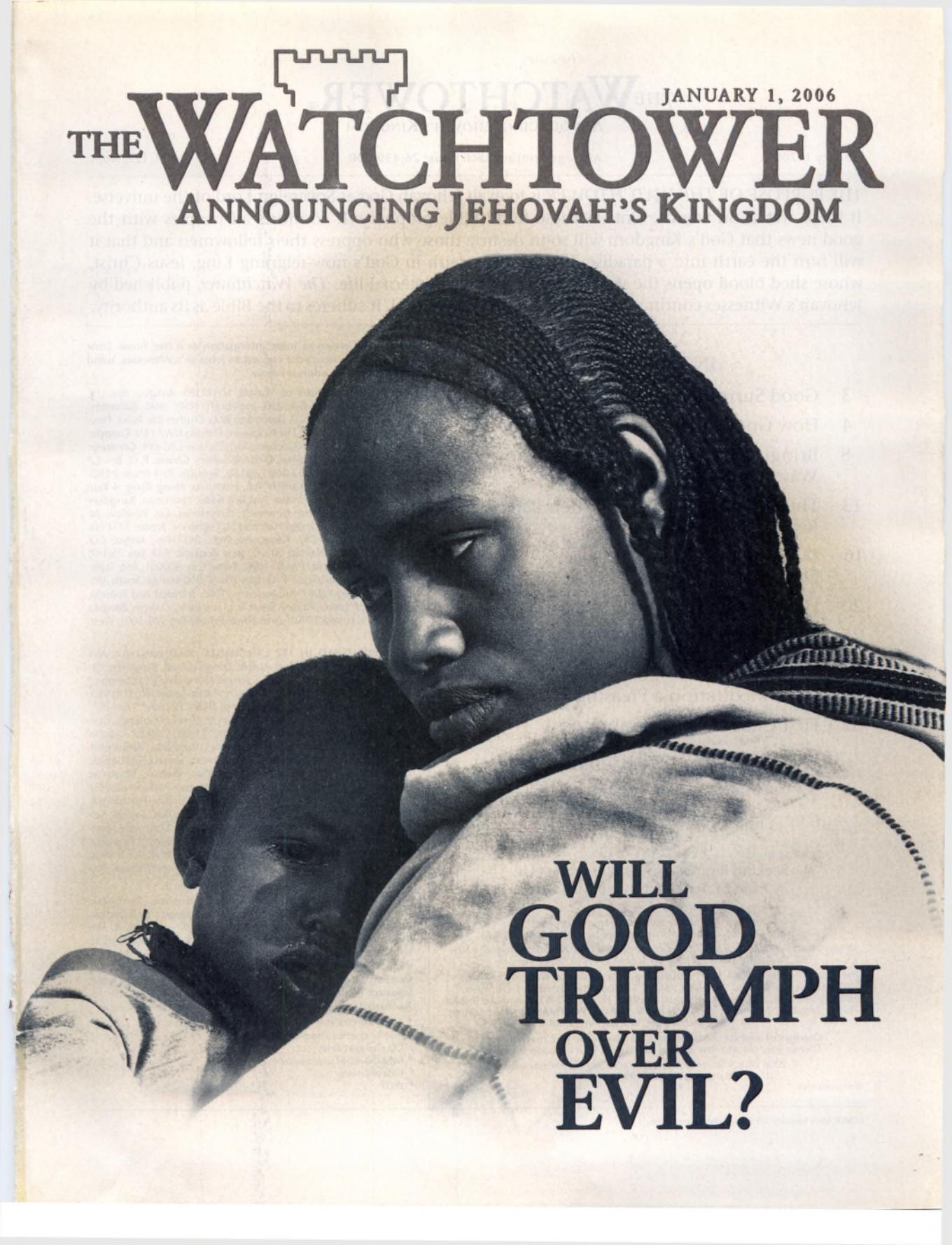


JANUARY 1, 2006

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**WILL
GOOD
TRIUMPH
OVER
EVIL?**

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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GOOD SURROUNDED BY EVIL

IN TODAY'S world, it may seem that few people are willing to give of themselves. Some, however, still wish "to make a difference"—to do good to others in some way. Each year, countless numbers of people give billions of dollars to what they feel are good causes. In Britain, for example, donations to charity reached a record \$13 billion (U.S.) in 2002. Since 1999, ten generous philanthropists have given or pledged more than \$38 billion (U.S.) to help the needy.

Some of the good works accomplished by charitable workers include paying for the medical bills of low-income families, mentoring children of single parents, funding immunization programs in developing countries, giving children their first book, supplying breeding animals to farmers in poor countries, and delivering relief supplies to victims of natural disasters.

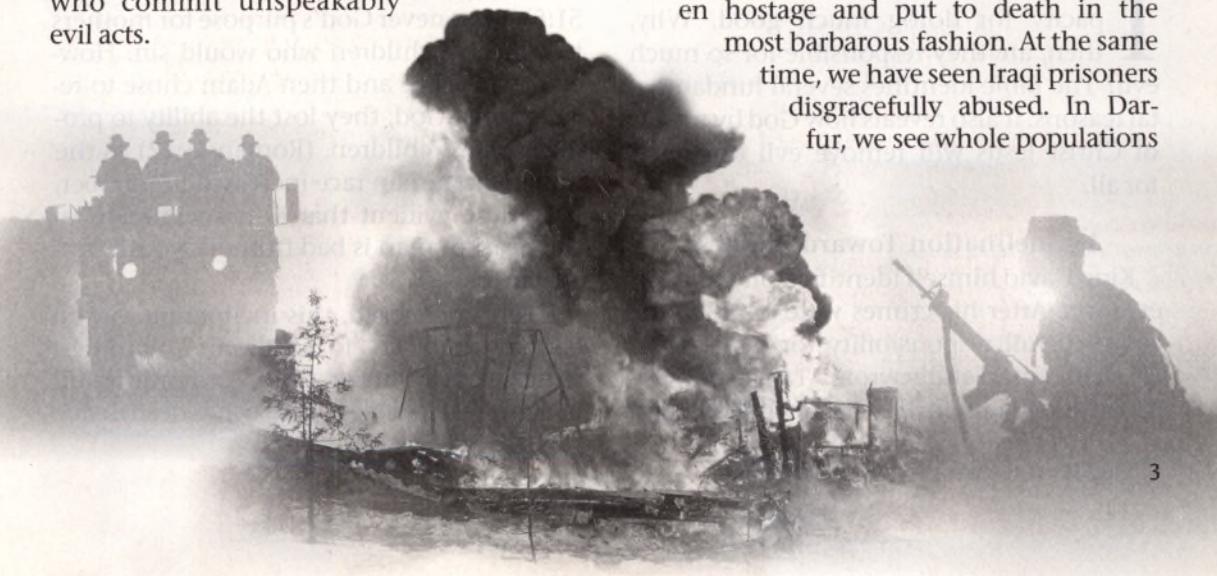
The foregoing facts show that humans have the capacity for doing good to others. Sadly, though, there are also people who commit unspeakably evil acts.

Evil on the Rise

Since the end of World War II, there have been nearly 50 documented incidents of genocide and politically motivated mass murder. "These episodes," states the journal *American Political Science Review*, "have cost the lives of at least 12 million and as many as 22 million noncombatants, more than all victims of internal and international wars since 1945."

During the latter half of the 20th century, up to 2.2 million people were murdered in Cambodia for political reasons. Ethnic hatred in Rwanda led to the deaths of more than 800,000 men, women, and children. Religiously and politically motivated murders in Bosnia resulted in over 200,000 deaths.

Identifying more recent acts of evil, the secretary-general of the United Nations said in 2004: "In Iraq, we see civilians massacred in cold blood, while relief workers, journalists and other non-combatants are taken hostage and put to death in the most barbarous fashion. At the same time, we have seen Iraqi prisoners disgracefully abused. In Darfur, we see whole populations



displaced, and their homes destroyed, while rape is used as a deliberate strategy. In northern Uganda, we see children mutilated and forced to take part in acts of unspeakable cruelty. In Beslan, we have seen children taken hostage and brutally massacred."

Even in so-called developed lands, hate crimes seem to be on the rise. For example, *Independent News* reported in 2004 that Brit-

ain has witnessed "an eleven-fold increase in the number of victims of racially motivated attack or abuse over the past decade."

Why do humans who have the capacity for doing so much good commit such wicked acts? Will we ever be free from evil? As the following article shows, the Bible provides satisfying answers to these perplexing questions.

HOW GOOD WILL CONQUER EVIL

King David was a good man. He had a deep love for God, a yearning for justice, and an affection for the lowly. Yet, this same good king committed adultery with the wife of one of his trusted men.



And after David discovered that the wife, Bath-sheba, was pregnant by him, he ultimately orchestrated the murder of her husband. He then married Bath-sheba in an attempt to cover his crimes.—2 Samuel 11:1-27.



IT IS evident that humans have the capacity for doing much good. Why, then, are they responsible for so much evil? The Bible identifies several fundamental reasons. It also reveals how God by means of Christ Jesus will remove evil once and for all.

An Inclination Toward Badness

King David himself identified one cause of evil acts. After his crimes were exposed, he accepted full responsibility for his actions. He then remorsefully wrote: "Look! With error I was brought forth with birth pains, and

in sin my mother conceived me." (Psalm 51:5) It was never God's purpose for mothers to conceive children who would sin. However, when Eve and then Adam chose to rebel against God, they lost the ability to produce sinless children. (Romans 5:12) As the imperfect human race increased in number, it became evident that "the inclination of the heart of man is bad from his youth up."—Genesis 8:21.

If left unchecked, this inclination toward badness results in "fornication, . . . enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, contentions, divisions, sects, envies," and other destructive

behavior that the Bible describes as “works of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:19-21) In the case of King David, he gave in to fleshly weakness and committed fornication, which resulted in strife. (2 Samuel 12:1-12) He could have resisted his immoral inclination. Instead, by dwelling on his desire for Bath-sheba, David followed the pattern later described by the disciple James: “Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire. Then the desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin; in turn, sin, when it has been accomplished, brings forth death.”—James 1:14, 15.

The mass murders, rapes, and pillaging mentioned in the preceding article are extreme examples of what happens when people allow wrong desires to dictate their actions.

Evil Feeds on Ignorance

The apostle Paul’s experience highlights a second reason why people do evil things. By the time he died, Paul had gained a reputation as a gentle, affectionate man. He had expended himself unselfishly in the service of his Christian brothers and sisters. (1 Thessalonians 2:7-9) Earlier in his life, though, when he was known by the name Saul, he was “breathing threat and murder” against this very same group. (Acts 9:1, 2) Why did Paul condone and participate in the evil acts perpetrated against the early Christians? “Because I was ignorant,” he says. (1 Timothy 1:13) Yes, Paul formerly had “a zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge.”—Romans 10:2.

Like Paul, many sincere people have engaged in evil acts because of a lack of accurate knowledge of God’s will. For example, Jesus warned his followers: “The hour is coming when everyone that kills you will imagine he has rendered a sacred service to God.” (John 16:2) Jehovah’s present-day

Witnesses experience the truth of Jesus’ words. In many lands, they have been persecuted and even murdered by people claiming to serve God. Obviously, such misguided zeal does not please the true God.—1 Thessalonians 1:6.

The Originator of Evil

Jesus identified the principal reason for the existence of evil. Addressing the religious leaders who were intent on killing him, he said: “You are from your father the

Saul condoned evil acts because he lacked accurate knowledge



Devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father. That one was a manslayer when he began.” (John 8:44) It was Satan who for selfish reasons enticed Adam and Eve into rebelling against God. That rebellion introduced sin—and thus death—to all mankind.

Satan’s murderous disposition was further exposed in the way in which he dealt with Job. When Jehovah granted him permission to test Job’s integrity, Satan was not content with stripping Job of his possessions. He also caused the death of his ten children. (Job 1:9-19) In recent decades, mankind has experienced a surge in evil because of human

imperfection and ignorance and also as a result of Satan's increased meddling in human affairs. The Bible reveals that the Devil was "hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him." That same prophecy accurately foretold that Satan's confinement would produce unprecedented "woe for the earth." While Satan cannot force people to do evil things, he is a master at "misleading the entire inhabited earth." —Revelation 12:9, 12.

Removing the Inclination Toward Badness

If evil is to be permanently eliminated from human society, man's inborn inclination toward badness, his lack of accurate knowledge, and Satan's influence must be addressed. First, how can man's inborn inclination toward sin be removed from his heart?

No human surgeon or man-made medicine can perform that task. Jehovah God, though, has provided a cure for inherited sin and imperfection for all those willing to accept it. The apostle John wrote: "The blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7) When the perfect man Jesus voluntarily offered up his life, he "bore our sins in his own body upon the stake, in order that we might be done with sins and live to righteousness." (1 Peter 2:24) Jesus' sacrificial death would counterbalance the effects of Adam's evil act. Paul states that Christ Jesus became "a corresponding ransom for all." (1 Timothy 2:6) Yes, Christ's death opened the way for all mankind to regain the perfection that Adam had lost.

You may ask, though, 'If Jesus' death some 2,000 years ago made it possible for mankind to regain perfection, why do evil and death still exist?' Finding an answer to that question can help banish the second cause for evil—man's ignorance of God's purposes.

Goodness Thrives on Accurate Knowledge

Gaining accurate knowledge of what Jehovah and Jesus are now doing to eliminate evil may prevent a sincere person from unwittingly condoning evil acts, or worse, becoming a fighter "actually against God." (Acts 5:38, 39) Jehovah God is willing to overlook past wrongs that were committed in ignorance. Speaking in Athens, the apostle Paul said: "God has overlooked the times of such ignorance, yet now he is telling mankind that they should all everywhere repent. Because he has set a day in which he purposes to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and he has furnished a guarantee to all men in that he has resurrected him from the dead." —Acts 17:30, 31.

Paul knew firsthand that Jesus had been raised from the dead, for the resurrected Jesus himself spoke to Paul and stopped him from persecuting the early Christians. (Acts 9:3-7) Once Paul received accurate knowledge of God's purposes, he changed and became a genuinely good person in imitation of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1; Colossians 3:9, 10) In addition, Paul zealously preached "this good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) During the almost 2,000 years since Jesus' death and resurrection, Christ has selected from among mankind those who, like Paul, will rule with him in his Kingdom. —Revelation 5:9, 10.

Throughout the past century and up until now, Jehovah's Witnesses have zealously fulfilled Jesus' commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19, 20) Those who respond to this message have the



Helping someone take in accurate knowledge of God is the greatest good one person can do for another

prospect of living forever on earth under Christ's heavenly government. Jesus said: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) Helping someone to gain this knowledge is the greatest good one person can do for another.

Those who embrace this Kingdom good news display such qualities as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control," despite all the evil that surrounds them. (Galatians 5:22, 23) In imitation of Jesus, they "return evil

for evil to no one." (Romans 12:17) On a personal level, they endeavor to "keep conquering the evil with the good."—Romans 12:21; Matthew 5:44.

The Ultimate Conquest of Evil

By themselves, humans will never be able to conquer the ultimate sponsor of evil, Satan the Devil. Soon, though, Jehovah will use Jesus to crush Satan's head. (Genesis 3:15; Romans 16:20) Jehovah will also direct Christ Jesus to "crush and put an end" to all political systems, many of which have perpetrated so much evil throughout history. (Daniel 2:44; Ecclesiastes 8:9) During this coming day of judgment, all those who "do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus . . . will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction."

—2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9; Zephaniah 1:14-18.

Once Satan and those who support him are removed, from heaven Jesus will help the survivors to restore the earth to its original condition. Christ will also resurrect all those worthy of the opportunity to live on the restored earth. (Luke 23:32, 39-43; John 5:26-29) In so doing, he will nullify some of the effects of the evil suffered by humanity.

Jehovah will not force people to obey the good news about Jesus. However, he is giving people the opportunity to take in the knowledge that leads to life. It is vital that you take advantage of this opportunity now! (Zephaniah 2:2, 3) If you do so, you will learn how to cope with any evil that now blights your life. You will also see how Christ will lead the ultimate conquest of evil.—Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-3, 10; 21:3, 4.



BRINGING UP EIGHT CHILDREN IN JEHOVAH'S WAYS WAS A CHALLENGE AND A JOY

AS TOLD BY
JOYCELYN VALENTINE

In 1989 my husband went abroad to work. He promised to send money home so that I could take care of my eight children. Weeks went by, but I did not hear from him. Months passed and still no word from my husband. I kept reassuring myself, 'As soon as things work out for him, he is going to come home.'

WITHOUT funds to care for my family, I grew desperate. During many sleepless nights, I asked myself in disbelief, 'How can he do this to his family?' Eventually, I accepted the harsh reality that my husband had abandoned us. Today, some 16 years after he left us, he still has not returned. As a result, I reared my children without the help of a mate. This has been challenging, but seeing my children embrace Jehovah's ways

has given me much joy. However, before I relate how we fared as a family, let me tell you about my upbringing.

Looking for Biblical Guidance

I was born in 1938 on the Caribbean island of Jamaica. Although Father never claimed membership in a church, he considered himself to be God-fearing. At night he often asked me to read to him from the Bible

book of Psalms. Soon, I was able to repeat many psalms from memory. Mother was a member of a local church, and she would occasionally take me to religious meetings.

At those meetings, we were told that God takes good people to heaven and burns bad people forever in hellfire. We were also told that Jesus is God and that he loves children. I became quite confused and afraid of God. I wondered, 'How can a God who loves us torture people in fire?'

The thought of hellfire gave me nightmares. In time, I took a Bible correspondence course sponsored by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. They taught that wicked people would not be tormented forever but, rather, would be burned to ashes in the flames. This sounded more reasonable, and I started attending their religious meetings. But I found their teachings confusing, and what I learned did not correct my mistaken views on morality.

Back then, people generally accepted that fornication was wrong. Yet, I and many others believed that only those who had sexual relations with multiple partners were fornicators. Thus, two unmarried persons who limited their sexual activity to each other did not sin. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Hebrews 13:4) That belief contributed to my becoming an unwed mother of six children.

Making Spiritual Progress

In 1965, Vaslyn Goodison and Ethel Chambers came to live in the nearby community of Bath. They were pioneers, or full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses, and one day they spoke with my father. He accepted their offer of a home Bible study. If I was at home when they visited, they also spoke with me. Although I viewed Jehovah's Witnesses with great suspicion, I decided to study the Bible with them to prove them wrong.

I asked a lot of questions during the study, and the Witnesses answered all of them using the Bible. With their help, I discovered that the dead are unconscious and do not suffer in hell. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) I also learned about the hope of everlasting life in Paradise on earth. (Psalm 37:11, 29; Revelation 21:3, 4) Although my father discontinued his Bible studies, I began attending meetings of the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. The peaceful and orderly way in which those meetings were conducted allowed me to learn more about Jehovah. I also attended circuit assemblies and district conventions, larger gatherings that the Witnesses organized. This exposure to the Bible developed in me a strong desire to worship Jehovah acceptably. I had an obstacle, however.

At that time, I was living out of wedlock with the father of three of my six children. From the Bible, I learned that God condemns sexual relations outside of marriage, and my conscience began to bother me. (Proverbs 5:15-20; Galatians 5:19) As my love of the truth deepened, I longed to bring my life into harmony with God's law. Finally, I made a decision. I told my common-law companion that either we would get married or our relationship would end. Although my companion did not share my beliefs, we were officially married on August 15, 1970, five years after the Witnesses first spoke to me. In December of 1970, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah by water baptism.

As regards the ministry, I will never forget the first day I shared in the preaching work. I was nervous and did not know how to start a Bible conversation. Actually, I was relieved when the first householder brought a quick end to our conversation. Soon, though, I was no longer tense. At the end of the day, I was very happy, since I had briefly talked to

several people about the Bible and had left some of our Bible-based publications with them.

Keeping the Family Spiritually Strong

By 1977 our family had grown to eight children. I was determined to do my utmost to help my household serve Jehovah. (Joshua 24:15) So I worked hard to conduct a regular family Bible study. At times, because of exhaustion, I dozed off while one of the children was reading a paragraph out loud, and the children had to wake me up. But physical fatigue never kept us from studying the Bible as a family.

I also prayed very often with my children. As soon as they were old enough, I taught them to pray to Jehovah on their own. I made sure that each of them offered a personal prayer at bedtime. I prayed individually with each child who was too young to offer a prayer.

My husband at first opposed my taking the children to congregation meetings.

However, the prospect of looking after the children himself while I was at the meetings lessened his opposition. At night, he loved to go out and visit with his friends, but the thought of doing so accompanied by eight children did not appeal to him! Later, he even began to help me get the children ready to go to the Kingdom Hall.

The children soon became accustomed to attending all congregation meetings and sharing in the public ministry. During their summer holidays, they often went out in the preaching work with the pioneers, or full-time ministers, in the congregation. This helped my young ones to develop a heartfelt love for the congregation and for the preaching work.—Matthew 24:14.

Times of Testing

To improve the family's finances, my husband began traveling abroad to work. He was away from the family for long periods but returned at regular intervals. In 1989, however, he left and did not return. As I mentioned

With my children, their spouses, and my grandchildren



earlier, the loss of my husband left me devastated. For many nights I cried and fervently prayed to Jehovah for comfort and endurance, and I felt that he answered my prayers. Such scriptures as Isaiah 54:4 and 1 Corinthians 7:15 gave me peace of mind and the strength to go on with life. In the Christian congregation, relatives and friends also supported me emotionally and materially. I am so grateful to Jehovah and his people for their help.

We had other trials. Once one of my daughters was removed from the congregation for unscriptural conduct. I dearly love all my children, yet my loyalty to Jehovah comes first. So during that time, my other children and I strictly observed the Bible's direction on how to act toward disfellowshipped ones. (1 Corinthians 5:11, 13) We received much criticism from people who did not understand our position. However, after my daughter was reinstated in the congregation, her husband told me that our firm stand for Bible principles had impressed him. He now serves Jehovah with his family.

Facing Financial Problems

When my husband left us, I did not have a steady income, and the family no longer received his financial support. This situation taught us to be content with a simple life and to value spiritual riches more than material pursuits. As the children learned to love and help one another, they grew close. When the older ones started working, they willingly supported their younger siblings. My eldest daughter, Marseree, helped her youngest sister, Nicole, complete her basic secondary school education. In addition, I was able to operate a small grocery shop. The modest income helped me to care for some of our material needs.

Jehovah has never abandoned us. Once, I told a Christian sister that our financial con-

dition did not allow us to attend the district convention. She replied: "Sister Val, when you hear of a convention, start packing! Jehovah will provide." I followed her advice. Jehovah provided, and he has continued to do so. Our family has never missed an assembly or a convention for lack of money.

In 1988, Hurricane Gilbert devastated Jamaica, and we left our home for shelter in a safer place. During a lull in the storm, my son and I left the refuge area to survey the wreckage that was once our home. While poking around in the debris, I spotted something I wanted to save. Suddenly, winds were howling again, but I still held on to what I had salvaged. "Mom, put down the television. Are you Lot's wife?" (Luke 17:31, 32) That comment from my son returned me to my senses. I dropped the rain-soaked TV set, and both of us ran for safety.

I tremble now as I recall that I risked my life for a TV set. But it warms my heart when I think of the spiritually alert comment my son made on that occasion. Thanks to the Biblical training he had received from the Christian congregation, he was able to help me avoid serious physical and perhaps spiritual harm.

The hurricane left our home and possessions in ruins, and it also left us disheartened. Then our Christian brothers arrived. They encouraged us to face our loss

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Angels—How They Affect Us

Animal Creation Magnifies Jehovah

Do Not Allow Place for the Devil

with trust in Jehovah and to continue active in the ministry, and they helped us to rebuild our home. That loving and self-sacrificing work done by Witness volunteers from Jamaica and abroad touched us deeply.

Putting Jehovah First

After completing her education, my second child, Melaine, served as a pioneer minister. Then she accepted an invitation to serve as a pioneer in another congregation, which meant that she would have to give up her job. Although that job allowed her to give significant financial support to our family, we trusted that Jehovah would take care of us if each one of us put Kingdom interests first. (Matthew 6:33) Later, my son, Ewan, also received an invitation to serve as a pioneer. He was supporting the family financially, but we urged him to accept the invitation and wished him Jehovah's blessing. I have never discouraged the children from expanding their Kingdom service, and those of us who remained at home have never suffered want. Instead, our joy has increased, and at times, we have been able to help others in need.

Today, it brings me much joy to see my children "walking in the truth." (3 John 4) One of my daughters, Melaine, is currently accompanying her husband in his traveling ministry as a circuit overseer. My daughter Andrea and her husband serve as special pioneers, and she accompanies her husband when he visits congregations as a substitute circuit overseer. My son, Ewan, and his wife serve as special pioneers, and he is a congregation elder. Another daugh-



I now use a bicycle to carry out my ministry

ter, Ava-Gay, works with her husband at the Jamaica branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses. Jennifer, Genieve, and Nicole serve along with their husbands and children as active members of their respective congregations. Marseree lives with me, and the two of us now attend the Port Morant Congregation. My blessings are great, for all eight of my children continue to worship Jehovah.

The passing of time has brought me physical problems. I now put up with rheumatoid arthritis, but I still enjoy serving as a pioneer. Some time ago, though, walking in the hilly neighborhood where I lived became very difficult. I had a hard time keeping up with my ministry. I tried riding a bicycle and found it to be easier than walking. So I bought a secondhand bike and began using it. At first, my children found it difficult to watch their arthritic mother riding a bike. Yet, they were very pleased to see me continue preaching as my heart desired.

It gives me great joy to see people with whom I have studied embrace Bible truth. I always pray that Jehovah will help all in my family to remain faithful to him through this time of the end and on into eternity. My praise and thanks go to Jehovah, the Great "Hearer of prayer," for enabling me to meet the challenge of bringing up my eight children in his ways.—Psalm 65:2.

They Made the Hearts of Their Parents Rejoice

MY SON, if your heart has become wise, my heart will rejoice, even mine." (Proverbs 23:15) Indeed, Christian parents rejoice when their children acquire godly wisdom. On Saturday, September 10, 2005, an international group of 6,859 people attended the graduation of the 119th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. All felt their hearts swell with rejoicing, especially the parents of the 56 graduates.

David Walker, a longtime member of the United States Bethel family, opened the program with a heartfelt prayer. Then the chairman, David Splane of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, began the graduation exercises by telling those fathers and mothers: "You deserve our warm commendation. The qualities that you have cultivated in your sons and daughters have moved them to take up missionary service." Those parents might have been anxious, since their sons and daughters would soon be off to distant assignments. However, Brother Splane reassured them: "Don't worry about your children. Jehovah can take care of them far better than you can." Then he said: "Think about the good that your sons and daughters will accomplish. People who suffer are going to get true comfort for the first time in their lives."

How to Continue to Bring Joy to Others

The chairman introduced four speakers. First, Ralph Walls of the United States Branch Committee spoke on the theme "Keep Your Eyes Open." He stressed that spiritual blindness is far worse than physical blindness. The first-century congregation in Laodicea lost its spiritual sight. The Christians in that congregation who were blind were offered help, but it is always far better to prevent such blindness by keeping our spiritual eyes open. (Revelation 3:14-18) The speaker said: "Keep your eyes open, and see responsible men as Jehovah sees them." The graduates should not be unduly anxious if there are problems in



CLASS STATISTICS

Number of countries represented: 10

Number of countries assigned to: 25

Number of students: 56

Average age: 32.5

Average years in truth: 16.4

Average years in full-time ministry: 12.1

the congregation. The Lord Jesus Christ is aware of all such things. He will see that matters are handled in due time.

Next, Samuel Herd of the Governing Body answered the question "Are You Ready?" Just as a traveler takes along the clothing he needs, so the graduates must always clothe themselves with the qualities of the new personality. They must have the compassion of Jesus. When a leper told him: "If you just want to, you can make me clean," Jesus said: "I want to. Be made clean." (Mark 1:40-42) The speaker then said: "If you really want to help people, you will find a way to do it." Philippians

2:3 tells Christians to consider that "others are superior." Brother Herd said: "Being lowly of heart is more important than having knowledge. Those you meet in your ministry and your brothers and sisters in the congregation will benefit from your knowledge only if you are humble." He concluded by saying that if the graduates continue to clothe themselves with Christian love, they are ready to travel to their assignments, with sure success ahead.—Colossians 3:14.

Mark Noumair, one of the Gilead instructors, created expectation with the title of his talk, "Will You Maintain It?" "It" refers to our gratitude for Jehovah's goodness. Psalm 103:2 states: "Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and do not forget all his doings." The Israelites showed a lack of gratitude for the manna that kept them alive, calling it "the contemptible bread." (Numbers 21:5) As time went by, the value of the manna did not change, but their appreciation for it disappeared. The instructor said: "If you forget Jehovah's doings and allow your foreign service to become commonplace, that will affect how you view the work Jehovah has given you." Psalm 103:4 states that Jehovah is "crowning you with loving-kindness." The graduates will experience God's loving-kindness in their new congregations.

Another Gilead instructor, Lawrence Bowen, spoke on the subject "Will You Be Overtaken?" He noted that the members of the 119th class of Gilead have trained hard to be successful missionaries. But now they need to stick to Jehovah and the work he has assigned to them. At Revelation 14:1-4, the 144,000 are described as "the ones that keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes." All in that group stick loyally to Jehovah and his Son regardless of their trials, and they reach their goal. "Come what may, we too loyally stick to Jehovah and the work he has assigned to us," said the speaker. By doing so, the graduates will find that Jehovah's blessings "overtake" them.—Deuteronomy 28:2.

Producing Fruitage in Their Service

Every weekend during the course, the students shared in the field ministry. As Wallace Liverance, the school registrar, spoke with them on the program, it became evident that they had been successful. They preached the good news in at least ten languages and started a number of Bible studies. One Gilead couple began a Bible study with a Chinese man. After two visits, they asked him how he felt about getting to know Jehovah. He opened his Bible and asked *them* to read John 17:3. He felt that he was on the road to life.

Anthony Morris of the Governing Body then interviewed three brothers who serve on the Branch Committees of Côte d'Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, and Ecuador. These brothers reassured the graduates that the Branch Committees are looking forward to their arrival and will help them adjust to their assignments.

Next, Leonard Pearson of the United States Bethel family spoke with three Branch Committee members, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Papua New Guinea, and Uganda. These brothers encouraged the graduates to get fully involved in the field ministry. One missionary couple who have spent over 21 years in the Congo have helped 60 people to dedication and baptism. That couple now conducts 30 Bible studies, and 22 of their students attend congregation meetings. With such a great spiritual harvest, now is a wonderful time to serve as a missionary.

Bearing Witness With a Spirit of Urgency

Gerrit Lösch of the Governing Body presented the final talk. His theme was "Speaking About God and Bearing Witness to Jesus in the Lord's Day." The words "witness," "witnesses," and "witnessing" occur 19 times in the book of Revelation. Thus, Jehovah leaves no doubt about the work he has for his people. When are we to give such a witness?



119th Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back, and names are listed from left to right in each row.
(1) Helgesen, S.; Daugaard, H.; Pierluissi, A.; Joseph, I.; Racanelli, C. (2) Byrge, T.; Butler, D.; Freedlun, J.; Nuñez, K.; Pavageau, C.; Doumen, T. (3) Camacho, O.; Lindqvist, L.; Broomer, A.; Wessels, E.; Burton, J.; Woodhouse, O.; Doumen, A. (4) Tirion, A.; Connally, L.; Fournier, C.; Gil, A.; Johnsson, K.; Hamilton, L. (5) Byrd, D.; Scribner, I.; Camacho, B.; Laschinski, H.; Hallahan, M.; Libuda, O. (6) Joseph, A.; Lindqvist, M.; Helgesen, C.; Nuñez, D.; Scribner, S.; Fournier, J. (7) Pierluissi, F.; Pavageau, T.; Broomer, C.; Racanelli, P.; Butler, T.; Woodhouse, M.; Libuda, J. (8) Laschinski, M.; Freedlun, S.; Burton, I.; Tirion, M.; Byrd, M.; Byrge, J. (9) Wessels, T.; Hallahan, D.; Connally, S.; Gil, D.; Daugaard, P.; Hamilton, S.; Johnsson, T.

During "the Lord's day." (Revelation 1:9, 10) That day began in 1914, is continuing into our time, and stretches into the future. According to Revelation 14:6, 7, the work of speaking about God has angelic support. Revelation 22:17 shows that the responsibility of directing the work of bearing witness to Jesus is entrusted to the remnant of anointed Christians. But we all must take advantage of that privilege now. In verse 20, Jesus is re-

corded as saying: "I am coming quickly." Brother Lösch exhorted all present: "Call out to the people, 'Come, take life's water free.' Jesus is coming quickly. Are we ready?"

Fred Rusk, who himself served as a Gilead School instructor for 11 years, ended the program with a prayer of thanks to Jehovah that touched the hearts of all in attendance. It was a fitting end to a day that had been an occasion of great rejoicing.

"A WORD AT ITS RIGHT TIME IS SO HOW GOOD!"

DURING a day-long assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses, Kim did her best to listen and take notes while trying to keep her two-and-a-half-year-old daughter sitting quietly. At the conclusion of the program, a Christian sister sitting in the same row turned to Kim and sincerely commended her for the way she and her husband had looked after their daughter during the program. That commendation meant so much to Kim that even now, years later, she says: "When I feel particularly tired at meetings, I think of what that sister said. Her kind words still encourage me to continue to train our daughter." Indeed, timely words can lift a person's spirit. The Bible states: "A word at its right time is O how good!"—Proverbs 15:23.

For some of us, though, commanding others may be difficult. At times, being conscious of our own inadequacies can make it hard to do so. Says one Christian: "For me, it's like standing on soft ground. The more I lift others up, the more I feel myself being pushed down." Such factors as shyness, insecurity, or the fear of being misunderstood can also make it difficult to offer commendation. In addition, if we personally received little or no recognition while growing up, we may find it hard to command others.

Nevertheless, knowing that commendation may have a good effect on both the giver and the recipient might move us to do our best to give a word of commendation at the right time. (Proverbs 3:27) What, then, are the positive effects that result from doing so? Let us briefly consider some.

Positive Effects

Appropriate commendation can build confidence in the recipient. "When people commend me, I feel that they have confidence in me, that they believe in me," says Elaine, a Christian wife. Yes, to commend someone lacking confidence can give that person courage to deal with obstacles, and as a result, he finds joy. Youths especially benefit from deserved commendation. One teenager who admits to being discouraged by her own negative thoughts says: "I always try my best to please Jehovah, but sometimes I feel that no matter what I do, it is not good enough. When someone commands me, I feel very good inside." True, indeed, is the Bible proverb: "As apples of gold in silver carvings is a word spoken at the right time for it."—Proverbs 25:11.

Commendation can motivate and encourage a person. One full-time minister says, "Commendation encourages me to work harder and to improve the quality of my ministry." A mother of two observes that when her children receive acknowledgment from other members of the congregation for giving comments at meetings, they want to comment more. Yes, it can motivate young ones to make progress in Christian living. In fact, all of us need to be reassured that we are appreciated and valued. This stress-filled world may leave us tired and weighed down. A Christian elder says, "At times when I am discouraged, commendation is like an answer to my prayers." Similarly, Elaine says,

"Sometimes I feel that Jehovah shows his approval of me through the expressions of others."

Being commended can create a sense of belonging. Giving genuine commendation shows thoughtfulness and builds an atmosphere of warmth, security, and appreciation. It is evidence that we truly love our fellow Christians and appreciate them. Josie, a mother, says: "In the past, I had to take my stand for the truth in a religiously divided household. At that time, receiving recognition from spiritually mature individuals strengthened my resolve not to give up." Indeed, "we are members belonging to one another."—Ephesians 4:25.

Wanting to commend helps us to see the good in others. We look at the strengths of

others, not at their weaknesses. A Christian elder named David says, "Being appreciative of what others do will help us to commend others more often." Keeping in mind how liberal Jehovah and his Son are in speaking well of imperfect humans will move us to be generous in this regard.—Matthew 25:21-23; 1 Corinthians 4:5.

Deserving Recipients

Jehovah God, by reason of his Creatorship, is foremost among those who deserve to be praised. (Revelation 4:11) Although he does not need us to build his confidence or to motivate him, when we praise Jehovah for his awesomeness and his loving-kindness, he draws close to us and we develop a relationship with him. Praising God also nurtures a

Who in your congregation is deserving of commendation?



healthy and modest estimation of our own achievements and causes us to attribute our successes to Jehovah. (Jeremiah 9:23, 24) Jehovah extends to all deserving humans the prospect of everlasting life, and that is yet another motivating reason for praising him. (Revelation 21:3, 4) King David of old was eager to "praise the name of God" and "magnify him with thanksgiving." (Psalm 69:30) May that be our desire as well.

Fellow worshippers are deserving of appropriate commendation. When we give it, we act in harmony with the divine command to "consider one another to incite to love and fine works." (Hebrews 10:24) Exemplary in this regard was the apostle Paul. He wrote to the congregation in Rome: "First of all, I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ concerning all of you, because your faith is talked about throughout the whole world." (Romans 1:8) Similarly, the apostle

John acknowledged his fellow Christian Gaius for his sterling example of "walking in the truth."—3 John 1-4.

Today, when a fellow Christian displays a Christlike quality in an exemplary manner, delivers a well-prepared meeting part, or makes a heartfelt comment during a meeting, we have a fine opportunity to express our appreciation to that individual. Or when a child tries hard to look up scriptures during congregation meetings, we can offer commendation. Elaine, mentioned earlier, comments: "We differ in our gifts. By noting what someone else does, we show our appreciation for the variety of gifts among God's people."

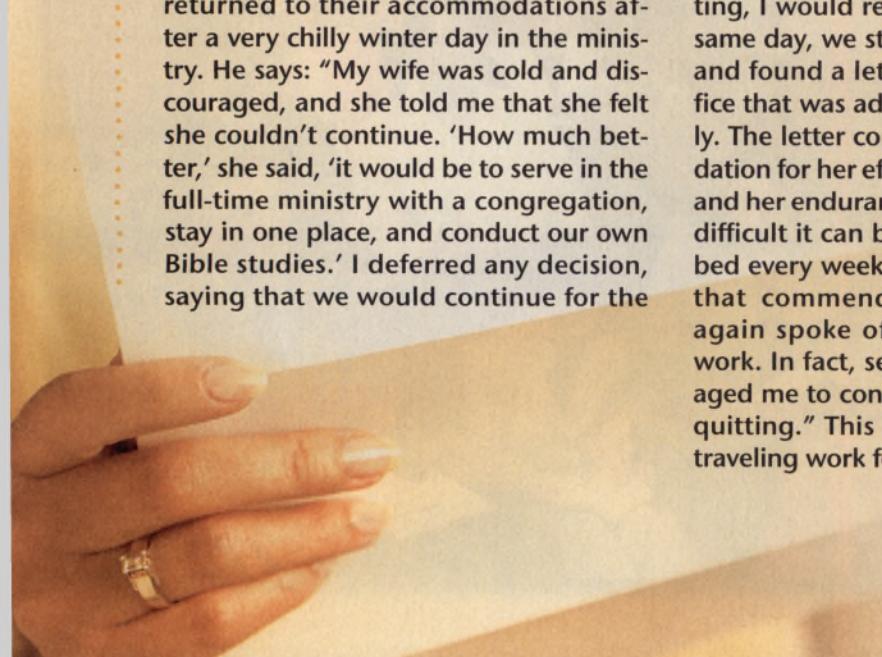
In the Family

What about expressing appreciation to members of our own family? It takes much time, effort, and loving attention for hus-

A Letter That Touched Her Heart

One traveling overseer remembers well one occasion when he and his wife returned to their accommodations after a very chilly winter day in the ministry. He says: "My wife was cold and discouraged, and she told me that she felt she couldn't continue. 'How much better,' she said, 'it would be to serve in the full-time ministry with a congregation, stay in one place, and conduct our own Bible studies.' I deferred any decision, saying that we would continue for the

rest of the week and see how she felt by then. If she still felt strongly about quitting, I would respect her feelings. That same day, we stopped at the post office and found a letter from the branch office that was addressed to her personally. The letter contained warm commendation for her efforts in the field ministry and her endurance, acknowledging how difficult it can be to sleep in a different bed every week. She was so touched by that commendation that she never again spoke of leaving the traveling work. In fact, several times she encouraged me to continue when I thought of quitting." This couple remained in the traveling work for almost 40 years.



band and wife to provide spiritual, emotional, and material support for their family. Surely they deserve to hear words of commendation from each other and from their children. (Ephesians 5:33) For instance, regarding a capable wife, God's Word says: "Her sons have risen up and proceeded to pronounce her happy; her owner rises up, and he praises her."

—Proverbs 31:10, 28.

Children also deserve commendation. Sadly, some parents are quick to tell their children what they expect from them but rarely commend them for the effort they put forth in being respectful and obedient. (Luke 3:22) When given in the early years of a child's development, commendation often makes the child feel wanted and more secure.

Granted, it takes effort to commend others, but we reap many benefits from doing so. In fact, the more diligent we are in commending those who are deserving, the greater our happiness will be.—Acts 20:35.

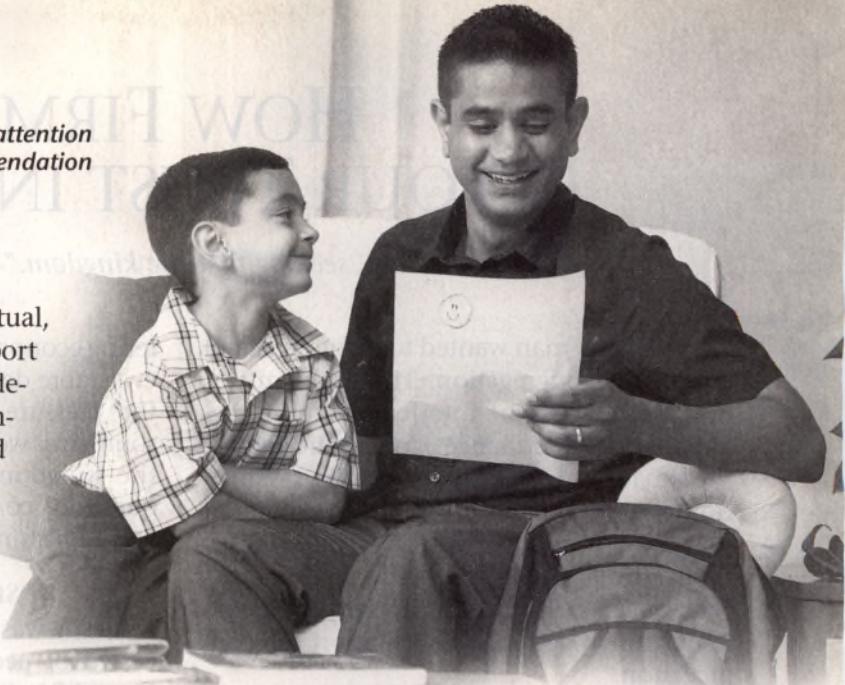
Accept and Give Commendation in the Right Spirit

Receiving commendation can, however, pose a test for some. (Proverbs 27:21) It could, for example, foster feelings of superiority in individuals who have a tendency to be proud. (Proverbs 16:18) Hence, there is reason for caution. The apostle Paul gave

this down-to-earth admonition: "I tell everyone there among you not to think more of himself than it is necessary to think; but to think so as to have a sound mind, each one as God has distributed to him a measure of faith." (Romans 12:3) To help others not to fall into the trap of thinking too much of themselves, it may be wise not to focus on such traits as keen intelligence or good looks. Instead, we should acknowledge others for their fine deeds.

When given and accepted in the right spirit, words of commendation can affect us in a positive way. We may be moved to acknowledge our indebtedness to Jehovah for anything good that we have done. Commendation may also encourage us to continue conducting ourselves in a fine manner.

Sincere and well-deserved commendation is a gift that all of us can give. When we thoughtfully bestow it upon someone, it may mean more to the recipient than we will ever know.



HOW FIRM IS YOUR TRUST IN GOD?

"Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom."—MATTHEW 6:33.

A YOUNG man wanted to be more useful in his congregation. The problem was that his secular work interfered with his regular meeting attendance. How did he address the situation? He simplified his life, resigned from his job, and in time found employment that did not interfere with his Christian activities. Today, he earns much less than before, but he still cares for his family's needs and is much better able to support the congregation.

² Do you understand why that young man took such a step? Can you see yourself taking a similar step if you were in circumstances like his? Commendably, many Christians have, and their actions demonstrate their confidence in Jesus' promise: "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33) They trust in Jehovah for security rather than in the secular world.—Proverbs 3:23, 26.

³ In view of the difficult times we are living in, some may wonder whether that young man made a wise decision. Today, one section of humanity lives in the deepest poverty while another enjoys the highest standard of living in history. Most in poor lands would eagerly seize any opportunity to make their life a little easier. On the other hand, many in wealthier lands feel the pressure of maintaining their standard of living in the face of fal-

1, 2. What step as to employment did a young man take, and why?

3. Why may some wonder whether it is practical today to put God's Kingdom first?

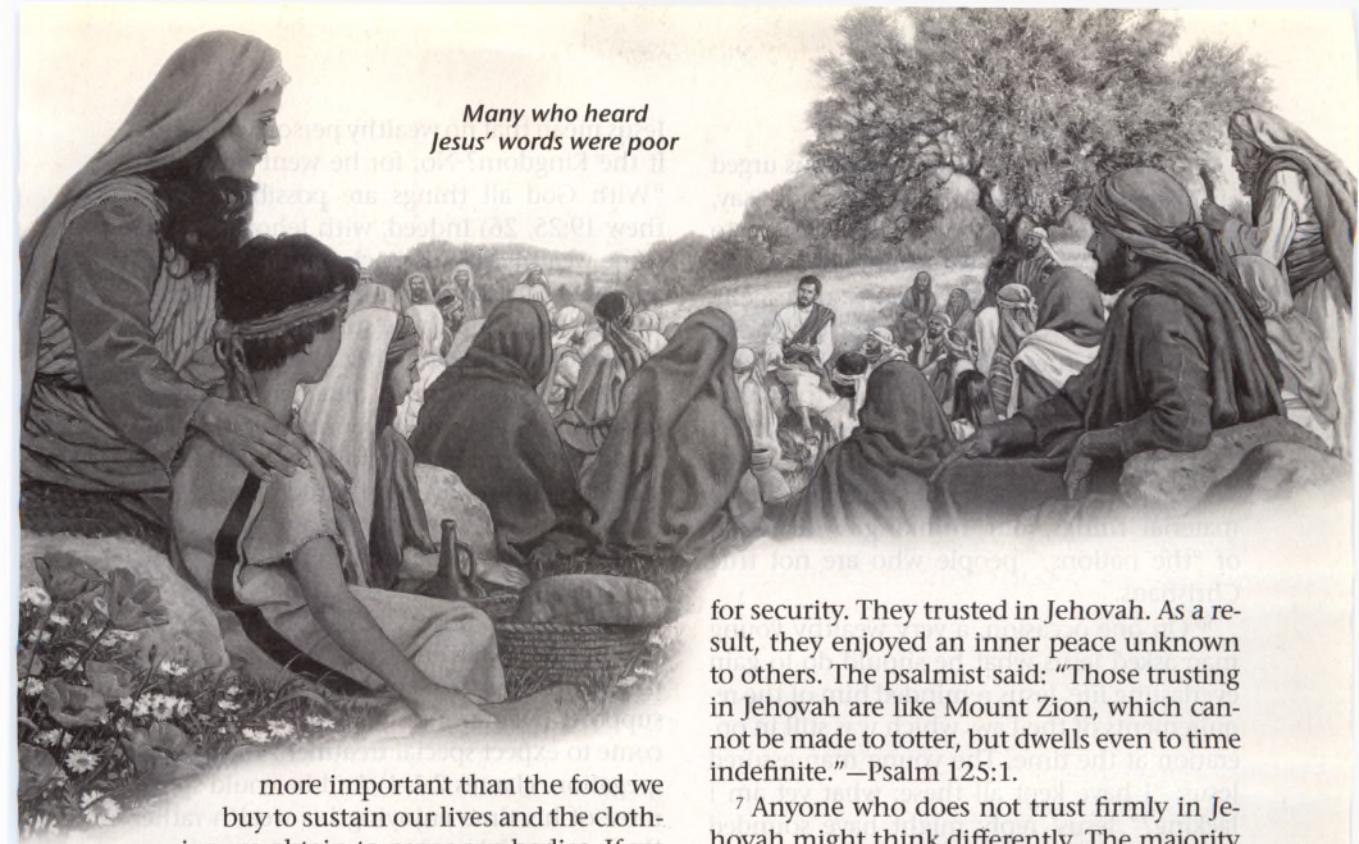
tering economies, changing job markets, and ever more demanding employers. In view of the pressure involved in making a living, some may wonder, 'Is it still practical to seek the Kingdom first?' To help answer that question, consider the audience that Jesus was addressing.

"Stop Being Anxious"

⁴ Jesus was in Galilee, speaking to a large crowd of people from many places. (Matthew 4:25) Few if any of those people were wealthy. Likely, most were poor. Yet, Jesus urged them to give priority, not to the gaining of material wealth, but to the storing up of something far more valuable—spiritual treasure. (Matthew 6:19-21, 24) He said: "Stop being anxious about your souls as to what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your bodies as to what you will wear. Does not the soul mean more than food and the body than clothing?"—Matthew 6:25.

⁵ To many of those listening, Jesus' words might have sounded impractical. They knew that if they did not work hard, their families would suffer. However, Jesus reminded them about the birds. Birds live from one day to the next, yet Jehovah cares for them. Jesus also pointed to the way Jehovah provides for wildflowers, the beauty of which surpasses that of Solomon in all his glory. If Jehovah cares for birds and flowers, how much more so will he care for us? (Matthew 6:26-30) As Jesus said, our lives (souls) and bodies are far

4, 5. How did Jesus illustrate that it was reasonable for God's people not to be overly anxious about everyday concerns?



*Many who heard
Jesus' words were poor*

more important than the food we buy to sustain our lives and the clothing we obtain to cover our bodies. If we devote all our efforts merely to feed and cover ourselves, with nothing substantial left for serving Jehovah, we miss the very purpose of living.—Ecclesiastes 12:13.

A Balanced Viewpoint

⁶ Of course, Jesus did not encourage his listeners to stop working and wait for God somehow to provide for their families. Even the birds have to search for food for themselves and their young. Thus, Christians had to work if they wanted to eat. They had to care for family responsibilities. Christian servants and slaves had to work diligently for their masters. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Peter 2:18) The apostle Paul often worked as a tentmaker to support himself. (Acts 18:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 2:9) Still, those Christians did not look to secular work

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6. (a) For what are Christians responsible?
(b) Where do Christians place their complete trust?

for security. They trusted in Jehovah. As a result, they enjoyed an inner peace unknown to others. The psalmist said: "Those trusting in Jehovah are like Mount Zion, which cannot be made to totter, but dwells even to time indefinite."—Psalm 125:1.

⁷ Anyone who does not trust firmly in Jehovah might think differently. The majority of humans view material wealth as a major key to security. Hence, parents have encouraged their offspring to invest much of their young adulthood in higher education, hoping that it will prepare them for well-paying careers. Sadly, some Christian families have found the cost of such an investment to be very high, as their children have lost their spiritual focus and turned to pursuing materialistic goals.

⁸ Hence, wise Christians realize that Jesus' counsel applies as much today as it did in the first century, and they try to keep a balance. Even if they have to spend long hours in secular work in order to care for Scriptural responsibilities, they never allow the need to earn money to blind them to the more important spiritual matters.—Ecclesiastes 7:12.

-
7. What might be the viewpoint of one who does not trust firmly in Jehovah?
8. What balance do Christians maintain?

"Never Be Anxious"

⁹ In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus urged his listeners: "Never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' For all these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things." (Matthew 6:31, 32) What encouraging words! If we trust fully in Jehovah, he will always be there to support us. However, Jesus' words are also sobering. They remind us that if we "eagerly" pursue material things, our thinking is like that of "the nations," people who are not true Christians.

¹⁰ On one occasion, a very wealthy young man asked Jesus what he should do to gain everlasting life. Jesus reminded him of the requirements of the Law, which was still in operation at the time. The young man assured Jesus: "I have kept all these; what yet am I lacking?" Jesus' reply might have sounded impractical to many. He said: "If you want to be perfect, go sell your belongings and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven, and come be my follower." (Matthew 19:16-21) The young man went away sad, unable to contemplate losing his wealth. However much he loved Jehovah, he loved his possessions more.

¹¹ That event led Jesus to say something unexpected: "It will be a difficult thing for a rich man to get into the kingdom of the heavens. ... It is easier for a camel to get through a needle's eye than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:23, 24) Did

9. How does Jesus reassure those who fully trust in Jehovah?
10. When a young man approached Jesus for counsel, how did Jesus reveal what the young man loved most?
- 11, 12. (a) What sobering words did Jesus utter regarding wealth? (b) How can possessions be a barrier to serving Jehovah?

Jesus mean that no wealthy person will inherit the Kingdom? No, for he went on to say: "With God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:25, 26) Indeed, with Jehovah's help some wealthy people back then did become anointed Christians. (1 Timothy 6:17) Nevertheless, Jesus said those surprising words for good reason. He was giving a warning.

¹² If a person becomes attached to his possessions as that wealthy young man did, they could become a barrier to his serving Jehovah wholeheartedly. That could be true both of one who is already wealthy and of one who is "determined to be rich." (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) Trusting too much in material things can lead a person to be less 'conscious of his spiritual need.' (Matthew 5:3) As a result, he might not feel the same need for Jehovah's support. (Deuteronomy 6:10-12) He might come to expect special treatment in the congregation. (James 2:1-4) And he could spend most of his time enjoying his wealth rather than serving Jehovah.

Cultivate the Right Viewpoint

¹³ One group with a wrong view of possessions was the first-century congregation in Laodicea. Jesus said to them: "You say: 'I am rich and have acquired riches and do not need anything at all,' but you do not know you are miserable and pitiable and poor and blind and naked." It was not their wealth that brought the Laodiceans to such a pitiable spiritual situation. It was the fact that they trusted in wealth rather than in Jehovah. As a result, they were spiritually luke-warm, near to being 'vomited out of' Jesus' mouth.—Revelation 3:14-17.

14. On the other hand, Paul commended the Hebrew Christians for their attitude during
13. What wrong viewpoint did the Laodiceans have?
14. Why did the Hebrew Christians merit Paul's commendation?



The merchant in Jesus' parable sacrificed everything for one valuable pearl

ing an earlier time of persecution. He said: "You both expressed sympathy for those in prison and joyfully took the plundering of your belongings, knowing you yourselves have a better and an abiding possession." (Hebrews 10:34) Those Christians were not devastated by the loss of their possessions. They retained their joy because they kept hold of their most valuable possession, their "better and . . . abiding possession." Like the merchant of Jesus' parable who sacrificed everything for one valuable pearl, they were determined not to loosen their grip on the Kingdom hope, whatever the cost. (Matthew 13:45, 46) What a fine attitude!

¹⁵ Many today have cultivated a similar fine attitude. In Liberia, for example, a young Christian woman was offered the opportunity to study at the university. In that country, such an offer is viewed as a way to a secure future. However, she was a pioneer, a full-time evangelizer, and had received an invitation

15. How did a Christian woman in Liberia put Kingdom interests first?

The wealthy young man loved his possessions more than he loved God

to serve as a temporary special pioneer. She chose to seek first the Kingdom and remain in full-time service. She went to her assignment and started 21 Bible studies in three months. This young sister and thousands like her seek first the Kingdom, even at the cost of possible material advantages. How do they maintain such an attitude in this materialistic world? They have cultivated a number of fine qualities. Let us discuss some of these.

¹⁶ *Modesty:* The Bible says: "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. Do not become wise in your own eyes." (Proverbs 3:5-7) Sometimes, a certain course might seem practical from a secular point of view. (Jeremiah 17:9) Still, a sincere Christian looks to Jehovah for guidance. (Psalm 48:14) 'In all his ways'—in congregation matters, education or secular work, relaxation, or anything else—he modestly seeks Jehovah's counsel.—Psalm 73:24.

¹⁷ *Confidence in Jehovah's promises:* Paul said: "He that approaches God must believe

16, 17. (a) Why is modesty important if we are to trust in Jehovah? (b) Why should we cultivate confidence in God's promises?



that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Hebrews 11:6) If we doubt that Jehovah will fulfill his promises, it might seem logical to 'use this world to the full.' (1 Corinthians 7:31) On the other hand, if our belief is strong, we will be determined to seek the Kingdom first. How can a strong belief be developed? By drawing close to Jehovah in constant, heartfelt prayer and through regular personal study. (Psalm 1:1-3; Philippians 4:6, 7; James 4:8) Like King David, we can pray: "In you I have put my trust, O Jehovah. I have said: 'You are my God.' How abundant your goodness is!" —Psalm 31:14, 19.

¹⁸ *Diligence in Jehovah's service:* Paul linked confidence in Jehovah's promises with industriousness when he wrote: "We desire each one of you to show the same industriousness so as to have the full assurance of the hope down to the end." (Hebrews 6:11) If we are busy in Jehovah's service, he will support us. Each time we experience that support,

18, 19. (a) How does industriousness strengthen our trust in Jehovah? (b) Why should a Christian be willing to make sacrifices?

Can You Explain?

- With regard to material things, what balance did Jesus encourage us to have?
- What do we learn from Jesus' illustration of the camel and the needle's eye?
- What Christian qualities help us to seek first God's Kingdom?



*If we are busy
in Jehovah's service,
he will support us*

our trust in him gets stronger, we become "steadfast, unmovable." (1 Corinthians 15:58) Our faith is renewed, and our hope confirmed.—Ephesians 3:16-19.

¹⁹ *Willingness to make sacrifices:* Paul sacrificed a promising career in order to follow Jesus. He clearly made the right choice, although his life was sometimes hard from a material standpoint. (1 Corinthians 4:11-13) Jehovah does not promise a life of luxury, and sometimes his servants endure hardships. Our willingness to simplify our lifestyle and make

sacrifices proves the strength of our determination to serve Jehovah.—1 Timothy 6:6-8.

²⁰ *Patience:* The disciple James urged fellow Christians: "Exercise patience, therefore, brothers, until the presence of the Lord." (James 5:7) In this fast-moving world, it is difficult to be patient. We want things to happen quickly. But Paul urges us to imitate those who "through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Hebrews 6:12) Be willing to wait on Jehovah. Everlasting life on a paradise earth—surely that is worth waiting for!

²¹ Yes, Jesus' counsel to seek first the Kingdom is practical. When we do so, we demonstrate that we really trust in Jehovah and choose the only safe way for a Christian to live. However, Jesus also counseled us to keep on "seeking first . . . [God's] righteousness." In the following article, we will see why that encouragement is especially needed today.

20. Why is patience vital for one who puts Kingdom interests first?
21. (a) What do we demonstrate when we put Kingdom interests first? (b) What will be discussed in the following article?

SEEKING RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL PROTECT US

"Keep on, then, seeking first . . . [God's] righteousness."—MATTHEW 6:33.

A YOUNG Christian woman in Asia worked as a secretary in a government office. She was conscientious, reporting for work early and not loitering at her job. However, since her position was not permanent, it came up for review. The head of the department told the young woman that he would employ her permanently and even give her a higher position, provided she would have an immoral relationship with him. This she flatly refused, even though it would mean the loss of her employment.

² Was that young Christian woman unrealistic? No, she was carefully following Jesus' words: "Keep on, then, seeking first . . . [God's] righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) For her, following righteous principles was far more important than gaining an advantage by means of committing sexual immorality.—1 Corinthians 6:18.

The Importance of Righteousness

³ "Righteousness" implies a state of moral integrity and honesty. In the Bible, the Greek and Hebrew words have the thought of "rectitude" or "uprightness." It is not self-righteousness, judging oneself by one's own standards. (Luke 16:15) It is uprightness according to Jehovah's standards. It is God's righteousness.—Romans 1:17; 3:21.

⁴ Why is righteousness important? Because Jehovah, the "righteous God," favors

1. 2. What decision did a young Christian make, and why did she make that decision?
3. What is righteousness?
4. Why is righteousness important to a Christian?

his people when they practice righteousness. (Psalm 4:1; Proverbs 2:20-22; Habakkuk 1:13) Anyone who works unrighteousness cannot have a close relationship with him. (Proverbs 15:8) That is why the apostle Paul urged Timothy: "Flee from the desires incidental to youth, but pursue righteousness," along with other vital qualities. (2 Timothy 2:22) It is also why Paul included "the breastplate of righteousness" when he listed the various parts of our spiritual armor.—Ephesians 6:14.

⁵ Of course, no human is righteous in a complete sense. All inherit imperfection from Adam, and all are sinful, unrighteous, from birth. Yet, Jesus said that we should seek righteousness. How is that possible? In that Jesus gave his perfect life as a ransom for us, and if we exercise faith in that sacrifice, Jehovah is willing to forgive our sins. (Matthew 20:28; John 3:16; Romans 5:8, 9, 12, 18) On that basis, as we learn Jehovah's righteous standards and do our utmost to observe them—praying for help to overcome our weaknesses—Jehovah accepts our worship. (Psalm 1:6; Romans 7:19-25; Revelation 7:9, 14) How comforting that is!

Righteous in an Unrighteous World

⁶ When Jesus' disciples received the commission to be his witnesses "to the most distant part of the earth," they faced a difficult situation. (Acts 1:8) All their assigned

5. How can imperfect creatures seek righteousness?
6. Why was the world a dangerous place for the early Christians?



*For Jesus' followers,
the world was
a dangerous place*

territory was “lying in the power of the wicked one,” Satan. (1 John 5:19) The world was infected with the wicked spirit that he promotes, and Christians would be exposed to its contaminating influence. (Ephesians 2:2) For them, the world was a dangerous place. Only by seeking first God’s righteousness could they endure with their integrity intact. Most did endure, but a few were diverted from “the path of righteousness.”—Proverbs 12:28; 2 Timothy 4:10.

⁷ Is the world safer for Christians today? By no means! It is even more corrupt than it was in the first century. In addition, Satan has been cast down to the earth and wages vicious warfare against anointed Christians, “the remaining ones of [the woman’s] seed, who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus.” (Revelation 12:12, 17) Satan also attacks any who support that “seed.” Yet, Christians cannot hide from the world. While no part of it, they have to live in it. (John 17:15, 16) And they have to preach in it to seek out rightly disposed people and teach them to be disciples of Christ. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20)

7. What responsibilities require that a Christian resist corrupting influences?

Therefore, since Christians cannot entirely avoid the corrupting influences in this world, they have to resist them. Let us consider four of those influences.

The Trap of Immorality

⁸ Toward the end of their 40-year trek in the wilderness, a large number of Israelites turned from the path of righteousness. They had witnessed many acts of deliverance by Jehovah, and soon they would march into the Promised Land. Yet, at that critical point, they turned to serving the gods of the Moabites. Why? They succumbed to “the desire of the flesh.” (1 John 2:16) The record says: “The people started to have immoral relations with the daughters of Moab.”—Numbers 25:1.

⁹ That episode demonstrates the way wrong fleshly desires can corrupt unwary ones. We do well to learn from it, especially since immorality has become widely viewed as an acceptable lifestyle. (1 Corinthians 10:6, 8) A report from the United States says: “Until around 1970, cohabitation [the practice of unmarried couples living together] was illegal in all American states. Now, it is routine. More than half of all first marriages are preceded by cohabitation.” That and similar loose moral practices are not limited to one country. They are found all around the world, and sadly, some Christians have followed the trend—even losing their standing in the Christian congregation.—1 Corinthians 5:11.

8. Why did the Israelites turn to worshipping the gods of the Moabites?

9, 10. What situation today makes it vital always to keep in mind the corrupting power of wrong fleshly desires?

**Children who are taught
to love Jehovah will be
fortified against immorality**

¹⁰ Moreover, propaganda promoting immorality seems to be everywhere. Movies and television programs suggest that it is perfectly acceptable for young people to have sex before marriage. Homosexual relationships are depicted as normal. And many shows depict increasingly graphic sex. Pictures of graphic sex are also easily accessible on the Internet. For instance, a newspaper columnist reported that his seven-year-old son came home from school and excitedly told his father that a school friend had come across an Internet site showing naked women performing sex acts. The father was horrified, but how many children have come across such sites without telling their parents? In addition, how many parents know the contents of the video games their children play? Many popular games feature disgusting immorality, as well as demonism and violence.

¹¹ How can a family resist such degraded "entertainment"? By seeking first God's righteousness, refusing to get involved with anything immoral. (2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:3) Parents who properly oversee their children's activities and inculcate in their children a love of Jehovah and his righteous laws fortify them against pornography, pornographic video games, immoral movies, and other unrighteous temptations.—Deuteronomy 6:4-9.*

* Valuable suggestions for parents on protecting the family from immoral influences are found in the book *The Secret of Family Happiness*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

11. How can a family be protected from the immorality of the world?



The Danger of Community Pressure

¹² When Paul was in Lystra in Asia Minor, he miraculously healed a man. The account says: "The crowds, seeing what Paul had done, raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian tongue: 'The gods have become like humans and have come down to us!' And they went calling Barnabas Zeus, but Paul Hermes, since he was the one taking the lead in speaking." (Acts 14:11, 12) Later those same crowds wanted to kill Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 14:19) Clearly, those people were very susceptible to community pressure. It seems that when some from that region became Christians, they did not lose their superstitious tendencies. In his letter to Christians in Colossae, Paul warned against the "worship of the angels."—Colossians 2:18.

¹³ Today, true Christians likewise need to avoid popularly accepted customs based on false religious ideas that violate Christian principles. In some lands, for example, many customary ceremonies surrounding birth and death are based on the lie that we have a spirit that survives death. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) There are lands in which it is the

12. What problem arose in the first century?
13. What are some customs that a Christian has to avoid, and how can he find the strength to do so?

custom to subject young girls to female genital mutilation.* This is a cruel, unnecessary practice that is out of harmony with the loving care that Christian parents owe their children. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; Ephesians 6:4) How can Christians resist community pressures and abandon such practices? By having complete trust in Jehovah. (Psalm 31:6) The righteous God will strengthen and care for those who say to him from their heart: "You are my refuge and my stronghold, my God, in whom I will trust."—Psalm 91:2; Proverbs 29:25.

Do Not Forget Jehovah

¹⁴ Shortly before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Jehovah warned them not to forget him. He said: "Watch out for yourself that you may not forget Jehovah your God so as not to keep his commandments and his judicial decisions and his statutes that I am commanding you today; for fear that you

* Female genital mutilation used to be called female circumcision.

14. What warning did Jehovah give the Israelites shortly before they entered the Promised Land?

may eat and indeed satisfy yourself, and you may build good houses and indeed dwell in them, and your herd and your flock may increase, and silver and gold may increase for you, and all that is yours may increase; and your heart may indeed be lifted up and you may indeed forget Jehovah your God."—Deuteronomy 8:11-14.

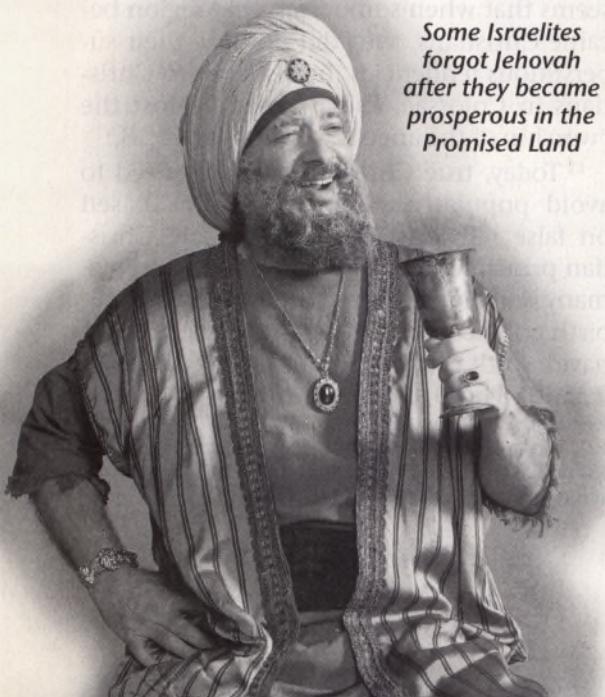
¹⁵ Could something similar happen today? Yes, if we have the wrong priorities. However, if we seek first God's righteousness, pure worship will be the most important thing in our lives. We will, as Paul encouraged us to do, 'buy out the opportune time' and have a sense of urgency in our ministry. (Colossians 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:2) If, though, meeting attendance and field service are less important to us than relaxation or finding ways to have a good time, we could forget Jehovah in the sense of viewing him as secondary in our lives. Paul said that in the last days, men would be "lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God." (2 Timothy 3:4) Sincere Christians examine themselves regularly to be sure that they are not influenced by that kind of thinking.—2 Corinthians 13:5.

Beware of an Independent Spirit

¹⁶ In Eden, Satan successfully appealed to Eve's selfish desire for independence. Eve wanted to make her own decisions about right and wrong. (Genesis 3:1-6) In the first century, some in the Corinthian congregation had a similar independent spirit. They thought they knew better than Paul, and he sarcastically called them superfine apostles.—2 Corinthians 11:3-5; 1 Timothy 6:3-5.

¹⁷ In the world today, many are "head-

15. How can we be sure that we are not forgetting Jehovah?
16. What wrong spirit was manifested by Eve and by some in Paul's day?
17. How can we avoid developing an independent spirit?



Some Israelites forgot Jehovah after they became prosperous in the Promised Land

strong, puffed up with pride," and some Christians have been influenced by that way of thinking. Some have even become opposers of the truth. (2 Timothy 3:4; Philippians 3:18) When it comes to pure worship, it is vital that we look to Jehovah for direction and cooperate with "the faithful and discreet slave" and the congregation elders. That is a way to seek righteousness, and it protects us from developing an independent spirit. (Matthew 24:45-47; Psalm 25:9, 10; Isaiah 30:21) The congregation of the anointed is "a pillar and support of the truth." Jehovah has provided it to protect and guide us. (1 Timothy 3:15) Recognizing its vital role will help us to 'do nothing out of egotism' as we humbly submit to Jehovah's righteous will.—Philippians 2:2-4; Proverbs 3:4-6.

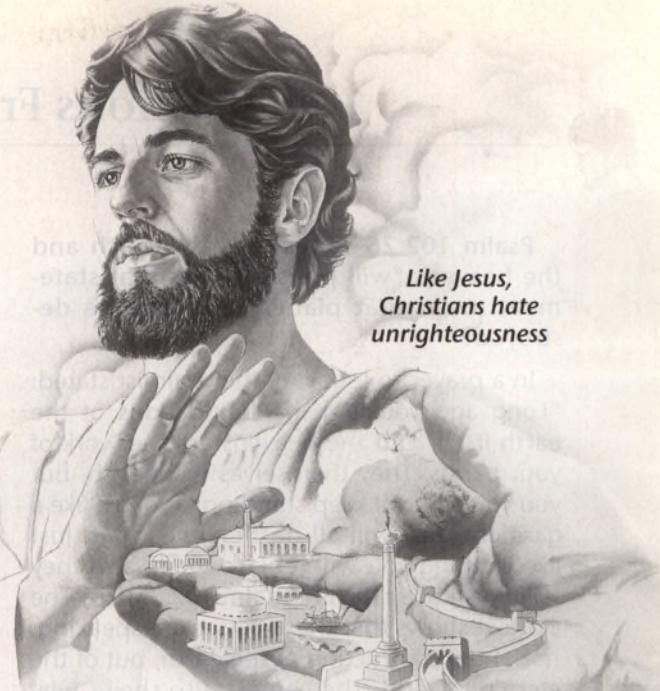
Be Imitators of Jesus

¹⁸ Of Jesus, the Bible prophetically says: "You have loved righteousness and you hate wickedness." (Psalm 45:7; Hebrews 1:9) What a fine attitude to imitate! (1 Corinthians 11:1) Jesus did not merely know Jehovah's upright standards; he loved them. So when Satan tempted him in the wilderness, Jesus was unhesitating and firm in his refusal to stray from "the path of righteousness." —Proverbs 8:20; Matthew 4:3-11.

18. We are encouraged to imitate Jesus in what ways?

Can You Explain?

- Why is it vital to seek righteousness?
- How can an imperfect Christian seek righteousness?
- What are some things in the world that a Christian has to avoid?
- How does seeking righteousness protect us?



*Like Jesus,
Christians hate
unrighteousness*

¹⁹ True, the unrighteous desires of the flesh can be strong. (Romans 7:19, 20) Still, if righteousness is precious to us, this will strengthen us against wickedness. (Psalm 119:165) A deep love of righteousness will shield us when we are confronted by what is wrong. (Proverbs 4:4-6) Remember, whenever we give in to temptation, we give Satan a victory. How much better to resist him and give the victory to Jehovah!—Proverbs 27:11; James 4:7, 8.

²⁰ Because they seek righteousness, true Christians are "filled with righteous fruit, which is through Jesus Christ, to God's glory and praise." (Philippians 1:10, 11) They put on "the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Ephesians 4:24) They belong to Jehovah and live to serve him, not to please themselves. (Romans 14:8; 1 Peter 4:2) That is what governs their thoughts and actions. What delight they bring to the heart of their heavenly Father!—Proverbs 23:24.

19, 20. What are the good results of seeking righteousness?

Questions From Readers

Psalm 102:26 states that the earth and the heavens "will perish." Does that statement mean that planet Earth will be destroyed?

In a prayer to Jehovah, the psalmist stated: "Long ago you laid the foundations of the earth itself, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They themselves will perish, but you yourself will keep standing; and just like a garment they will all of them wear out. Just like clothing you will replace them, and they will finish their turn." (Psalm 102:25, 26) The context shows that these verses are speaking, not of the destruction of the earth, but of the eternity of God. The context also shows why that vital truth is of comfort to God's servants.

The psalmist, perhaps in exile in Babylon, begins by describing his afflictions. He laments that his life is fleeting "just like smoke." Feverish anxiety wrecks his body, making his bones feel "red-hot just like a fireplace." He is exhausted, "dried up like mere vegetation," and he feels lonely, "like a bird isolated upon a roof." His trials have robbed him of his appetite, and his days are marked by mourning. (Psalm 102:3-11) Even so, the psalmist has not given up all hope. Why not? Because of what Jehovah has promised to do with Zion, or Jerusalem.

Although Zion has been destroyed, Jehovah has promised that it will be restored. (Isaiah 66:8) Therefore, the psalmist confidently says to Jehovah: "You will have mercy on Zion, for it is the season to be favorable to her, for the appointed time has come. For Jehovah will certainly build up Zion." (Psalm 102:13, 16) Then the psalmist returns to the subject of his personal suffering. He reasons, in effect, that if desolated Jerusalem can be restored by God's power, Jehovah is well able to rescue him from his miserable condition. (Psalm 102:

17, 20, 23) And something else moves the psalmist to put his full trust in Jehovah. What? The fact that God is eternal.

Jehovah's eternal existence stands in stark contrast to the brevity of the psalmist's own life. "Your years are throughout all generations," he says to Jehovah. (Psalm 102:24) The psalmist next states: "Long ago you laid the foundations of the earth itself, and the heavens are the work of your hands."—Psalm 102:25.

Yet, even the great age of the earth and the heavens cannot be compared with Jehovah's eternal existence. The psalmist adds: "They [earth and heavens] themselves will perish, but you yourself will keep standing." (Psalm 102:26) The physical earth and heavens are perishable. True, Jehovah stated elsewhere that they will last forever. (Psalm 119:90; Ecclesiastes 1:4) But they could be destroyed if this was God's purpose. In contrast, God cannot die. The physical creations keep "standing forever" only because God maintains them. (Psalm 148:6) If Jehovah ever stops renewing the physical creations, then "just like a garment they will all of them wear out." (Psalm 102:26) As a man outlives his clothes, so Jehovah could outlive his creation—if he chose to do so. However, we know from other scriptures that such is not his will. God's Word assures us that Jehovah has determined that the literal earth and heavens will remain forever. —Psalm 104:5.

It is a source of comfort to know that Jehovah will always be there to fulfill all his promises. No matter what trials may befall us, when we cry out to him, we can be confident that he "will certainly turn to the prayer of those stripped of everything, and not despise their prayer." (Psalm 102:17) Yes, Jehovah's assurance of support found in Psalm 102 is even more solid than the earth we stand on.

Make Meditation a Pleasure

TO SOME people the idea of meditating may be intimidating. They may view meditation as a daunting task requiring intense concentration. Such ones may also feel guilty for neglecting meditation, especially when they read of its importance. (Philippians 4:8) However, silently pondering truths we have learned about Jehovah, his beautiful qualities, his awesome accomplishments, his requirements, and his glorious purpose can and should be a very pleasurable way to spend time. Why?

Jehovah God is the Supreme Ruler of the universe and is busy working toward the fulfillment of his great purpose. (John 5:17) Even so, he concerns himself with the silent thoughts of each individual worshipper. The psalmist David knew this and wrote under divine inspiration: "O Jehovah, you have searched through me, and you know me. You yourself have come to know my sitting down and my rising up. You have considered my thought from far off."—Psalm 139:1, 2.

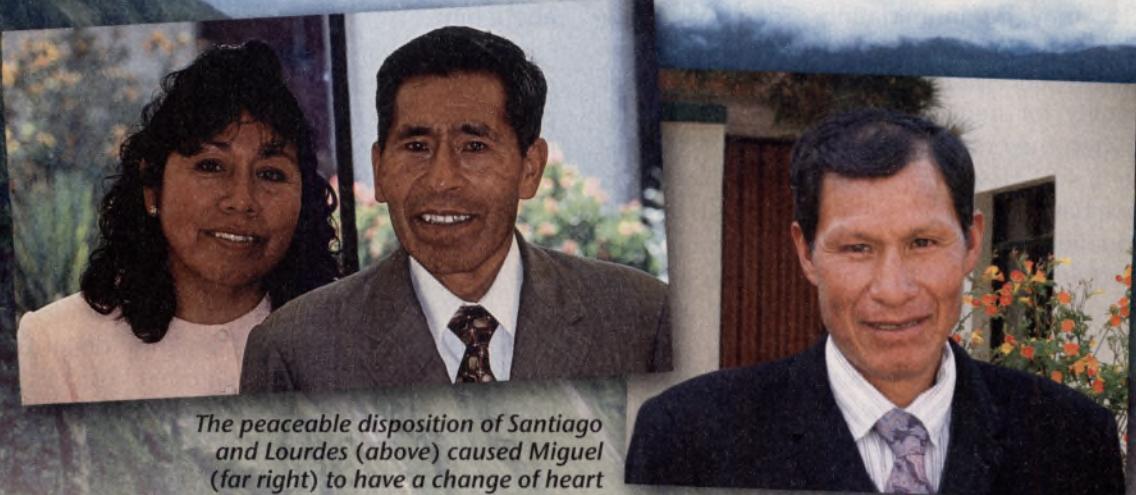
At first, someone may view those words of the psalmist negatively. He may reason, 'Although God is "far off," he notices every bad thought that comes into my mind.' Of course, such a realization has its place. It can help us to fight against wrong thoughts and, when we do have such thoughts, to confess them to God, confident that he will forgive us on the basis of our faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice. (1 John 1:8, 9; 2:1, 2) At the same time, however, we should remember that Jehovah examines his worshippers in a positive way. He

pays attention when we think appreciatively about him.

"Does Jehovah really take note of all the good thoughts of his millions of worshippers?" you may ask. He most certainly does. Jesus emphasized Jehovah's interest in us when he said that Jehovah takes notice even of little sparrows, and then he added: "You are worth more than many sparrows." (Luke 12:6, 7) Sparrows cannot think about Jehovah. So if he cares about them, how much more must he care about us and find delight in the godly thoughts of each one of us! Yes, like David, we can confidently pray: "Let the . . . meditation of my heart become pleasurable before you, O Jehovah my Rock and my Redeemer."—Psalm 19:14.

Further proof that Jehovah indeed concerns himself with the meditation of his loyal worshippers is found in the inspired words of the prophet Malachi. Speaking about our day, he foretold: "At that time those in fear of Jehovah spoke with one another, each one with his companion, and Jehovah kept paying attention and listening. And a book of remembrance began to be written up before him for those in fear of Jehovah and for those thinking upon his name." (Malachi 3:16) Reminding ourselves that Jehovah keeps "paying attention" when we think about him can indeed make godly meditation a pleasure. Therefore, may we echo the words of the psalmist who wrote: "I shall certainly meditate on all your activity, and with your dealings I will concern myself."—Psalm 77:12.

First Chased, Then Embraced



The peaceable disposition of Santiago and Lourdes (above) caused Miguel (far right) to have a change of heart

SOME years ago, Santiago and his wife, Lourdes, moved to the picturesque town of Huillcapata, Peru, to share the Bible's message of hope with people there. Soon, however, a priest arrived from Cuzco and called the town residents together. The priest warned them that the presence of Jehovah's Witnesses would bring a deadly plague and heavy snowfall that would kill their cattle and ruin their crops.

Many were influenced by this "prophecy," and for more than half a year, no one in town accepted the invitation of Santiago and Lourdes to study the Bible. A town official named Miguel, the lieutenant governor, chased Santiago and Lourdes down

the street, hurling stones at them. But they always behaved in a peaceable, Christian manner.

In time, some townspeople accepted a Bible study. Even Miguel changed his attitude. He began studying with Santiago, stopped drinking to an excess, and became a peaceable person. Eventually Miguel, his wife, and two of his daughters embraced Bible truth.

Today, there is a thriving congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in this town. Miguel is happy that most of the stones he threw at Santiago and Lourdes missed their targets, and he is grateful to the couple for their fine example of peaceableness.