

THE WATCHTOWER

JULY 15, 2005

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**TRUE
TEACHINGS**
**Where
Can You
Find Them?**

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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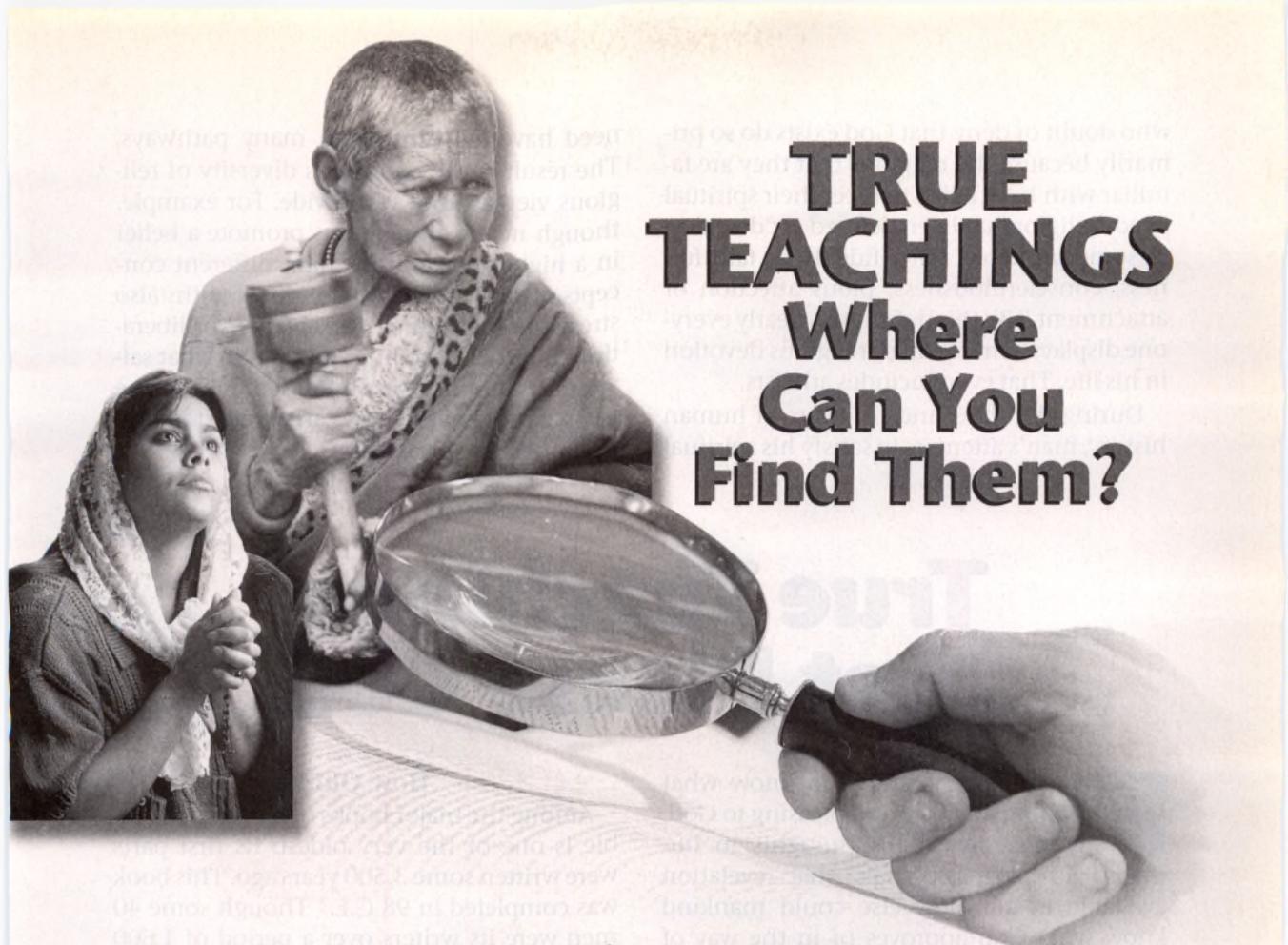
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TRUE TEACHINGS Where Can You Find Them?

A MAN in Tibet spins a prayer wheel, a drum containing written prayers. He believes that his petitions are repeated with each turn of the wheel. In a spacious home in India, a small room is set aside for doing puja—worship that may include making offerings of incense, flowers, and other things to images of various gods and goddesses. Thousands of miles away in Italy, a woman in an ornate church kneels before an image of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and prays while holding a string of rosary beads.

Perhaps you have seen for yourself the influence of religion on the lives of people. "Religion . . . has been and continues to be the lifeblood of societies all over the world," states the book *The World's Religions—Under-*

standing the Living Faiths. In the book *God—A Brief History*, author John Bowker observes: "There has never been any human society in which God has not been a part, usually a controlling and creative part. That is true even of those societies that set out to be deliberately secular."

Indeed, religion has influenced the lives of millions of people. Is this not strong evidence that man has a spiritual need and yearning? In his book *The Undiscovered Self*, the eminent psychologist Dr. Carl G. Jung refers to man's need to worship a higher power and says that "its manifestations can be followed all through human history."

Yet, many people neither profess belief in God nor have any interest in religion. Some

who doubt or deny that God exists do so primarily because the religions that they are familiar with have failed to meet their spiritual need. Religion has been defined as "devotion to some principle; strict fidelity or faithfulness; conscientiousness; pious affection or attachment." By this definition, nearly everyone displays some form of religious devotion in his life. That even includes atheists.

During the thousands of years of human history, man's attempts to satisfy his spiritual

need have led him down many pathways. The result is the enormous diversity of religious views found worldwide. For example, though nearly all religions promote a belief in a higher power, they have different concepts of who or what that is. Most faiths also stress the importance of salvation or liberation. But their teachings differ as to what salvation is and how it is attained. Out of the vast array of beliefs, how can we identify true teachings that please God?

True Teachings That Please God

FOR earth's inhabitants to know what teachings are true and pleasing to God, he must reveal his thoughts to humans. He must also make that revelation available to all. How else could mankind know what God approves of in the way of doctrine, worship, and conduct? Has God supplied such information? If so, in what form?

Can any human with a life span of a few decades personally reach all mankind and serve as a channel of communication from God? No. But a permanent written record can. Therefore, would it not be appropriate that the revelation from God be made available in the form of a book? One of the ancient books claiming inspiration by God is the Bible. "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness," states one of its writers. (2 Timothy 3:16) Let us take a closer look at the Bible and see if it is the source of true teachings.

How Old?

Among the major books of religion, the Bible is one of the very oldest. Its first parts were written some 3,500 years ago. This book was completed in 98 C.E.* Though some 40 men were its writers over a period of 1,600 years, the Bible is a harmonious body of writings. That is so because its real Author is God.

The Bible is the most widely circulated and translated book in all history. Each year, some 60 million copies of the entire Bible or portions of it are distributed. The complete Bible or parts of it have been translated into more than 2,300 languages and dialects. Over 90 percent of the human family have access to the Bible, or at least part of it, in their native language. This book has transcended national boundaries, racial divisions, and ethnic barriers.

* C.E. denotes "Common Era," often called A.D., for Anno Domini, meaning "in the year of the Lord." B.C.E. means "Before the Common Era."

How Organized?

If you have a Bible, why not open it and see how it is organized?* First, turn to the table of contents. Most Bibles have one at the beginning, listing the name of each book and the page number where it can be found. You will note that the Bible is actually a large collection of individual books, each having a unique name. The very first book is Genesis, and the last is Revelation, or Apocalypse. The books are grouped into two sections. The first 39 books are called the Hebrew Scriptures, since they were written mostly in the Hebrew language. The last 27 books were written in the Greek language and make up the Greek Scriptures. Some refer to these two sections as the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The books of the Bible have chapters and verses for easy reference. When scriptures are cited in this magazine, after the name of the Bible book, the first number indicates the chapter of that book and the next denotes the verse. For example, the citation "2 Timothy 3:16" means the book of Second Timothy, chapter 3, verse 16. See if you can find that verse in the Bible.

Would you not agree that the best way to become familiar with the Bible is to read it regularly? Some have found it helpful to read the Greek Scriptures first, starting with the book of Matthew. By reading from three to five chapters a day, you can read the entire Bible in a year. But how can you be sure that what you read in the Bible is actually inspired of God?

Can You Trust the Bible?

Should not a divinely inspired book for all

* If you do not have a personal copy of the Bible, Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to supply you with one.

people contain timeless advice for living? The Bible reflects an understanding of human nature that applies to every generation of mankind, and its principles are just as practical today as they were when first stated. This can easily be seen in a famous discourse given by Jesus Christ, the Founder of Christianity. It is recorded in Matthew chapters 5 to 7. This address, known as the Sermon on the Mount, shows us not only how to find true happiness but also how to settle disputes, how to pray, how to view material needs, and much more. In this discourse, and throughout the rest of its pages, the Bible clearly tells us what to do and what to avoid in order to please God and improve our lot in life.

Another reason why you can put your trust in the Bible is that when it comes to scientific matters, what this ancient book states is accurate. For example, at a time when most people believed that the earth was flat,


NASA photo

the Bible spoke of "the circle [or, sphere] of the earth."* (Isaiah 40:22) And over 3,000 years before the famous scientist Sir Isaac Newton explained that the planets are held in empty space by gravity, the Bible poetically stated that 'the earth is hanging upon nothing.' (Job 26:7) Consider also this poetic description of the earth's water cycle, recorded some 3,000 years ago: "All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again." (Ecclesiastes 1:7, *New International Version*) Yes, the Creator of the universe is also the Author of the Bible.

The historical accuracy of the Bible agrees with the fact that it is inspired of God. Events

* The original-language word translated "circle" at Isaiah 40:22 may also be rendered "sphere." Certain Bible translations read, "the globe of the earth" (*Douay Version*) and "the round earth."—*Moffatt*.

covered in the Bible are not mere myths. They are related to specific dates, people, and places. For example, Luke 3:1 factually refers to "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was district ruler of Galilee."

Although ancient historians almost always reported only the successes and virtues of rulers, the Bible writers were honest, openly admitting even their own mistakes. For instance, King David of Israel confessed: "I have sinned very much in what I have done. . . . I have acted very foolishly." That statement is candidly documented in the Bible. (2 Samuel 24:10) And the Bible writer Moses himself recorded the incident in which he did not demonstrate reliance on the true God.—Numbers 20:12.

The Bible has yet another mark of divine inspiration. That mark is its fulfilled prophecies—history written in advance. Some of these are prophecies concerning Jesus Christ. For example, over 700 years before Jesus' birth, the Hebrew Scriptures accurately foretold that this Promised One would be born "in Bethlehem of Judea."—Matthew 2:1-6; Micah 5:2.

Consider another example. At 2 Timothy 3:1-5, the Bible states: "In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power." Does this not describe the attitude of people in general today? These words were penned in the year 65 C.E., over 1,900 years ago!

What Does the Bible Teach Us?

As its message unfolds before your eyes, you will be able to see that the Bible is a source of higher wisdom. It provides satisfying answers to such questions as these: Who is God? Is the Devil real? Who is Jesus Christ? Why does suffering exist? What happens to us when we die? The answers you may hear from others are as diverse as the beliefs and customs of the people giving them. But the Bible reveals the truth about these and many other subjects. Furthermore, in the matter of conduct and attitude toward other humans and higher authorities, the Bible's guidance cannot be surpassed.*

What does the Bible reveal about God's purpose for the earth and mankind? It promises: "Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more . . . But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:10, 11) "God himself will be with [mankind]. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:3, 4) "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Psalm 37:29.

The Bible also foretells that war, crime, violence, and wickedness will soon end. Sickness, old age, and death will be no more. Everlasting life on a paradise earth will become a reality. What delightful prospects! And how all of this demonstrates God's love for mankind!

What Will You Do?

The Bible is a marvelous gift from the Creator. How should you respond to this book? A man of Hindu background believed that

* These subjects are discussed in the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

for a revelation from God to be of benefit to all mankind, it has to date back to the dawn of civilization. Upon realizing that parts of the Bible are older than the most ancient Hindu writings, the Vedas, he decided to read the Bible and examine its contents.* A university professor in the United States also came to see the need to read this most widely circulated book in the world before forming an opinion about it.

Reading the Bible and applying what it teaches will bring you rich blessings. The Bible states: "Happy is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night. And he will certainly become like a tree planted by streams of water, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither, and everything he does will succeed."** (Psalm 1:1-3) Studying

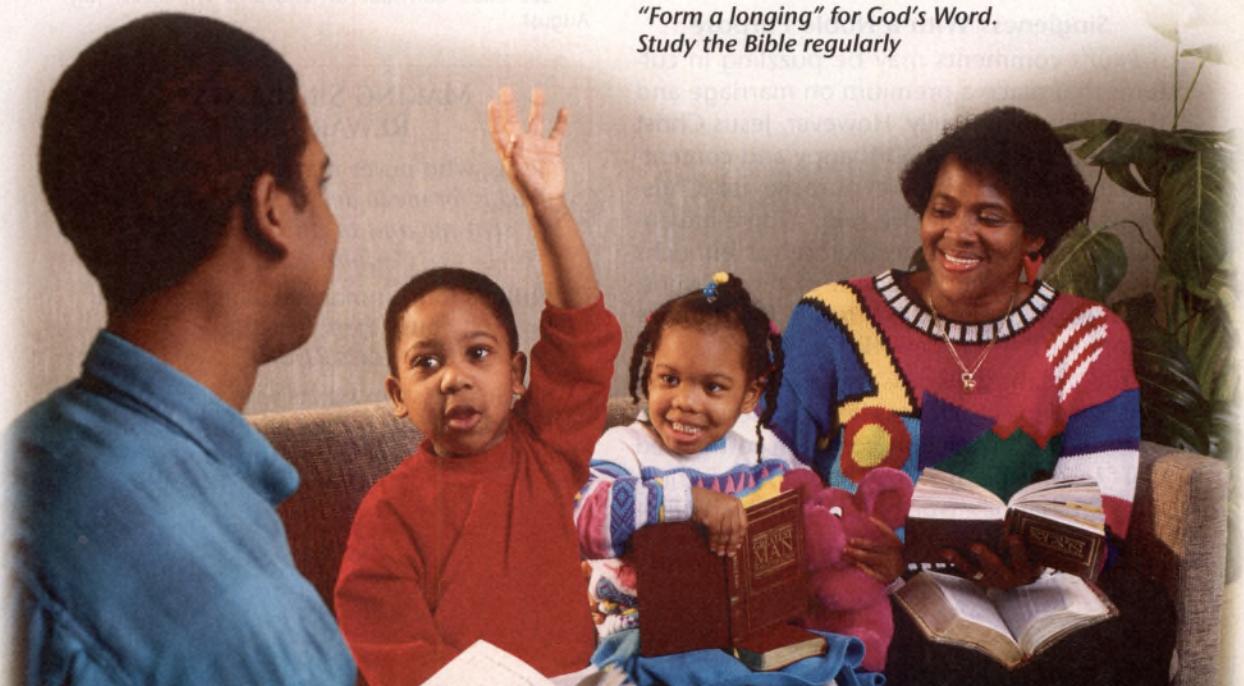
* The earliest hymns of the Vedas are believed to have been composed nearly 3,000 years ago and transmitted orally. "It was only in the fourteenth century A.D. that the Veda was written down," says P. K. Saratkumar in his book *A History of India*.

** Jehovah is the name of the God of the Bible. In many Bible translations, it can be found at Psalm 83:18.

the Bible and reflecting upon what it says will bring you happiness because your spiritual need will thus be satisfied. (Matthew 5:3) The Bible will show you how to live a fruitful life and how to cope with problems successfully. Yes, "in the keeping of [God's laws set out in the Bible] there is a large reward." (Psalm 19:11) Moreover, putting confidence in God's promises will bring you blessings now and will give you a bright hope for the future.

The Bible urges us: "As newborn infants, form a longing for the unadulterated milk belonging to the word." (1 Peter 2:2) An infant depends on nourishment and insists on having that need met. Likewise, we really are dependent on knowledge from God. So "form a longing," or a strong desire, for his Word. The Bible is a book of true teachings from God. Make it a goal to study it regularly. Jehovah's Witnesses in your community will be happy to help you to get the most out of your study. You have our warm invitation to contact them. Or you may write to the publishers of this magazine.

**"Form a longing" for God's Word.
Study the Bible regularly**



Single and Contented in Jehovah's Service

SO MANY of us are completely happy even though we are not married," noted a Christian woman in Spain. What is the reason for her contentment? "We love being free from many anxieties so that we can serve our God, Jehovah, more fully."

Such feelings harmonize with what God's Word observes about singleness. When the apostle Paul discussed matters involving marriage, he offered this inspired insight: "I say to the unmarried persons and the widows, it is well for them that they remain even as I am." Paul himself was not married. But what reason did he give for recommending singleness? He pointed out that the married person is divided, whereas the unmarried man or woman is "anxious for the things of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:8, 32-34) Serving Jehovah is the principal factor that makes a single person happy and contented.

Singleness With a Noble Purpose

Paul's comments may be puzzling in cultures that place a premium on marriage and the raising of a family. However, Jesus Christ—himself unmarried but happy and contented—mentioned a noble purpose for Christians who are single. He said: "There are eunuchs that have made themselves eunuchs on account of the kingdom of the heavens. Let him that can make room for it make room for it."—Matthew 19:12.

True to those words, many have found that singleness allows them to serve God without the distraction common to married life. (1 Corinthians 7:35) Thousands of Christians are happily worshipping Jehovah with-

out a marriage mate, and they find joy in actively assisting others.*

Many unmarried Christians realize that happiness is not the prerogative of married people and that unhappiness is not the experience of all single individuals. In both groups, some at times experience happiness as well as grief. Actually, the Bible realistically observes that marriage itself brings 'tribulation in the flesh.'—1 Corinthians 7:28.

Single by Circumstance

Many are single not by choice but because of circumstances. They may desire the warmth, companionship, and affection that can be found within the marital arrangement. For some, however, financial or other considerations may at present preclude marriage. Some Christians—many of them dear spiritual sisters—have remained single because they are determined to obey the Bible counsel to

* See 2005 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses, July/August.

MAKING SINGLENESS REWARDING

Jesus, who never married, stated: "*My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work.*"

—John 4:34.

Philip's four unmarried daughters kept busy 'prophesying.'

—Acts 21:8, 9.

Single Christian sisters who declare the Kingdom message are part of the 'large army of women telling the good news.'

—Psalm 68:11.

"The unmarried man is anxious for the things of the Lord, how he may gain the Lord's approval."

—1 CORINTHIANS 7:32

marry "only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39) They loyally seek a marriage mate only among dedicated, baptized worshippers of Jehovah.

At times, some of these individuals are lonely. After admitting that she feels this way, one single Christian states: "We know Jehovah's law and would not want to displease Jehovah in any way. We may want the companionship of a mate, but no matter how many times people in the world try to 'fix us up,' we're standing firm. We don't even want to be in the company of unbelieving men or women." Such Christians are to be commended for applying Bible counsel and maintaining high moral standards so as to please Jehovah despite any emotional distress they may experience.

Generous Divine Help

Jehovah is loyal to those showing their loyalty to him in such matters as refusing to marry individuals who do not serve him. From personal experience, King David could testify: "With someone loyal you [Jehovah] will act in loyalty." (Psalm 18:25) And to those who faithfully obey him, God promises: "I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5) Imitating Jehovah, we can give generous commendation to single Christians of all ages who faithfully stick to God's Word. We can also pray that Jehovah strengthen them to meet their challenges.—Judges 11:30-40.

Many single Christians find that engaging fully in Bible educational work fills their lives with meaning. For example, consider Patricia, an unmarried woman in her mid-30's who is a pioneer, or full-time evangelizer. She says: "Although trials come with singleness, it has afforded me the opportunity to become a regular pioneer. Since I am a single person, my schedule is more flexible, which allows more time for study. I have also learned to lean more heavily on Jehovah, especially through trying times."

Such sentiments are based on the Bible's reassuring promise: "Roll upon Jehovah your way, and rely upon him, and he himself will act." (Psalm 37:5) Indeed, all faithful worshippers of Jehovah, married or single, can find comfort and strength in the inspired words: "My help is from Jehovah."—Psalm 121:2.



"CLEAR LIGHT" on the Bible From RUSSIA'S OLDEST LIBRARY



TWO scholars are on the hunt for ancient Bible manuscripts. They individually travel through deserts and search caves, monasteries, and ancient cliff dwellings. Years later, their paths cross in Russia's oldest public library, where some of the most exciting Bible discoveries the world has ever known come together. Who were these men? How did the treasures they discovered end up in Russia?

Ancient Manuscripts —Champions of God's Word

To meet one of these two scholars, we must go back to the beginning of the 19th century when Europe was being swept by the winds of an intellectual revolution. It was a time of scientific progress and cultural achievement, which promoted a skeptical view of traditional beliefs. Higher critics sought to undermine the Bible's authority. In fact, scholars were voicing doubts about the authenticity of the Bible text itself.

Certain sincere defenders of the Bible discerned that new champions—as yet undiscovered ancient Bible manuscripts—would undoubtedly uphold the integrity of God's Word. If manuscripts older than those then extant could be found, they would serve as silent witnesses to the purity of the Bible text, even though repeated attempts had long been made to destroy or distort its message. Such manuscripts could also

Both images: National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg



Manuscript room of The National Library

expose the few places where erroneous renderings had crept into the text.

Some of the hottest debates on the authenticity of the Bible raged in Germany. There a young professor slipped away from his comfortable academic life to go on a journey that would lead him to one of the biggest Bible discoveries of all time. His name was Konstantin von Tischendorf, a Bible scholar whose rejection of higher criticism led to notable success in defending the authenticity of Bible text. His first journey to the wilderness of Sinai in 1844 met with unbelievable success. A casual look into a monastery wastebasket revealed an ancient copy of the *Septuagint*, or Greek translation of the He-

brew Scriptures—the oldest one that had ever been discovered!

Exultant, Tischendorf managed to take away 43 sheets. Although he was convinced that there were more, a return visit in 1853 produced only a fragment. Where were the rest? His funds exhausted, Tischendorf sought the patronage of a wealthy sponsor, and he decided to leave his homeland again in search of ancient manuscripts. Before going on this mission, though, he would appeal to the czar of Russia.

The Czar Takes an Interest

Tischendorf may well have wondered what kind of reception that he, a Protestant scholar, would get in Russia, a vast land espousing the Russian Orthodox religion. Happily, Russia had entered a favorable era of change and reform. An emphasis on education had led to the founding of St. Petersburg's Imperial Library in 1795 by Empress Catherine II (also known as Catherine the Great). As Russia's first public library, it had made a wealth of printed information accessible to millions.

Hailed as one of the finest libraries in Europe, The Imperial Library did have one drawback. Fifty years after it was founded, the library contained only six Hebrew manuscripts. It could not keep up with Russia's rising interest in the study of Bible languages and translations. Catherine II had sent scholars to European universities to study Hebrew. After the scholars returned, Hebrew courses sprang up in major Russian Orthodox semi-



Empress
Catherine II



Konstantin von
Tischendorf (center)
and Alexander II,
czar of Russia

Catherine II: National Library of Russia,
St. Petersburg; Alexander II: From the book
Spamers Illustrirte Weltgeschichte, Leipzig, 1898

naries, and for the first time, Russian scholars started work on an accurate translation of the Bible from ancient Hebrew into Russian. But they faced a lack of resources and even opposition from conservative church leaders. True enlightenment had yet to begin for those seeking Bible knowledge.

The czar, Alexander II, was quick to appreciate Tischendorf's mission and extended his patronage. Despite "jealous and fanatical opposition" from some, Tischendorf returned from his mission to Sinai with the rest of the copy of the *Septuagint*.^{*} Later named the Codex Sinaiticus, it is still one of the oldest Bible manuscripts in existence. Back in St. Petersburg, Tischendorf hastened to the czar's residence, the Imperial Winter Palace. He proposed that the czar support "one of the greatest undertakings in critical and Biblical study"—a published edition of the newly found manuscript, which was later placed in The Imperial Library. The czar readily agreed, and an elated Tischendorf later wrote: "Providence has given to our age . . . the Sinaitic Bible, to be to us a full and clear

light as to what is the real text of God's Word written, and to assist us in defending the truth by establishing its authentic form."

Bible Treasures From the Crimea

Another scholar searching for Bible treasures was mentioned at the outset. Who was

* He also brought a complete copy of the Christian Greek Scriptures dating back to the fourth century C.E.

he? A few years before Tischendorf returned to Russia, The Imperial Library received a proposal so unbelievable that it drew the czar's interest and brought scholars to Russia from all over Europe. They could hardly believe their eyes. Before them was an enormous collection of manuscripts and other material. It numbered a staggering 2,412 items, including 975 manuscripts and scrolls. Among these were 45 Bible manuscripts dating earlier than the tenth century. As incredible as it seemed, all these manuscripts had been collected almost single-handedly by a man named Abraham Firkovich, a Karaite scholar who was then more than 70 years old! But who were the Karaites?*

This question was of great interest to the czar. Russia had extended its borders to encompass territory previously held by other states. This had brought new ethnic groups into the empire. The picturesque Crimea region, on the shores of the Black Sea, was populated by a people who seemed to be Jewish but who had Turkish customs and spoke a language related to Tatar. These Karaites traced their de-



Abraham Firkovich

scent from Jews exiled to Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. Unlike rabbinic Jews, however, they rejected the Talmud and emphasized the reading of the Scriptures. The Crimean Karaites were eager to present to the czar evidence of their distinctness from rabbinic Jews, thereby giving them a separate status.

By presenting ancient manuscripts owned by Karaites, they hoped to prove that they had descended from Jews who had immigrated to the Crimea after the Babylonian exile.

When Firkovich undertook his search for ancient records and manuscripts, he started with the Crimean cliff dwellings of Chufut-Kale. Generations of Karaites had lived and worshipped in these small houses built from the stones carved out of cliffs. The Karaites never destroyed worn-out copies of the Scriptures where the divine name, Jehovah, appeared because they considered such action sacrilege. The manuscripts were carefully placed in a small storehouse called a genizah, meaning "hiding place" in Hebrew. Because the Karaites had deep respect for the divine name, such parchments were seldom disturbed.

Undeterred by the dust of centuries, Firkovich searched the genizah sites carefully. In one, he found the famous manuscript of 916 C.E. Called the Petersburg Codex of the Latter Prophets, it is one of the oldest copies of the Hebrew Scriptures in existence.

Firkovich managed to amass great numbers of manuscripts, and in 1859 he decided to offer his vast collection to The Imperial Library. In 1862, Alexander II helped to purchase the collection for the library for the then enormous sum of 125,000 rubles. At that time, the entire library budget was no more than 10,000 rubles a year! This acquisi-

* For more information on the Karaites, see the article "The Karaites and Their Quest for Truth," in the July 15, 1995, issue of *The Watchtower*.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

The Bible Can Help You Find Joy

When Is There a Basis for Taking Offense?

Jehovah Has Numbered "the Very Hairs of Your Head"

tion included the renowned Leningrad Codex (B 19^A). It dates from 1008 and is the world's oldest complete copy of the Hebrew Scriptures. One scholar noted that it is "probably the single most important manuscript of the Bible, for it established the text of most modern critical editions of the Hebrew Bible." (See the accompanying box.) That same year, 1862, Tischendorf's Codex Sinaiticus was published, to worldwide acclaim.

Spiritual Enlightenment in Modern Times

The library now known as The National Library of Russia houses one of the world's largest collections of ancient manuscripts.* Reflecting Russian history, the name of the library has been changed seven times over the course of two centuries. One well-known name is The State Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library. Though the turmoil of the 20th century did not leave the library unscathed, its manuscripts survived intact through both world wars and the siege of Leningrad. How do we benefit from such manuscripts?

Ancient manuscripts are the reliable basis for many modern Bible translations. They allow sincere truth-seekers to enjoy a clear version of the Holy Scriptures. Both the Sinaiticus and the Leningrad codices have made valuable contributions to the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses and released in its complete form in 1961. For example, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*, used by the New World Bible Translation Committee, are based on the Leningrad Codex and use the Tetragrammaton, or divine name, 6,828 times in the original text.

* Most of the Codex Sinaiticus was sold to the British Museum. Only fragments remain in The National Library of Russia.

THE DIVINE NAME KNOWN AND USED

In his wisdom, Jehovah has seen to it that his Word, the Bible, has been preserved until modern times. The diligent work of scribes throughout the ages has been involved in its preservation. The most meticulous of these were the Masoretes, professional Hebrew scribes who worked from the sixth to the tenth century C.E. Ancient Hebrew was written without vowels. Over time, this increased the danger of losing the proper pronunciation as Aramaic replaced Hebrew. The Masoretes developed a system of vowel points to add to the Bible text in order to indicate the correct pronunciation of Hebrew words.

Significantly, the Masoretic vowel points in the Leningrad Codex allow for the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton—the four Hebrew consonants making up the divine name—as *Yehwah'*, *Yeh-wih'*, and *Yeho-wah'*. "Jehovah" is now the most widely known pronunciation of the name. The divine name was a living, familiar term to Bible writers and others of ancient times. Today, God's name is known and used by millions who acknowledge that 'Jehovah alone is the Most High over all the earth.'—Psalm 83:18.

Relatively few Bible readers are aware of their indebtedness to the quiet library in St. Petersburg and its manuscripts, some bearing the city's former name, Leningrad. Yet, our greatest debt is to the Bible's Author, Jehovah, who gives spiritual light. The psalmist therefore petitioned him: "Send out your light and your truth. May these themselves lead me."—Psalm 43:3.

"JEHOVAH'S SWORD AND GIDEON'S!"

THEY are as numerous as locusts, reducing fertile fields to a wasteland. It is sometime during the period when judges rule in Israel, and the Israelites are in despair. For seven years, just as sown seed has begun to sprout, plundering hordes of camel-riding Midianites, Amalekites, and Easterners descend upon the land. The marauders' flocks spread out in search of pasture, devouring everything green. But the people of Israel have neither ass nor bull nor sheep. So severe is Midian's reign of terror that the poverty-stricken Israelites resort to underground storage in the mountains, the caves, and places difficult to approach.

Why such a plight? Apostate Israel is serving false gods. In turn, Jehovah has abandoned them to oppressors. When the sons of Israel can stand it no longer, they call to Jehovah for aid. Will he listen? What can Israel's experience teach us?—Judges 6:1-6.

Cautious Farmer or "Valiant, Mighty One"?

Israelite farmers normally thresh wheat with an ox and a sledge in an exposed, airy location so that the breeze can catch the chaff and separate it from the grain in the winnowing process. But the threat posed by marauders intent on stripping the land makes that far too conspicuous. Out of sight of the Midianites, Gideon threshes wheat in a winepress—likely a large, sheltered vat carved out of rock. (Judges 6:11) There the grain can likely be beaten with a stick in small quantities only. Under the circumstances, Gideon is improvising.

Imagine Gideon's surprise when Jehovah's angel appears to him and says: "Jehovah is with you, you valiant, mighty one." (Judges 6:12) As a man secretly threshing grain in a winepress, Gideon must feel anything but valiant. Yet, those words indicate divine confidence that Gideon can be a valiant leader in Israel. Even so, he himself needs to be convinced.

When Jehovah commissions him to "save Israel out of Midian's palm," Gideon modestly states: "Excuse me, Jehovah. With what shall I save Israel? Look! My thousand is the least in Manasseh, and I am the smallest in my father's house." Cautious Gideon requests a sign that God would be with him in striking down Midian, and Jehovah is willing to accommodate Gideon's reasonable need for assurance. So Gideon presents a gift of food to his angelic visitor, and fire ascends out of a rock, consuming the offering. After Jehovah has allayed Gideon's fright, Gideon builds an altar at that location.—Judges 6:12-24.

"Let Baal Make a Legal Defense"

Israel's biggest problem is not Midianite oppression. It is bondage to Baal worship. Jehovah is "a jealous God," and no one can serve him acceptably while revering other gods. (Exodus 34:14) Therefore, Jehovah commands Gideon to destroy his father's altar to Baal and to cut down the sacred pole. Fearing his father's reaction and that of others if he does this during the day, Gideon acts at night, with the help of ten servants.



Gideon's caution is justified, for on discovering his "sacrilege," local Baal worshippers demand his life. With unassailable logic, however, Gideon's father, Joash, reasons with the people that if Baal were God, he would be able to defend himself. At that, Joash aptly calls his son Jerubbaal, meaning "Let Baal Make a Legal Defense Against Him."—Judges 6:25-32, footnote.

God always blesses his servants for taking a bold stand for true worship. When the Midianites and their allies again invade Israelite territory, 'Jehovah's spirit envelops Gideon.' (Judges 6:34) Under the influence of God's spirit, or active force, Gideon musters troops from the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali.—Judges 6:35.

Preparing for Action

Although Gideon now has an army of 32,000, he asks God for a sign. If a fleece left on the threshing floor becomes wet with dew while the ground remains dry, this will indicate that God will save Israel through him. Jehovah performs this miracle, and Gideon seeks and receives confirmation when the

sign is reversed—wet ground and a dry fleece. Is Gideon being overly cautious? Apparently not, for Jehovah grants his request for reassurance. (Judges 6:36-40) We do not expect such miracles today. Yet, we can receive Jehovah's guidance and reassurance from his Word.

God now raises the point that Gideon's army is too big. If they prevail over their enemies with such a large force, the Israelites might brag that they have saved themselves. But Jehovah must receive credit for the coming victory. The solution?

Gideon is to apply a provision of the Mosaic Law by inviting the fearful to withdraw. At that, 22,000 of his men do so, leaving only 10,000.—Deuteronomy 20:8; Judges 7:2, 3.

From God's standpoint, there are still too many men. Gideon is told to have them go down to the water. Jewish historian Josephus says that God had Gideon march his troops to a river in the heat of the day. Be that as it may, Gideon observes how the men drink. Just 300 dip one hand in the water and lap from it while watching for a possible enemy attack. Only the vigilant 300 will go with Gideon. (Judges 7:4-8) Imagine yourself in their shoes. Since your enemies number 135,000, you must surely conclude that a victory could come about only by Jehovah's power, not your own!

God invites Gideon to take along an attendant and scout the Midianite camp. While there, Gideon overhears a man relating a dream to a companion who unhesitatingly interprets it to mean that God has determined to give Midian into Gideon's hand. That is just what Gideon needs to hear. He is certain that Jehovah will grant him and

his 300 men victory over the Midianites.
—Judges 7:9-15.

Battle Strategy

The 300 are divided into three bands of 100 each. Every man is given a horn and a large empty jar. A torch is hidden in the jar. Gideon's first order is this: 'Watch me, and do just as I do. When I blow the horn, you blow yours and shout "Jehovah's sword and Gideon's!"' —Judges 7:16-18, 20.

The 300 Israelite warriors stealthily move to the edge of the enemy camp. It is about ten o'clock in the evening—just after the changing of the guard. This seems to be the opportune time to strike, for it will take a while before the eyes of the new sentries adjust to the darkness.

What terror the Midianites now experience! Suddenly, the stillness is broken by the shattering of 300 jars, the blare of 300 horns, and the shouts of 300 men. Stunned, especially by the cry "Jehovah's sword and Gideon's!", the Midianites add their own cries to the din. In the chaos, it is impossible for them to tell friend from foe. The 300 stand still in their assigned positions as God causes the enemies to use their own swords to slaughter one another. The camp is routed, escape is cut off, and mop-up operations involving an arduous pursuit permanently remove the Midianite threat. The long and murderous occupation has finally come to an end.—Judges 7:19-25; 8:10-12, 28.

Even after this victory, Gideon is modest. When the Ephraimites, who apparently feel slighted at not being called for the fight, pick a quarrel with him, he responds mildly. His mild answer turns away their rage and calms their spirit.—Judges 8:1-3; Proverbs 15:1.

Now that peace has been established, the Israelites urge Gideon to become their king. What a temptation! But Gideon rejects it. He has not lost sight of who won the victory over

Midian. "I myself shall not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you," he declares. "Jehovah is the one who will rule over you." —Judges 8:23.

Being imperfect, however, Gideon does not always exercise good judgment. For some unstated reason, he makes an ephod with the spoils of war and exhibits it in his city. The record says that all Israel begins to have "immoral intercourse" with the ephod. They worship it, and it becomes a snare even to Gideon and his household. Yet, he has not become a rank idolater, for the Scriptures reckon him a man with faith in Jehovah. —Judges 8:27; Hebrews 11:32-34.

Lessons for Us

Gideon's story provides lessons of both warning and encouragement. It warns us that if Jehovah should remove from us his spirit and blessing because of our wayward conduct, our spiritual condition would become like that of poverty-stricken residents of a land ravaged by locusts. We live in critical times and should never forget that Jehovah's blessing "is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it." (Proverbs 10:22) We enjoy God's blessing because we "serve him with a complete heart and with a delightful soul." Otherwise, he would cast us off. —1 Chronicles 28:9.

We can draw encouragement from the account about Gideon, for it proves that Jehovah can deliver his people from any menace, even by using those who appear weak or helpless. That Gideon and his 300 men were able to vanquish 135,000 Midianites attests to God's infinite power. We may find ourselves in desperate straits and may seem to be hopelessly outnumbered by our enemies. Yet, the Bible account involving Gideon encourages us to trust in Jehovah, who will bless and deliver all of those exercising faith in Him.



"THE SHREWD ONE Considers His Steps"

A SHREWD person is practical and clever, sound in judgment and sharp in perception, judicious and prudent, discerning and wise. He is neither devious nor manipulative. "Everyone shrewd will act with knowledge," states Proverbs 13:16. Yes, shrewdness, or prudence, is a desirable trait.

How can we display shrewdness in our day-to-day life? How is this quality made evident by the choices we make, the way we treat others, and the way we respond to various situations? What rewards do the prudent reap? What calamities do they avoid? King Solomon of ancient Israel gives practical answers to these questions, as we read at Proverbs 14:12-25.*

Choose Your Course Wisely

Making wise choices and being successful in life certainly require the ability to distinguish what is right from what is wrong. However, the Bible warns: "*There exists a way that is upright before a man, but the ways of death are the end of it afterward.*" (Proverbs 14:12) Hence, we must learn to differentiate what is truly right from what appears to be right. The expression "the ways of death" indicates that there are many such deceptive paths. Consider some areas that we should be aware of and avoid.

The rich and famous of the world are generally viewed as respectable people to be admired. Their social and financial success

* For a discussion of Proverbs 14:1-11, see pages 26-9 of the November 15, 2004, issue of *The Watchtower*.

may make it seem that their way of doing things is right. What, though, about the means that many of such individuals use to gain wealth or fame? Are their ways always upright and moral? Then there are some individuals who display admirable zeal for their religious beliefs. But does their sincerity really prove that their beliefs are right?

—Romans 10:2, 3.

A way may also appear upright because of self-deception. To base our decisions on what we personally feel is right is to depend upon the heart, a treacherous guide. (Jeremiah 17:9) An unenlightened and untrained conscience can lead us into thinking that the wrong way is the right way. What, then, will help us to choose a proper course?

Diligent personal study of the deeper truths of God's Word is a must if we are to acquire "perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong." Moreover, we must train these powers "through use" in applying Bible principles. (Hebrews 5:14) We must be careful not to allow a way that merely seems to be right to cause us to veer off 'the cramped road leading into life.'

—Matthew 7:13, 14.

When "the Heart May Be in Pain"

Can we be happy when we are not at peace inside? Does laughter and merriment alleviate deep-rooted pain? Is it shrewd to drown feelings of depression in alcohol, to abuse drugs, or to try to eliminate those feelings by adopting a promiscuous lifestyle?



The answer is no. *"In laughter the heart may be in pain,"* says the wise king.—Proverbs 14:13a.

Laughter may mask the pain, but it fails to remove it. "For everything there is an appointed time," states the Bible. Indeed, there is "a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to wail and a time to skip about." (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4) When depression persists, we must take steps to overcome it, seeking "skillful direction" when necessary. (Proverbs 24:6)* Laughter and amusement are of some value, but their relative worth is small. Warning against improper forms of amusement and excesses in entertainment, Solomon says: *"Grief is what rejoicing ends up in."*—Proverbs 14:13b.

The Faithless and the Good —Satisfied How?

"The one faithless at heart will be satisfied with the results of his own ways," continues the king of Israel, *"but the good man with the results of his dealings."* (Proverbs 14:14) How do the faithless and the good get satisfied with the results of their dealings?

* See pages 11-16 of the October 22, 1987, issue of *Awake!*

Diligent study of deeper truths is a must if we are to distinguish both right and wrong

A faithless person is not concerned about rendering an account to God. Therefore, doing what is right in Jehovah's eyes is of no consequence to a man without faith. (1 Peter 4:3-5) Such a person is satisfied with the results of his materialistic lifestyle. (Psalm 144:11-15a) The good person, on the other hand, has spiritual interests at heart. In all his dealings, he adheres to God's righteous standards. Such an individual is satisfied with the results because Jehovah is his God and he derives incomparable joy from serving the Most High.—Psalm 144:15b.

Do Not 'Put Faith in Every Word'

Contrasting the ways of the inexperienced with those of the prudent, Solomon says: *"Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps."* (Proverbs 14:15) The shrewd one is not gullible. Rather than believing everything he hears or letting others do his thinking for him, he considers his steps wisely.

Is a materialistic lifestyle truly satisfying?



Gathering all available facts, he acts with knowledge.

Take, for example, the question, "Is there a God?" The inexperienced one is inclined to go along with what is popular or with what prominent people believe. The shrewd one, on the other hand, takes time to examine the facts. He reflects on such scriptures as Romans 1:20 and Hebrews 3:4. In spiritual matters, a prudent person does not just accept the word of religious leaders. He 'tests the inspired expressions to see whether they originate with God.'—1 John 4:1.

How wise it is to heed the advice not to 'put faith in every word'! Those entrusted with the responsibility to counsel others in the Christian congregation must especially take this to heart. The counselor must have the complete picture of what has transpired. He must listen well and gather facts from all sides so that his counsel is not unsound or one-sided.—Proverbs 18:13; 29:20.

"The Man of Thinking Abilities Is Hated"

Pointing to yet another difference between the wise and the foolish, the king of Israel says: "*The wise one fears and is turning away from badness, but the stupid is becoming furious and self-confident. He that is quick to anger will commit foolishness, but the man of thinking abilities is hated.*"—Proverbs 14:16, 17.

The wise person fears the consequences of following a wrong course. Therefore, he is cautious and appreciates any counsel that helps him to avoid badness. The stupid one does not have such fear. Being self-confident, he arrogantly ignores the counsel of others. Prone to becoming furious, such a person acts foolishly. But how is it that a man of thinking abilities becomes an object of hostility?

The original-language expression translat-

ed "thinking abilities" has two meanings. In a positive sense, it can denote discernment or cleverness. (Proverbs 1:4; 2:11; 3:21) Or negatively, the phrase can refer to wicked ideas or malicious thinking.—Psalm 37:7; Proverbs 12:2; 24:8.

If the expression "the man of thinking abilities" refers to a malicious schemer, it is not difficult to see why such a person is hated. However, is it not true that a man of discernment may also be hated by those lacking this quality? For example, those who exercise their mental faculties and choose to be "no part of the world" are hated by the world. (John 15:19) Christian youths who exercise their thinking abilities and stand up to unwholesome peer pressure in order to avoid improper behavior are ridiculed. The fact is that true worshippers are hated by the world, which is lying in the power of Satan the Devil.—1 John 5:19.

"Bad People Will Have to Bow Down"

The prudent, or the shrewd, differ from inexperienced ones in yet another way. "*The inexperienced ones will certainly take possession of foolishness, but the shrewd ones will bear knowledge as a headdress.*" (Proverbs 14:18) Lacking discernment, the inexperienced ones choose what is foolish. This becomes their lot in life. On the other hand, knowledge adorns the shrewd just as a crown honors a king.

"Bad people will have to bow down before the good ones," says the wise king, *"and the wicked people at the gates of the righteous one."* (Proverbs 14:19) In other words, the good will ultimately triumph over the wicked. Consider the increase in numbers and the superior way of life that God's people enjoy today. Seeing these blessings bestowed upon Jehovah's servants will force some opposers to "bow down" to Jehovah's figurative heavenly woman, represented by the

spirit-anointed remnant on earth. At Armageddon at the latest, those opposers will be compelled to acknowledge that the earthly part of God's organization truly represents the heavenly part.—Isaiah 60:1, 14; Galatians 6:16; Revelation 16:14, 16.

"Showing Favor to the Afflicted Ones"

Making an observation about human nature, Solomon says: *"Even to his fellowman one who is of little means is an object of hatred, but many are the friends of the rich person."* (Proverbs 14:20) How true this is of imperfect humans! Being selfishly inclined, they tend to favor the rich over the poor. While the friends of the rich person are many, they are as transitory as his wealth. Should we not then avoid making friends by means of money or flattery?

What if an honest self-examination reveals that we curry the favor of the rich and look down on those of little means? We must realize that showing such favoritism is condemned in the Bible. It states: *"The one despising his own fellowman is sinning, but happy is he who is showing favor to the afflicted ones."*—Proverbs 14:21.

We should show consideration to those in difficult circumstances. (James 1:27) How can we do this? By providing "this world's means for supporting life," which can include money, food, shelter, clothing, and personal attention. (1 John 3:17) Happy is he who is showing favor to such ones, since "there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—Acts 20:35.

How Do They Fare?

The principle "whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap" applies to the shrewd person as well as to the foolish one. (Galatians 6:7) The former does what is good; the latter devises mischief. *"Will not those devising mischief go wandering about?"* asks the wise king. The answer is yes; they do "go

astray." (*An American Translation*) *"But there are loving-kindness and trueness as regards those devising good."* (Proverbs 14:22) Those who do good enjoy the goodwill of others as well as God's loving-kindness.

Associating success with hard work and linking failure with much talk and little action, Solomon says: *"By every kind of toil there comes to be an advantage, but merely the word of the lips tends to want."* (Proverbs 14:23) This principle certainly applies to our spiritual endeavors. When we work hard in the Christian ministry, we reap the rewards of introducing the lifesaving truth of God's Word to many others. Faithfully carrying out any theocratic assignment we may receive leads to joy and satisfaction.

"The crown of the wise is their riches; the foolishness of the stupid ones is foolishness," says Proverbs 14:24. This could mean that the wisdom that the wise strive to attain is their riches, and it crowns, or adorns, them. The stupid, on the other hand, gain merely foolishness. According to one reference work, this proverb could also suggest that "wealth is an ornament to those who use it well . . . [whereas] fools only have their folly." Whatever the case, the wise one fares better than the foolish one.

"A true witness is delivering souls," says the king of Israel, *"but a deceitful one launches forth mere lies."* (Proverbs 14:25) While this certainly is true in a judicial context, consider its implications for our ministry. Our Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work involves bearing witness to the truth of God's Word. That witness delivers righthearted individuals from false religion and saves lives. By paying constant attention to ourselves and to our teaching, we will save both ourselves and those who listen to us. (1 Timothy 4:16) As we continue to do this, let us be alert to display shrewdness in all aspects of life.

"KEEP PROVING WHAT YOU YOURSELVES ARE"

"Keep testing whether you are in the faith, keep proving what you yourselves are."

—2 CORINTHIANS 13:5.

A MAN traveling through the countryside comes to a fork in the road. Uncertain about which way will lead him to his destination, he asks passersby for directions but receives conflicting information. Confused, he is unable to go on. Having doubts about our beliefs can have a similar effect on us. Such uncertainty can interfere with our ability to make decisions, causing us to be unsure of the way in which to walk.

² A situation arose that could have had such an effect on some people in the Christian congregation in first-century Corinth, Greece. "Superfine apostles" were challenging the authority of the apostle Paul, saying: "His letters are weighty and forceful, but his presence in person is weak and his speech contemptible." (2 Corinthians 10:7-12; 11:5, 6) Such a viewpoint may have caused some in the Corinthian congregation to be unsure of how to walk.

³ Paul founded the congregation in Corinth during his visit there in 50 C.E. He stayed in Corinth "a year and six months, teaching among them the word of God." Indeed, "many of the Corinthians that heard began to believe and be baptized." (Acts 18:5-11) Paul was keenly interested in

1, 2. (a) How can uncertainty about our beliefs affect us? (b) What situation in first-century Corinth may have caused some to be unsure of the way in which to walk?

3, 4. Why should Paul's admonition to the Corinthians be of interest to us?

the spiritual welfare of his fellow believers in Corinth. Moreover, the Corinthians had written Paul for advice on certain matters. (1 Corinthians 7:1) So he gave them very fine admonition.

⁴ "Keep testing whether you are in the faith," Paul wrote, "keep proving what you yourselves are." (2 Corinthians 13:5) Applying this counsel would have protected those brothers in Corinth from being uncertain about the way in which to walk. It can do the same for us today. How, then, can we follow Paul's advice? How can we test whether we are in the faith? And what is involved in proving what we ourselves are?

"Keep Testing Whether You Are in the Faith"

⁵ In a test, usually a subject or an object is tested, and there is a measure or a standard according to which the test is performed. In this case, the test subject is not the faith—the body of beliefs we have embraced. We as individuals are the subject. To perform the test, we have a perfect standard. A melody composed by the psalmist David states: "The law of Jehovah is perfect, bringing back the soul. The reminder of Jehovah is trustworthy, making the inexperienced one wise. The orders from Jehovah

5, 6. What standard do we have for testing whether we are in the faith, and why is that the ideal standard?

are upright, causing the heart to rejoice; the commandment of Jehovah is clean, making the eyes shine." (Psalm 19:7, 8) The Bible contains Jehovah's perfect laws and upright orders, his trustworthy reminders and clean commandments. The message found therein is the ideal standard for testing.

⁶ Concerning that God-inspired message, the apostle Paul says: "The word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and their marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12) Yes, God's word can test our heart—what we really are on the inside. How can we make this sharp and powerful message come to life for us? The psalmist leaves no doubt as to what this entails. He sang: "Happy is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night." (Psalm 1:1, 2) "The law of Jehovah" is found in God's written Word, the Bible. We must take pleasure in reading Jehovah's Word. Indeed, we must take time to read in it in an undertone, or to meditate on it. As we do this, we need to expose ourselves—the test subjects—to what is written there.

⁷ The foremost way of testing whether we are in the faith, then, is to read and meditate on God's Word and examine how our conduct measures up to what we learn. We can be glad that we have much help to understand God's Word.

⁸ Jehovah has provided teachings and instruction through the publications of "the

7. What is the foremost way of testing whether we are in the faith?

8. How can the publications of "the faithful and discreet slave" help us to test whether we are in the faith?

faithful and discreet slave," which explain the Scriptures. (Matthew 24:45) For example, consider the box entitled "Questions for Meditation" at the end of most chapters in the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*.^{*} What fine opportunities for personal reflection this feature of the book provides! Numerous subjects discussed in our journals, *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*, also help us to test whether we are in the faith. Regarding the articles on the book of Proverbs in recent issues of *The Watchtower*, one Christian woman said: "I find these articles very practical. They help me examine whether my speech, conduct, and attitude really measure up to Jehovah's righteous standards."

⁹ We also receive abundant direction and encouragement at congregation meetings, assemblies, and conventions. These are among the spiritual provisions that God has made for those concerning whom Isaiah prophesied: "It must occur in the final part of the days that the mountain of the house of Jehovah will become firmly established above the top of the mountains, and it will certainly be lifted up above the hills; and to it all the nations must stream. And many peoples will certainly go and say: 'Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, . . . and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.'" (Isaiah 2:2, 3) It certainly is a blessing to have such instruction about Jehovah's ways.

¹⁰ Not to be overlooked is the counsel from those who have spiritual qualifications, including Christian elders. Concerning them, the Bible says: "Brothers, even though a man takes some false step before

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

9, 10. What provisions of Jehovah help us to keep testing whether we are in the faith?

he is aware of it, you who have spiritual qualifications try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness, as you each keep an eye on yourself, for fear you also may be tempted." (Galatians 6:1) How grateful we can be for this provision for our readjustment!

¹¹ Our publications, Christian meetings, appointed men—these are wonderful provisions from Jehovah. Testing whether we are in the faith, though, requires self-examination. So when we are reading our publications or listening to Scriptural admonition, we need to ask ourselves: 'Does this describe me? Do I do this? Am I adhering to the body of Christian beliefs?' Our attitude toward the information we receive by means of these provisions also has a bearing on our spiritual condition. "A physical man does not receive the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him," says the Bible. "However, the spiritual man examines indeed all things." (1 Corinthians 2:14, 15) Should we not strive to maintain a positive, spiritual view of what we read in our books, magazines, and other publications and of what we hear at our meetings and from the elders?

"Keep Proving What You Yourselves Are"

¹² Proving what we ourselves are involves self-evaluation. Yes, we can be in the truth, but what is the level of our spirituality? Proving what we are involves giving proof of maturity and of genuine appreciation for spiritual provisions.

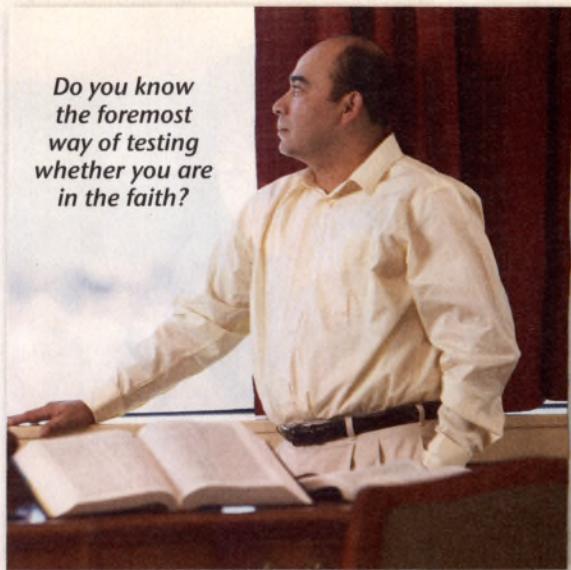
¹³ What proof of Christian maturity can we look for in ourselves? The apostle Paul

11. Testing whether we are in the faith calls for what?

12. What does proving what we ourselves are involve?

13. According to Hebrews 5:14, what serves as proof of our maturity?

*Do you know
the foremost
way of testing
whether you are
in the faith?*



wrote: "Solid food belongs to mature people, to those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong." (Hebrews 5:14) We give proof of maturity by training our perceptive powers. Just as certain muscles in the body of an athlete need to be trained through repeated use before he can excel at his sport, our perceptive powers have to be trained through use in applying Bible principles.

¹⁴ Before we can train our perceptive powers, though, we must acquire knowledge. For this, diligent personal study is essential. When we regularly engage in personal study—especially of the deeper things of God's Word—our perceptive powers are improved. Over the years, many deep subjects have been discussed in *The Watchtower*. How do we respond when we come across articles that discuss deeper truths? Do we tend to shy away from them just because they contain "some things hard to understand"? (2 Peter 3:16) On the

14, 15. Why should we put forth diligent effort to study the deeper things of God's Word?



We give proof of our Christian maturity by exercising our perceptive powers

contrary, we put forth extra effort to understand what is being said.—Ephesians 3:18.

¹⁵ What if personal study is difficult for us? It is vital that we endeavor to acquire or cultivate a taste for it.* (1 Peter 2:2) Growing to maturity requires that we learn to draw nourishment from solid food, the deeper truths of God's Word. Otherwise, our perceptive powers will necessarily remain limited. Giving proof of maturity, however, involves more than acquiring perceptive powers. In daily life we must put to use the knowledge that we gain through diligent personal study.

¹⁶ The proof of what we ourselves are is also found in our expressions of appreciation for the truth—our works of faith. Using a powerful illustration to describe this area of self-evaluation, the disciple

* For helpful suggestions on how to study, see pages 27-32 of the book *Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

16, 17. What admonition does the disciple James give about becoming "doers of the word"?

James says: "Become doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves with false reasoning. For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, this one is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, and off he goes and immediately forgets what sort of man he is. But he who peers into the perfect law that belongs to freedom and who persists in it, this man, because he has become, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, will be happy in his doing it." —James 1:22-25.

¹⁷ James is saying: 'Peer into the mirror of God's word, and evaluate yourself. Persist in doing this, and scrutinize yourself in the light of what you find in God's word. Then, do not quickly forget what you have seen. Make the needed corrections.' Following this advice may at times present a challenge.

¹⁸ Take, for example, the requirement to share in the Kingdom-preaching work. "With the heart one exercises faith for righteousness," wrote Paul, "but with the mouth one makes public declaration for salvation." (Romans 10:10) Making public declaration for salvation with our mouth requires a number of adjustments. Participating in the preaching work does not come naturally to most of us. Being zealous at it and giving the work the place that it deserves in our lives requires even more changes and sacrifices. (Matthew 6:33) But once we become doers of this God-given work, we are happy because of the praise that it brings to Jehovah. Are we, then, zealous Kingdom proclaimers?

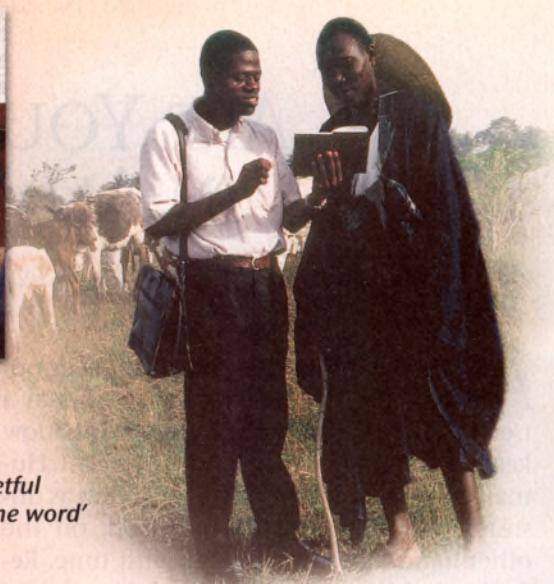
¹⁹ How inclusive should our works of

18. Why does following James' counsel present a challenge?

19. What should our works of faith include?



*We prove what we are
by becoming 'not forgetful
hearers, but doers of the word'*



faith be? Paul states: "The things that you learned as well as accepted and heard and saw in connection with me, practice these; and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:9) Proof of what we are is given by our practicing what we have learned, accepted, heard, and seen—the full scope of Christian dedication and discipleship. "This is the way. Walk in it," instructs Jehovah through the prophet Isaiah.—Isaiah 30:21.

²⁰ Men and women who are diligent students of God's Word, who are zealous preachers of the good news, who are flawless in their integrity, and who are loyal supporters of the Kingdom are a great blessing to the congregation. Their presence adds stability to the congregation they associate with. They prove to be very helpful, especially because there are so many new ones to care for. When we take to heart Paul's advice to 'keep testing whether we are in the faith, keep proving what we ourselves are,' we too become a good influence on others.

20. What type of individuals are a great blessing to the congregation?

Take Delight in Doing God's Will

²¹ "To do your will, O my God, I have delighted," sang King David of ancient Israel, "and your law is within my inward parts." (Psalm 40:8) David took pleasure in doing God's will. Why? Because Jehovah's law was in David's heart. David was not uncertain about the way in which to walk.

²² When God's law is within our inward parts, we are not unsure of the way in which to walk. We take delight in doing God's will. By all means, then, let us 'exert ourselves vigorously' as we serve Jehovah from the heart.—Luke 13:24.

21, 22. How can we take delight in doing God's will?

Do You Recall?

- How can we test whether we are in the faith?
- What is involved in proving what we ourselves are?
- What proof can we give of Christian maturity?
- How do our works of faith help us to evaluate what we are?

ARE YOU FAITHFUL IN ALL THINGS?

"The person faithful in what is least is faithful also in much."—LUKE 16:10.

AS THE day progresses, have you ever noticed what happens to a shadow that a tree casts on the ground? Why, the shadow keeps changing in size and direction! Human endeavors and promises are often as unsteady as a shadow. Jehovah God, on the other hand, does not change with time. Referring to him as "the Father of the celestial lights," the disciple James says: "With him there is not a variation of the turning of the shadow [or, "variation or shadow caused by a turning," footnote]." (James 1:17) Jehovah is constant and dependable, even in the minutest details. He is "a God of faithfulness."

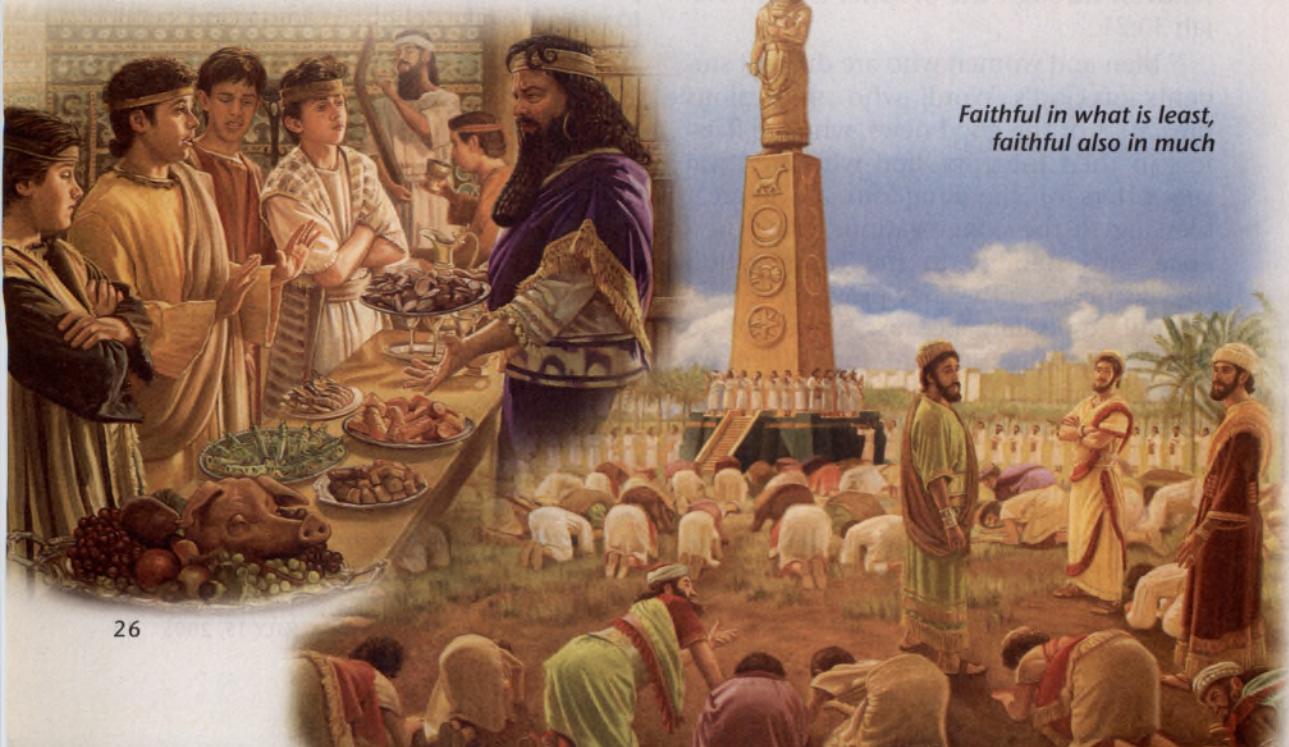
—Deuteronomy 32:4.

1. What is one of the ways that Jehovah is faithful?

2 How does God view the dependability of his worshippers? In the same way as did David, who said of them: "My eyes are upon the faithful ones of the earth, that they may dwell with me. The one walking in a faultless way, he it is who will minister to me." (Psalm 101:6) Yes, Jehovah takes delight in the faithfulness of his servants. With good reason, the apostle Paul wrote: "What is looked for in stewards is for a man to be found faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:2) What does being faithful entail? In what areas of life should we act in faithfulness? What are the blessings of "walking in a faultless way"?

2. (a) Why should we examine ourselves to determine whether we are faithful? (b) What questions about faithfulness will we consider?

*Faithful in what is least,
faithful also in much*



What It Means to Be Faithful

³ "Moses as an attendant was faithful," states Hebrews 3:5. What made the prophet Moses faithful? In the construction and setting up of the tabernacle, "Moses proceeded to do according to all that Jehovah had commanded him. He did just so." (Exodus 40:16) As worshippers of Jehovah, we show faithfulness by obediently serving him. This certainly includes our remaining loyal to Jehovah while facing difficult tests or severe trials. However, success in dealing with big tests is not the sole factor that determines our faithfulness. "The person faithful in what is least is faithful also in much," stated Jesus, "and the person unrighteous in what is least is unrighteous also in much." (Luke 16:10) We must remain faithful even in seemingly small matters.

⁴ Obedience each day in "what is least" is important for two reasons. First, it reveals how we feel about Jehovah's sovereignty. Think of the test of loyalty placed before the first human pair, Adam and Eve. It was a requirement that imposed no hardship whatsoever on them. While having access to all sorts of food in the garden of Eden, they were merely to refrain from eating the fruit of just one tree—"the tree of the knowledge of good and bad." (Genesis 2:16, 17) Their faithfulness in obeying that simple command would have demonstrated that the first human couple were for Jehovah's rulership. Following Jehovah's instructions in our day-to-day life shows that we are on the side of Jehovah's sovereignty.

⁵ Second, our conduct in "what is least" has a bearing on how we will respond "also in much," that is, when we face bigger issues in life. In this regard, consider what happened to Daniel and his three faithful He-

3. What determines whether we are faithful?
4. 5. What does our faithfulness in "what is least" reveal?

brew companions—Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were taken into exile in Babylon in 617 B.C.E. While still young, likely in their teens, these four found themselves in the royal court of King Nebuchadnezzar. There they were "appointed a daily allowance from the delicacies of the king and from his drinking wine, even to nourish them for three years, that at the end of these they might stand before the king."—Daniel 1:3-5.

⁶ The provisions of the Babylonian king, however, presented a challenge to the four Hebrew youths. Foods prohibited by the Mosaic Law were likely included in the delicacies of the king. (Deuteronomy 14:3-20) The slaughtered animals may not have been bled properly, and partaking of such meat would have violated God's Law. (Deuteronomy 12:23-25) The food may also have been offered to idols, as was the custom among Babylonian worshippers before eating a communion meal.

⁷ Dietary restrictions undoubtedly were not of high concern to the royal household of the Babylonian king. However, Daniel and his friends were determined in their hearts not to pollute themselves by eating food forbidden in God's Law to Israel. This was an issue that touched on their loyalty and faithfulness to God. So they requested a diet of vegetables and water, and it was granted to them. (Daniel 1:9-14) To some people today, what those four young men did may seem insignificant. However, their obedience to God showed where they stood on the issue of Jehovah's sovereignty.

⁸ Proving faithful in what might have seemed less significant prepared Daniel's

6. What test did Daniel and his three Hebrew companions face in the Babylonian royal court?
7. What did the obedience of Daniel and his three friends show?
8. (a) What critical test of loyalty did the three Hebrews face? (b) What was the outcome of the test, and what does this illustrate?

three friends to cope with a greater trial. Turn to chapter 3 of the Bible book of Daniel, and read for yourself how the three Hebrews faced the death penalty for refusing to worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. When brought before the king, they declared their determination with confidence: "If it is to be, our God whom we are serving is able to rescue us. Out of the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king, he will rescue us. But if not, let it become known to you, O king, that your gods are not the ones we are serving, and the image of gold that you have set up we will not worship." (Daniel 3:17, 18) Did Jehovah rescue them? The guards who threw the young men into the fiery furnace perished, but the three faithful Hebrews stepped out alive—not even scorched by the heat of the furnace! Their well-established pattern of faithfulness helped prepare them to be faithful during that critical test. Does this not illustrate the importance of being faithful in small things?

Faithfulness Regarding "Unrighteous Riches"

⁹ Before stating the principle that one who is faithful in seemingly small things is also faithful in important matters, Jesus advised his listeners: "Make friends for yourselves by means of the unrighteous riches, so that, when such fail, they may receive you into the everlasting dwelling places." He followed up with the statement about faithfulness in what is least. Then Jesus said: "Therefore, if you have not proved yourselves faithful in connection with the unrighteous riches, who will entrust you with what is true? . . . No house servant can be a slave to two masters; for, either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stick to the one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves to God and to riches."—Luke 16:9-13.

9. What is the context of Jesus' words recorded at Luke 16:10?

¹⁰ According to the context, the original application of Jesus' words found at Luke 16:10 has to do with the use of "unrighteous riches," our material resources or possessions. They are called unrighteous because material riches—particularly money—are under the control of sinful humans. Moreover, a desire for acquiring riches can lead to unrighteous acts. We show faithfulness by exercising wisdom in the way we use our material possessions. Rather than using them for selfish purposes, we want to use them in furthering Kingdom interests and in helping those in need. By being faithful in this way, we make friends with Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, the possessors of "the everlasting dwelling places." They will receive us into these places, granting us eternal life either in heaven or in Paradise on earth.

¹¹ Consider, too, what we extend to people with whom we place Bibles or Bible-based literature when we proclaim the Kingdom message and explain to them that we accept contributions to the worldwide work done by Jehovah's people. Are we not extending to them an opportunity to make wise use of their material resources? Though the original application of Luke 16:10 concerns the use of material resources, the principle stated there also applies in other areas of life.

Honesty Really Matters

¹² The apostle Paul wrote: "We trust we have an honest conscience, as we wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things." (Hebrews 13:18) "All things" certainly include all matters that involve the handling of finances. We pay our debts and our taxes promptly and honestly. Why? We do so be-

10. How can we demonstrate faithfulness in our use of "unrighteous riches"?
11. Why should we not hold back from explaining to householders that we accept contributions to the worldwide work done by Jehovah's Witnesses?
- 12, 13. In what areas can we demonstrate honesty?



'Conduct yourselves honestly in all things'

cause of our conscience and primarily out of love for God and in obedience to his instructions. (Romans 13:5, 6) How do we respond when we find something that does not belong to us? We seek to return it to its rightful owner. What a fine witness this results in when we explain what prompted us to return the individual's possession!

¹³ Being faithful and honest in all things calls for honesty at our place of employment. Honesty in our work habits draws attention to the kind of God we represent. We do not "steal" time by being lazy. Rather, we work hard, as to Jehovah. (Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:23) It is estimated that in one European land, one third of the employees who request a doctor's letter authorizing sick leave do so fraudulently. True servants of God do not fabricate excuses to avoid going to work. At times, Jehovah's Witnesses are offered promotions because employers observe their honesty and hard work.—Proverbs 10:4.

Faithfulness in Our Christian Ministry

¹⁴ How do we show faithfulness in the ministry that is entrusted to us? "Let us always offer to God a sacrifice of praise," says

^{14, 15.} What are some ways that we can prove ourselves faithful in the Christian ministry?

A fine way to show faithfulness is to prepare well for the field ministry

the Bible, "that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name." (Hebrews 13:15) The foremost way to show faithfulness in the field ministry is to participate in it regularly. Why should we allow a month to pass without witnessing about Jehovah and his purpose? A regular share in the preaching work also helps us to improve our skills and our effectiveness.

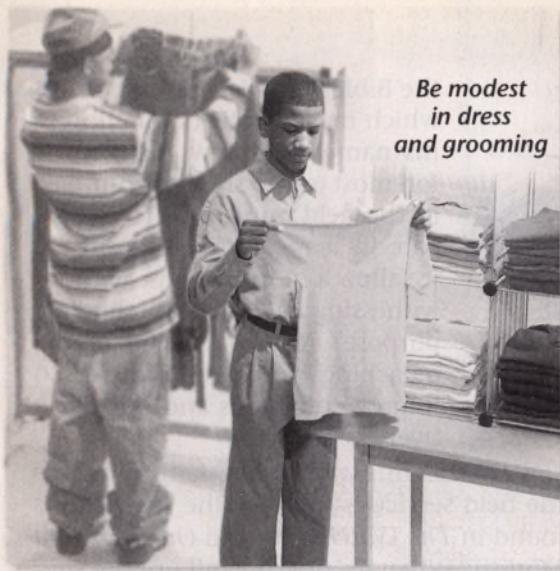
¹⁵ Another fine way to show faithfulness in the field service is to apply the suggestions found in *The Watchtower* and *Our Kingdom Ministry*. When we prepare and use the suggested presentations or others that are realistic, do we not find that our ministry is more productive? When we meet someone who shows interest in the Kingdom message, do we promptly follow up on the interest? And what about home Bible studies that we may start with interested people? Are we dependable and faithful in caring for them? Our proving faithful in the ministry can lead to life for us and for those who listen to us.
—1 Timothy 4:15, 16.

Keeping Separate From the World

¹⁶ In prayer to God, Jesus said of his

^{16, 17.} In what ways can we show that we are separate from the world?





*Be modest
in dress
and grooming*

followers: "I have given your word to them, but the world has hated them, because they are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world. I request you, not to take them out of the world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one. They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world." (John 17:14-16) We may be firm and determined to keep separate from the world on large issues, such as neutrality, religious holidays and customs, and immorality. What, though, about smaller things? Could it be that even without realizing it, we may be influenced by the ways of the world? If we are not careful, for instance, how easily our manner of dress can become undignified and inappropriate! Being faithful calls for "modesty and soundness of mind" in the matter of dress and grooming. (1 Timothy 2:9, 10) Yes, "in no way are we giving any cause for stumbling, that our ministry might not be found fault with; but in every way we recommend ourselves as God's ministers."—2 Corinthians 6:3, 4.

¹⁷ Out of a desire to honor Jehovah, we dress in a dignified way for our congregation meetings. The same is true when we meet in large numbers at our assemblies and conven-

tions. Our dress needs to be practical and presentable. This serves as a witness to others who observe us. Even the angels take note of our activity, as they did of that of Paul and his Christian associates. (1 Corinthians 4:9) In fact, we should always be appropriately attired. To some, faithfulness in the choice of clothing may seem to be a small matter, but in God's eyes it is important.

Blessings for Faithfulness

¹⁸ True Christians are spoken of as "fine stewards of God's undeserved kindness expressed in various ways." As such, they are "dependent on the strength that God supplies." (1 Peter 4:10, 11) Moreover, as stewards, we are entrusted with what does not personally belong to us—expressions of God's undeserved kindness, including the ministry. In proving ourselves fine stewards, we rely on the strength that God supplies, "the power beyond what is normal." (2 Corinthians 4:7) What fine training to help us face whatever trials the future may bring!

¹⁹ The psalmist sang: "O love Jehovah, all you loyal ones of his. The faithful ones Jehovah is safeguarding." (Psalm 31:23) Let us be determined to prove ourselves faithful, fully confident that Jehovah is "a Savior of all sorts of men, especially of faithful ones."

—1 Timothy 4:10.

18, 19. What blessings result from faithfulness?

Do You Recall?

- Why should we be "faithful in what is least"?
- How can we prove faithful in regard to honesty in the ministry?
- in keeping separate from the world?

Questions From Readers

Since King Solomon of ancient Israel in his old age turned unfaithful to God, can we conclude that he will not be resurrected?—1 Kings 11:3-9.

While the Bible lists by name some men and women of faith who will no doubt be resurrected, it does not specifically comment on the resurrection prospects of every single individual it names. (Hebrews 11:1-40) In the case of Solomon, however, we can get an idea of God's judgment by comparing what happened to him at death with what happened to certain faithful ones when they died.

The Scriptures speak of only two possibilities for the dead—the temporary state of nonexistence and the state of eternal death. Those who are judged unworthy of a resurrection are pitched into "Gehenna," or "the lake of fire." (Matthew 5:22; Mark 9:47, 48; Revelation 20:14) Among these would be the first human pair, Adam and Eve, the betrayer Judas Iscariot, and certain ones who died when God executed judgment upon them, such as the people in Noah's day and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.* At death, those who will be favored with a resurrection go to the common grave of mankind—Sheol, or Hades. Speaking of their future, the Bible states: "The sea gave up those dead in it, and death and Hades gave up those dead in them, and they were judged individually according to their deeds."—Revelation 20:13.

The faithful ones referred to in Hebrews chapter 11, then, are in Sheol, or Hades, awaiting the resurrection. Among these are God's loyal servants

* See pages 30-1 of the June 1, 1988, issue of *The Watchtower*.

Abraham, Moses, and David. Now consider how the Bible speaks of them with regard to their dying. "As for you," Jehovah told Abraham, "you will go to your forefathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age." (Genesis 15:15) Jehovah said to Moses: "Look! You are lying down with your forefathers." (Deuteronomy 31:16) Concerning Solomon's father, David, the Bible says: "David lay down with his forefathers and was buried in the City of David." (1 Kings 2:10) Thus, the expression 'lying down with one's forefathers' is another way of saying that the person went to Sheol.

What happened to Solomon when he died? The Bible answers: "The days that Solomon had reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel were forty years. Then Solomon lay down with his forefathers, and was buried in the City of David his father." (1 Kings 11:42, 43) Hence, it seems reasonable to conclude that Solomon is in Sheol, or Hades, from which he will be resurrected.

This conclusion implies that the possibility of being resurrected is open to others concerning whom the Scriptures specifically say, 'they lay down with their forefathers.' In fact, many of the kings who succeeded Solomon, though unfaithful, are spoken of in this way. This is not inconceivable, since "there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) Of course, only after "all those in the memorial tombs" are raised will we know for a certainty who has been favored with a resurrection. (John 5:28, 29) So rather than be dogmatic about the resurrection of any particular individual of old, we wait, trusting in Jehovah's perfect decision.



"THEY DID NOT COMPROMISE"

HAPPY are you when people reproach you and persecute you and lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against you for my sake," Jesus Christ told his disciples. (Matthew 5:11) Jehovah's Witnesses today are happy because, in harmony with Christ's teaching and example, they remain "no part of the world" and maintain strict political neutrality and integrity to God under all kinds of circumstances.—John 17:14; Matthew 4:8-10.

Concerning the uncompromising stand that Jehovah's Witnesses took in the former Soviet Union, including those in Estonia, Lutheran theologian and Bible translator Toomas Paul writes in his book *Kirik keset küla* (The Church in the Middle of the Village): "Very few have heard of what happened in the early hours of April 1, 1951. A campaign was planned to dispose of Jehovah's Witnesses and all their supporters—279 persons in all were captured and deported to Siberia . . . They were given an opportunity to sign a standard form renouncing their faith in order to avoid deportation or imprisonment. . . . Together with the ones arrested earlier, there were 353 interned, including at least 171 persons only associating with their congregations. They did not compromise—even in Siberia. . . . Not many members of the [Estonian Lutheran] Church had a faith similar to that of Jehovah's Witnesses."

Jehovah's Witnesses around the world trust in God to help them remain faithful and obedient to him despite persecution. They rejoice in knowing that the reward for their faithfulness is great.—Matthew 5:12.

