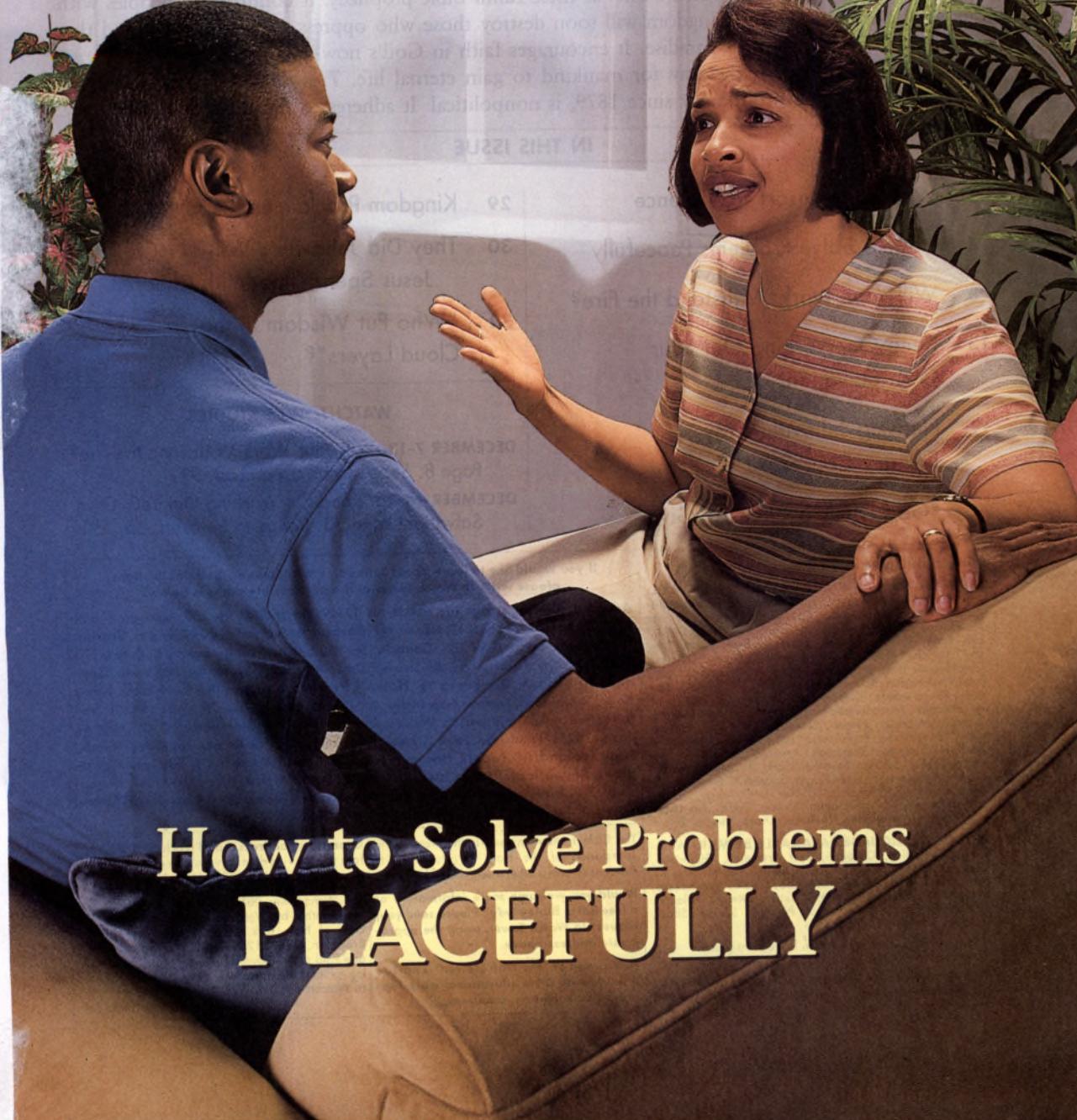


NOVEMBER 1, 1998

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM.

IN THIS ISSUE



A black and white photograph of a man and a woman sitting on a couch. The man, on the left, is wearing a blue shirt and dark pants, looking towards the woman. The woman, on the right, is wearing a striped short-sleeved top and light-colored pants, gesturing with her hands as if speaking. They appear to be engaged in a conversation. In the background, there are some plants and a window with a view of the outdoors.

How to Solve Problems
PEACEFULLY



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

November 1, 1998

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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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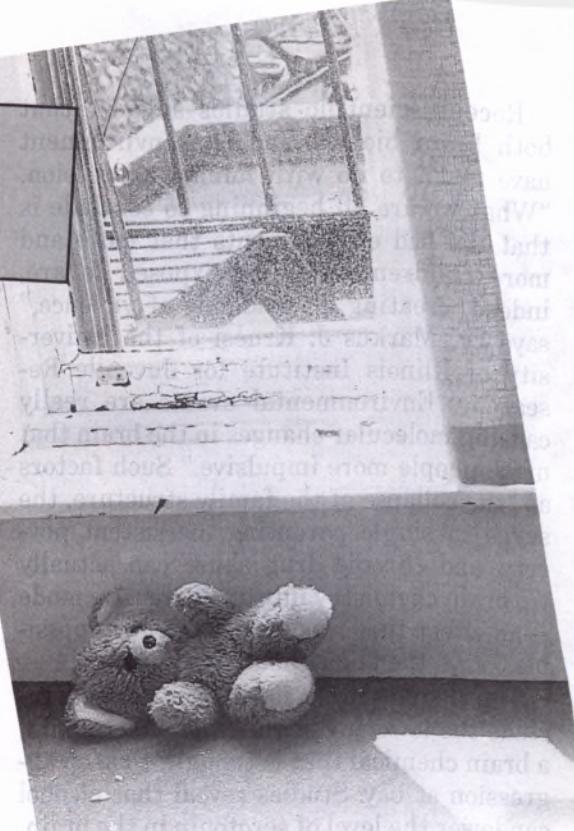
Innumerable children are abused,
battered, or killed in one of
the most violent places on earth
—the home!

WHY THEY RESORT TO VIOLENCE

ABABY, a 27-week-old premature infant, was born in Denver, Colorado, U.S.A. The boy survived, and after three months in the hospital, he was returned home to his parents. Three weeks later, the boy was back in the hospital. Why? He had suffered massive brain injury from a violent shaking by his father. The father could not stand the baby's crying. The little boy was left blind and disabled. Modern medicine had saved him from the trauma of his birth but could not save him from his father's violence.

Innumerable children are abused, battered, or killed in one of the most violent places on earth—the home! Some estimate that as many as 5,000 children a year die at the hands of their parents in the United States alone! And children are not the only victims. According to *World Health* magazine, "wife abuse is the leading cause of injury among women of reproductive age" in the United States. What of other lands? "One-third to over half of women surveyed [in developing countries] report being beaten by their partner." Yes, violence is taking its toll, especially in the home.

Many husbands and wives try to settle their disagreements with violence. In some countries, parents and teachers use violence



to take their anger out on children. For sheer amusement, bullies pick on weaker ones, subjecting them to violence. Why do humans get so violent?

Why People Become Violent

Some claim that humans are violent by nature. While violent crime in general has decreased in the United States, it has increased among youths. And interest in violence has increased. The three major television networks doubled the number of crime stories and tripled their coverage of murders. Yes, crime sells! "We not only tolerate violence," said psychiatrist Karl Menninger, "we put it on the front pages of our newspapers. One-third or one-fourth of our television programs use it for the amusement of our children. Condone! My dear friends, we love it."

Recent scientific studies suggest that both brain biology and the environment have much to do with human aggression. "What we are all beginning to conclude is that the bad environments that more and more children are being exposed to are, indeed, creating an epidemic of violence," says Dr. Markus J. Kruesi of the University of Illinois Institute for Juvenile Research. "Environmental events are really causing molecular changes in the brain that make people more impulsive." Such factors as "the collapse of the family structure, the surge in single parenting, persistent poverty, and chronic drug abuse can actually tip brain chemistry into an aggressive mode—an effect that was once thought impossible," says the book *Inside the Brain*.

The changes in the brain, it is claimed, include the lowering of the level of serotonin, a brain chemical that is thought to keep aggression at bay. Studies reveal that alcohol can lower the level of serotonin in the brain, thereby giving some scientific basis for the long-known link between violence and the abuse of alcohol.

Still another factor is involved in the surge in violence today. "Remember," alerts

a trusted book of prophecy, the Bible, that "there will be difficult times in the last days. People will be selfish, greedy, boastful, and conceited; . . . they will be unkind, merciless, slanderers, violent, and fierce; they will hate the good; they will be treacherous, reckless, and swollen with pride . . . Keep away from such people." (2 Timothy 3:1-5, *Today's English Version*) Yes, the violence we see today is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy about "the last days."

Something else makes this an especially violent time. "Woe for the earth and for the sea," says the Bible, "because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." (Revelation 12:12) The Devil and his demon hordes have been cast out of heaven and are now concentrating their malevolence upon mankind. As "the ruler of the authority of the air," the Devil manipulates "the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience," making the earth an increasingly violent place.—Ephesians 2:2.

How, then, can we cope with the violent "air" of the world today? And how can we resolve differences without violence?

HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS PEACEFULLY

HUMAN violence is almost as old as mankind. The Bible traces violence back to Cain, the brother of Abel and the oldest son of the first human couple. When God favored Abel's offering over his, Cain "grew hot with great anger." How did he deal with the situation? "Cain proceeded

to assault Abel his brother and kill him." Afterward, he found himself in very deep trouble with God. (Genesis 4:5, 8-12) Violence did not solve the problem of Cain's bad standing before his Creator.

How can we avoid Cain's course of resorting to physical force to resolve problems?

From Violence to Tolerance

Consider a man who watched approvingly the murder of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. (Acts 7:58; 8:1) The man, Saul of Tarsus, did not agree with Stephen's religious stand and supported the violent murder as a justified way of stopping Stephen's activities. Granted, Saul may not have been violent in every aspect of his life. Yet he was willing to accept violence as a way of solving problems. Right after Stephen's death, Saul "began to deal outrageously with the [Christian] congregation. Invading one house after another and, dragging out both men and women, he would turn them over to prison."—Acts 8:3.

According to Bible scholar Albert Barnes, the Greek word here translated "to deal outrageously with" denotes the devastations that wild beasts, such as lions and wolves, can create. "Saul," explains Barnes, "raged against the church like a wild beast—a strong expression, denoting the zeal and fury with which he engaged in persecution." When Saul headed to Damascus to round up more followers of Christ, he was "still breathing threat and murder against the disciples of the Lord [Christ]." On his way, he was spoken to by the resurrected Jesus, and this resulted in Saul's conversion to Christianity.—Acts 9:1-19.

Following that conversion, Saul's way of dealing with others changed. An incident that took place some 16 years afterward demonstrated the change. A group of people came to his home congregation in Antioch and urged the Christians there to conform to the Mosaic Law. "No little dissension" resulted. Saul, by this time better known as Paul, took a position in the dispute. Apparently, sparks flew. But Paul did not resort to violence. Rather, he assented to the congregation's decision to refer the matter to the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem congregation.—Acts 15:1, 2.

In Jerusalem, again "much disputing" took place at the meeting of the elders. Paul waited until "the entire multitude became silent" and then reported the magnificent work of God's spirit among the uncircumcised believers. After a Scriptural discussion, the apostles and Jerusalem elders came "to a unanimous accord" not to burden uncircumcised believers unnecessarily but to admonish them "to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication." (Acts 15:3-29) Indeed, Paul had changed. He learned to resolve issues without violence.

Coping With Violent Tendencies

"A slave of the Lord does not need to fight," Paul later admonished, "but needs to be gentle toward all, qualified to teach, keeping himself restrained under evil, instructing with mildness those not favorably disposed." (2 Timothy 2:24, 25) Paul urged Timothy, a younger overseer, to han-

Paul was realistic. He knew that emotions could become heated up even among Christians

dle difficult situations calmly. Paul was realistic. He knew that emotions could become aroused even among Christians. (Acts 15:37-41) With good reason, he counseled: "Be wrathful, and yet do not sin; let the sun not set with you in a provoked state." (Ephesians 4:26) Controlling anger without exploding in uncontrolled rage is the proper way to deal with such emotions. But how can this be accomplished?

Today, it is not easy to keep anger under control. "Being mean is popular," said Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, assistant dean

at the Harvard School of Public Health. "In fact, the skills for getting along—negotiation, compromise, empathy, forgiveness—are those usually ascribed to wimps." Yet, those are manly qualities, and they are key to controlling violent tendencies that may well up inside us.

Upon becoming a Christian, Paul learned a better way of dealing with differences of opinion. It was based on the teachings of the Bible. As a learned scholar of Judaism, Paul was familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures. He must have been aware of such scriptures as: "Do not become envious of the man of violence, nor choose any of his ways." "He that is slow to anger is better than a mighty man, and he that is controlling his spirit than the one capturing a city." "As a city broken through, without a wall, is the man that has no restraint for his spirit." (Proverbs 3:31; 16:32; 25:28) Yet, that knowledge had not prevented Paul, before his conversion, from resorting to violence against the Christians. (Galatians 1:13, 14) But what helped Paul, as a Christian, to resolve emotionally charged issues by using reason and persuasion instead of violence?

Paul gave us a clue when he said: "Become imitators of me, even as I am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1) He greatly appreciated what Jesus Christ had done for him. (1 Timothy 1:13, 14) Christ became the model for him to follow. He knew how Jesus suffered for the sake of sinful mankind. (Hebrews 2:18; 5:8-10) Paul could verify that Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus: "He was hard pressed, and he was letting himself be afflicted; yet he would not open his mouth. He was being brought just like a sheep to the slaughtering; and like a ewe that before her shearers has become mute, he also would not open his mouth." (Isaiah 53:7) The apostle Peter

wrote: "When he [Jesus] was being reviled, he did not go reviling in return. When he was suffering, he did not go threatening, but kept on committing himself to the one who judges righteously."—1 Peter 2:23, 24.

Paul's appreciation for the way Jesus Christ dealt with tense situations moved him to change. He could admonish his fellow believers: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also." (Colossians 3:13) Acknowledging the need not to be violent is not enough. Appreciation for what Jehovah and Jesus Christ have done for us helps to provide the motivation needed to overcome violent tendencies.

Is It Possible?

One man in Japan needed such strong motivation. His father, who was a soldier with a quick temper, dominated his family with violence. Being a victim of violence and seeing his mother suffer similarly, the man developed a violent disposition. He carried two samurai swords of different lengths that he wielded to solve problems as well as to threaten people.

When his wife started to study the Bible, he sat in on the study without taking it seriously. Upon reading a booklet entitled *This Good News of the Kingdom*,* however, he changed. Why? "When I read the material under the subheadings, 'Christ Jesus' and 'The Ransom,' I felt ashamed," he explains. "Although I lived a wayward life, I still liked to be kind to those I got along with. I took pleasure in making my buddies happy but only to the extent that it would not affect my own life. Well, God's Son, Jesus, was willing to give up his life for man-

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



Appreciation for what God has done for us makes for peaceful relations

kind, including ones like me. I was stunned, as though I had been struck with a mallet."

He stopped associating with his former buddies and soon enrolled in the Theocratic Ministry School in a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. This school helps the enrollees to acquire the art of teaching the Bible to others. The course brought a fringe benefit to this man. He reminisces: "When I was young, I resorted to threats and violence because I could not convey my feelings to others. As I learned to communicate my thoughts to others, I began to reason with them instead of resorting to violence."

Has he, like Paul, made Christ's way of life his own? His faith was tested when a former friend with whom he was bound by a mutual oath of brotherhood tried to stop him from becoming a Christian. His "friend" hit him and blasphemed his God, Jehovah. The formerly violent man controlled himself and apologized for not being able to keep the oath. Disappointed, his "brother" left him alone.

By conquering his violent tendencies, this formerly angry man has gained many spiritual brothers and sisters, who are united by love for God and neighbor. (Colossians 3:14) In fact, more than 20 years after becoming a dedicated Christian, he now serves as a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses. What a joy it is for him to be able to show from the Bible that men with beast-like dispositions can learn to solve differences without violence just as he learned it! And what a privilege it is for him to be able to point to the grand fulfillment of the prophetic words: "They will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain; because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea!"—Isaiah 11:9.

Like the apostle Paul and this formerly violent man, you too can learn to handle provoking situations, solving problems peacefully. Jehovah's Witnesses in your locality will be happy to help you.

WILL YOUR WORK WITHSTAND THE FIRE?

"Let each one keep watching how he is building on [the foundation]."

—1 CORINTHIANS 3:10.

A CHRISTIAN married couple gazes at their newborn child. A Kingdom publisher sees an eager, interested expression on the face of a Bible student. A Christian elder teaching from the platform notices in the audience a newly interested individual avidly looking up scriptures in his Bible. These faithful servants of Jehovah have hearts full of hope. They cannot help but wonder, 'Will this person come to love and serve Jehovah—and *remain* faithful?' Of course, such an outcome is not automatic. It takes work.

² A masterful teacher himself, the apostle Paul underscored the importance of the work of teaching and making disciples when he wrote: "You ought to be teachers in view of the time." (Hebrews 5:12) The Christians whom he addressed had made little progress, considering how long they had been believers. Far from being ready to teach others, they needed to be reminded of basic aspects of the truth. Today, all of us do well from time to time to take stock of our abilities as teachers and see how we can make improvements. Lives are at stake. What can we do?

1. What hope do faithful Christians entertain regarding prospective disciples?
2. How did the apostle Paul remind the Hebrew Christians of the importance of the teaching work, and what self-examination might this prompt us to make?

³ In an extended illustration, Paul likened the making of disciples to the process of constructing a building. He began by saying: "We are God's fellow workers. You people are God's field under cultivation, God's building." (1 Corinthians 3:9) So we share in a building work involving people; we help to build them into disciples of Christ. We do so as fellow workers of the One who "constructed all things." (Hebrews 3:4) What a privilege! Let us see how Paul's inspired counsel to the Corinthians can help us to become more skilled at our work. We will focus particularly on our "art of teaching."

—2 Timothy 4:2.

Laying the Right Foundation

⁴ If a building is to be stable and durable, it needs a good foundation. Thus, Paul wrote: "According to the undeserved kindness of God that was given to me, as a wise director of works I laid a foundation." (1 Corinthians 3:10) Using a similar illustration, Jesus Christ told of a house that survived a storm because its builder had chosen a solid foundation. (Luke 6:47-49) Jesus knew

3. (a) To what did the apostle Paul compare the process of making a Christian disciple? (b) As Christian builders, what great privilege do we have?
4. (a) What was Paul's role in the Christian building work? (b) Why might it be said that both Jesus and his audience knew the importance of good foundations?



In many ancient cities, fire-resistant stone buildings coexisted with flimsier structures

all about the importance of foundations. He was present when Jehovah founded the very earth.* (Proverbs 8:29-31) Jesus' audience too valued good foundations. Only well-founded houses could outlast the flash floods and earthquakes that sometimes occurred in Palestine. What, though, was the foundation Paul had in mind?

⁵ Paul wrote: "No man can lay any other foundation than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11) This was not the first time Jesus had been likened to a foundation. In fact, Isaiah 28:16 foretold: "This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said: 'Here I am laying as a foundation in Zion a stone, a tried stone, the precious corner of a sure foundation.'" Jehovah

* The 'foundation of the earth' may refer to the physical forces that hold it—and all heavenly bodies—firmly in place. Additionally, the earth itself is constructed in such a way that it will never "totter," or suffer destruction.—Psalm 104:5.

5. Who is the foundation of the Christian congregation, and how was this foretold?

had long purposed that his Son become the foundation of the Christian congregation.—Psalm 118:22; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-6.

⁶ What is the foundation for individual Christians? As Paul said, there is no foundation for a true Christian but the one laid down in God's Word—Jesus Christ. Paul certainly laid such a foundation. In Corinth, where philosophy was so highly regarded, he did not seek to impress people with worldly wisdom. Rather, Paul preached "Christ impaled," which the nations dismissed as so much "foolishness." (1 Corinthians 1:23) Paul taught that Jesus is the central figure in Jehovah's purposes.—2 Corinthians 1:20; Colossians 2:2, 3.

⁷ Paul noted that he did such teaching "as a wise director of works." This statement was not egotistic. It was simply an acknowledgment of a wonderful gift Jehovah had

6. How did Paul lay the proper foundation in Corinthian Christians?

7. What can we learn from Paul's reference to himself as "a wise director of works"?

given him—that of organizing or directing work. (1 Corinthians 12:28) Granted, we today do not have the miraculous gifts that were bestowed upon first-century Christians. And we might not think of ourselves as gifted teachers. But in an important sense, we are. Consider: Jehovah gives us his holy spirit to help us. (Compare Luke 12:11, 12.) And we have a love of Jehovah and a knowledge of the basic teachings of his Word. These are truly wonderful gifts to use in teaching others. Let us resolve to use them to lay the proper foundation.

⁸ When we lay Christ as a foundation, we do not present him as a helpless babe in a manger, nor as Jehovah's equal in a Trinity. No, such unscriptural notions form a foundation for counterfeit Christians. Rather, we teach that he was the greatest man who ever lived, that he laid down his perfect life in our behalf, and that he is today Jehovah's appointed King reigning in heaven. (Romans 5:8; Revelation 11:15) We also seek to motivate our students to walk in Jesus' footsteps and imitate his qualities. (1 Peter 2:21) We want them to be deeply moved by Jesus' zeal for the ministry, his compassion for the lowly and downtrodden, his mercy toward sinners crushed by their own guilt, his unswerving courage in the face of trials. Truly, Jesus is a magnificent foundation. But what comes next?

Building With the Right Materials

⁹ Paul wrote: "Now if anyone builds on the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood materials, hay, stubble, each one's work will become manifest, for the day will

8. How do we lay Christ as a foundation in prospective disciples?

9. Although Paul was primarily a foundation-layer, what concern did he have for those who accepted the truth of what he taught?

show it up, because it will be revealed by means of fire; and the fire itself will prove what sort of work each one's is." (1 Corinthians 3:12, 13) What did Paul mean? Consider the background. Paul was primarily a foundation-layer. On his missionary tours, he traveled from city to city, preaching to many who had never heard of Christ. (Romans 15:20) As people accepted the truth that he taught, congregations were formed. Paul cared deeply about these faithful ones. (2 Corinthians 11:28, 29) However, his work required him to move on. So after spending 18 months laying a foundation in Corinth, he left to preach in other cities. Still, he was keenly interested in how others followed up on the work that he had done there.—Acts 18:8-11; 1 Corinthians 3:6.

¹⁰ It seems that some who were building on the foundation that Paul had laid in Corinth were doing a poor job. To expose the problem, Paul contrasts two types of building materials: gold, silver, and precious stones on the one hand; wood, hay, and stubble on the other. A building can be erected from fine, durable, fire-resistant materials; or one can be hastily put up using disposable, temporary, and flammable materials. Such a great city as Corinth no doubt abounded in buildings of both types. There were imposing temples made from massive, expensive blocks of stone, perhaps faced or decorated in part with gold and silver.* These durable edifices probably loomed ma-

* The "precious stones" Paul referred to were not necessarily gems, such as diamonds and rubies. They could have been such costly building stones as marble, alabaster, or granite.

10, 11. (a) How did Paul contrast differing types of building materials? (b) What types of literal buildings probably existed in ancient Corinth? (c) What types of buildings are more likely to endure a fire, and what object lesson does that provide for Christian disciple makers?

jestically over nearby huts, hovels, and market stalls made of rough wooden frames and thatched with straw.

¹¹ What would happen to these buildings in a fire? The answer was as obvious in Paul's day as it is in ours. In fact, the city of Corinth had been conquered and set ablaze by the Roman General Mummius back in 146 B.C.E. Many structures of wood, hay, or stubble had surely been utterly destroyed. What of the sturdy buildings of stone, decorated with silver and gold? These, no doubt, survived. Paul's students in Corinth may well have passed by such buildings daily—proud stone survivors of disasters that had long since leveled their less durable neighbors. How vividly, then, Paul made his point! When teaching, we need to regard ourselves as builders. We want to work with the best, most durable materials possible. That way our work is more likely to last. What are those durable materials, and why is it vital to use them?

Will Your Work Withstand the Fire?

¹² Clearly, Paul felt that some of the Christians in Corinth were building poorly. What was wrong? As the context shows, the congregation was plagued with divisiveness, the admiring of human personalities despite the risk to the unity of the congregation. Some were saying, "I belong to Paul," whereas others were insisting, "I [belong] to Apollos." Some evidently thought too highly of their own wisdom. The result, not surprisingly, was an atmosphere of fleshly thinking, spiritual immaturity, and rampant "jealousy and strife." (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:1-4, 18) These attitudes were surely reflected in the teaching that was done in the congregation and in the

12. In what ways were some of the Corinthian Christians doing slipshod building work?

ministry. The result was that their disciple-making work was slipshod, like building work done with inferior materials. It would not survive the "fire." What fire was Paul talking about?

¹³ There is a fire that we all face in life—tests of our faith. (John 15:20; James 1:2, 3) The Christians in Corinth needed to know, just as we today need to know, that everyone to whom we teach the truth *will* be tested. If we teach poorly, there may be sad consequences. Paul warned: "If anyone's work that he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward; if anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved; yet, if so, it will be as through fire."*—1 Corinthians 3:14, 15.

¹⁴ Sobering words indeed! It can be very painful to work hard to help someone become a disciple, only to see the individual succumb to temptation or persecution and eventually leave the way of the truth. Paul acknowledges as much when he says that we suffer loss in such cases. The experience may be so painful that our salvation is described as being "as through fire"—like a man who lost everything in a fire and was himself just barely rescued. For our part, how can we minimize the risk of loss? Build with durable materials! If we teach our students so as to reach their hearts, moving them to value

* Paul was putting into doubt the salvation of, not the builder, but the builder's "work." *The New English Bible* renders this verse: "If a man's building stands, he will be rewarded; if it burns, he will have to bear the loss; and yet he will escape with his life, as one might from a fire."

13. What does the fire in Paul's illustration represent, and of what should all Christians be aware?

14. (a) How might Christian disciple makers "suffer loss," yet how might they attain to salvation as through fire? (b) How can we minimize the risk of suffering loss?

such precious Christian qualities as wisdom, discernment, fear of Jehovah, and genuine faith, then we are building with durable, fire-resistant materials. (Psalm 19:9, 10; Proverbs 3:13-15; 1 Peter 1:6, 7) Those who acquire these qualities will continue to do God's will; theirs is the sure hope of remaining alive forever. (1 John 2:17) How, though, can we put Paul's illustration to practical use? Consider some examples.

¹⁵ When teaching Bible students, we should never promote humans over Jehovah God. Our goal is not to teach them to view us as a primary source of wisdom. We want them to look to Jehovah, his Word, and his organization for guidance. To that end, we do not simply offer our own views in response to their questions. Rather, we teach them to find answers, using the Bible and the publications that "the faithful and discreet slave" has provided. (Matthew 24:45-47) For similar reasons, we are careful not to be possessive of our Bible students. Instead of resenting it when others express an interest in them, we should encourage our

15. In what ways can we make sure that we avoid doing slipshod building work with regard to our Bible students?

How Would You Answer?

- What is the "foundation" in a true Christian, and how is it laid?
- What may we learn from the different types of building materials?
- What does the "fire" represent, and how might it cause some to "suffer loss"?
- How might Bible teachers, elders, and parents build with fire-resistant materials?

students to "widen out" in their affections, getting to know and appreciate as many in the congregation as possible.—2 Corinthians 6:12, 13.

¹⁶ Christian elders too play a vital role in building disciples. When they teach before the congregation, they seek to build with fire-resistant materials. Their teaching ability, experience, and personality may vary widely, but they do not capitalize on these differences to draw followers after themselves. (Compare Acts 20:29, 30.) We do not know exactly why some in Corinth were saying, "I belong to Paul" or, "I to Apollos." But we can be quite sure that neither of these faithful elders promoted such divisive thinking. Paul was not flattered by such sentiments; he refuted them vigorously. (1 Corinthians 3:5-7) Likewise today, elders keep in mind that they shepherd "the flock of God." (1 Peter 5:2) It does not belong to any man. So elders stand firm against any tendency for one man to dominate either the flock or the body of elders. As long as elders are motivated by a humble desire to serve the congregation, reach hearts, and help the sheep to serve Jehovah whole-souled, they build with fire-resistant materials.

¹⁷ Christian parents too are deeply concerned with this matter. How dearly they yearn to see their children live forever! That is why they work so hard to "inculcate" the principles of God's Word into their children's hearts. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) They want their children to know the truth, not just as a set of rules or a litany of facts, but as a full, rewarding, and happy way of life. (1 Timothy 1:11) In order

16. How may elders build with fire-resistant materials?

17. How do Christian parents endeavor to build with fire-resistant materials?

to build their children into faithful disciples of Christ, loving parents endeavor to use fire-resistant materials. They patiently work with their children, helping them weed out qualities that Jehovah hates and cultivate the qualities that he loves.—Galatians 5:22, 23.

Who Is Responsible?

¹⁸ This discussion raises an important question. If someone whom we endeavor to help falls away from the truth, does that mean that we failed as teachers—that we must have built with inferior materials? Not necessarily. Paul's words certainly remind us that it is a great responsibility to share in building disciples. We want to do everything in our power to build well. But God's Word is not telling us to shoulder the whole responsibility and become burdened

18. When a disciple rejects healthful teaching, why may it not necessarily be the fault of the ones endeavoring to teach and train him?

with guilt when those whom we seek to help turn away from the truth. There are other factors that come into play besides our own role as builders. For example, notice what Paul says regarding even the teacher who has done a poor job in this building work: “He will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved.” (1 Corinthians 3:15) If this individual may eventually gain salvation—whereas the Christian personality he endeavored to build in his student is pictured as being “burned up” in a fiery test—what must we conclude? Surely, that Jehovah holds the student primarily responsible for his own decisions as to whether he will follow a faithful course or not.

¹⁹ Personal, or individual, responsibility is a matter of great importance. It touches each one of us. Specifically, what does the Bible teach on the matter? Our next article will consider this.

19. What will we consider in the following article?

KEEP ON WORKING OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION!

“Beloved ones, . . . keep working out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

—PHILIPPIANS 2:12

“WERE you born that way?” Recently, that question was emblazoned on the cover of a popular magazine. Beneath the headline appeared the words: “Personality, tempera-

ment, even life choices. New studies show it’s mostly in your genes.” Such claims may cause some to feel that they have little control over their own life.

² Others fear that their parents’ poor parenting or their teachers’ poor teaching has somehow condemned them to an unhappy life. They may feel doomed to repeat their

1, 2. What popular notions have led many people to feel that they have no control over how their lives turn out?

parents' mistakes, to act on their worst impulses, to prove unfaithful to Jehovah—in short, to make bad choices. Is that what the Bible teaches? There are, to be sure, religionists who insist that the Bible teaches something like this, the doctrine of predestination. According to this doctrine, God long ago foreordained every event in your life.

³ All these different notions have one message in common: You have little choice, little control over how your life turns out. That is a discouraging message, is it not, and discouragement adds to the problem. Proverbs 24:10 says: "Have you shown yourself discouraged in the day of distress? Your power will be scanty." We are encouraged to learn, though, that according to the Bible, we can 'work out our own salvation.' (Philippians 2:12) How can we bolster our confidence in this positive Scriptural teaching?

The "Building" Work We Do in Ourselves

⁴ Consider the apostle Paul's illustration found at 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. There, he speaks of a Christian building work, and the principle of his illustration can apply to the internal and external ministry. Does he imply that whether a disciple finally chooses to serve Jehovah and stays by that choice is entirely the responsibility of those who taught and trained him? No. Paul was emphasizing the importance of the teacher's doing the best possible building work. But as we learned in the preceding article, he was not saying that the student or disciple has no choice in the matter. True, Paul's il-

lustration focuses on the work we do in others, not the building up of ourselves. This is evident because Paul speaks of slipshod building work as being destroyed while the builder himself is saved. Nonetheless, the Bible does at times apply that same figure of speech to the work that we do in ourselves.

⁵ Consider, for example, Jude 20, 21: "You, beloved ones, by building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying with holy spirit, keep yourselves in God's love." Jude here uses the same Greek word for "building" that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, but his point seems to be that we build *ourselves* up on the foundation of our faith. Luke, in recording Jesus' illustration of the man who founded his house upon a rock-mass, uses the same Greek word for "foundation" that Paul uses in his illustration of Christian building. (Luke 6:48, 49) Furthermore, Paul uses the imagery of being established on a "foundation" when exhorting his fellow Christians to make spiritual progress. Yes, God's Word teaches that we do "building" work in ourselves.—Ephesians 3: 15-19; Colossians 1:23; 2:7.

⁶ Is building a Christian a one-man job? Well, imagine that you decide to build a house. You go to an architect for the plans. While you intend to do much of the work yourself, you hire a contractor to work with you and to advise you on the best methods. If he lays a solid foundation, helps you to understand the plans, suggests the best materials to purchase, and even teaches you much about building, you would likely agree that he has done a good job. But what if you were to ignore his advice, buy cheap or shod-

3. What encouraging message does the Bible have about our ability to take responsibility for our future?

4. Although 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 speaks of building with fire-resistant materials, what does this not imply?

5. What Scriptures show that Christians must do a "building" work in themselves?

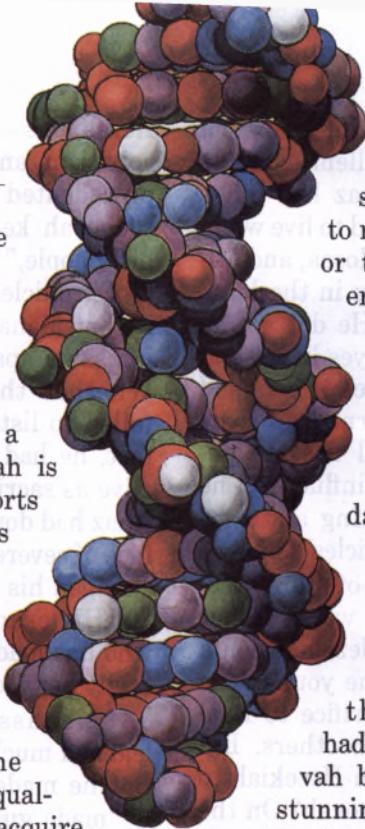
6. (a) Illustrate how each Christian disciple is the result of a joint building project. (b) What responsibility does each individual disciple have?

Is your future determined by genetics?

dy materials, and even deviate from the architect's plans? Surely you could not blame the contractor or the architect if the house collapsed! Similarly, each Christian disciple is a result of a joint building project. Jehovah is the master architect. He supports the faithful Christian who, as one of "God's fellow workers," teaches and builds up a student. (1 Corinthians 3:9) Yet the student is involved too. In the final analysis, he is responsible for his own life course. (Romans 14:12) If he wants to have fine Christian qualities, he must work hard to acquire them, to build them in himself.—2 Peter 1:5-8.

⁷ Does this mean, then, that genetics, environment, and the quality of our teachers are meaningless? Far from it. God's Word recognizes each of these as important and influential. Many sinful, negative tendencies are inborn and can be very hard to fight. (Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12; 7:21-23) Parental training and the home environment can have a tremendous impact on the young—for good or for bad. (Proverbs 22:6; Colossians 3:21) Jesus condemned the Jewish religious leaders for the bad effects their teaching had on others. (Matthew 23:13, 15) Today, such factors are at work on all of us. For example, some of God's people face challenges as a result of difficult childhoods. These ones need our kindness and empathy.

7. What challenges do some Christians face, and what may comfort them?



And they can take comfort from the Bible's message that they are *not* doomed to repeat their parents' mistakes or to prove unfaithful. Consider how some of the kings of ancient Judah illustrate this point.

Judah's Kings—They Made Their Own Choices

⁸ Uzziah became king of Judah at the tender age of 16 and reigned for 52 years. Throughout much of this time, he "continued to do what was upright in Jehovah's eyes, according to all that Amaziah his father had done." (2 Kings 15:3) Jehovah blessed him with a series of stunning military victories. Sadly, though, success went to Uzziah's head.

He became haughty and rebelled against Jehovah by offering incense at the altar in the temple, a duty reserved for priests. Uzziah was rebuked but only responded with rage. Then he was humiliated—struck with leprosy and forced to live out his days in isolation. (2 Chronicles 26:16-23) How did his son Jotham react to all of this? The young man could easily have been influenced by his father and could have resented Jehovah's correction. The people in general may have been a negative influence since they carried on wrong religious practices. (2 Kings 15:4) But Jotham made his own choice. "He kept doing what was right in Jehovah's eyes."—2 Chronicles 27:2.

⁹ Jotham ruled for 16 years, remaining

8. What poor example did Jotham have in his father, yet what choice did he make?
9. What were some of the good influences upon Ahaz, but how did his life turn out?

faithful to Jehovah all the while. His son Ahaz, therefore, had the excellent example of a faithful father. And Ahaz had other good influences. He was blessed to live when the faithful prophets Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah were actively prophesying in the land. Yet, he made a bad choice. "He did not do what was right in Jehovah's eyes like David his forefather." He made images of Baal and worshiped them and even burned up some of his own sons in sacrificial fires to pagan gods. Despite the best of influences, he failed catastrophically as a king and as a servant of Jehovah.—2 Chronicles 28:1-4.

¹⁰ From the point of view of pure worship, it is hard to imagine a worse father than Ahaz. However, his son Hezekiah could not choose his own father! The young sons that Ahaz slaughtered in sacrifice to Baal were likely Hezekiah's own brothers. Did this terrible background doom Hezekiah to a life of unfaithfulness to Jehovah? On the contrary, Hezekiah became one of Judah's few truly great kings—a faithful, wise, and beloved man. "Jehovah proved to be with him." (2 Kings 18:3-7) In fact, there is reason to believe that Hezekiah while still a young prince was the inspired writer of the 119th Psalm. If so, it is not hard to see why he would have penned the words: "My soul has been sleepless from grief." (Psalm 119:28) Despite his grievous troubles, Hezekiah let Jehovah's Word guide him in life. Psalm 119:105 says: "Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway." Yes, Hezekiah made his own choice—the right choice.

¹¹ Paradoxically, though, from one of Judah's best kings came one of the very worst.

10. What kind of father was Ahaz, but what choice did his son Hezekiah make?

11. (a) Despite his father's good influence, how extreme was Manasseh's rebellion against Jehovah? (b) What choice did Manasseh make toward the end of his life, and what may we learn from this?

Hezekiah's son Manasseh promoted idolatry, spiritism, and wholesale violence to an unprecedented extent. The record says that "Jehovah kept speaking to Manasseh and his people," likely through the prophets. (2 Chronicles 33:10) Jewish tradition has it that Manasseh responded by having Isaiah sawn apart. (Compare Hebrews 11:37.) Whether that is true or not, Manasseh failed to listen to any divine warnings. In fact, he had some of his own sons burned alive as sacrifices, much as his grandfather Ahaz had done. Yet, this wicked man, in the face of severe trials late in life, repented and changed his ways. (2 Chronicles 33:1-6, 11-20) His example teaches us that a person who has made terrible choices is not necessarily beyond redemption. He can change.

¹² Manasseh's son Amon could have learned much from his father's repentance. But he made wrong choices. Amon actually "made guiltiness increase" until he was finally assassinated. His son Josiah was a refreshing contrast. Josiah evidently chose to learn from what had happened to his grandfather. He began to rule at a mere eight years of age. When he was just 16, he began to search for Jehovah and thereafter proved to be an exemplary, faithful king. (2 Chronicles 33:20-34:5) He made a choice—the right choice.

¹³ This brief examination of seven Judean kings teaches a powerful lesson. In some instances, the worst of kings had the best of sons and, conversely, the best of kings had the worst of sons. (Compare Ecclesiastes 2:18-21.) This does not diminish the importance of parental training. Parents who train their children according to Jeho-

12. What opposite choices did Amon and his son Josiah make regarding service to Jehovah?

13. (a) What do we learn from the Judean kings we have considered? (b) How important is parental training?

**Despite the bad example of his father,
King Josiah chose to serve God**

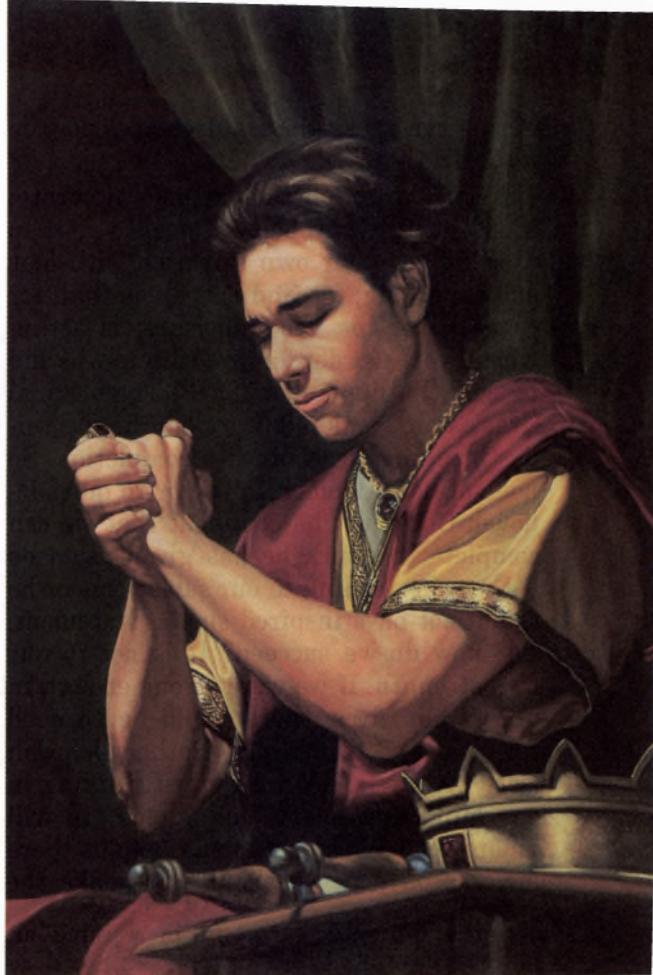
vah's way certainly give their offspring the best possible opportunity to become faithful servants of Jehovah. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) Still, some children, despite the best efforts of faithful parents, choose to follow a wrong course. Other children, despite the worst parental influence, choose to love and serve Jehovah. With his blessing, they make a success of their life. Do you wonder, at times, which it will be in your case? Consider, then, some of Jehovah's personal assurances that you *can* make the right choice!

Jehovah Believes in You!

¹⁴ Jehovah sees everything. Proverbs 15:3 says: "The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch upon the bad ones and the good ones." King David said of Jehovah: "Your eyes saw even the embryo of me, and in your book all its parts were down in writing, as regards the days when they were formed and there was not yet one among them." (Psalm 139:16) So Jehovah knows what negative tendencies you struggle against—whether you inherited them or acquired them as a result of other influences beyond your control. He understands exactly how these have affected you. He understands your limitations even better than you yourself do. And he is merciful. He never expects more of us than we can reasonably do.—Psalm 103:13, 14.

¹⁵ On the other hand, Jehovah does not see us as helpless victims of circumstance. If we have had bad past experiences, we may find consolation in the certain-

14. How do we know that Jehovah understands our limitations?
15. (a) What is one source of consolation for those who have been deliberately hurt by others?
(b) Jehovah dignifies each of us by giving us what responsibility?



ty that Jehovah hates all such deliberately hurtful conduct. (Psalm 11:5; Romans 12:19) But will he then hold us exempt if we turn around and knowingly make wrong choices? Of course not. His Word says: "Each one will carry his own load." (Galatians 6:5) Jehovah dignifies each of his intelligent creatures with the responsibility to do right and serve him. It is as Moses told the nation of Israel: "I do take the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you today, that I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring." (Deuteronomy 30:19) Jehovah is confident that

we too can make the right choice. How do we know that?

¹⁶ Note what the apostle Paul wrote: "Consequently, my beloved ones, . . . keep working out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is the one that, for the sake of his good pleasure, is acting within you in order for you both to will and to act." (Philippians 2:12, 13) The original Greek word rendered 'work out' here signifies bringing something to completion. So none of us is doomed to fail or to quit. Jehovah God must be confident that we can complete the work he has given us to do—the work leading to our salvation—or he would not have inspired such a statement. But how do we succeed? It is not in our own strength. If we were strong enough in and of ourselves, there would be no need for "fear and trembling." Rather, Jehovah 'acts within us,' his holy spirit working in our mind and heart, helping us "to will and to act." With that loving help, is there any reason why we should not make the

16. How can we be successful in 'working out our own salvation'?

What Do You Think?

- What popular notions contradict the Bible's positive teaching regarding individual responsibility?
- What building work must each Christian do in himself?
- How do the examples of the kings of Judah demonstrate that each individual makes his own choice?
- How does Jehovah assure us that we can make the right choices in life, regardless of negative influences around us?

right choices in life and live by them? No!—Luke 11:13.

¹⁷ We will have obstacles to overcome—perhaps a lifetime of bad habits and harmful influences that can distort our thinking. Nevertheless, with the help of Jehovah's spirit, we can overcome these! As Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, God's Word is powerful enough to overturn even "strongly entrenched things." (2 Corinthians 10:4) In fact, Jehovah can help us to make sweeping changes in ourselves. His Word urges us to "put away the old personality" and to "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Ephesians 4:22-24) Can Jehovah's spirit really help us to make such changes? Certainly! God's spirit produces fruitage in us—beautiful, precious qualities that all of us want to cultivate. The first of these is love.—Galatians 5:22, 23.

¹⁸ Herein lies a great, liberating truth. Jehovah God has a limitless capacity for love, and we are made in his image. (Genesis 1:26; 1 John 4:8) So we can choose to love Jehovah. And that love—not our earlier life, not our acquired faults, not our inherited tendency to do wrong—is the key to our future. Love of Jehovah God is what Adam and Eve needed in order to stay faithful in Eden. Such love is what each of us needs in order to survive Armageddon and pass the final test at the end of Christ's Millennial Reign. (Revelation 7:14; 20:5, 7-10) Each and every one of us, whatever our circumstances, can cultivate such love. (Matthew 22:37; 1 Corinthians 13:13) Let us be determined to love Jehovah and to build on that love for all eternity.

17. What changes can we make in ourselves, and how does Jehovah help us to do so?

18. What choice is every reasoning human fully able to make, and what should this help us to be determined to do?



PLEASING JEHOVAH IS MY PRIMARY CONCERN

AS TOLD BY THEODOROS NEROS

My cell door swung open, and an officer called out: "Who is Neros?"

When I identified myself, he ordered: "Get up. We are going to execute you."

That happened in a military camp in Corinth, Greece, in 1952. Why was my life hanging so precariously in the balance? Before explaining that, let me tell you a little about my background.

ABOUT 1925, my father was contacted by the Bible Students (as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known). He soon became one of them and imparted his beliefs to his eight brothers and sisters, all of whom embraced Bible truth. So did his parents. Afterward, he got married, and I was born in 1929 in Agrinio, Greece.

What terrible years those were for Greece! First there was the cruel dictatorship of General Metaxas. Then, in 1939, World War II broke out, and soon afterward the country was occupied by the Nazis. Disease and hunger were rampant. The swollen bodies of the dead were carried away on small wheelbarrows. The evil in the world was all too obvious, as was the need for God's Kingdom.

A Life of Dedicated Service

On August 20, 1942, as a group of us gathered for a meeting outside Thessalonica, our presiding overseer pointed to the British warplanes dropping bombs on the city and emphasized how we were protected by obeying the exhortation 'not to forsake the gathering of ourselves together.' (Hebrews 10:25) On that occasion, we met by the seashore, and I was among those who presented themselves for baptism. When we came out of the water, we stood in a line, and our Christian brothers and sisters sang a song in which they commended us for the decision we had made. What an unforgettable day that was!

Shortly afterward, while another boy and I were calling on people during our house-to-house ministry, policemen apprehended

us and took us to the police station. To emphasize that we were viewed as Communists and that our preaching work was prohibited, we were beaten and told: "Jehovah is the same as Stalin, you idiots!"

Civil war was by then raging in Greece, and anti-Communist fever ran high. The following day we were paraded past our homes handcuffed, as if we were criminals. But those were not the only tests I had.

Tests of Faith in School

Early in 1944, I was still a schoolboy, and the Nazis continued to occupy Thessalonica. One day at school, a Greek Orthodox priest, our professor of religion, told me that I was to be tested on the day's lesson. "He is not an Orthodox Christian," the other children said.

"What is he?" the professor asked.

"I am one of Jehovah's Witnesses," I replied.

"A wolf among the sheep," he shouted, as he grabbed me and slapped me across the face.

'How is it possible,' I thought to myself, 'for a wolf to be bitten by a sheep?'

A few days later, about 350 of us were seated at our tables set for lunch. The supervisor said: "Neros will say grace." I repeated the so-called 'Our Father,' the prayer Jesus taught his followers, as recorded at Matthew 6:9-13. This was not to the supervisor's liking, so he angrily asked me from his position at the table: "Why did you say the prayer like that?"

"Because I am one of Jehovah's Witnesses," I said. At that he too grabbed me and struck me on the cheek. Later that day another teacher called me into his office and told me: "Well done, Neros, hold fast to what you believe, and don't give in." That night, my father encouraged me with these

words of the apostle Paul: "All those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted."—2 Timothy 3:12.

When I finished high school, I had to choose what career to follow. Because of the civil strife in Greece, I also had to face the question of Christian neutrality. (Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 26:52) Eventually, early in 1952, I was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for refusing to take up arms during that difficult period in Greek history.

My Christian Neutrality Tested

While I was confined in military camps at Mesolóngion and Corinth, I had the opportunity to explain to the military commanders that my Bible-trained conscience would not allow me to become a soldier in support of political causes. "I am already a soldier of Jesus," I explained, pointing to 2 Timothy 2:3. When I was urged to reconsider, I said that my decision had not been made on the spur of the moment but after serious consideration and in view of my dedication to God to do his will.

As a result, I had to do compulsory labor, go without food every other day for 20 days, and sleep on the cement floor of a cell that measured three feet by six feet. And I shared this cell with two other Witnesses! It was during this time, while in the Corinth camp, that I was called from my cell to be executed.

As we proceeded to the place for execution, the officer asked, "Are you not going to say anything?" "No," I answered.

"Are you not going to write to your family?" "No," I replied again. "They are already aware that I may be executed here."

We reached the courtyard, and I was ordered to stand against the wall. Then, in-



(Left to right)

Serving in the
Bethel kitchen
in 1965

Giving a talk in
1970 when our
preaching was
under ban

With my wife
in 1959



stead of commanding the soldiers to fire, the officer ordered, "Take him inside." It was all a mock execution, designed to test my resolve.

Later, I was sent to the isle of Makrónisos, where I was not allowed to have any literature except a Bible. Thirteen Witnesses were kept in a small house separated from the nearly 500 criminal prisoners. Yet, literature was somehow smuggled in to us. For example, one day a box of *loukoúmia* (a popular candy) was sent to me. The inspectors were so eager to sample the *loukoúmia* that they overlooked the *Watchtower* magazine hidden beneath. "The soldiers ate the *loukoúmia*, but we 'ate' *The Watchtower!*!" one Witness noted.

A copy of the then recently released book *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?* reached us, and a Witness prisoner who knew English translated it. We also studied *The Watchtower* together, holding our meetings secretly. We viewed prison as a

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għixxex nsej qed u ja
għad lu ex-xien ja kriti

school, as an opportunity to strengthen our spirituality. Above all, we were happy because we knew that our course of integrity was pleasing to Jehovah.

The last prison in which I was confined was in Týrintha in eastern Pelopónnisos. There I noticed a guard who carefully observed as I conducted a Bible study with a fellow prisoner. What a surprise it was for me to meet that guard years later in Thessalonica! He was by then a Witness. Later, one of his children was sent to prison, not to serve as a guard but as a prisoner. He was imprisoned for the same reason that I had been.

Renewed Activity After Release

I served only three years of what was originally a 20-year sentence. After my release I decided to live in Athens. However, I soon fell sick with a form of pleurisy and was forced to return to Thessalonica. I was in bed for two months. Later I met a lovely

girl named Koula, and we were married in December 1959. In 1962 she began serving as a pioneer, as full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses are called. Three years later I was able to join her in the pioneer work.

In January of 1965, we were assigned to the circuit work, visiting congregations to strengthen them spiritually. That summer we also had the privilege of attending our first large district convention, in Vienna, Austria. It was unlike those we held in Greece where we had to meet secretly in the woods because our work was banned. Toward the end of 1965, we were invited to work at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Athens. However, because of the health problems of some of my relatives, we had to return to Thessalonica in 1967.

While caring for family responsibilities, we continued to be very busy in the evangelizing work. Once, when speaking to my cousin Kostas, I described to him the beauty of God's organization and the love, unity, and obedience to God that exists in it. He said, "These things would be very nice if only God existed." He accepted my invitation to examine whether God exists or not. I mentioned that we would be attending an international convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nuremberg, Germany, in August 1969. He asked if he could

come along, and his friend Alekos, who was also studying the Bible with us, wanted to come too.

The Nuremberg convention was an extraordinary spectacle! The convention was held in the huge stadium where Hitler had celebrated his military victories. Our attendance reached a peak of over 150,000, and Jehovah's spirit was manifested in all the proceedings. Soon afterward both Kostas and Alekos were baptized. Both now serve as Christian elders, and their families are also Witnesses.

I started to study with an interested lady. Her husband announced that he wanted to investigate our beliefs, and shortly afterward he informed me that he had invited a certain Mr. Sakkos, a Greek Orthodox theologian, for a debate. The husband wanted to pose some questions to both of us. Mr. Sakkos came, along with a priest. The man we had been visiting began by saying, "First, I would like Mr. Sakkos to answer three questions."

Holding up the translation of the Bible that we had been using in our discussions, the man asked, "Question number one: Is this a genuine Bible, or is it the Witnesses' Bible?" Mr. Sakkos answered that it was an authoritative translation, and he also described Jehovah's Witnesses as "lovers of the Bible."

Continuing, the man asked, "Question number two: Are Jehovah's Witnesses moral people?" Actually, he wanted to know what kind of people his wife had started keeping company with. The theologian answered that they are definitely moral people.

"The third question," the man continued, "Are Jehovah's Witnesses being paid?" "No," the theologian answered.

"I have received the answers to my ques-

In Our Next Issue

Do You Have a Guardian Angel?

Walking With God—The Early Steps

Should I Ask My Brother for a Loan?



With my wife, Koula

tions, and I have made my decision," the man concluded. Thereafter he continued his Bible study and soon became baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

A Rich, Rewarding Life

I again began serving as a circuit overseer in January 1976. Some six years later, I had the privilege of sharing in spearheading a new form of preaching in Greece—street witnessing. Then, in October 1991, my wife and I began serving as special pioneers. A few months later, I had to undergo a quadruple bypass heart operation, which thankfully was a success. Now my health is quite good, and I have been able to resume the full-time preaching work. I also serve as an elder in one of the congregations in Thessalonica, as well as work with the local Hospital Liaison Committee to assist those with medical needs.

As I look back on my life, I realize how

satisfying it has been to do what pleases our heavenly Father. I am delighted that I long ago accepted his appealing invitation: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me." (Proverbs 27:11) It indeed brings joy to my heart to see the worldwide increase in the number of sincere people who are coming into Jehovah's organization. To share in emancipating people by means of Bible truth and thus open to them the prospect of eternal life in a righteous new world is truly a privilege!—John 8:32; 2 Peter 3:13.

We always try to encourage young servants of Jehovah to set as their goal the full-time ministry, to give of their time and strength to him. Truly, trusting in Jehovah and finding exquisite delight in making his heart rejoice is the most fulfilling life one can experience!—Proverbs 3:5; Ecclesiastes 12:1.

"GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER"

JEHOVAH is the personification of generosity. Indeed, the Bible says that he is the Giver of "every good gift and every perfect present." (James 1:17) Consider, for example, the things that God created. He made food that is delicious, not tasteless; flowers that are colorful, not drab; sunsets that are spectacular, not lackluster. Yes, every facet of Jehovah's creation gives evidence of his love and generosity. (Psalm 19:1, 2; 139:14) Furthermore, Jehovah is a cheerful Giver. He delights in doing good in behalf of his servants.—Psalm 84:11; 149:4.

The Israelites were commanded to reflect God's generosity in their dealings with one another. "You must not harden your heart or be closefisted toward your poor brother," Moses told them. "You should by all means give to him, and your heart should not be stingy." (Deuteronomy 15:7, 10) Since giving was to come from the heart, the Israelites were to take delight in acts of generosity.

Christians were given similar admonition. Indeed, Jesus said that there is "happiness in giving." (Acts 20:35) Jesus' disciples were exemplary in giving cheerfully. For example, the Bible reports that in Jerusalem those who became believers "went selling their possessions and properties and distributing the proceeds to all, just as anyone would have the need."—Acts 2:44, 45.

But these generous Judeans later fell



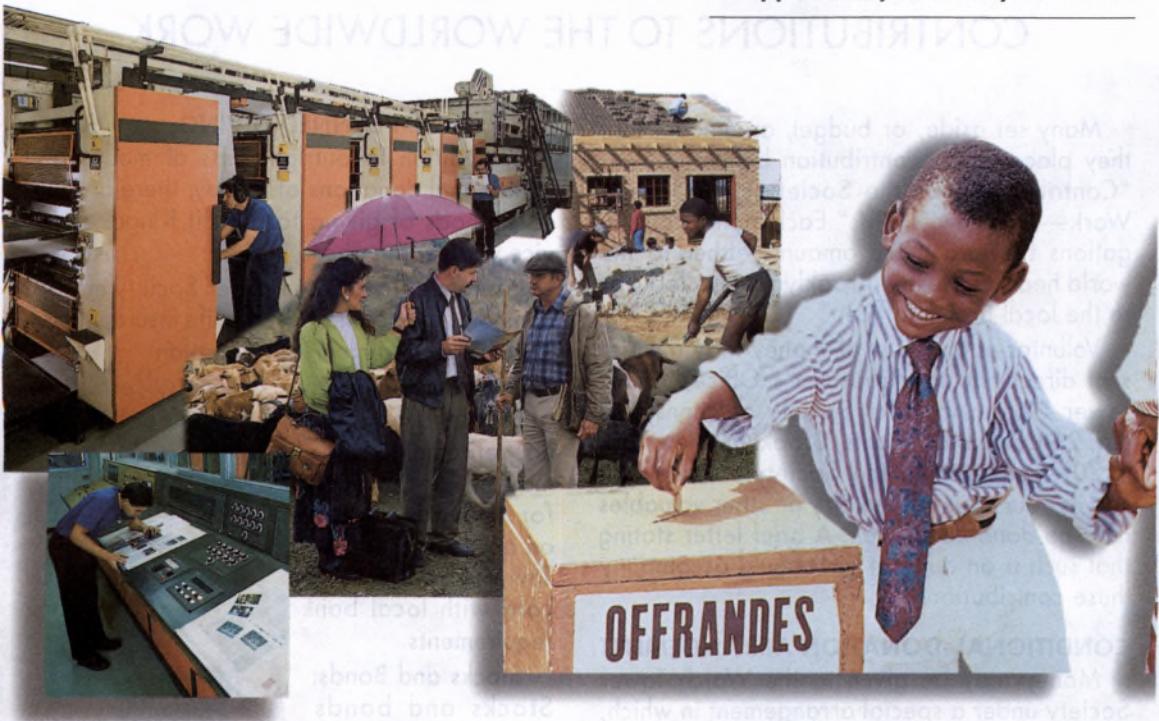
into poverty. The Bible does not specify just what brought on their condition. Some scholars say that the famine referred to at Acts 11:28, 29 may have been the cause. In any event, the Judean Christians were in dire straits, and Paul wanted to make sure that their needs would be cared for. How would he do so?

A Collection for the Needy

Paul enlisted the help of congregations as far away as Macedonia, and he arranged for a collection to be taken in behalf of the poverty-stricken Christians in Judea. To the Corinthians, Paul wrote: "Just as I gave orders to the congregations of Galatia, do that way also yourselves. Every first day of the week let each of you at his own house set something aside in store as he may be prospering."*—1 Corinthians 16:1, 2.

Paul intended that these funds be quickly forwarded to the brothers in Jerusalem, but the Corinthians were slow in responding to Paul's instructions. Why? Were they insensitive to the plight of their Judean brothers? No, for Paul knew that the Corinthians were "abounding in everything, in faith and word and knowledge and all earnestness." (2 Corinthians 8:7) Likely, they were quite

* Although Paul "gave orders," this does not mean that he set forth arbitrary, compulsory demands. Instead, Paul was simply supervising the collection, which involved several congregations. In addition, Paul said that each one "at his own house" was to give "as he may be prospering." In other words, each contribution was to be made in a private and voluntary manner. No one was coerced.



busy attending to other vital matters that Paul addressed in his first letter to them. But now the situation in Jerusalem was urgent. So Paul addressed the issue in his second letter to the Corinthians.

Appeals to Generosity

First, Paul told the Corinthians about the Macedonians, whose response to the relief effort was exemplary. "During a great test under affliction," Paul wrote, "their abundance of joy and their deep poverty made the riches of their generosity abound." The Macedonians did not need prodding. On the contrary, Paul said that "they of their own accord kept begging us with much entreaty for the privilege of kindly giving." The cheerful generosity of the Macedonians is all the more remarkable when we consid-

er that they themselves were in "deep poverty."—2 Corinthians 8:2-4.

In praising the Macedonians, was Paul trying to stir up a competitive spirit among the Corinthians? Not at all, for he knew that this was not a proper way to motivate. (Galatians 6:4) Furthermore, he knew that the Corinthians did not need to be shamed into doing the right thing. Rather, he had confidence that the Corinthians truly loved their Judean brothers and desired to contribute to the relief effort. "Already a year ago," he told them, "you initiated not only the doing but also the wanting to do." (2 Corinthians 8:10) Indeed, in some aspects of the relief effort, the Corinthians themselves were exemplary. "I know your readiness of mind of which I am boasting to the Macedonians about you," Paul said to them, adding: "Your

Ways in Which Some Choose to Give

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLDWIDE WORK

Many set aside, or budget, an amount that they place in the contribution boxes labeled: "Contributions for the Society's Worldwide Work—Matthew 24:14." Each month congregations forward these amounts either to the world headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, or to the local branch office.

Voluntary donations of money may also be sent directly to the Treasurer's Office, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York 11201-2483, or to the Society's office that serves your country. Jewelry or other valuables may be donated as well. A brief letter stating that such is an outright gift should accompany these contributions.

CONDITIONAL-DONATION ARRANGEMENT

Money may be given to the Watch Tower Society under a special arrangement in which, should the donor have a personal need, the donation will be returned to him. For more information, please contact the Treasurer's Office at the address noted above.

zeal has stirred up the majority of *them*." (2 Corinthians 9:2) Now, though, the Corinthians needed to turn their zeal and their readiness of mind into action.

Hence, Paul told them: "Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7) Paul's aim, then, was not to pressure the Corinthians, for a person can hardly be a cheerful giver when he is coerced. Evidently, Paul assumed that proper motive was already present, that each one had *already resolved* to give. In addition, Paul told them:

PLANNED GIVING

In addition to outright gifts of money and conditional donations of money, there are other methods of giving to benefit Kingdom service worldwide. These include:

Insurance: The Watch Tower Society may be named as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy or in a retirement/pension plan.

Bank Accounts: Bank accounts, certificates of deposit, or individual retirement accounts may be placed in trust for or made payable on death to the Watch Tower Society, in accord with local bank requirements.

Stocks and Bonds: Stocks and bonds may be donated to the Watch Tower Society either as an outright gift or un-



"If the readiness is there first, it is especially acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what a person does not have." (2 Corinthians 8:12) Yes, when the readiness is there—when a person is motivated by love—what he offers will be acceptable to God, no matter how seemingly small the amount.—Compare Luke 21:1-4.

Cheerful Givers Today

The relief effort in behalf of the Judean Christians provides a sterling example for our day. Jehovah's Witnesses have undertaken a worldwide preaching campaign, bring-

der an arrangement whereby income continues to be paid to the donor.

Real Estate: Salable real estate may be donated to the Watch Tower Society either by making an outright gift or by reserving a life estate to the donor, who can continue to live therein during his or her lifetime. One should contact the Society before deeding any real estate to the Society.

Wills and Trusts: Property or money may be bequeathed to the Watch Tower Society by means of a legally executed will, or the Society may be named as a beneficiary of a trust agreement. A trust benefiting a religious organization may provide certain tax advantages.

As the term "planned giving" implies, these types of donations typically require some planning on the part of the donor. To assist individuals desiring to benefit the Society through some form of planned giving, the Society has prepared an English-language brochure entitled *Planned Giving to Benefit Kingdom Service Worldwide*. The brochure was written in response to the many inquiries the Society has received regarding gifts, wills, and trusts. It also contains additional useful information on estate, financial, and tax planning. And it is designed to help individuals in the United States

who are planning to make a special gift to the Society now or to leave a bequest at death to select the most advantageous and efficient method in the light of their family and personal circumstances.

After reading the brochure and conferring with the Planned Giving Desk, many have been able to assist the Society and at the same time, maximize the tax benefits of doing so. The Planned Giving Desk should be informed of and receive a copy of any relevant document pertaining to any of these arrangements. Those interested in a brochure or in any of these planned giving arrangements should contact the Planned Giving Desk, either in writing or by telephone, at the address listed below or at the Society's office that serves your country.

PLANNED GIVING DESK

Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society
of Pennsylvania

100 Watchtower Drive,
Patterson, New York 12563-9204

Telephone: (914) 878-7000

ing nourishment to millions who are spiritually famished. (Isaiah 65:13, 14) They do this in obedience to Jesus' command: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you."—Matthew 28:19, 20.

Fulfilling this commission is no easy task. It involves maintaining missionary homes and more than a hundred branch facilities around the world. It also entails the building of Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls so that worshipers of Jehovah will have suitable places to meet and encourage one

another. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) At times, Jehovah's Witnesses also provide relief assistance in areas that have been devastated by natural disaster.

Think, too, of the enormous expense of printing. Each week, on the average, over 22,000,000 copies of *The Watchtower* or some 20,000,000 copies of *Awake!* are printed. In addition to this regular supply of spiritual food are the millions of books, brochures, audiocassettes, and videocassettes that are produced each year.

How is all this work supported? By voluntary donations. These are made, not for

CHILDREN ARE CHEERFUL GIVERS TOO!

I want to give you this to make more books for us. I saved this money up from helping my daddy. Thank you very much for all the hard work you do.—Pamela, age seven.

I am sending you \$6.85 to help build more Kingdom Halls. I made it this summer when I had a lemonade stand.—Selena, age six.

I was raising a hen from which I got a rooster and another hen. I dedicated the last one to Jehovah. It finally gave birth to three hens, which I sold. I enclose the amount for Jehovah's work.—Thierry, age eight.

This is all the money I have! Please use it wisely. It was hard to save. Here is \$21.—Sarah, age ten.

I won first prize in a school assignment, so I had to go on to the county competition. I won first place there too and then second prize in the district finals. For all of these, I won cash. I wanted to share some of that



money with the Society. I feel that I was able to win these prizes because of the training I have received in the Theocratic Ministry School. I felt comfortable giving my report in front of the judges.—Amber, sixth grade.

I would like to give you this for Jehovah. Ask him what to do with it. He knows everything.—Karen, age six.

publicity or out of selfish motive, but to advance true worship. Hence, such giving brings happiness to the giver, along with God's blessing. (Malachi 3:10; Matthew 6:1-4) Even children among Jehovah's Witnesses show themselves to be generous, cheerful givers. For example, after hearing of the devastation wrought by a hurricane in one part of the United States, four-year-old Allison contributed \$2. "This is all the money in my bank," she wrote. "I know the children lost all their toys and books and dolls. Maybe you can use this money to buy a book for a little girl my age." Maclean, age eight, wrote that he was happy that none of

the brothers died in the storm. He added: "I made \$17 selling hubcaps with my dad. I was going to buy something with my money, but then I thought of the brothers."—See also box above.

Truly, Jehovah's heart rejoices to see both young and old put his Kingdom interests first by 'honoring him with their valuable things.' (Proverbs 3:9, 10) Of course, no one can actually enrich Jehovah, for he owns all things. (1 Chronicles 29:14-17) But supporting the work is a privilege that affords the worshiper opportunity to display his love for Jehovah. We are grateful to everyone whose heart has impelled him in such a way.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

A Former Opponent Learns the Truth

MUCH has been reported in the news regarding the civil war in Liberia. Tens of thousands lost their lives, and even more were exiled. In spite of these hardships, honesthearted people continue to embrace the truth, as the following experience illustrates.

From the age of ten, James was educated by the Lutheran Church. After becoming an editor of a church paper, he used his position to write against Jehovah's Witnesses. This was in spite of the fact that he had never met one of them.

In time, James left the church paper and became a successful motel owner. One day as he was sitting in the reception area of his motel, two well-dressed sisters called on him. On seeing their neat clothing, he invited them in. But when they explained the purpose of their visit, he said, "I am too busy to talk." The Witnesses offered him subscriptions to the Watchtower and Awake! magazines, and he accepted just to get rid of them. For 12 months the magazines came to his home, but he put them in a plastic bag without even removing their wrappers.

A civil war was raging, so James packed a bag with money and valuables in order to flee at the first sign of attack. One morning a grenade exploded behind his back door, and in a panic he grabbed his bag and ran for his life. Joining thousands of retreating civilians, he had to pass through a number of checkpoints. There, innocent civilians were often robbed and killed for no apparent reason.

At the first checkpoint, James was asked a few questions and then told to open his bag. When he did, he looked into his bag and could not believe his eyes. To his horror he saw that the bag he had brought was not the one containing his valuables. In his panic, he had picked up the bag containing all the unopened Watchtower and Awake! magazines. However, when the sol-

dier saw the magazines and read his name on the labels, he said: "Oh, you are one of Jehovah's Witnesses. We are not looking for you people, we know you do not lie." After taking a few magazines out of the bag, the soldier told James to move on.

The same thing happened at nine different checkpoints, as all the commanders presumed that James was one of Jehovah's Witnesses and let him go through unharmed. James was now grateful that he had not brought his valuables because from what he had seen, he would almost certainly have been killed for his belongings.

When he finally reached the last and most feared checkpoint, he was horrified to see a number of dead bodies lying around. Terrified, he called upon Jehovah's name. He prayed that if God would help him through this killing field, he would serve him for the rest of his life.

James presented his bag to the soldiers, and once again they said: "We are not looking for these people." Turning to him, they added: "One of your brothers lives down this hill. Go and be with him." By this time James' opinion of the Witnesses had changed completely. He immediately contacted the brother, and arrangements were made for a Bible study in the book You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth.*

A few days later, an attack forced him to flee the area. This time, James ran into the bush clutching only his Live Forever book! During 11 months of isolation from the Witnesses, he studied through his book five times. When he was finally able to return to the city, he resumed his Bible study with the Witnesses and made rapid progress. A short time later, he was baptized, and he now serves faithfully with his spiritual brothers.

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

Jesus Spent Time With Children

JESUS' three-and-a-half-year ministry was nearing its end. Soon he would enter Jerusalem and suffer an agonizing death. He was well aware of what lay ahead, for he had told his disciples: "The Son of man is to be delivered into men's hands, and they will kill him." —Mark 9:31.

Surely, Jesus would want to make the most of each day, each hour, each moment that remained. His disciples still needed attention. Jesus saw that they still needed strong admonition regarding the need for humility and the ever-present danger of stumbling. (Mark 9:35-37, 42-48) They also needed instruction on marriage, divorce, and singleness. (Matthew 19:3-12) Knowing that he was soon to die, Jesus no doubt spoke to his disciples concisely and with a sense of urgency. Time was of the essence—a fact that made what Jesus did next all the more remarkable.

Jesus Welcomes Children

The Bible account says: "People began bringing him young children for him to touch these." When the disciples saw this, they immediately voiced their disapproval. Perhaps they reasoned that Jesus was too important or too busy to be concerned with children. Imagine the disciples' surprise, then, when Jesus became indignant with them! "Let the young children come to me," he told them. "Do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to suchlike ones." Then Jesus added: "Truly I say to you, Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a young child will by no means enter into it." —Mark 10:13-15.

Jesus saw admirable qualities in children. They are usually inquisitive and trustful. They will accept their parents' words and even defend them before other children. Their receptive, teachable nature is worthy of imitation by all who wish to enter God's Kingdom. As Jesus said, "the kingdom of God belongs to suchlike ones." —Compare Matthew 18:1-5.

But Jesus was not simply using these children for the sake of an illustration. The account makes it clear that Jesus genuinely loved being around them. Mark reports that Jesus "took the children into his arms and began blessing them, laying his hands upon them." (Mark 10:16) Only Mark's account includes the warm detail that Jesus "took the children into his arms."* Jesus thus exceeded the expectations of the adults, who brought these children to Jesus that he might merely "touch" them.

What was the significance of Jesus' "laying his hands" upon the children? There is no suggestion here of a religious ceremony, such as a baptism. While on some occasions, the laying on of hands meant the bestowing of an appointment, on others it merely signified the giving of a blessing. (Genesis 48:14; Acts 6:6) So Jesus may simply have been bestowing a blessing on the children.

In any event, Mark uses a stronger word for "blessing" (*ka-teu-lo-ge'o*), denoting intensive force. This suggests that Jesus blessed the children fervently, tenderly, and warmly. Clearly, he did not view children as a time-consuming burden.

* One translation says that Jesus "embraced them." Another says that he "took them up in the crook of his arm."



Lesson for Us

Jesus' manner of dealing with both children and adults was neither intimidating nor demeaning. "He must have smiled easily and laughed joyously," says one reference work. No wonder people of all ages felt at ease around him. Reflecting on Jesus' example, we can ask ourselves, 'Do others find me approachable?' 'Do I seem too busy to be bothered with the activities and concerns of others?' Cultivating a sincere interest in people will move us to give of ourselves, as did Jesus. Others will sense our genuine interest and will be drawn to us.—Proverbs 11:25.

As Mark's account shows, Jesus enjoyed being with children. Evidently, he took time to observe them at play, for he referred to their games in one of his illustrations. (Matthew

11:16-19) Perhaps some of the children that Jesus blessed were too young to appreciate who he was and what he taught. But this did not cause him to feel that he was wasting his time. He spent time with children because he loved them. Likely, many of the children whom Jesus encountered during his ministry were later moved to respond to his love by becoming his disciples.

If Jesus spent time with children during the crucial last weeks of his life, surely we can make time for them in our busy schedule. We should be particularly mindful of those who have special needs, such as the fatherless boys and girls. Really, all children thrive when they are given attention, and it is Jehovah's desire that we give them all the love and help that we can. —Psalm 10:14.

"WHO PUT WISDOM IN THE CLOUD LAYERS"?

WHEN you see a cloud rising in western parts, at once you say, 'A storm is coming,' and it turns out so. And when you see that a south wind is blowing, you say, 'There will be a heat wave,' and it occurs." These words of Jesus, penned by the Gospel writer Luke, are examples of weather forecasts as they were made in ancient Palestine. (Luke 12:54, 55) In certain circumstances, the ancients could read the signs and make accurate short-term predictions.

Today, meteorologists use sophisticated instruments, such as earth-orbiting satellites, Doppler radar, and powerful computers, to gauge weather patterns over longer periods. But their predictions are often wrong. Why?

Many factors make accurate weather forecasting difficult. For example, unforeseen changes in temperature, humidity, air pressure, and wind-speed and direction can complicate matters. Added to these are the complex interactions of

the sun, clouds, and oceans, which scientists do not yet fully understand. For that reason, weather forecasting remains an inexact science.

Man's limited knowledge of weather reminds us of the questions asked of Job: "Who gave birth to the dewdrops? Out of whose belly does the ice actually come forth? . . . Can you raise your voice even to the cloud, so that a heaving mass of water itself may cover you? . . . Who put wisdom in the cloud layers, or who gave understanding to the sky phenomenon? Who can exactly number the clouds in wisdom, or the water jars of heaven—who can tip them over?"—Job 38:28-37.

The answer to all these questions is, Not man but Jehovah God. Yes, however wise humans may seem to be, the wisdom of our Creator is far, far superior. It is truly loving on his part that he has made his wisdom available to us in the pages of the Bible, so that we can make our way successful.—Proverbs 5:1, 2.