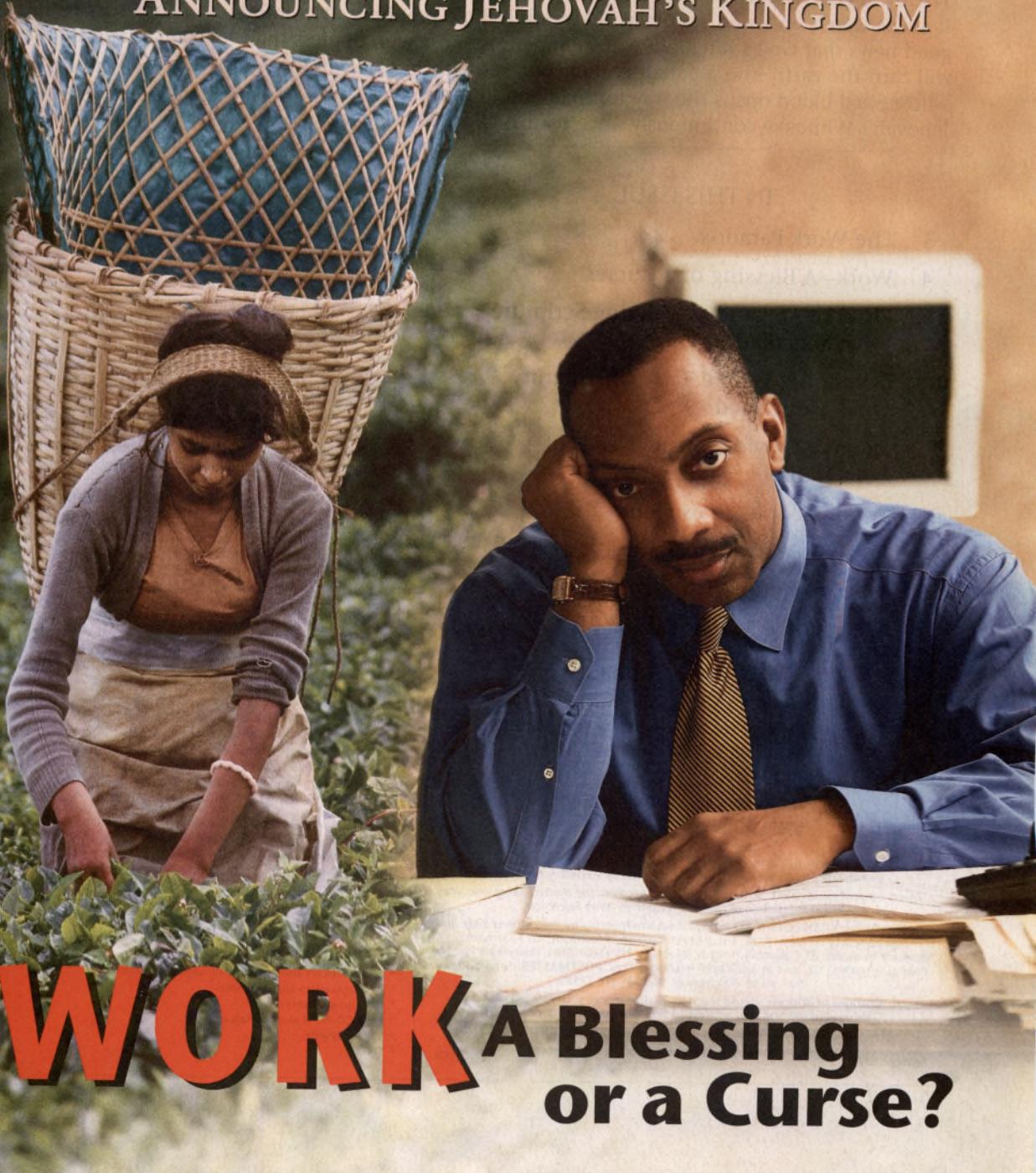


JUNE 15, 2005

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



# WORK A Blessing or a Curse?

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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# The Work Paradox

**"To work—to work! It is such infinite delight to know that we still have the best things to do."**  
—Katherine Mansfield, author (1888-1923).

DO YOU share the idealistic notion of work expressed in the statement above? How do you personally view work? Do you perhaps feel that work is a long, dark tunnel between leisurely weekends? Or has your work become a passion bordering on addiction?

For most people, the largest segment of their waking hours is devoted to work. Work may determine where we live and what kind of life-style we have. From young adulthood to retirement, many find that work is the single pursuit that most dominates their lives. Some of us get great personal satisfaction from our labor. Others measure the value of work by income or prestige, while still others see work as no more than a time filler or even a time waster.



There are those who work to live and those who live to work; others die at or because of their work. For instance, according to a recent United Nations report, work causes more pain and death "than wars or drug and alcohol abuse combined." Commenting on this, *The Guardian* newspaper of London reported: "More than two million people die from work-related accidents or disease every year . . . Exposure to dust, chemicals, noise and radiation [is] causing cancer, heart disease and strokes." Child labor and forced labor are just two other ugly realities of current working conditions.

In addition, there is what psychologist Steven Berglas calls "supernova burnout." He describes the diligent worker who has reached the pinnacle of his career only to feel "chronic trepidation, distress, despondency or depression attributable to the belief that he is trapped in a job, or on a career path, from which he can neither escape nor derive psychological gratification."

## Hard Work Versus Workaholism

In a world where many toil for long hours, it is useful to distinguish between hard workers and workaholics. Many workaholics see the workplace as a haven in a dangerous,



unpredictable world; the industrious experience work as an essential and sometimes fulfilling obligation. Workaholics allow work to crowd out all other aspects of life; hard workers know when to turn off the computer, to switch gears mentally, and to be present when celebrating their wedding anniversary, for example. Workaholics find an emotional payoff in overwork and get an adrenaline high from it; hard workers do not.

Modern society blurs the line between the two as it glamorizes overwork. Modems, cell phones, and pagers may blur the boundary between workplace and home. When any place can be the workplace and any time can be work time, some will work themselves to death.

How do some people react to such an unwholesome attitude? Sociologists have discerned a trend of overworked and overstressed people toward bringing spirituality

into the workplace and integrating religious and professional lives. The *San Francisco Examiner* reported that "the melding of spirituality and work has become something of a public phenomenon."

Regarding Silicon Valley, a high-tech mecca in the United States, a recent report stated: "As executives count the empty workplace parking slots as layoffs persist, parking spots at evening Bible studies are in short supply." Whatever the significance of that might be, many around the globe have found that the Bible has a positive influence on their outlook on work, resulting in a more balanced approach to life.

How can the Bible help us gain a balanced view of work? Are there any Scriptural principles that can help us face the challenges of the modern workplace successfully? The following article will deal with these questions.

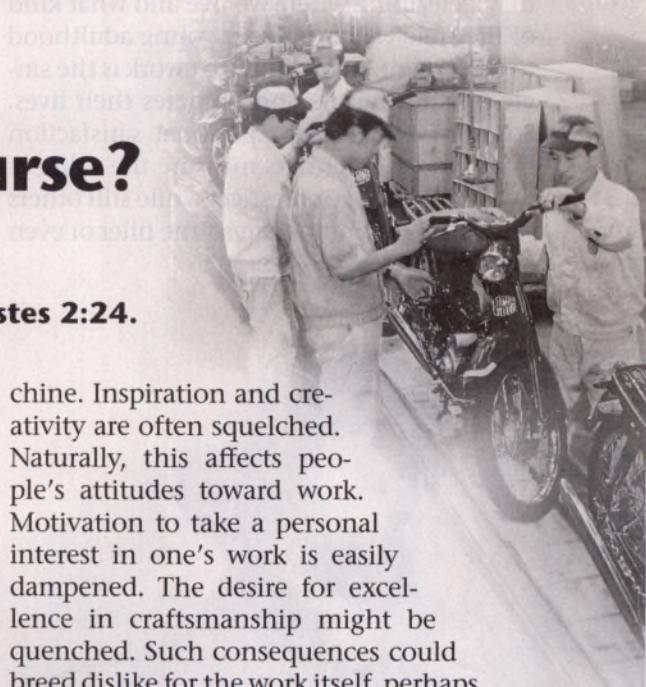
# Work A Blessing or a Curse?

**"With a man there is nothing better than that he should . . . see good because of his hard work."—Ecclesiastes 2:24.**

**"U**SED up at the end of the workday." In a recent survey, that is how 1 in 3 employees described the way they very often feel. This comes as no surprise in an environment where people suffer from stress; they work longer and take more work home—all the while having bosses who seldom offer a word of appreciation.

The advent of mass production has made many workers feel like little more than cogs in the wheels of a massive, impersonal ma-

chine. Inspiration and creativity are often squelched. Naturally, this affects people's attitudes toward work. Motivation to take a personal interest in one's work is easily dampened. The desire for excellence in craftsmanship might be quenched. Such consequences could breed dislike for the work itself, perhaps making a person hate his job.



## Examining Our Attitude

Granted, we cannot always change our circumstances. Do you not agree, however, that we can adjust our attitude? If you find that you have to some extent been influenced by negative attitudes toward work, you do well to consider God's viewpoint and principles relating to this subject. (Ecclesiastes 5:18) Many have found that considering these has given them a measure of happiness and contentment in their work.

**God is the Supreme Worker.** God is a worker. Perhaps we have not thought of him in that way, but that is how he first introduces himself in the Bible. The Genesis account opens with Jehovah's creating the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1) Think of the array of roles that God assumed when he thus started creating—designer, organizer, engineer, artist, materials specialist, project developer, chemist, biologist, zoologist, programmer, linguist, to name just a few. —Proverbs 8:12, 22-31.

What was the quality of God's work? The Bible record says that it was "good,"

"very good." (Genesis 1:4, 31)

Indeed, the creation is "declaring the glory of God," and we too should praise him! —Psalm 19:1; 148:1.

However, God's work did not end with the creation of the physical heavens and earth and the first human pair. Jehovah's Son, Jesus Christ, said: "My Father has kept working until now." (John 5:17)

Yes, Jehovah continues to work by providing for his creatures, sustaining his creation, and saving his faithful worshipers. (Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 36:6; 145:15, 16) He even uses people, "God's fellow workers," to assist with accomplishing certain tasks. —1 Corinthians 3:9.

*Many workers feel like cogs in an impersonal machine*

**Work can be a blessing.** Does the Bible not say that work is a curse? Genesis 3:17-19 might seem to imply that God punished Adam and Eve for their rebellion by putting the burden of work on them. When condemning those first humans, God said to Adam: "In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground." Was that a blanket condemnation of work?

No. Rather, because of Adam and Eve's unfaithfulness, extension of the Edenic Paradise would not happen then and there. The ground came under God's curse. Sweat and toil were required for a person to eke out a living from the soil.—Romans 8:20, 21.

Instead of presenting work as a curse, the Bible shows that it is a blessing to be cherished. As noted above, God himself is a hard worker. Having created humans in his image, Jehovah has bestowed on them the ability and the authority to manage his earthly creation. (Genesis 1:26, 28; 2:15) That work assignment was given before God pronounced the words recorded at Genesis 3:19. If work were a curse and an evil, Jehovah would never have encouraged people to engage in it. Noah and his family had much work to do before and after the Flood. In the Christian era, Jesus' disciples were also urged to work. —1 Thessalonians 4:11.

Still, we all know that work can be burdensome nowadays. Stress, hazards, boredom, disappointment, competition, deception, and injustice are just some of the "thorns and thistles" now associated with it. But work in itself is not a curse. At Ecclesiastes 3:13, the Bible calls work and its fruitage a gift from God.—See the box "Dealing With Work-Related Stress."

**You can glorify God with your work.** Quality and excellence in the workplace have always been praised. Quality is one of the keys to a Biblical view of work. God himself does his work with excellence. He has given

us talents and abilities, and he wants us to use our skills to a good end. For example, during the construction of the tabernacle in ancient Israel, Jehovah filled people like Bezalel and Oholiab with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, enabling them to carry out specific artistic and practical tasks. (Exodus 31:1-11) This shows that God took a special interest in the function, craftsmanship, design, and other details of their work.

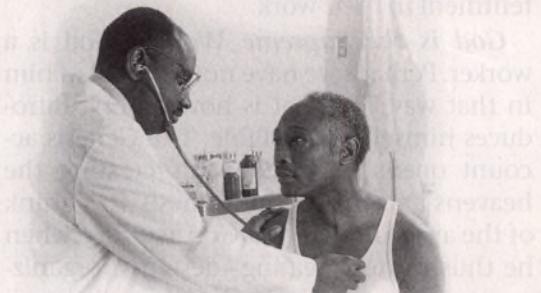
## DEALING WITH WORK-RELATED STRESS

Medical professionals have classified job stress as an occupational hazard. It can cause ulcers and depression and can even lead to suicide. The Japanese have a term for it—*karoshi*, “death from overwork.”

Various work-related factors can contribute to stress. These include a change in working hours or conditions, trouble with supervision, a change in responsibilities or kind of work, retirement, and dismissal. Reacting to such stress, some try to escape by changing jobs or environment. Others seek to suppress such stress, only to find that it spills over into other areas of life, most commonly the family. Some people even suffer emotionally, giving way to depression and despair.

Christians are well-equipped to deal with work-generated stress. The Bible provides numerous fundamental principles that can carry us through difficult times with a positive effect on our spiritual and emotional well-being. For example, Jesus said: “Never be anxious about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties. Sufficient for each day is its own badness.” The encouragement here is to focus on today’s problems, not tomorrow’s. Thus we avoid blowing our troubles out of proportion,

This has profound implications for our perception of personal abilities and work habits. It helps us see them in a sense as gifts from God, which are not to be taken for granted. Thus, Christians are admonished to do their work as if God himself were reviewing their performance: “Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men.” (Colossians 3:23) God’s servants are commanded to do good work,



only to increase the sense of pressure.—Matthew 6:25-34.

It is essential that Christians rely on God’s strength, not their own. When we feel that we are at the breaking point, God can give us peace and joy in our hearts and provide us with wisdom to deal with any hardship. “Go on acquiring power in the Lord and in the mightiness of his strength,” wrote the apostle Paul.—Ephesians 6:10; Philippians 4:7.

Finally, even stressful circumstances can produce positive results. Trials can make us turn to Jehovah, seeking him and trusting in him. They can also prompt us to continue cultivating a Christian personality and the ability to persevere under pressure. Paul admonishes us: “Let us exult while in tribulations, since we know that tribulation produces endurance; endurance, in turn, an approved condition; the approved condition, in turn, hope.”—Romans 5:3, 4.

Thus, even stress can become a catalyst for spiritual growth rather than the source of despair and grief.

thus making the Christian message more attractive to coworkers and others.—See the box “Applying Bible Principles in the Workplace.”

In the light of this, we do well to ask ourselves what kind of quality and diligence we put into our work. Would God be pleased with our performance? Are we fully satisfied with the way we carry out our assigned tasks? If not, there is room for improvement.—Proverbs 10:4; 22:29.

**Balance work with spirituality.** Although working hard is commendable, there is yet

another key element to finding satisfaction in work and in life. It is spirituality. King Solomon, who worked hard and enjoyed all the riches and comforts that life had to offer, came to this conclusion: “Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man.”—Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Clearly, we must consider God’s will in whatever we do. Are we working in harmony with his will, or might we be working against it? Are we endeavoring to please God, or are we just trying to please ourselves? If we do

## APPLYING BIBLE PRINCIPLES IN THE WORKPLACE

A Christian’s attitude and behavior on the job can make the message of the Bible attractive to coworkers and others. In his letter to Titus, the apostle Paul admonishes those in a situation like employees to “be in subjection to their [supervisors] in all things, and please them well, not talking back, not committing theft, but exhibiting good fidelity to the full, so that they may adorn the teaching of our Savior, God, in all things.”—Titus 2:9, 10.

For example, consider what one businessman wrote to the world headquarters of Jehovah’s Witnesses: “I am writing to ask permission to hire Jehovah’s Witnesses. I want to hire them because I know for a fact that they are honest, sincere, and trustworthy, and they will not cheat you. The only people I really trust are Jehovah’s Witnesses. Please help me.”

Kyle is a Christian who works as a receptionist at a private school. As a result of a misunderstanding, a coworker cursed at her in



front of some students. “I had to be careful not to bring shame on Jehovah’s name,” recalls Kyle. For the next five days, Kyle gave thought to how she could apply Bible principles. One is found at Romans 12:18: “If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men.” She e-mailed her coworker and apologized for the tension between them. Kyle invited her coworker to stay after work to talk and clear the air. When they did that, Kyle’s colleague softened and acknowledged the wisdom of Kyle’s approach. She said to Kyle, “This must have something to do with your religion” and gave her a warm embrace as they said good night. Kyle’s conclusion? “We can never go wrong if we apply Bible principles.”

not do God's will, we will eventually suffer the pain of despair, loneliness, and emptiness.

Steven Berglas suggested that burned-out executives 'find a cause they feel passion for and work it into their life.' There is no cause more worthwhile than serving the One who gave us the skills and abilities to do meaningful work. Doing work that pleases our Creator will not leave us dissatisfied. To Jesus, the work he was assigned by Jehovah was as nourishing, satisfying, and refreshing as food. (John 4:34; 5:36) And recall that God,

world can alert us to areas where we need to grow in faith.—1 Corinthians 16:13, 14.

### When Work Will Be a Blessing

Those who are now working hard to serve God can look forward to the time when he will restore Paradise and the whole earth will be filled with worthwhile work. Isaiah, a prophet of Jehovah, foretold regarding life then: "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have

**God is the Supreme Worker:**  
Genesis 1:1, 4, 31;  
John 5:17



**Work can be a blessing:**  
Genesis 1:28; 2:15;  
1 Thessalonians 4:11



**You can glorify God with your work:**  
Exodus 31:1-11;  
Colossians 3:23

**Balance work with spirituality:**  
Ecclesiastes 12:13;  
1 Corinthians 3:9

the Supreme Worker, invites us to become his "fellow workers."—1 Corinthians 3:9.

Worshiping God and growing spiritually prepare us for rewarding work and responsibility. Since the workplace is often filled with pressures, conflicts, and demands, our deep-rooted faith and spirituality can supply much-needed strength as we strive to be better employees or employers. On the other hand, the realities of life in this ungodly

occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating. . . . The work of their own hands my chosen ones will use to the full."—Isaiah 65:21-23.

What a blessing work will then be! By learning what God's will is for you and working in harmony with it, may you be among the blessed ones of Jehovah and always 'see good for all your hard work.'—Ecclesiastes 3:13.

# PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA

## Mixing Scripture With Speculation

IN 332 B.C.E., Alexander the Great advanced into Egypt. Before marching eastward on the road to world conquest, he founded a city that he called Alexandria. It became a center of Greek culture. There, about 20 B.C.E., another conqueror was born, one whose weapons were, not swords and lances, but philosophical reasonings. He is known as Philo of Alexandria, or Philo Judeus because of his Jewish background.

The Diaspora, which occurred after Jerusalem's destruction in 607 B.C.E., resulted in many Jews living in Egypt. Thousands lived in Alexandria. There were problems, however, between the Jews and their Greek neighbors. The Jews refused to worship the Greek gods, while the Greeks ridiculed the Hebrew Scriptures. With his Greek education and Jewish upbringing, Philo was familiar with the controversy. He believed that Judaism was the true religion. But unlike many, Philo looked for a peaceful way to lead the Gentiles to God. He wanted to make Judaism acceptable to them.

### New Meaning to Old Writings

Philo's first language was Greek, as was true of many Jews in Alexandria. So the Greek Septuagint version of the Hebrew Scriptures was the basis of his study. As he

examined the *Septuagint* text, he became convinced that it contained elements of philosophy and that Moses possessed "the genius of the philosopher."

Centuries earlier, Greek intellectuals had found stories of gods and goddesses—giants and demons of their ancient Greek mythology—hard to accept. They started reinterpreting those old stories. Classical scholar

James Drummond said this about their method: "The philosopher would begin to look for subtle meanings hidden beneath the surface of the mythological tales, and to infer from their very grossness and absurdity that their authors must have intended to exhibit through their sensuous imagery some profound or edifying truth." This process is called allegorical interpretation, and Philo tried to use it to explain the Scriptures.

As an example, think about Genesis 3:22 in Bagster's version of the *Septuagint*, which says: "The Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and clothed them." The Greeks felt that making clothes was beneath the dignity of the Supreme God. So Philo found symbolism in that verse and stated: "The garment of skins is a figurative expression for the natural skin, that is to say, our body; for God, when first of all he made the intellect, called it Adam; after that he created



*The great lighthouse of Alexandria*

Archives Charmet/Bridgeman Art Library

the outward sense, to which he gave the name of Life. In the third place, he of necessity also made a body, calling that by a figurative expression, a garment of skins." Thus Philo attempted to make God's act of clothing Adam and Eve a philosophical point to ponder.

Consider also Genesis 2:10-14, which describes the water source for the garden in Eden and mentions four rivers that flowed out of the garden. Philo attempted to penetrate the words and look far beyond the landscape. After commenting on the land itself, he said: "Perhaps this passage also contains an allegorical meaning; for the four rivers are the signs of four virtues." He spec-

ulated that the river Pishon represents prudence, the river Gihon is the symbol of sobriety, the Tigris symbolizes fortitude, and the Euphrates denotes justice. Thus allegory supplants geography.

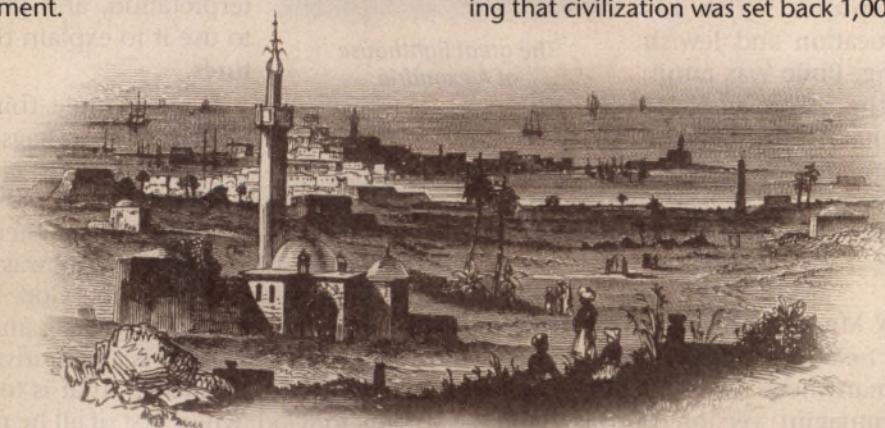
Philo used allegorical interpretation to analyze the creation account, the record of Cain murdering Abel, the Flood of Noah's day, the confusion of languages at Babel, and many precepts of the Mosaic Law. As the example in the preceding paragraph shows, he often acknowledged the literal point of a Bible verse and then introduced his symbolic understanding with such words as: "Perhaps we ought to look on these things as spoken in an allegorical sense." In Philo's

## THE CITY OF PHILO

Philo lived and worked in Egyptian Alexandria. For centuries, that city was the world capital of books and scholarly discussions.

Students learned from famous scholars who taught in the schools of the city. Alexandria's library became world renowned. Its holdings grew to hundreds of thousands of items as the librarians sought to obtain copies of every written document.

Later, the worldwide esteem for Alexandria and its stores of knowledge gradually diminished. Emperors in Rome gave preeminence to their own city, and the cultural center shifted to Europe. The decline of Alexandria climaxed in the seventh century C.E. when invaders conquered the city. To this day, historians lament the loss of the famous library, with some claiming that civilization was set back 1,000 years.



L. Chapons/Illustrierte Familien-Bibel nach der deutschen  
Übersetzung Dr. Martin Luthers

writings, symbolisms stand out while, sadly, the obvious meaning of the Scriptures fades away.

### Who Is God?

Philo argued for the existence of God with a powerful illustration. After describing the land, rivers, planets, and stars, he concluded: "The world is the most artificial and skilfully made of all works, as if it had been put together by some one who was altogether accomplished and most perfect in knowledge. It is in this way that we have received an idea of the existence of God." This was sound reasoning.—Romans 1:20.

But when Philo expounded on the nature of Almighty God, he strayed far from the truth. Philo claimed that God "has no distinctive qualities" and that God "is incomprehensible." Philo discouraged efforts to come to know God, saying that "to attempt to proceed further, so as to pursue investigations into the essence or distinctive qualities of God, is an absolute piece of folly." This thinking came, not from the Bible, but from the pagan philosopher Plato.

Philo said that God is so far beyond comprehension that calling him by a personal name is impossible. Said Philo: "It was, therefore, quite consistent with reason that no proper name could with propriety be assigned to him who is in truth the living God." How contrary to fact!

The Bible leaves no doubt that God has a personal name. Psalm 83:18 says: "You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth." Isaiah 42:8 quotes God as saying: "I am Jehovah. That is my name." Why did Philo, a Jew with knowledge of these Bible texts, teach that God was nameless? Because he was describing, not the personal God of the Bible, but a nameless, inaccessible god of Greek philosophy.

### What Is the Soul?

Philo taught that the soul is separate from the body. He speaks of man as "consisting of body and soul." Can the soul die? Notice Philo's explanation: "When we are alive, we are so though our soul is dead and buried in our body, as if in a tomb. But if it [the body] were to die, then our soul would live according to its proper life, being released from the evil and dead body to which it is bound." To Philo, the soul's death was symbolic. It never really dies. It is immortal.

Yet, what does the Bible teach regarding the soul? Genesis 2:7 says: "Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul." According to the Bible, humans do not *have* souls; rather, they *are* souls.

The Bible also teaches that the soul is not immortal. Ezekiel 18:4 states: "The soul that is sinning—it itself will die." From these scriptures we can properly draw a conclusion: A human is a soul. Therefore, when a human dies, a soul dies.—Genesis 19:19.\*

After Philo died, the Jews paid little heed to him. Christendom, however, embraced him. Eusebius and other church leaders believed that Philo had converted to Christianity. Jerome listed him as one of the Church Fathers. Apostate Christians, rather than the Jews, preserved the writings of Philo.

Philo's writings led to a religious revolution. His influence led nominal Christians to adopt the unscriptural doctrine of the immortality of the soul. And Philo's teaching about the Logos (or, Word)

\* Regarding the soul, *The Jewish Encyclopedia* of 1910 comments: "The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body is a matter of philosophical or theological speculation rather than of simple faith, and is accordingly nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture."

contributed to the development of the Trinity, a non-Biblical dogma of apostate Christianity.

### Do Not Be Misled

In his study of the Hebrew Scriptures, Philo made sure that he was "not omitting any allegorical meaning which may perchance be concealed beneath the plain language." However, as found at Deuteronomy 4:2, Moses said regarding God's Law: "You must not add to the word that I am commanding you, neither must you take away from it, so as to keep the commandments of Jehovah your God that I am commanding you." With all his apparently good intentions, Philo added layers of speculation that, like a thick haze, obscured the clear instruction of God's inspired Word.

"It was not by following artfully contrived false stories that we acquainted you with

the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ," said the apostle Peter. (2 Peter 1:16) Unlike the writings of Philo, Peter's instruction to the early Christian congregation was based on fact and on direction by God's spirit, "the spirit of the truth," which guided them into all the truth.—John 16:13.

If you are interested in worshiping the God of the Bible, you need truthful guidance, not interpretations based on human thinking. You need accurate knowledge of Jehovah and his will, and you need the humility to be a sincere student. If you study the Bible with that wholesome attitude, you will get to know "the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through the faith in connection with Christ Jesus." You will see that the Word of God can make you "fully competent, completely equipped for every good work."—2 Timothy 3:15-17.

## ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION TODAY

Allegory usually is "the expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence." Accounts that employ allegory are said to be symbolic of more important things that are hidden. Like Philo of Alexandria, some modern-day religious teachers use allegorical interpretation to explain the Bible.

Consider Genesis chapters 1-11, in which human history from creation to the scattering of peoples at the tower of Babel is recorded. *The New American Bible*, a Catholic translation, says regarding that part of the Bible: "To make the truths contained in these chapters intelligible to the Israelite people destined to preserve

them, they needed to be expressed through elements prevailing among that people at that time. For this reason, the truths themselves must therefore be clearly distinguished from their literary garb." This is saying that Genesis chapters 1-11 are not to be taken literally. Rather, just as garb (clothing) covers the body, so the words cover a deeper meaning.

Jesus, however, taught that those early chapters of Genesis were literally true. (Matthew 19:4-6; 24:37-39) The apostles Paul and Peter did likewise. (Acts 17:24-26; 2 Peter 2:5; 3:6, 7) Sincere Bible students reject explanations that do not agree with the entire Word of God.

# Expanding Where Early Christianity Once Flourished

ITALY, the boot-shaped peninsula extending into the Mediterranean Sea, has been a place where religious and cultural events have influenced world history. It is a magnet for millions of tourists attracted by the beauty of its diverse landscape, its famous works of art, and its delicious cuisine. This is also a country where Bible education thrives.

True Christianity may first have reached Rome—capital of the then world power—when Jews and proselytes who became Christians at Pentecost 33 C.E. returned home from Jerusalem. About 59 C.E., the apostle Paul visited Italy for the first time. In seaside Puteoli he “found brothers” in the faith.—Acts 2:5-11; 28:11-16.

As predicted by Jesus and the apostles, before the end of the first century C.E., apostate elements gradually fell away from true Christianity. However, prior to the end of this wicked system of things, true disciples of Jesus have spearheaded the preaching of the good news worldwide—including in Italy.—Matthew 13:36-43; Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8; 2 Peter 2:1-3.

## A Less Than Promising Beginning

In 1891, Charles Taze Russell, who was taking the lead in the worldwide preaching work of the Bible Students (as Jehovah’s Witnesses were then known), visited some Italian cities for the first time. He had to admit that the result of his ministry there was not very promising: “We saw nothing to encourage us to hope for any harvest in Italy.” In the spring of 1910, Brother Russell returned to Italy and delivered a Bible lecture in a gymnasium in the center of Rome. What



was the result? “On the whole,” he reported, “the meeting was quite a disappointment.”

In fact, for some decades the progress of the preaching of the good news in Italy was slow, partly because Jehovah’s Witnesses were persecuted by the Fascist dictatorship. During that period, there were no more than 150 Witnesses of Jehovah in the country, the majority of whom had learned Bible truths from relatives or friends who lived abroad.

## Spectacular Progress

Following World War II, a number of missionaries were sent to Italy. But as shown by correspondence found in State archives, high-ranking individuals in the Vatican hierarchy asked the government to expel the missionaries. With a few exceptions, the missionaries were forced to leave the country.

Despite the obstacles, crowds in Italy began streaming to “the mountain” of Jehovah’s worship. (Isaiah 2:2-4) The increase in

Witnesses has been remarkable. In 2004 there was a peak of 233,527 publishers of the good news, 1 for every 248 inhabitants, and 433,242 attended the Memorial of Christ's death. There were 3,049 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses meeting in comfortable Kingdom Halls. In recent times, certain segments of the population in particular have been enjoying considerable growth.

### Preaching in Scores of Languages

Many immigrants from Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe come to Italy to find work or a better life or, in some cases, to escape tragic situations. How can these millions be helped spiritually?

Many Witnesses in Italy have accepted the challenge of learning difficult languages, such as Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Punjabi, Sinhala, and Tagalog. Starting in 2001, language courses were held to teach these willing ones to give a witness in foreign languages. During the past three years, 3,711 Witnesses attended 79 courses held in 17 different languages. This has made it possible to form and strengthen 146 congregations and 274 groups in 25 different languages. Many sincere ones have thus heard the good news and have started to study the Bible. Often the results are extraordinary.

#### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

"Happy Are Those Conscious of Their Spiritual Need"

"Bringing Good News of Something Better"

Good News for People of All Nations

A minister of Jehovah's Witnesses spoke about the Bible to George, a Malayalam-speaking man from India. Despite having major problems with work, George happily accepted a Bible study. A few days later, George's friend Gil, a Punjabi-speaking Indian man, went to the Kingdom Hall, and a Bible study was started with him. Gil introduced David, a Telugu-speaking Indian, to the Witnesses. David was soon studying the Bible. Two other Indians, Sonny and Shubash, were living in the same house as David. Both of them joined in the Bible study.

Some weeks later, the Witnesses received a telephone call from Dalip, a Marathi-speaking man. He said: "I am George's friend. Can you teach me the Bible?" Then came Sumit, a Tamil-speaking man. Finally, another of George's friends telephoned, asking for a Bible study. George then brought another young man, Max, to the Kingdom Hall. He too asked for a study. To date, six Bible studies are being conducted, and arrangements are being made for four more. They are held in English, although publications in Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu are also being used.

#### The Deaf "Hear" the Good News

There are more than 90,000 deaf people in Italy. In the mid-1970's, the Witnesses began to give attention to teaching Bible truth to them. Initially, some deaf Witnesses taught Italian Sign Language (ISL) to fellow ministers who were willing to assist in that field. Then more and more deaf people started to show interest in the Bible. Today, more than 1,400 who use ISL are attending Christian meetings. Fifteen congregations and 52 groups hold meetings in ISL.

At first, preaching to deaf people depended mainly on the initiative of individual Witnesses. But in 1978, the Italy branch of-

fice of Jehovah's Witnesses began to organize conventions for the deaf. In May of that year, it was announced that at the forthcoming international convention in Milan, there would be sessions for the deaf. The first circuit assembly for the deaf was held at the Assembly Hall in Milan in February 1979.

The branch office has since paid close attention to the spiritual nourishment of deaf ones by encouraging a growing number of evangelizers to improve in their skill with this language. Since 1995, special pioneers (full-time evangelizers) have been sent to some groups to train deaf Witnesses in the ministry and to organize Christian meetings. Three Assembly Halls are equipped with state-of-the-art video systems to improve program viewing. And videocassettes of Christian publications are available to provide spiritual food to deaf people.

Observers have noticed that the Witnesses care well for the spiritual needs of deaf people. *P@role & Segni*, a magazine published by the Italian Deaf Society, quoted from a letter

sent by a Catholic monsignor: "Being deaf is awkward in the sense that the deaf person needs constant attention. For example, he arrives at the church alone without any difficulty, but he needs the aid of an interpreter to follow everything that is being read, declared, or sung during the services." The magazine added that the prelate "reckons that unfortunately, the church is not yet prepared to deal with the disability, and he points out that many deaf people are better cared for in Kingdom Halls of Jehovah's Witnesses than in the parish church."

### Good News Preached to Prisoners

Can one be free yet still be in prison? Yes, because God's Word has the power to 'set free' those who accept it and apply it in their



*The Bitonto Assembly Hall and an Italian Sign Language congregation in Rome*



lives. The message that Jesus proclaimed "to the captives" was freedom from sin and false religion. (John 8:32; Luke 4:16-19) In Italy excellent results are being obtained by preaching in prisons. Almost 400 ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses have been authorized by the State to visit prisoners in order to provide spiritual assistance. Jehovah's Witnesses were the first non-Catholic organization to ask for and obtain such permission.

The Bible's message may be spread in unpredictable ways. Prisoners talk to fellow inmates about the Bible education work of Jehovah's Witnesses. Some of those inmates have, in turn, requested a visit by a Witness minister. Or family members who have started studying the Bible encourage the prisoners to request a visit by the Witnesses. Some prisoners who are serving life sentences for homicide or other serious crimes have repented and drastically changed their lives. This prepares them for dedication to Jehovah God and for baptism.

In a number of prisons, arrangements have been made to give public discourses on Bible subjects, to commemorate the Memorial of Jesus' death, and to show video-cassettes of Bible programs produced by Jehovah's Witnesses. Often scores of prisoners attend these meetings.

To help the prison population in practical ways, the Witnesses have widely distributed magazines that deal with subjects the inmates will find helpful. One such magazine was the May 8, 2001, *Awake!*, which discussed the subject "Can Prisoners Be Reformed?" The April 8, 2003, issue was on the topic "Drug Abuse in the Family—What Can You Do?" Thousands of copies have been placed with prisoners. As a result, several hundred Bible studies are being conducted.



*Prisoners are being 'set free' by Bible truth*

Some prison guards have also shown interest in the Bible's message.

After obtaining a special permit from the authorities, a prisoner named Costantino was baptized in a Kingdom Hall in San Remo, with 138 local Witnesses present. "I felt that I was showered with affection," said a visibly moved Costantino after the event. A local newspaper reported the words of the prison warden: "It was with great joy... that we granted this permission. Everything that can further the social, personal, and spiritual rehabilitation of a prisoner should be considered." Costantino's wife and daughter were impressed with the way accurate knowledge of the Bible had affected Costantino's life: "We are proud of him for the changes he has made. He has become peaceable, and his concern for us keeps growing. We have renewed trust in and respect for him." They too have started to study the Bible and to attend Christian meetings.

Sergio, who was convicted of theft, armed robbery, drug smuggling, and homicide, was sentenced to imprisonment until 2024. After examining the Scriptures for three years and turning his life around, Sergio decided to get baptized. He is the 15th prisoner in the Porto Azzurro prison, on the isle of Elba, to get baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. With several fellow inmates in atten-

dance, his baptism was held in a portable pool set up on the prison's sporting grounds.

Leonardo, who is serving a 20-year prison sentence, obtained special permission to get baptized in a Kingdom Hall in Parma. Interviewed by the local newspaper, Leonardo stated that he wanted to "make it clear that he had decided to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, not to find a way out of the darkness of prison, but to fill a deeply felt spiritual need." Leonardo said: "My life has been one of errors, but I have left that behind. I have changed, though not overnight. I will need to continue being upright."

Salvatore, who was convicted of homicide, is in the Spoleto maximum-security prison. His baptism, held within prison walls, im-

pressed many. The prison warden there said: "The social importance of a choice that leads to better behavior toward all should be encouraged, both for the benefit of the prison community and for all society." As a result of the changes Salvatore has made, his wife and a daughter are now attending the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. A prisoner to whom Salvatore had witnessed was baptized as a dedicated servant of Jehovah.

Some of early Christianity's expansion and increase took place in Italy. (Acts 2:10; Romans 1:7) In this time of harvest, spiritual growth and expansion continue in the same areas where Paul and his fellow Christians toiled to preach the good news.—Acts 23:11; 28:14-16.



*Spiritual growth continues where early Christianity once flourished*

# PARENTS, PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF YOUR FAMILY

*"If anyone does not provide for those who are his own, . . . he has disowned the faith."* —1 TIMOTHY 5:8.

**W**HEN you look around in the Christian congregation before a meeting begins, you may see clean and well-dressed children settling into their seats alongside their parents. Is it not pleasant to see the love evident in such families—the love for Jehovah and for one another? It is easy to forget, though, how much effort goes into getting a family to the meetings on time.

<sup>2</sup> In most cases, parents are very busy all day long, and on meeting nights, family life becomes even busier. There is a meal to prepare, chores to do, homework to complete. The parents carry the heaviest load, making sure that everyone is clean, fed, and ready on time. Of course, with children the unexpected may happen at the most inopportune moments. The oldest tears his pants while playing. The youngest spills his food. The children begin to bicker. (Proverbs 22:15) The result? Even careful parental planning may go awry. Yet, the family is nearly always at the Kingdom Hall well before the meeting starts. How encouraging it is to see them there week after week, year af-

1, 2. (a) Why is it encouraging to see families attending Christian meetings together? (b) What are some challenges that families face in order to get to meetings on time?



*Many birds labor tirelessly to provide for their young*

ter year, as the children grow up to serve Jehovah!

<sup>3</sup> Though your work as a parent is at times difficult, even exhausting, you may be assured that Jehovah great-

ly values your efforts. Jehovah is the Originator of the family arrangement. His Word thus says that every family "owes its name"—its very existence—to Jehovah. (Ephesians 3:14, 15) So when you parents seek to fulfill your family roles in the right way, you honor the Sovereign Lord of the universe. (1 Corinthians 10:31) Is that not a great privilege? It is fitting, then, that we consider the assignment that Jehovah

has given to parents. In this article, we will think of that in terms of *providing* for the family. Let us review three ways in which God expects parents to provide.

## Providing Materially

<sup>4</sup> The apostle Paul wrote: "Certainly if anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without

3. How do we know that Jehovah greatly values families?
4. In the family, what arrangements has Jehovah made to provide for the needs of the children?

faith." (1 Timothy 5:8) When Paul spoke of "anyone" here, whom did he have in mind? It was the family head, usually the father. God also gives the woman a dignified role as helper to her husband. (Genesis 2:18) Women in Bible times often helped their husbands to provide for the family. (Proverbs 31: 13, 14, 16) Today, single-parent families are ever more common.\* Many single Christian parents are doing an admirable job of providing for their household. Of course, it is ideal for a family to have both parents, with the father taking the lead.

<sup>5</sup> At 1 Timothy 5:8, what kind of providing did Paul have in mind? The context suggests that he was speaking directly about the material needs of the family. In today's world, there are many obstacles a family head may face in order to provide in that way. Economic hardships are common worldwide, as are layoffs, high unemployment rates, and a rising cost of living. What can help a provider to persevere in the face of such challenges?

<sup>6</sup> A provider does well to remember that he is carrying out an assignment from Jehovah. Paul's inspired words show that a man who is able to obey this command yet refuses to do so is comparable to one who has "disowned the faith." A Christian would do his utmost to avoid such a standing before his God. Sadly, though, many people in today's world have "no natural affection." (2 Timothy 3:1, 3) Indeed, countless fathers shirk their responsibility, leaving their family in the lurch. Christian husbands do not share that hard-hearted, casual view of providing for their

\* In this discussion, the provider will generally be referred to in the male gender. However, the principles are also applicable to Christian women who serve as primary providers.

5, 6. (a) What are some of the challenges facing those trying to provide materially for their own? (b) Maintaining what viewpoint toward secular work will help Christian providers to persevere?

own. Unlike many of their coworkers, Christian providers see even the most menial of jobs as being dignified and important, a means of pleasing Jehovah God, since it enables them to provide for their loved ones.

<sup>7</sup> Family heads may also find it helpful to contemplate Jesus' perfect example. Remember, the Bible prophetically refers to Jesus as our "Eternal Father." (Isaiah 9:6, 7) As "the last Adam," Jesus effectively replaces "the first man Adam" as the father of those of mankind who exercise faith. (1 Corinthians 15:45) Unlike Adam, who turned out to be a selfish, self-serving father, Jesus is the ideal father. The Bible says of him: "By this we have come to know love, because that one surrendered his soul for us." (1 John 3:16) Yes, Jesus willingly offered up his own life for others. However, he also on a day-to-day basis put the needs of others ahead of his own in smaller ways. You parents do well to imitate that self-sacrificing spirit.

<sup>8</sup> Parents can learn much about selfless love from Jesus' words to God's wayward people: "How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings!" (Matthew 23:37) Jesus here painted a vivid word picture of a mother hen sheltering her young with her wings. Truly, parents may learn much from the protective instincts of a mother bird, who will readily put herself at risk to protect her chicks from harm. What parent birds do on a day-to-day basis, though, is also remarkable to see. They fly to and fro incessantly in their search for food. Even when near exhaustion, they drop the food into the gaping beaks of their hatchlings, who

7. Why is it fitting that parents contemplate Jesus' example?

8, 9. (a) What may parents learn from birds about providing selflessly for their young? (b) How are many Christian parents showing a self-sacrificing spirit?



swallow it and usually clamor for more. Many of Jehovah's creatures are "instinctively wise" in the way they care for the needs of their young.—Proverbs 30:24.

<sup>9</sup> In a comparable way, Christian parents around the world are showing an admirably self-sacrificing spirit. You would rather suffer harm yourself than allow any harm to come to your children. Further, you willingly make daily sacrifices in order to provide for your own. Many of you rise early to work at exhausting or tedious jobs. You labor to put nutritious food on the table. You struggle to make sure that your children have clean clothing, suitable shelter, and an adequate education. And you keep at it day after day, year after year. Surely such self-sacrifice and endurance please Jehovah! (Hebrews 13:16) At the same time, though, you remember that there are more important ways in which to provide for your own.

### Providing Spiritually

<sup>10</sup> Even more essential than providing materially is providing spiritually. Jesus said: "Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth." (Matthew 4:4; 5:3) What can you parents do to provide spiritually?

**10, 11. What is the most important of human needs, and what must Christian parents do first in order to fill this need in their children?**

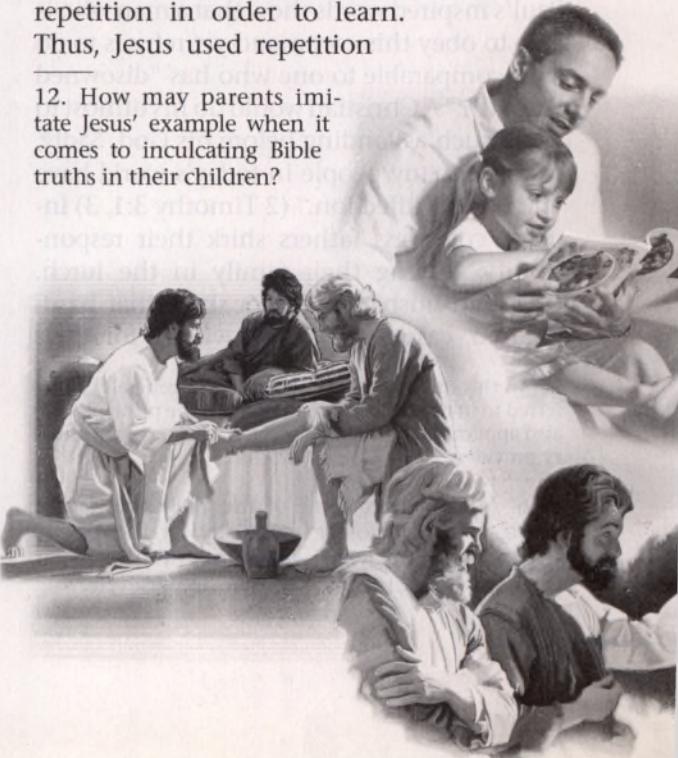
### *Parents must first cultivate their own spirituality*

<sup>11</sup> On this subject, perhaps no passage of Scripture is quoted more often than Deuteronomy 6:5-7. Please open your Bible and read those verses. Note that parents are first told to cultivate their own spirituality, building love for Jehovah and taking his words to heart. Yes, you need to be a serious student of God's Word, reading the Bible regularly and meditating on it so that you develop a real understanding of and love for Jehovah's ways, principles, and laws. As a result, your heart will be full of fascinating Bible truths that will move you to feel joy, awe, and love for Jehovah. You will have an abundance of good things to impart to your children.  
—Luke 6:45.

<sup>12</sup> Spiritually strong parents are prepared to apply the counsel found at Deuteronomy 6:7, to "inculcate" Jehovah's words in their offspring at every opportunity. To "inculcate" means to teach and impress by means of repetition. Jehovah well knows that all of us—children in particular—need repetition in order to learn.

Thus, Jesus used repetition

12. How may parents imitate Jesus' example when it comes to inculcating Bible truths in their children?



*Parents can find many occasions to teach their children about the Creator*

in his ministry. For example, when teaching his disciples to be humble instead of proud and competitive, he found a variety of ways to repeat the same principle. He taught by reasoning, by illustrating, even by demonstrating. (Matthew 18:1-4; 20:25-27; John 13:12-15) Remarkably, though, Jesus never showed impatience. Similarly, parents need to find ways to teach basic truths to their children, patiently repeating Jehovah's principles until the children absorb and apply them.

<sup>13</sup> Family study sessions are ideal occasions for such teaching. Indeed, a regular, upbuilding, happy family Bible study is a mainstay of family spirituality. Christian families around the world delight in such studies, making use of the literature provided through Jehovah's organization and tailoring the study to the needs of the children. The book *Learn From the Great Teacher* has been an outstanding blessing in this regard, as has the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work.\** How-

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

13, 14. What are some occasions when parents can inculcate Bible truths in their children, using what aids?

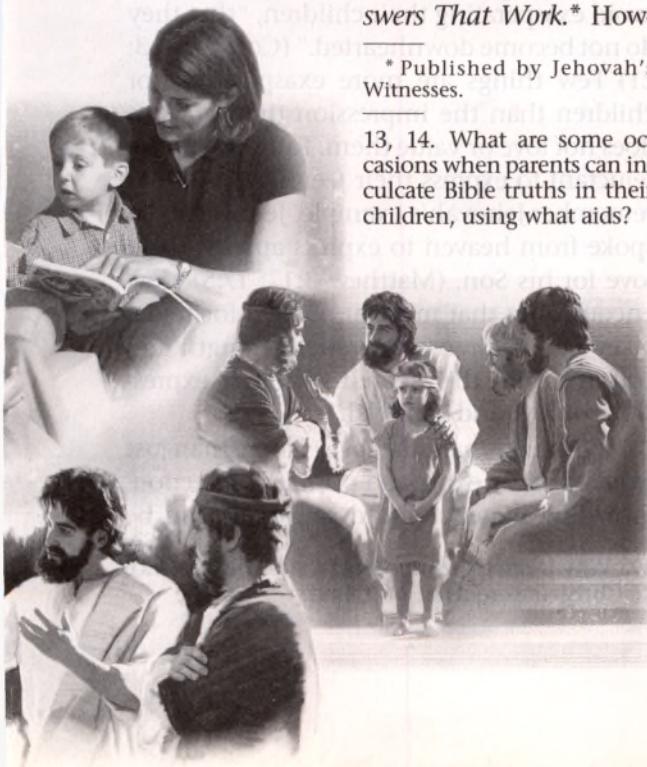


ever, the family study is not the only time to teach children.

<sup>14</sup> As Deuteronomy 6:7 shows, there are many occasions when you parents can discuss spiritual things with your children. Whether traveling together, doing chores together, or relaxing together, you may find opportunities to provide for your children's spiritual needs. Of course, you need not incessantly "lecture" your children about Bible truths. Rather, try to keep family conversation on an upbuilding, spiritual level. For example, the *Awake!* magazine contains many articles on a wide variety of subjects. Such articles may pave the way for conversations about Jehovah's animal creation, places of natural beauty around the world, and the wonderful variety among human cultures and ways of life. Such conversations may move young ones to read more of the literature provided by the faithful and discreet slave class.—Matthew 24:45-47.

<sup>15</sup> Engaging in upbuilding conversations with your children will help you to satisfy another spiritual need. Christian children need to learn to share their faith effectively with others. In the course of talking about some point of interest in *The Watchtower* or *Awake!* you may look for opportunities to relate the

15. How might parents help their children to view the Christian ministry as interesting and rewarding?



material to the ministry. For example, you might ask: "Wouldn't it be wonderful if more people knew this about Jehovah? How do you think we could get someone interested in this subject?" Such discussions may help young ones to develop greater interest in sharing with others what they are learning. Then, when your children accompany you in the ministry, they see a living example of putting such conversations into practice. They may also learn that the ministry is an interesting and happy work, producing great satisfaction and joy.—Acts 20:35.

<sup>16</sup> Parents also provide for their children's spiritual needs when praying. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, and he prayed with them on many occasions. (Luke 11:1-13) Just think of how much they learned by joining in prayer with Jehovah's own Son! Similarly, your children can learn a lot from your prayers. They may learn, for example, that Jehovah wants us to speak to him freely from the heart, approaching him with any concern that we might have. Yes, your prayers can help your children to learn a vital spiritual truth: They can have a relationship with their heavenly Father.—1 Peter 5:7.

### Providing Emotionally

<sup>17</sup> Of course, children also have pressing emotional needs. God's Word tells parents

16. What may children learn from listening to their parents' prayers?

17, 18. (a) How does the Bible reveal the importance of showing love to children? (b) How should fathers imitate Jehovah in expressing love for their children?



*Children draw strength and courage from parental approval*

how important it is to provide in this respect. For example, younger women are exhorted "to love their children." Their doing so is related to young mothers' being recalled to their senses, or being "mentally sound." (Titus 2:4, footnote) Indeed, it is sensible to show a child love. This teaches a child to love and brings lifelong benefits. On the other hand, a failure to show a child love is senseless. It causes great pain and represents a failure to imitate Jehovah, who shows us immense love despite our imperfections.—Psalm 103:8-14.

<sup>18</sup> Jehovah even takes the initiative in loving his earthly children. As 1 John 4:19 says, "he first loved us." You fathers in particular should imitate Jehovah's example, taking the initiative to build a loving bond with your children. The Bible urges fathers to avoid exasperating their children, "that they do not become downhearted." (Colossians 3:21) Few things are more exasperating for children than the impression that a parent does not love or value them. Fathers who are reluctant to express their feelings do well to remember Jehovah's example. Jehovah even spoke from heaven to express approval and love for his Son. (Matthew 3:17; 17:5) How encouraging that must have been for Jesus! Likewise, children draw much strength and courage from their parents' honest expressions of love and approval.

<sup>19</sup> Of course, parental love is more than just words. Love is expressed primarily in action. Providing materially and spiritually can be

19. Why is discipline important, and what balance do Christian parents strive to find?

an expression of parental love, especially when parents do so in a way that conveys that love is the primary motivation. Additionally, discipline is a vital expression of parental love. Indeed, "whom Jehovah loves he disciplines." (Hebrews 12:6) On the other hand, a failure to discipline is an expression of parental hatred! (Proverbs 13:24) Jehovah always finds the right balance, disciplining "to the proper degree." (Jeremiah 46:28) Such balance is not always easy for imperfect parents to find. Still, it is worth your every effort to strive for that balance. Firm, loving discipline helps a child grow up to live a happy, productive life. (Proverbs 22:6) Is that not what every Christian parent wants for his child?

<sup>20</sup> When you parents do the important work Jehovah has assigned you—providing

20. How can parents give their children the best possible opportunity to "choose life"?

for your children's material, spiritual, and emotional needs—the rewards are great. You thereby give your children the best possible opportunity to "choose life" and thereafter to "keep alive." (Deuteronomy 30:19) Those children who choose to serve Jehovah and stay on the path to life as they mature bring their parents tremendous joy. (Psalm 127:3-5) Such joy will last forever! How, though, can young people praise Jehovah now? The following article will take up that subject.

### How Would You Answer?

What can parents do in order to provide for their children

- materially?
- spiritually?
- emotionally?

## YOUNG PEOPLE, PRAISE JEHOVAH!

*"Praise Jehovah from the earth, . . .*

*you young men and also you virgins."*—PSALM 148:7, 12.

YOUNG people are often keenly aware of what they are not yet allowed to do. Many of them can readily tell you how old they will have to be before they are allowed to cross a street alone or stay up until a certain hour of the evening or drive a car. At times, a youth may feel that too many of

1, 2. (a) Many young people are aware of what sort of restrictions? (b) Why do young ones not need to resent the restrictions that their parents place upon them?

his or her eager requests meet with the same answer, "Wait until you are older."

2 You young people know that your parents feel that it is wise to make such restrictions, perhaps for your own protection. You surely know, too, that Jehovah is pleased when you obey your parents. (Colossians 3:20) Do you ever feel, though, as if you were waiting for your life to start? Are all the important things off limits until you are older? Nothing could be further from the truth!

There is a work going on today that is far more important than any other privilege you might be waiting for. Are you young people *allowed* to join in this work? Better than that—you are actually *invited* to do so by the Most High God himself!

<sup>3</sup> What work are we talking about? Note the words of our theme text for this article: "Praise Jehovah from the earth, . . . you young men and also you virgins, you old men together with boys." (Psalm 148:7, 12) There is your great privilege: You can praise Jehovah. As a young person, are you thrilled to take part in that work? Many are. To see why it is worth feeling that way, let us consider three questions. First, *why* should you praise Jehovah? Second, *how* can you praise him effectively? Third, *when* is it a good time to start praising Jehovah?

### Why Praise Jehovah?

<sup>4</sup> An outstanding reason for praising Jehovah is that he is the Creator. The 148th Psalm helps us to focus on this truth. Just imagine: If you approached a large group of people who in unison were singing a beautiful, moving song, how would you feel? What if the song's lyrics were words that you knew to be true, expressing thoughts that you knew to be important, joyful, and uplifting? Would you feel a desire to learn the words and join in? Most of us would. Well, the 148th Psalm shows that you are in a situation that is similar but far more wonderful. That psalm describes an immense crowd, all praising Jehovah in unison. As you read the psalm, though, you may notice something unusual. What is that?

<sup>5</sup> Many of the praisers described in Psalm 148 can neither speak nor reason. For

3. Jehovah invites young ones to have what privilege, and what questions will we now consider?

4, 5. (a) According to the 148th Psalm, we are in what wondrous situation? (b) How can creations that neither speak nor reason still praise Jehovah?

example, we read of the sun, moon, stars, snow, wind, mountains, and hills praising Jehovah. How can these inanimate creations do such a thing? (Verses 3, 8, 9) Really, in the same way that the trees, sea creatures, and animals do. (Verses 7, 9, 10) Have you ever watched a beautiful sunset or looked up at a full moon sailing across a sea of stars or laughed in delight at animals playing or gasped in awe at a gorgeous landscape? Then you have "heard" the song of praise coming from creation. All that Jehovah has made reminds us that he is the almighty Creator, that there is no one in all the universe so powerful, so wise, or so loving.—Romans 1:20; Revelation 4:11.

<sup>6</sup> The 148th Psalm also describes intelligent creation as praising Jehovah. In verse 2, we find Jehovah's celestial "army," the angels, praising God. In verse 11, powerful and influential humans, such as kings and judges, are invited to join in the praise. If the mighty angels find delight in praising Jehovah, what mere human could rightly say that he is too important to do so? Then, in verses 12 and 13, you young people are invited to join in and praise Jehovah as well. Are you moved to want to do that?

<sup>7</sup> Consider an illustration. If you had a close friend with an amazing skill—perhaps in sports, art, or music—would you talk about him to your family and other friends? No doubt. Well, learning about all that Jehovah has done can have a similar effect on us. For example, Psalm 19:1, 2 says that the starry heavens cause "speech to bubble forth." As for us, when we think about the amazing things that Jehovah has accomplished, we can hardly hold back from talking to others about our God.

6, 7. (a) The 148th Psalm describes what intelligent creatures as praising Jehovah? (b) Why might we be moved to praise Jehovah? Illustrate.



*If your friend had an outstanding skill, would you not mention this to others?*

<sup>8</sup> Another outstanding reason for praising Jehovah is that he wants us to do so. Why? Is it because he needs praise from humans? No. We humans may need praise at times, but Jehovah is far higher than we are. (Isaiah 55:8) He has no uncertainties about himself or his qualities. (Isaiah 45:5) Yet, he wants us to praise him and is pleased when we do. Why? Consider two reasons. First, he knows that we need to praise him. He designed us with a spiritual need, a need to worship. (Matthew 5:3) To see us filling that need pleases Jehovah, much the way it pleases your parents to see you eating food that they know is good for you.—John 4:34.

<sup>9</sup> Second, Jehovah knows that other people need to hear us praising him. The apostle Paul wrote these words to the younger man Timothy: “Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.” (1 Timothy 4:

8, 9. For what reasons does Jehovah want us to praise him?

16) Yes, when you teach others about Jehovah God, praising him, they may come to know Jehovah too. Such knowledge can lead to their everlasting salvation!—John 17:3.

<sup>10</sup> There is yet another reason for praising Jehovah. Remember the illustration about your remarkable friend. If you heard others telling lies about him, slandering his good name, would you not be even more determined to praise him? Well, Jehovah is widely slandered in this world. (John 8:44; Revelation 12:9) Those who love him thus feel impelled to tell the truth about him, setting the record straight. Would you too like to express your love and appreciation to Jehovah and show that you want him as your Ruler instead of his chief enemy, Satan? You can do all of that by praising Jehovah. The next question, then, is how.

### How Some Young Ones Praised Jehovah

<sup>11</sup> The Bible shows that young people are often very effective in praising Jehovah. For example, there was an Israelite girl who was taken captive by the Syrians. She boldly witnessed to her mistress about Jehovah’s prophet Elisha. Her words led to a miracle, and a powerful witness was given. (2 Kings 5:1-17) Jesus too witnessed boldly as a child. Of all the events of his youth that could have been recorded in the Scriptures, Jehovah chose one, the occasion when 12-year-old Jesus courageously questioned the religious teachers at the temple in Jerusalem and left them astounded at his understanding of Jehovah’s ways.—Luke 2:46-49.

<sup>12</sup> As a grown man, Jesus also inspired children to praise Jehovah. For example, just

10. Why do we feel impelled to praise our God?
11. What Bible examples show that young people can be very effective in praising Jehovah?
- 12, 13. (a) What did Jesus do in the temple shortly before his death, with what effect on the people there? (b) How did Jesus feel about the praise uttered by young boys?



a few days before his death, Jesus spent time at the temple in Jerusalem. He did "marvelous things" there, the Bible says. He threw out those who were making that sacred place a den of thieves. He also cured blind and lame people. Everyone there, especially the religious leaders, should have been moved to praise Jehovah and his Son, the Messiah. Sadly, though, many in those days uttered no such praises. They knew that Jesus was sent by God, but they were afraid of the religious leaders. One group of people, however, did speak up boldly. Do you know who they were? The Bible says: "When the chief priests and the scribes saw the marvelous things [Jesus] did and the boys that were crying out in the temple and saying: 'Save, we pray, the Son of David!' they became indignant and said to [Jesus]: 'Do you hear what these are saying?'"—Matthew 21:15, 16; John 12:42.

<sup>13</sup> Those priests were hoping that Jesus would silence the boys who were praising him. Did he? Far from it! Jesus answered the priests: "Yes. Did you never read this, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings you have furnished praise'?" Clearly, Jesus and his Father were pleased with the praise of the young boys. Those

children were doing what all the adults there should have been doing. In their youthful minds, it all must have seemed so clear. They saw this man do marvelous things, speak with courage and faith, and show intense love for God and his people. He was who he claimed to be—the promised "Son of David," the Messiah. Blessed for their faith, the boys even had the privilege of fulfilling prophecy.—Psalm 8:2.

<sup>14</sup> What can we learn from such examples? That young ones can be very effective praisers of Jehovah. They often have the gift of seeing the truth clearly and simply, expressing their faith with earnestness and zeal. They also have the gift mentioned at Proverbs 20:29: "The beauty of young men is their power." Yes, you young ones are blessed with strength and energy—real assets in praising Jehovah. How, specifically, can you put such gifts to work?

### How Can You Praise Jehovah?

<sup>15</sup> Being effective starts in the heart. You cannot praise Jehovah effectively if you are doing it only because others want you to. Remember, the greatest of all the commandments is this: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind." (Matthew 22:37) Have you come to know Jehovah personally through your own study of his Word? The proper result of such learning is a feeling of love for Jehovah. The natural way to express that love is

14. How do the gifts young ones possess lend themselves to praising God?

15. To praise Jehovah effectively, what motive is needed?

*Fellow students may be interested in your beliefs*

by praising him. Once your motive is clear and strong, you are ready to praise Jehovah enthusiastically.

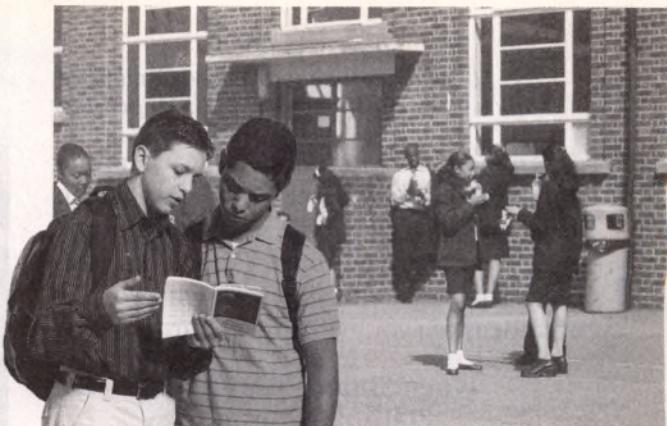
<sup>16</sup> Now, even before considering what you will say, consider how you will act. If that Israelite girl of Elisha's day had been habitually rude, disrespectful, or dishonest, do you think that her Syrian captors would have listened to her words about Jehovah's prophet? Probably not. Similarly, people are more likely to listen to you if they see that you are respectful, honest, and well behaved. (Romans 2:21) Consider an example.

<sup>17</sup> An 11-year-old girl in Portugal faced pressure in school to celebrate holidays that were in violation of her Bible-trained conscience. She respectfully explained to her teacher why she must refuse, but the teacher ridiculed her. As time passed, the teacher tried again and again to shame her, making fun of her religion. However, the young girl remained respectful. Years later, that young sister was serving as a regular pioneer, a full-time minister. At a convention, she watched people being baptized and recognized one of them. It was her former teacher! After a tearful embrace, the older woman told the younger that she had never forgotten her student's respectful conduct. A Witness had called on her, and the teacher had spoken about her former student's behavior. As a result, a Bible study was started, and this woman embraced Bible truth. Yes, your conduct can be a very powerful way to praise Jehovah!

<sup>18</sup> Do you at times find it hard to start con-

16, 17. What role does conduct play in praising Jehovah? Illustrate.

18. What might a young person do if he is hesitant to strike up conversations about the Bible and Jehovah God?



versations in school about your faith? You are not alone in feeling that way. However, you can make it more likely that others will ask you about your faith. For example, if it is legal and permissible to do so, why not bring Bible-based publications with you and read them during lunchtime or other periods when it is allowable to do so? Your fellow students may ask you about what you are reading. By answering them and telling them what you find interesting about the article or book in your hands, you may find that a good conversation is under way before you know it. Remember to ask questions, finding out what your fellow students believe. Listen respectfully, sharing what you have learned from the Bible. As the experiences on page 29 show, many young people are praising God in school. This brings them great joy and helps many to come to know Jehovah.

<sup>19</sup> The door-to-door ministry is a most effective way to praise Jehovah. If you are not yet taking part, why not set it as a goal? If you are taking part, are there further goals that you may set for yourself? For example, rather than saying essentially the same thing at each door, look for ways to improve, asking your parents and other

19. How can young people become more effective in the door-to-door ministry?

*If you want to improve in your ministry,  
ask a more experienced Witness for pointers*

experienced ones for pointers. Learn how to use the Bible more, to make effective return visits, and to start a Bible study. (1 Timothy 4:15) The more you praise Jehovah in such ways, the more effective you will become, and the more you will enjoy your ministry.

### When Should You Begin Praising Jehovah?

<sup>20</sup> Of the three questions in this discussion, the answer to this last one is the simplest. Notice the Bible's direct answer: "Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood." (Ecclesiastes 12:1) Yes, the time to start praising Jehovah is *now*. It is all too easy to say: "I am too young to praise Jehovah. I am inexperienced. I should wait until I am older." You would not be the first to feel that way. Young Jeremiah, for instance, told Jehovah: "Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! Here I actually do not know how to speak, for I am but a boy." Jehovah reassured him that there was no reason to fear. (Jeremiah 1:6, 7) Likewise, we have nothing to fear when we praise Jehovah. There is no harm that might come to

20. Why is there no need for youths to feel that they are too young to praise Jehovah?

### How Would You Answer?

- What are some important reasons for praising Jehovah?
- What Bible examples show that young people can be very effective in praising Jehovah?
- How can young people praise Jehovah today?
- When should young ones begin praising Jehovah, and why?



us that Jehovah cannot completely undo.  
—Psalm 118:6.

<sup>21</sup> We urge you young ones, then: Do not hesitate to praise Jehovah! Now while you are young is the best time to join in the most important work being done on earth today. When you do, you become part of something wonderful—the universal family of those praising Jehovah. Jehovah is delighted that this family includes you. Note these inspired words that the psalmist addressed to Jehovah: "Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day of your military force. In the splendors of holiness, from the womb of the dawn, you have your company of young men just like dewdrops."—Psalm 110:3.

<sup>22</sup> Dewdrops glistening in the morning light present a beautiful picture, do they not? They are refreshing, bright, and virtually beyond counting for multitude. That is how Jehovah sees you young ones who are faithfully praising him in these critical times. Clearly, your choice to praise Jehovah makes his heart rejoice. (Proverbs 27:11) By all means, then, you young ones, praise Jehovah!

21, 22. Why are young praisers of Jehovah likened to dewdrops, and why is that comparison encouraging?



## PRAISING JEHOVAH at School

AROUND the world, young Witnesses of Jehovah are finding ways to praise God at school—by means of both their speech and their conduct. Note some experiences that illustrate their youthful zeal.

A young Witness in Greece was assigned to write a report on the pollution of the earth's atmosphere. After looking in the *Watch Tower Publications Index*, she found useful material in the *Awake!* magazine, crediting it as her source at the conclusion of her essay. Her teacher told her that it was one of the best essays she had ever read. The teacher later used the information at a seminar, with good results. The young sister thus decided to offer the teacher more issues of *Awake!* including one featuring the series "Teachers—What Would We Do Without Them?" The teacher later praised the *Awake!* magazine in class, and some other students began asking for copies. The sister had to bring copies of the magazine to school so that they could read other issues.

In Benin, Africa, a teenage Christian faced an unusual type of pressure. According to custom, the parents of a number of students in her school got together to hire tutors for difficult subjects in order to prepare the youths for exams. However, the tutors chose Saturday mornings for the sessions. The young Witness objected: "Saturday morning is the time when the whole congregation preaches together. It is the happiest time of the week for me, and I would not trade it for anything!" Her father, a single parent and a Witness himself, agreed and tried to get one group of parents and tutors to change the schedule. However, they all refused. The young girl decided to do without the tutoring. She engaged in preaching with her congregation instead. Her classmates ridiculed her, urging her to give up her witnessing case and her God as well. They were quite sure that she would fail the exams. As it turned out, though, that group of tutored students failed, whereas our young sister passed. Needless to say, the mockery ceased. Now the students are telling her, "You should continue to serve your God."

In the Czech Republic, a 12-year-old girl had to prepare a book report. Her mother urged her to use the book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*. She began her report with the questions: "What do you think? Who could be the greatest man who ever lived?" She described Jesus, his life on earth, and his teachings. Then she discussed the chapter entitled "A Lesson in Forgiveness." Her teacher exclaimed, "That is the best report I have ever heard from you!" and gratefully accepted a copy of the book. Some fellow students also wanted a copy. The next day, the girl was thrilled to distribute 18 copies.

Such young ones are finding great joy in praising Jehovah at school. All of us do well to imitate their youthful zeal.

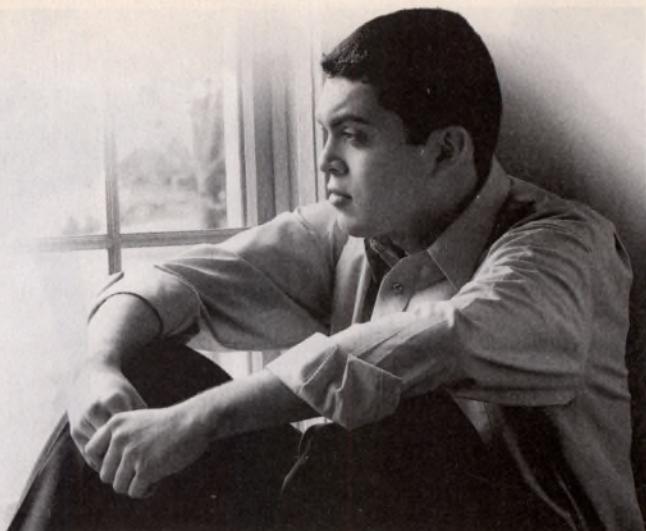
# We Can Cope With Any Trial!

ARE you presently facing a trial in your life? Do you feel at a loss, unable to cope with it? Do you even at times fear that your problem is unique and that there is no solution to it? If so, take heart! Whatever trials we may face, the Bible assures us that God can enable us to deal with them.

The Bible acknowledges that God's servants will "meet with various trials." (James 1:2) Note the word "various" (Greek *poi-ki'-los*). According to ancient usage, the original word means "manifold" or "many-tinted" and emphasizes "the diversity of the trials." In fact, in everyday speech, that basically means "many-colored." Thus, "various trials" are trials that come in many colors, so to speak. Nevertheless, Jehovah supports us so that we can cope with each one of them. Why can we be sure of that?

## "God's Undeserved Kindness Expressed in Various Ways"

The apostle Peter notes that Christians are "grieved by various trials." (1 Peter 1:6) Later in his inspired letter, he states that "God's undeserved kindness" is "expressed in various ways." (1 Peter 4:10) The phrase "in various ways" contains a form of the same original Greek word. In commenting on this expression, one Bible scholar notes: "This is a tremendous thought.... To speak of the grace [or, undeserved kindness] of God as *poikilos* means that there is no colour in the human situation which the grace of God cannot match." He further notes: "There is no possible set of circumstances, no possible crisis, emergency or demand



through which the grace of God cannot find a way, and which the grace of God cannot triumphantly deal with and overcome. There is nothing in life with which the grace of God cannot cope. This vivid word *poikilos* leads our thoughts straight to that many-coloured grace of God which is indeed sufficient for all things."

## Trials Matched by Kindness

According to Peter, one way that God's undeserved kindness is expressed is through the various ones who make up the Christian congregation. (1 Peter 4:11) Each servant of God has spiritual gifts, or abilities, that may serve as a source of encouragement to those facing trials. (Romans 12:6-8) For instance, some members of the congregation are outstanding Bible teachers. Their insightful words inspire and motivate others to endure. (Nehemiah 8:1-4, 8, 12) Others make regular shepherding visits at the homes of those in need of support. Such visits are occasions for encouragement, a 'comforting of hearts.' (Colossians 2:2) When overseers make such faith-strengthening visits, they impart a spiritual gift. (John 21:16) Still others in the congregation are known for warmth, com-

passion, and tenderness in dealing with fellow believers who are saddened by trials. (Acts 4:36; Romans 12:10; Colossians 3:10) The empathy and active assistance shown by such loving brothers and sisters is a significant expression, or “color,” of God’s undeserved kindness.—Proverbs 12:25; 17:17.

### **“The God of All Comfort”**

Above all, Jehovah provides comfort. He is “the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation.” (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) The wisdom found in God’s inspired Word and the strength provided by his holy spirit are principal means by which Jehovah answers our prayers for help. (Isaiah 30:18, 21; Luke 11:13; John 14:16) We can be

heartened by the inspired promise made by the apostle Paul. He said: “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it.”—1 Corinthians 10:13.

Yes, whatever is the “color,” or nature, of our trial, there will always be a “color,” or expression, of God’s undeserved kindness that will match it. (James 1:17) Jehovah’s timely and appropriate support provided for his servants—no matter how diverse their temptations or challenges may be—is but one evidence of “the greatly diversified wisdom of God.” (Ephesians 3:10) Do you not agree?

*Jehovah helps us to cope with our trials*



# "Persecuted for His Faith"

THE town of Cernobbio in northern Italy established a memorial site in a local park to remember victims of human rights violations. One of the plaques unveiled in their memory is dedicated to Narciso Riet. Born in Germany of Italian parents, Riet became one of Jehovah's Witnesses in the 1930's. During the Hitler regime, Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted because they refused to put Hitler above the true God, Jehovah.

When the Gestapo discovered that Riet was involved in bringing copies of *The Watchtower* into the concentration camps, he fled to Cernobbio. There he was asked to translate *The Watchtower* into Italian and to distribute it to his fellow believers nearby. His energetic activities did not go unnoticed. An SS officer and his men burst into Riet's home, arrested him, and seized the "criminal" evidence—two Bibles and a few letters! Riet was deported to Germany, incarcerated in the Dachau concentration camp, and executed shortly before the end of World War II. He was "persecuted for his faith," says the Cernobbio plaque.



The faith of Narciso Riet and hundreds of other Witnesses who fell victim to Nazi persecution is an encouragement to Christians today to remain faithful to Jehovah, the only Personage in the universe worthy of their worship. (Revelation 4:11) Jesus said: "Happy are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake." God will remember their deeds and bless them for their courageous course.—Matthew 5:10; Hebrews 6:10.

