feast. The Bible specifically states that they were invited. (John 2:1, 2) Likewise, in two illustrations of marriage feasts, Jesus repeatedly spoke of the guests as being present because they were invited.—Matthew 22:2-4, 8, 9; Luke 14:8-10.

In some lands it is customary for everyone in the community to feel free to attend a wedding feast whether invited or not. However, this can lead to financial hardship. A couple who are not wealthy may go into debt in order to ensure that there is enough food and drink for an unlimited crowd. Therefore, if a Christian couple decide on having a modest reception with a specific number of guests, this should be understood and respected by fellow Christians who are not invited. A man who got married in Cape Town, South Africa, recalls inviting 200 guests to his wedding. How-

ever, 600 turned up, and they quickly ran out of food. Among the uninvited ones was a bus-load of visitors who happened to be touring Cape Town on the weekend of the wedding. The conductor of this bus tour was a distant relative of the bride and believed that it was his right to bring along the whole group without even consulting the bride or groom!

Unless it has been stated that a reception is open to all, a true follower of Jesus would avoid attending a wedding reception uninvited and partaking of food and drink provided for the invited guests. Those tempted to go uninvited should ask themselves, 'Would my attending this wedding feast not show a lack of love for the newlyweds? Would I not cause inconvenience and detract from the joy of the occasion?' Rather than take offense at not being invited, an understanding Christian may lovingly send a message to congratulate the couple and wish them Jehovah's blessing. He may even consider helping the couple by sending a gift to add to the happiness of their wedding day.—Ecclesiastes 7:9; Ephesians 4:28.

### Who Is Responsible?

In parts of Africa, it is customary for older relatives to take over the wedding arrangements. Couples may feel grateful for this, since it relieves them of the financial obligations. They may feel that it also relieves them of responsibility for anything that might happen. However, before accepting any form of help from well-meaning relatives, a couple should be sure that their personal wishes will be respected.

Though Jesus was God's Son who "came down from heaven," there is no indication that he took over and directed most matters at the wedding in Cana. (John 6:41) Rather, the Bible account tells us that someone else was appointed to act as "the director of the feast." (John 2:8) This man, in turn, was answerable to the new family head, namely the bridegroom.—John 2:9, 10.

Christian relatives should respect the God-

appointed head of the new family. (Colossians 3:18-20) He is the one who should assume responsibility for what takes place at his wedding. Naturally, a bridegroom should be reasonable and, if possible, accommodate the wishes of his bride, his parents, and his in-laws. Still, if relatives insist on arranging matters contrary to the wishes of the couple, then the couple might have to refuse their help graciously and pay for their own modest wedding. In this way nothing will take place that leaves the couple with unpleasant memories. For example, at a Christian wedding in Africa, an unbelieving relative who acted as master of ceremonies made a toast to the dead ancestors!

Sometimes a married couple leave on their honeymoon before the wedding celebration ends. In such a case, the bridegroom should arrange for responsible ones to make sure that Bible standards are maintained and that the celebration ends at a reasonable hour.

### Careful Planning and Balance

Evidently, there was plenty of good food at the wedding Jesus attended, for the Bible describes it as a marriage feast. As has been noted, there was also plenty of wine. No doubt, there was appropriate music and dignified dancing because this was a common feature of Jewish social life. Jesus showed this in his famous illustration of the prodigal son. The wealthy father of that story was so happy for the return of his repentant son that he said: "Let us eat and enjoy ourselves." According to Jesus, the celebration included "a music concert and dancing."—Luke 15:23, 25.

Interestingly, however, the Bible does not specifically refer to music and dancing at the wedding in Cana. In fact, dancing is not referred to in any of the Bible accounts of

weddings. It would appear that among God's faithful servants of Bible times, dancing was incidental and not the main feature of their weddings. Can we learn anything from this?

At some Christian weddings in Africa, powerful electronic sound systems are used. The music can be so loud that guests cannot converse in comfort. Sometimes there is an obvious shortage of food but no shortage of dancing that easily becomes unrestrained. Rather than being a

marriage feast, such occasions may simply be an excuse for a dance party. Furthermore, the loud music often attracts troublemakers, strangers who simply come uninvited.

Since the Bible record of weddings does not stress music and dancing, should this not guide

a couple who plan a wedding that will honor Jehovah? Yet, in preparation for several recent weddings in southern Africa, Christian youths who were chosen to form part of the bridal party spent long hours practicing complicated dance steps. For months an inordinate amount of their time was used in this way. But Christians need to 'buy out the time' for "the more important things," such as the evangelizing work, personal study, and attending Christian meetings.—Ephesians 5:16; Philippians 1:10.

From the amount of wine Jesus provided, it appears that the wedding in Cana was a large, elaborate one. However, we can be sure that the occasion was not boisterous and that the guests did not abuse alcohol as was the case at certain Jewish weddings. (John 2:10) How can we be sure of this? Because the Lord Jesus Christ was in attendance. Of all men, Jesus would have been the most careful to obey God's command regarding bad association: "Do not come to be among heavy drinkers of wine."—Proverbs 23:20.



### CHECKLIST FOR A WEDDING RECEPTION

- If you invite an unbelieving relative to give a speech, have you made certain that he will not introduce some un-Christian tradition?
- If music will be played, have you selected only appropriate songs?
- Will your music be played at a reasonable volume?
- If dancing is permitted, will it take place in a dignified way?
- Will alcohol be served only in moderation?
- Will responsible ones control its distribution?
- Have you set a reasonable time for the wedding reception to conclude?
- Will responsible ones be present to ensure order till the end?

Therefore, if a couple decide to have wine or other alcoholic beverages served at their wedding, they should arrange for this to be done under the strict control of responsible individuals. And if they decide to have music, they should select suitable melodies and have a responsible person monitoring the volume. Guests should not be allowed to take over and introduce questionable music or raise the volume to unreasonable levels. If there is to be dancing, it can be introduced in a dignified and low-key way. If unbelieving relatives or immature Christians use vulgar or sensuous dance movements, the bridegroom might have to change the type of music or tactfully request that the dancing cease. Otherwise the wedding could deteriorate into a

riotous affair and cause stumbling.

—Romans 14:21.

Because of the dangers inherent in some types of modern dancing, loud music, and the free flow of alcohol, a number of Christian bridegrooms have decided not to include these features in their wedding. Some have been criticized for this, but instead they should be commended for their desire to avoid anything that might bring reproach on God's holy name. On the other hand, some bridegrooms arrange for appropriate music, a time for dancing, and alcohol served in moderation. In either case the bridegroom is responsible for what he allows to take place at his wedding.

In Africa some immature ones look down on dignified Christian weddings and say that they are like attending a funeral. However, that is not a balanced view. Sinful works of the flesh may bring temporary excitement, but they leave Christians with a troubled conscience and bring reproach on God's name. (Romans 2:24) On the other hand, God's holy spirit produces genuine joy. (Galatians 5:22) Many Christian couples look back with pride on their wedding day, knowing that it was a happy occasion and not a "cause for stumbling."—2 Corinthians 6:3.

Welsh and Elthea still recall the many favorable comments of unbelieving relatives who attended their wedding. Said one: "We are tired of the noisy weddings that take place these days. It was so nice to attend a decent wedding for a change."

Most important, Christian weddings that are joyful and dignified honor the Originator of marriage, Jehovah God.



## "I Will March Around Your Altar, O Jehovah"

"I SHALL wash my hands in innocency itself, and I will march around your altar, O Jehovah." (Psalm 26:6) With these words King David of old proclaimed his devotion to Jehovah. Why, though, would he "march around" Jehovah's altar, and in what sense?

For David, the center of Jehovah's worship was the tabernacle with its copper-covered altar of sacrifice, which during his reign was located at Gibeon, to the north of Jerusalem. (1 Kings 3:4) The altar was only about seven feet square, much smaller than the magnificent altar that would be erected in the courtyard of Solomon's temple.\* Still, David found great delight in the tabernacle with its altar, which was the center of pure worship in Israel.—Psalm 26:8.

Burnt offerings, communion sacrifices, and guilt offerings were made on the altar, and the annual Atonement Day featured sacrifices offered in behalf of the nation. The altar and its sacrifices have meaning for Christians today. The apostle Paul explained that the altar represented God's will, according to which He accepted an appropriate sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. Paul said: "By the said 'will' we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time."—Hebrews 10:5-10.

When about to minister at the altar, priests

\* That altar was some 30 feet square.



*The altar pictured Jehovah's will, by which he accepts a proper sacrifice for the redemption of mankind*

customarily washed their hands in water to cleanse themselves. Appropriately then, King David washed his hands "in innocency itself" before 'walking around the altar.' He acted "with integrity of heart and with uprightness." (1 Kings 9:4) If he had not washed his hands in this way, his worship—his 'walking around the altar'—would not have been acceptable. Of course, David was not a Levite and did not have the privilege of performing priestly service at the altar. Although a king, he was not even allowed in the courtyard of the tabernacle. Still, as a faithful Israelite, he obeyed the Mosaic Law and regularly brought his offerings for presentation on the altar. He walked around the altar in the sense of centering his life on pure worship.

Can we today follow David's example? Yes. We too can wash our hands in innocency and march around God's altar if we exercise faith in Jesus' sacrifice and, 'innocent in hands and pure in heart,' wholeheartedly serve Jehovah.—Psalm 24:4.



## THANKING JEHOVAH —THROUGH FULL-TIME SERVICE!

AS TOLD BY  
**STANLEY E. REYNOLDS**

I was born in London, England, in 1910. After World War I, my parents moved to a small Wiltshire village called Westbury Leigh. As a young lad, I often wondered, 'Who is God?' Nobody could ever tell me. And I could never understand why such a small community as ours needed two chapels as well as a church to worship God.

**I**N 1935, four years before the start of World War II, my younger brother, Dick, and I cycled to Weymouth on England's south coast for a camping vacation. As we sat in our tent listening to the pouring rain and wondering what to do, an elderly gentleman visited and offered me three Bible study aids—*The Harp of God*, *Light I*, and *Light II*. I obtained them, glad to have something to relieve the monotony. I immediately became enthralled with what I read, but little did I then know that it would completely change my life—and my brother's too.

When I returned home, my mother told me that Kate Parsons, who lived in our village, distributed the same type of Bible literature. She was well-known because, although being quite elderly, she rode a small motorcycle to visit people in our scattered community. I went to see her, and she gladly let me have the books *Creation* and *Riches* as well as other publications of the Watch Tower Society. She also told me that she was one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

After reading the books along with my Bible, I knew that Jehovah is the true God and I wanted to worship him. So I sent a letter of

*With my brother Dick (far left; Dick is standing) and other pioneers in front of the Bristol pioneer home*



*The Bristol pioneer home in 1940*



resignation to our church and started to attend Bible studies in the home of John and Alice Moody. They lived in Westbury, our nearest town. There were only seven of us at those meetings. Before and after the meetings, Kate Parsons played the harmonium as we sang Kingdom songs together at the top of our voice!

### **Early Days**

I could see that we were living in momentous times, and I longed to have a share in the preaching work prophesied at Matthew 24:14. So I gave up smoking, bought myself a briefcase, and made my dedication to the Great God, Jehovah.

In August 1936, Joseph F. Rutherford, the Watch Tower Society's president, was visiting Glasgow, Scotland, to speak on the subject "Armageddon." Even though Glasgow was some 400 miles away, I was determined to be there and to be baptized at that convention. Money was short, so I took my bicycle on the train to Carlisle, a town on the Scottish border, and cycled on from there 100 miles farther north. I also cycled most of the way home, returning physically exhausted but spiritually strengthened.

From that time on, I cycled whenever I went to share my faith with people in nearby villages. In those days each Witness had a testimony card with a Scriptural message for householders to read. We also used portable phonographs

to play records of Bible talks by the Society's president. And, of course, we always carried a magazine bag,\* which identified us as Jehovah's Witnesses.

### **Pioneering in Wartime**

My brother was baptized in 1940. The second world war had started in 1939, and we both saw the urgent need for full-time preachers. Hence, we submitted our pioneer applications. We were grateful to be assigned together to the Bristol pioneer home, there to join Edith Poole, Bert Farmer, Tom and Dorothy Bridges, Bernard Houghton, and other pioneers whose faith we had long admired.

A small van with "JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES" inscribed on its sides in bold letters soon arrived to pick us up. The driver was Stanley Jones, who later became a missionary in China and who was imprisoned there for seven years in solitary confinement on account of his preaching activity.

\* A cloth bag that could be hung from the shoulder and was designed for carrying copies of *The Watchtower* and *Consolation* (later, *Awake!*).

As the war progressed, we seldom got a full night's sleep. Bombs fell around our pioneer home, and we had to keep a constant watch for incendiary devices. One evening we left the center of Bristol after a fine assembly attended by 200 Witnesses and reached the comparative safety of our home through a hail of antiaircraft shell shrapnel.

Next morning Dick and I returned to the city to collect some things we had left behind. We were stunned. Bristol was a shambles. The entire city center had been blasted and burned out. Park Street, where our Kingdom Hall had stood, was a heap of smoking rubble. However, no Witnesses had been killed or injured. Happily, we had already moved our Bible literature from the Kingdom Hall and distributed it to the homes of members of the congregation. We thanked Jehovah on both counts.

#### **Unexpected Freedom**

The Bristol Congregation where I served as presiding overseer had grown to 64 ministers by the time I received my papers for national service. Many other Witnesses had been sent to prison on account of their neutral stand, and I expected my freedom to preach to be curtailed similarly. My case was heard at a local Bristol Tribunal where Brother Anthony Buck, a former prison officer,



*Stanley and Joan Reynolds on their wedding day, January 12, 1952, and today*



spoke in my behalf. He was a bold, fearless man, a stalwart for Bible truth, and as a result of his fine representation, I was unexpectedly granted complete exemption from military service on condition that I continued in my full-time ministry!

I was thrilled to have my freedom, and I determined to use it to preach to the greatest extent possible. When I received a call to report to the London branch office to talk to Albert D. Schroeder, the branch overseer, I naturally wondered what was in store for me. Imagine my surprise when I was invited to go to Yorkshire to serve as a traveling overseer, visiting a different congregation each week to help and encourage the brothers. I felt so inadequate for such an assignment, but I had my exemption and was free to go. So I accepted Jehovah's direction and willingly went.

Albert Schroeder introduced me to the brothers at an assembly in Huddersfield, and in April 1941, I took up my new assignment. What a joy it was to get to know those dear brothers! Their love and kindness made me appreciate even more that Jehovah has a people wholly devoted to him who love one another.

—John 13:35.

#### **More Privileges of Service**

An unforgettable five-day national convention was held

in 1941 at Leicester's De Montfort Hall. Despite food rationing and restricted national transportation, the attendance built up to a Sunday peak of 12,000; yet, at that time there were just over 11,000 Witnesses in the country. Recordings of talks by the Society's president were played, and the book *Children* was released. That convention was certainly a milestone in the theocratic history of Jehovah's people in Britain, held as it was in the midst of World War II.

Soon after this convention, I received an invitation to serve with the London Bethel family. There, I worked in the shipping and packing departments and later in the office, handling matters pertaining to the congregations.

The Bethel family had to contend with air raids on London night and day, as well as with constant checks by the authorities on responsible brothers working there. Pryce Hughes, Ewart Chitty, and Frank Platt were all sent to prison for their neutral stand, and eventually Albert Schroeder was deported to the United States. Despite these pressures, the congregations and Kingdom interests continued to be well cared for.

### On to Gilead!

When the war ended in 1945, I applied for missionary training at the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead and was accepted for the eighth class in 1946. The Society arranged for a number of us, including Tony Attwood, Stanley Jones, Harold King, Don Rendell, and Stanley Woodburn, to sail from the Cornish fishing port of Fowey. A local Witness had booked our passage on a small cargo ship carrying china clay. Our quarters were very cramped, and the deck was usually awash. How relieved we were when we finally approached our port of entry, Philadelphia!

The Gilead campus was beautifully situated at South Lansing in upstate New York, and the training I received there meant much to me. The students in our class came from 18 nations—the first time the Society had been able to en-

roll so many ministers from foreign lands—and we all became close friends. I greatly enjoyed the companionship of my roommate, Kalle Savaara from Finland.

Time passed quickly, and at the conclusion of five months, the Society's president, Nathan H. Knorr, arrived from the Brooklyn headquarters to give us our diplomas and to tell us where our assignments would be. In those days, students did not know their destinations until these were announced at the graduation ceremony. I was assigned to return to London Bethel to continue my work there.

### Back to London

The postwar years were austere ones in Britain. Food and many other necessities, including paper, continued to be rationed. But we got by, and Jehovah's Kingdom interests prospered. In addition to working at Bethel, I served at district and circuit assemblies and visited congregations, including some in Ireland. It was also a privilege to meet Erich Frost and other brothers and sisters from Europe and to learn from them something about the integrity of fellow Witnesses who had faced the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps. Bethel service was indeed a blessed privilege.

For ten years I had known Joan Webb, a special pioneer serving in Watford, a town just north of London. In 1952 we married. Both of us wanted to continue in full-time service, so we were thrilled when, after I left Bethel, I was appointed as a circuit overseer. Our first circuit was along England's south coast, in Sussex and Hampshire. Circuit work was not easy in those days. We traveled chiefly by bus, bicycle, and on foot. Many congregations had large, rural territories, which were often difficult to reach, but the number of Witnesses continued to grow steadily.

### New York City 1958

In 1957, I received another invitation from Bethel: "Would you like to come to the office and assist with the travel arrangements for

the forthcoming international assembly to be held at Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds in New York City in 1958?" Joan and I were soon busy handling applications from the brothers for the Society's chartered planes and ships. This turned out to be the famous Divine Will International Assembly, attended by a vast audience of 253,922. At this convention, 7,136 symbolized their dedication to Jehovah by water immersion—well over twice the number baptized on the historic occasion of Pentecost 33 C.E., as reported in the Bible.—Acts 2:41.

Joan and I will never forget the kindness of Brother Knorr when he personally invited us to attend the assembly to help care for the delegates arriving in New York City from 123 lands. That was a happy and fulfilling experience for us both.

#### Blessings of Full-Time Service

Upon our return, we continued in the traveling work until health problems came along.

Joan was hospitalized, and I had a mild stroke. We transferred to the special pioneer ranks but later had the privilege of temporarily serving in the circuit work again. Eventually, we returned to Bristol where we have remained in full-time service. My brother, Dick, lives nearby with his family, and we often reminisce.

My eyesight was irreparably damaged by detached retinas in 1971. Since then I have had great difficulty in reading, so I find the cassette recordings of Bible literature a wonderful provision from Jehovah. Joan and I still conduct home Bible studies, and over the years, we have been privileged to help some 40 individuals come to a knowledge of the truth, including one family of seven.

When we dedicated our lives to Jehovah over 60 years ago, our desire was to enter full-time service and stay in it. How grateful we are to have strength still to serve the Great Jehovah—the only way we can thank him for his goodness to us and for our years of happiness together!

## JEHOVAH IS GREATER THAN OUR HEARTS

"Jehovah is finding pleasure in those fearing him," wrote the psalmist. Indeed, the Creator rejoices in observing each of his human servants as they strive to uphold his righteous standards. God blesses his loyal ones, encourages them, and comforts them in times of despair. He knows that his worshipers are imperfect, so he is realistic in what he expects of them.—Psalm 147:11.

We may have no difficulty believing that Jehovah has great love for his servants in general. However, some seem to be so overly con-

cerned about their own shortcomings that they are convinced that Jehovah could never love them. "I am too imperfect for Jehovah to love me," they may conclude. Of course, we all have negative feelings from time to time. But some seem to wage a constant battle against feelings of worthlessness.

#### Feelings of Dejection

In Bible times a number of faithful individuals suffered from feelings of severe dejection. Job hated life and felt that God had

abandoned him. Hannah, who became the mother of Samuel, was at one time deeply distressed about her childlessness and wept bitterly. David was "bowed low to an extreme degree," and Epaphroditus was distressed because news of his sickness grieved his brothers.—Psalm 38:6; 1 Samuel 1:7, 10; Job 29:2, 4, 5; Philippians 2:25, 26.

What about Christians today? Perhaps illness, advancing age, or other personal circumstances prevent some from doing as much as they would like in sacred service. This may lead them to conclude that they are failing Jehovah and their fellow believers. Or some may constantly blame themselves for past mistakes, doubting that Jehovah has forgiven them. Perhaps others coming from difficult family backgrounds are convinced that they are just not worth loving. How is this possible?

Some grow up in families where the predominant spirit is not one of love but of selfishness, sarcasm, and fear. They may never get to know a father who deeply loves them, who looks for chances to praise and encourage, who overlooks misdemeanors and is prepared to forgive even more serious mistakes, and whose warmth makes the whole family feel secure. Since they never had a loving earthly father, they may find it hard to understand what it means to have a loving heavenly Father.

For example, Fritz writes: "My childhood and youth were strongly influenced by my father's unloving manner.\* He never gave any commendation, and I never felt close to him. In fact, most of the time, I was afraid of him." As a result, Fritz, who is now in his 50's, still has feelings of inadequacy. And Margarette explains: "My parents were cold and unloving. When I started to study the Bible, I had difficulty imagining what a loving father is like."

Such feelings, for whatever reason, can mean that our service to God is at times motivated, not primarily by love, but to a large

\* Names have been changed.

extent by guilt or fear. Our best never seems good enough. The desire to please Jehovah and our fellow believers may make us feel that we are stretched beyond our limits. As a result, we may fall short of our goals, blame ourselves, and feel despondent.

What can be done? Perhaps we need to remind ourselves of how largehearted Jehovah is. Someone who understood this loving aspect of God's personality was the apostle John.

### "God Is Greater Than Our Hearts"

At the end of the first century C.E., John wrote to his fellow believers: "By this we shall know that we originate with the truth, and we shall assure our hearts before him as regards whatever our hearts may condemn us in, because God is greater than our hearts and knows all things." Why did John write these words?—1 John 3:19, 20.

John clearly knew that it was possible for a servant of Jehovah to feel condemned at heart. Perhaps John himself had experienced such feelings. As a young man with a fiery temperament, John was on occasion corrected by Jesus Christ for being too severe in dealing with others. In fact, Jesus gave John and his brother James "the surname Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder."—Mark 3:17; Luke 9:49-56.

Over the next 60 years, John mellowed and became a balanced, loving, and merciful Christian. By the time he, as the last surviving apostle, penned his first inspired letter, he knew that Jehovah does not take each of his servants to task for every misdemeanor. Rather, he is a warm, largehearted, generous, and compassionate Father, who has deep love for all who love him and worship him in truth. John wrote: "God is love."—1 John 4:8.

### Jehovah Rejoices Over Our Service to Him

God knows our inborn weaknesses and shortcomings, and he takes these into

account. "He himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust," wrote David. Jehovah realizes the impact our background has in making us what we are. In fact, he knows us far better than we know ourselves.—Psalm 103:14.

He knows that many of us would like to be different, but we are unable to overcome our imperfections. Our situation could be compared to that of the apostle Paul, who wrote: "The good that I wish I do not do, but the bad that I do not wish is what I practice." All of us are engaged in the same struggle. In some cases this may result in our having a self-condemning heart.

—Romans 7:19.

Always remember this: More important than how we view ourselves is how Jehovah views us. Whenever he sees us trying to please him, he reacts not simply with mild satisfaction but with rejoicing. (Proverbs 27:11) Though what we achieve may seem to be relatively little in our own eyes, our willingness and good motive delight him. He looks beyond what we accomplish; he discerns what we *want* to do; he is aware of our wishes and desires. Jehovah can read our heart.—Jeremiah 12:3; 17:10.

For example, many of Jehovah's Witnesses are naturally timid and reserved people who prefer to keep a low profile. For such ones, preaching the good news from house to house can be a daunting challenge. Yet, moved by a desire to serve God and to help their neighbor, even timid ones learn to approach their neighbors and talk about the Bible. They may feel that they accomplish little, and this may rob them of their joy. Their heart might suggest that their public ministry is not worthwhile. But Jehovah surely rejoices over the great effort such ones put into their service. More

over, they cannot be sure when and where the seeds of truth sown will sprout, grow, and bear fruit.—Ecclesiastes 11:6; Mark 12:41-44; 2 Corinthians 8:12.

Other Witnesses suffer prolonged ill health or are getting on in years. For them, attending meetings regularly at the Kingdom Hall can be fraught with pain and anxiety. Listening to a talk about the preaching work might remind them of what they used to do and what they still want to do, though infirmity holds them back. Such may have pangs of guilt because they are not able to follow the counsel as much as they would like to. Yet, Jehovah surely treasures their loyalty and endurance. As long as they remain loyal, he never forgets their faithful record.—Psalm 18:25; 37:28.

Jehovah  
is not a severe  
despot but a warm,  
largehearted, and  
compassionate  
Father

#### "Assure Our Hearts"

By the time John reached old age, he must have understood much about God's largeheartedness. Remember that he wrote: "God is greater than our hearts and knows all things." Furthermore, John encouraged us to "assure our hearts." What did John mean by those words?

According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, the Greek verb translated "assure" means "to apply persuasion, to prevail upon or win over, to persuade." In other words, to assure our heart, we need to win our heart over, to persuade it to believe that Jehovah loves us. How?

Fritz, mentioned earlier in this article, has served as an elder in one of the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses for over 25 years and has found that personal study can reassure his heart of Jehovah's love. "I study the Bible and our publications regularly and carefully. This helps me not to dwell on the past but to keep a clear vision of our wonderful fu-

*Studying God's Word  
helps us to think  
as he does*

ture. At times, my past catches up with me, and I feel that God could never love me. But, in general, I find that regular study strengthens my heart, increases my faith, and helps me to keep joyful and balanced."

True, Bible reading and meditation may not change our actual situation. Yet, it can change the way we view our situation. Taking thoughts from God's Word into our hearts helps us to think as he does. Moreover, study enables us to grow in understanding of God's largeheartedness. We can gradually come to accept that Jehovah does not blame us for our childhood environment, and he does not blame us for our infirmities. He knows that the burdens many of us carry—be they emotional or physical—are often not of our own making, and he lovingly takes this into account.

What about Margarette, who was mentioned earlier? When she got to know Jehovah, studying the Bible was of great benefit to her as well. She, like Fritz, had to revise her image of a father. Prayer helped Margarette to consolidate what she learned through study. "To begin with I regarded Jehovah as a close friend, since I had more experience with loving friends than with a loving father. Gradually, I learned to pour out my feelings, doubts, anxieties, and troubles to Jehovah. I repeatedly talked to him in prayer, at the same time piecing together all the new things I was learning about him, rather like a mosaic. Af-



ter some time, my feelings for Jehovah developed to such an extent that I now rarely have trouble regarding him as my loving Father," says Margarette.

### Release From All Anxiety

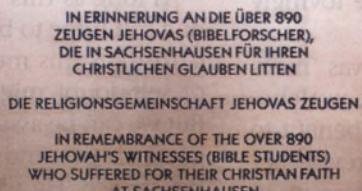
As long as this wicked, old system lasts, no one can hope to be free of anxieties. For some Christians this means that feelings of anxiety or self-doubt might recur and cause distress. But we can be assured that Jehovah knows our good motive and the hard work we put into his service. He will never forget the love we show for his name.—Hebrews 6:10.

In the approaching new earth under the Messianic Kingdom, all faithful humans can expect to be released from the burdens of Satan's system. What a relief that will be! Then we will see even more evidence of how largehearted Jehovah is. Until that time, let all be assured that "God is greater than our hearts and knows all things."—1 John 3:20.

# He Died for a Principle

"WE REMEMBER August Dickmann (born 1910), one of Jehovah's Witnesses." So begins the inscription on a plaque (shown here) recently unveiled in the former concentration camp of Sachsenhausen. Why would one of Jehovah's Witnesses rate such a plaque? The rest of the inscription tells the story: "[He] was publicly shot by the SS on September 15, 1939, because of conscientious objection."

August Dickmann was interned in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1937. Three days after the outbreak of World War II in 1939, he was ordered to sign his military induction slip. When he refused, the camp commander contacted Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS (*Schutzstaffel*, Hitler's elite guard), and asked permission to execute Dickmann in the presence of all other camp inmates. On September 17, 1939, *The New York Times* reported from Germany: "August Dickmann, 29 years old, . . . has been shot here by a firing squad." The news-



paper said that he was the first German conscientious objector of that war.

Sixty years later, on September 18, 1999, Dickmann's death was commemorated by the Brandenburg Memorial Foundation, and the memorial plaque now reminds visitors of his courage and strong faith. A second plaque on the outer wall of the former camp reminds visitors that Dickmann was just one of some 900 Witnesses of Jehovah who suffered in Sachsenhausen for their beliefs. Many more suffered in other camps. Yes, even under the terrible conditions of the concentration camps, many remained faithful to godly principles.

To Jehovah's Witnesses, it is a Christian duty to be "in subjection to the superior [government] authorities." (Romans 13:1) However, when governments try to force them to transgress God's laws, they follow the example of Christ's apostles, who said: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29) As a result, in a world where tribal enmities and ethnic hatreds have led

to shocking atrocities, Jehovah's Witnesses everywhere, like August Dickmann, pursue peace. They follow the Bible's exhortation: "Do not let yourself be conquered by the evil, but keep conquering the evil with the good." —Romans 12:21.