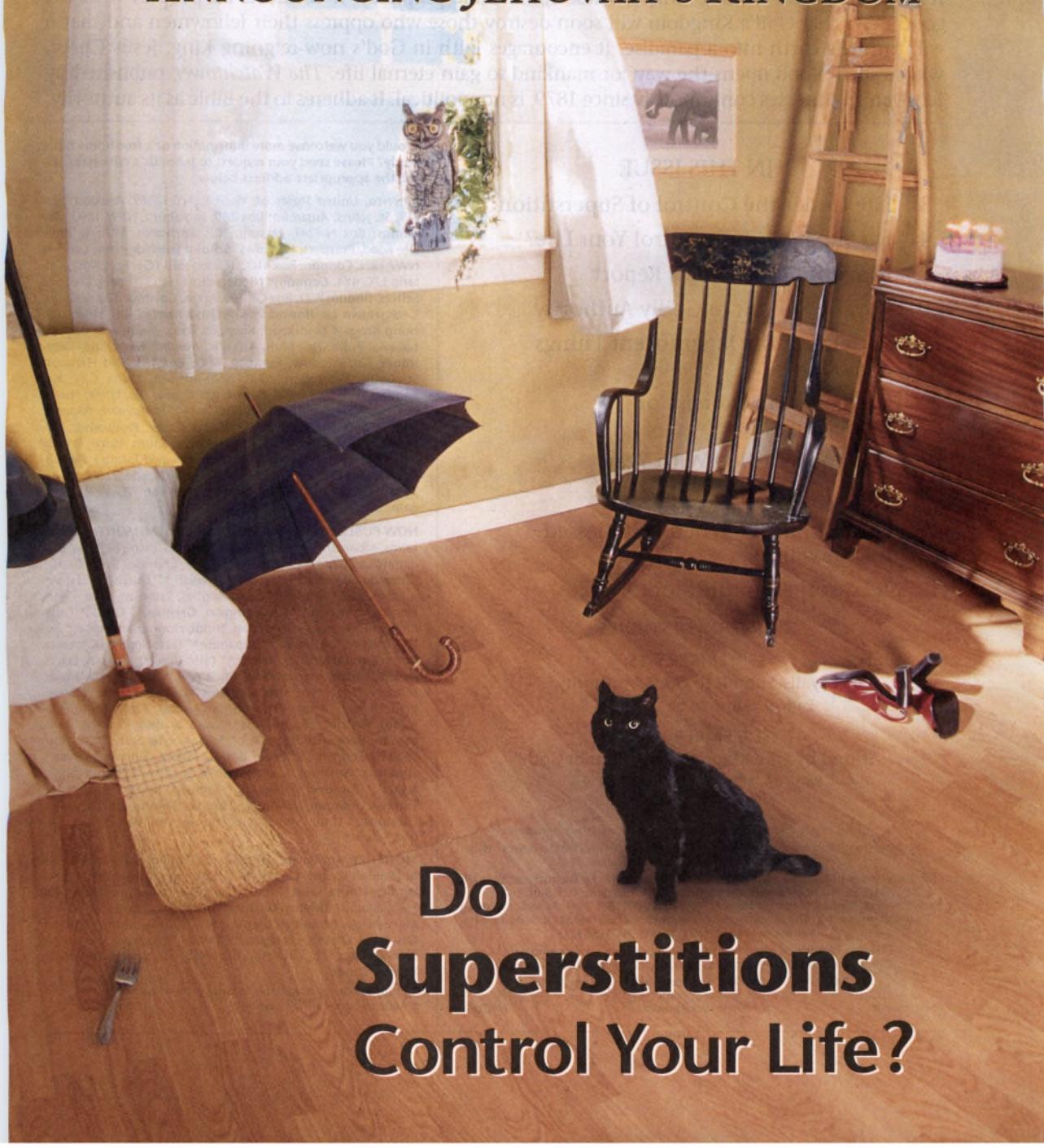


AUGUST 1, 2002

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**Do  
Superstitions  
Control Your Life?**

# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

August 1, 2002

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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.

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Life Under the Control of Superstition
- 4 Do Superstitions Control Your Life?
- 8 Kingdom Proclaimers Report
- 9 Loyally Submit to Godly Authority
- 14 Stirred by "the Magnificent Things of God"
- 20 Yoga—Just an Exercise or Something More?
- 23 Old and Satisfied With Years
- 28 Questions From Readers
- 29 Earnest Effort—When Is It Blessed by Jehovah?
- 32 A Lesson From the Stork

## WATCHTOWER STUDIES

### SEPTEMBER 9-15:

- Loyally Submit to Godly Authority.  
Page 9. Songs to be used: 38, 8.

### SEPTEMBER 16-22:

- Stirred by "the Magnificent Things of God."  
Page 14. Songs to be used: 84, 26.

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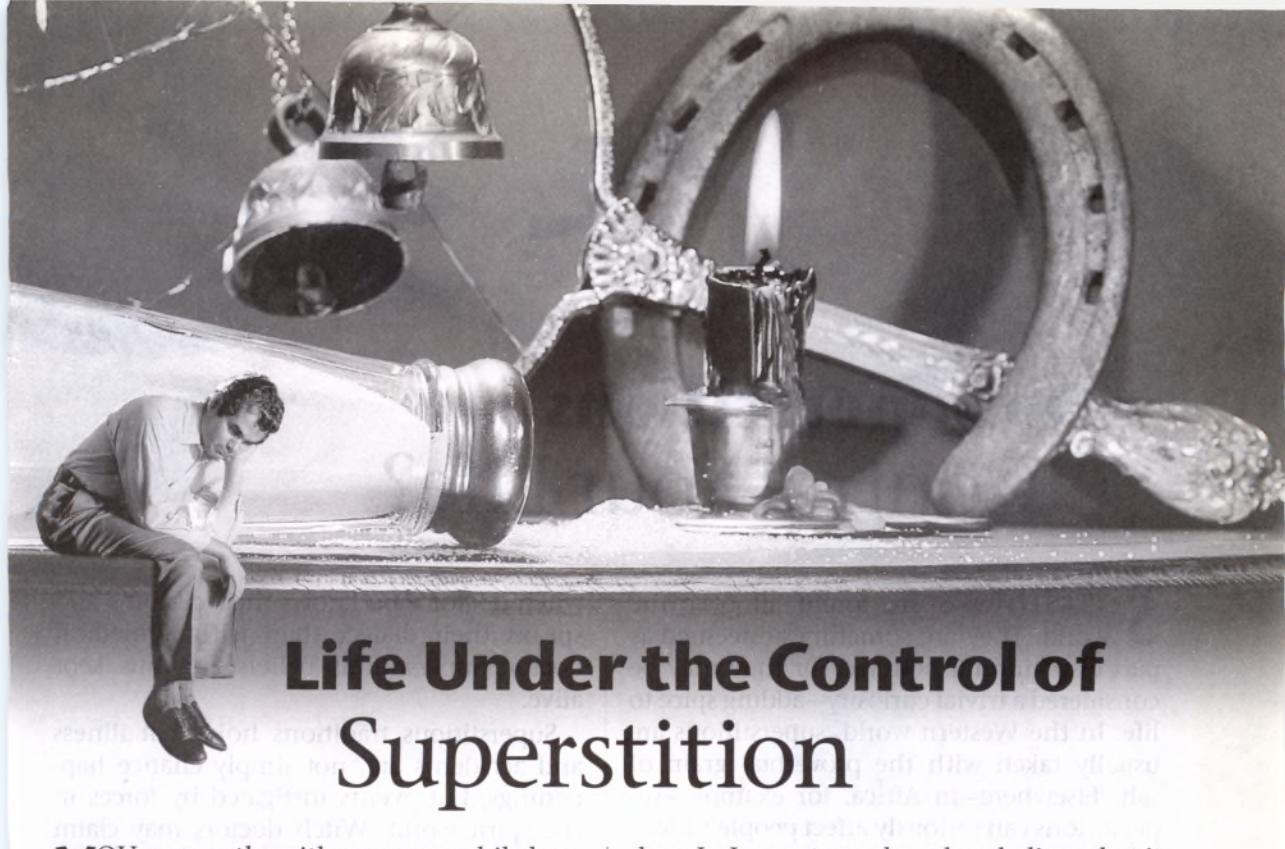
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## Life Under the Control of Superstition

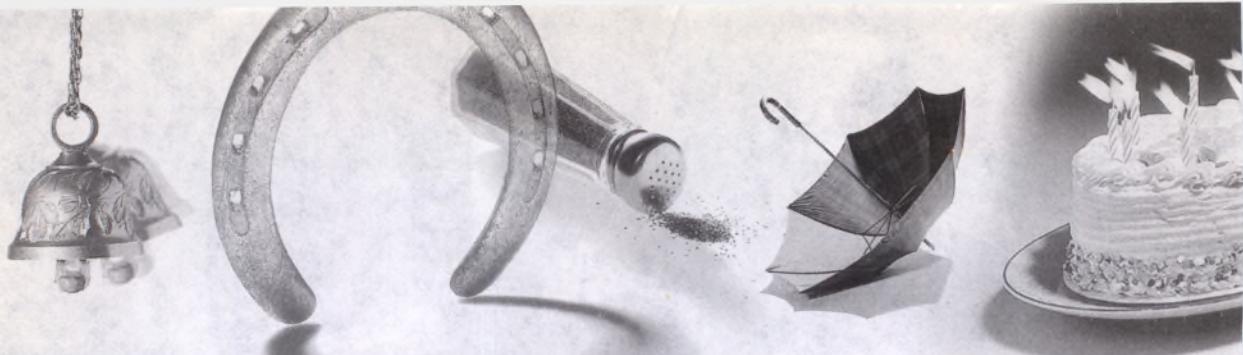
**Y**OU cross paths with someone while leaving your home. You stub your toe on a rock. A certain type of bird cries in the night. You have a recurring dream. Simple, innocuous events for many. But for certain peoples in West Africa, these could be viewed as signs, omens, or messages from the spirit world. Either good fortune or calamity is deemed in store, depending on the sign and its interpretation.

Superstitions, of course, persist outside of Africa as well. In spite of living under years of official atheism, a surprising number of people in China and in republics of the former Soviet Union still cling to superstitions. In the Western world, many consult their horoscope, dread Friday the 13th, and avoid black cats. Some peoples of the Far North view the northern lights as an omen of war and pestilence. In India, AIDS is being spread by truck drivers who believe that they need to have sexual relations in order to stay cool on hot

days. In Japan, tunnel workers believe that it brings bad luck if a woman enters a tunnel before it is finished. Superstitions also flourish in organized sport. One volleyball player even attributed a winning streak to his wearing black socks instead of white ones. The list is endless.

What about you? Do you perhaps have a secret, unexplainable fear? Are you affected by a "belief, half-belief, or practice for which there appears to be no rational substance"? Your answer could be revealing, for that is how one reference work defines the word "superstition."

A person who lets superstition affect his decisions and daily routine is allowing himself to be dominated by something he does not really understand. Is this wise? Should we submit ourselves to such a nebulous and possibly sinister influence? Is superstition an inconsequential foible or an ominous threat?



## Do Superstitions Control Your Life?

**SUPERSTITIONS** are found all over the world. They are sometimes esteemed as part of a cultural heritage. Or they may be considered a trivial curiosity—adding spice to life. In the Western world, superstitions are usually taken with the proverbial grain of salt. Elsewhere—in Africa, for example—superstitions can seriously affect people's life.

Much of African culture is based on superstition. Movies, radio shows, and literature produced in Africa often highlight superstition and mystical subjects, such as magic, ancestor worship, and fetishes. Why are people so influenced by superstitions, and where do superstitions come from?

### What Is Behind Superstitions?

Many superstitions basically stem from a fear of spirits of the dead or of spirits of any sort. Events are interpreted as attempts by these spirits to contact the living with a threat, a warning, or a blessing.

Superstitions are also closely associated with healing and medicine. For most people in the developing world, modern medicine is very expensive and often simply unobtainable. Hence, many seek cures or try to take preventive measures by turning to ancestral customs, spiritism, and superstitions. They also feel more comfortable dealing with a

witch doctor who knows their customs and speaks their dialect than with a medical doctor. Superstitious beliefs are thus kept alive.

Superstitious traditions hold that illness and accidents are, not simply chance happenings, but events instigated by forces in the spirit world. Witch doctors may claim that a dead ancestor is unhappy about something. Or spirit mediums may suggest that someone has placed a curse on the victim by means of a rival witch doctor, and that is why the sickness or the accident took place.

Superstitions vary immensely throughout the world, and their propagation depends on local folklore, legends, and circumstances. But the common denominator is the belief that someone, or something, from the invisible spirit world needs to be appeased.

### Innocuous or Dangerous?

To most families, the birth of twins is an exceptional and thrilling event. To the superstitious, however, it may be interpreted as a sign. In some regions of West Africa, many view it as the birth of deities, and the twins are worshiped. If one or both of the twins should die, small statues of the twins are made, and the family must offer food to these idols. Elsewhere, people view the birth of

twins as a curse, to the point that some parents will kill at least one of them. Why? They believe that if both twins survive, they will one day murder their parents.

Examples like these show that although some superstitions may seem quaint and inoffensive, others can be dangerous—even deadly. With a sinister interpretation, a harmless event can be transformed into a dangerous affair.

Yes, in reality, superstition is a belief, a form of religion. Given the dangerous aspects of superstition, it is relevant to ask: Who is actually being served by superstitious beliefs and practices?

### The Source of Superstitions

Despite evidence to the contrary, some people today tend to deny the existence of Satan or evil spirits. However, in time of war, refusing to recognize the existence of a dangerous enemy could only lead to disaster. The same could be true in a conflict with superhuman spirit creatures, for the apostle Paul

wrote: "We have a wrestling . . . against the wicked spirit forces."—Ephesians 6:12.

Even though we cannot see them, evil spirit creatures do exist. The Bible relates that an invisible spirit person used a serpent, much as a ventriloquist uses a dummy, to communicate with the first woman, Eve, and led her to rebel against God. (Genesis 3:1-5) The Bible identifies this spirit person as "the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth." (Revelation 12:9) That one, Satan, succeeded in enticing other angels into rebellion. (Jude 6) These wicked angels became demons, enemies of God.

Jesus expelled demons from people, as did his disciples. (Mark 1:34; Acts 16:18) These spirits are not dead ancestors, for the dead are "conscious of nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) Rather, they are the rebellious angels who were misled by Satan. Contacting them or submitting to their influence is not to be taken lightly, for they, just like their leader, Satan the Devil, would like to devour us.

### Some Common Superstitions Around the World

- Standing chopsticks in a bowl of rice is a sign of death
- Seeing an owl in the sunlight brings bad luck
- A candle going out during a ceremony means that evil spirits are nearby
- Dropping an umbrella on the floor means that there will be a murder in the house
- Putting a hat on the bed brings bad luck
- The sound of bells drives away demons
- Blowing out all the candles on a birthday cake on the first try grants a wish
- A broom against a bed allows evil spirits in the broom to cast a spell on the bed
- A black cat crossing your path means bad luck
- Dropping a fork means that a man is coming to visit
- A picture of elephants brings good luck if it faces a door
- A horseshoe over the doorway brings good luck
- Ivy growing on the house gives protection against evil
- It is bad luck to walk under a ladder
- Breaking a mirror means seven years of bad luck
- Spilling pepper means that you will have an argument with your best friend
- Spilling salt brings bad luck unless a pinch is thrown over the left shoulder
- Leaving a rocking chair rocking while empty invites demons to sit in it
- Leaving shoes upside down brings bad luck
- When someone dies, windows must be opened to let the soul out

(1 Peter 5:8) Their goal is to turn us away from the only hope for mankind—the Kingdom of God.

The Bible reveals one of the methods used by Satan and his demons: "Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14) Satan would like to lull us into believing that he can offer us a better way of life. Hence, some temporary benefits may *seem* to come through the intervention of wicked spirits. But they can offer no lasting solutions. (2 Peter 2:4) They cannot possibly bestow eternal life on anyone, and they are soon to be destroyed. (Romans 16:20) Our Creator is the only source of eternal life and true happiness and the best possible protection against wicked spirit forces.

—James 4:7.

God condemns seeking help through spiritistic practices. (Deuteronomy 18:10-12; 2 Kings 21:6) That is flirting with the enemy, forming an alliance with God's betrayers! Consulting a horoscope, inquiring of a tribal medicine man, or dabbling in any superstitious practice would mean allowing the wicked spirits to control the decisions you make in your life. It is tantamount to joining in their rebellion against God.

A "Sangoma" throws bones to divine the cause of a patient's problems



### Protection From Evil —Is It Possible?

Ade,\* a man living in Niger, was studying the Bible with a full-time preacher of Jehovah's Witnesses. Ade explained why he had a talisman in his shop: "There are many enemies." Ade's Bible teacher showed him that only Jehovah can be counted on for real protection. He read Psalm 34:7 to Ade, which states: "The angel of Jehovah is camping all around those fearing him, and he rescues them." Ade concluded: "If Jehovah can really protect me, then I will remove the talisman." Now, years later, he serves as an elder and a full-time minister. Not one of his enemies has harmed him.

\* Names have been changed.

### Freed From the Clutches of Superstition

Jehovah's Witnesses were preaching in an area in South Africa. When one door opened after their knocking, the Witnesses were confronted by a woman dressed in full *Sangoma* (witch doctor) regalia. They wanted to leave, but the woman insisted that they deliver their message. One of the Witnesses read Deuteronomy 18:10-12 to show her God's view of spiritistic practices. The witch doctor accepted the message and agreed to a Bible study. She said that if she was convinced from her study of the Bible that practicing as

a *Sangoma* was against Jehovah's will, she would stop.

After studying chapter 10 in the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* along with the Bible, she burned all her paraphernalia related to witchcraft and started attending meetings at the Kingdom Hall. Furthermore, she straightened out her marital status, even though she had been separated from her husband for 17 years. Now, both are dedicated, baptized Witnesses of Jehovah.

The Bible shows that time and unforeseen events befall us all, whether we are superstitious or not. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) But Jehovah never tests us with bad things. (James 1:13) Death and imperfection are due to sin inherited from Adam. (Romans 5:12) On this account, everyone falls sick from time to time as well as makes mistakes that may lead to calamitous consequences. Therefore, it would be wrong to attribute all sickness or all setbacks to the workings of wicked spirits. Such a belief would only tempt us to try to appease the spirits in some way.\* When we are ill, we should seek proper medical attention, not advice from "a liar and the father of the lie," Satan the Devil. (John 8:44) Statistics show that people living in countries where ancestral superstitions are prevalent do not live longer or better lives than people in other countries. Clearly, then, superstitions give no health advantage.

God is more powerful than any wicked spirit, and He is interested in our welfare. "The eyes of Jehovah are upon the righteous ones, and his ears are toward their supplication." (1 Peter 3:12) Pray to him for protection and wisdom. (Proverbs 15:29; 18:10)

\* See the article "Does the Devil Make Us Sick?" in the September 1, 1999, *Watchtower*.

Make an effort to understand his Holy Word, the Bible. Accurate knowledge of the Bible is the best protection we can have. It will help us recognize why bad things happen and how to gain the favor of Almighty God.

### Benefits of Knowledge of God

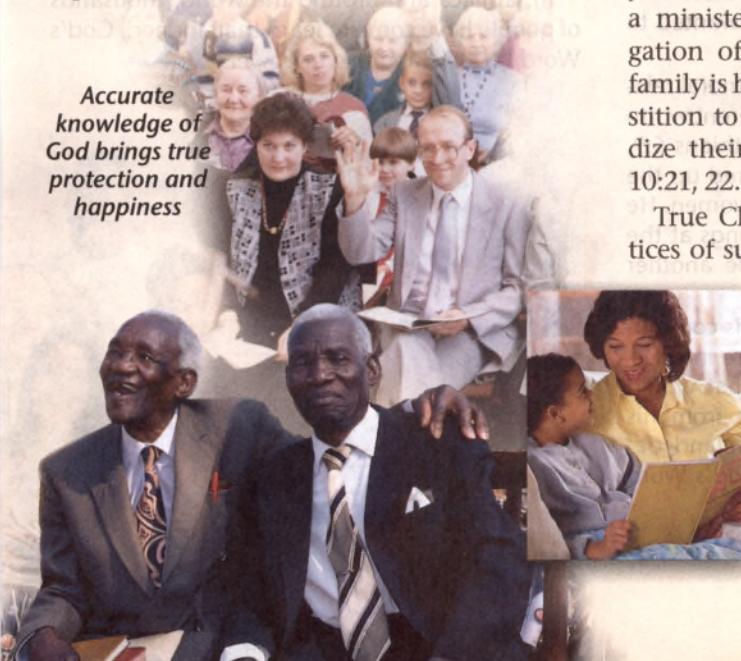
Accurate knowledge of Jehovah and his purposes—the opposite of ignorance and superstition—is the key to gaining true protection. This is shown by the case of Jean, a man from Benin. Superstitions were deeply rooted in Jean's family. According to superstitious tribal customs, a woman who had just given birth to a son would have to stay in a specially built hut for nine days. If she gave birth to a daughter, she would be confined to the hut for seven days.

In 1975, Jean's wife gave birth to a good-looking baby boy, whom they named Marc. Based on their knowledge of the Bible, Jean and his wife wanted nothing to do with wicked spirits. But would they succumb to fear and the pressure to follow the superstition and have the mother stay in the hut? No—they rejected this tribal superstition.—Romans 6:16; 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15.

Did any harm come to Jean's family? Many years have passed, and Marc is now serving as a ministerial servant in the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. The whole family is happy that they did not allow superstition to influence their life and to jeopardize their spiritual welfare.—1 Corinthians 10:21, 22.

True Christians must keep the dark practices of superstition out of their life and accept the spiritual light offered by the Creator, Jehovah, and his Son, Jesus Christ. They can thus enjoy true peace of mind derived from the knowledge that they are doing what is right in the eyes of God.—John 8:32.

Accurate  
knowledge of  
God brings true  
protection and  
happiness



## 'The Word of God Exerts Power'

**I**N THE sunny Caribbean island of Jamaica, most people are acquainted with the Bible. The *King James Version*, in fact, can be found in nearly every home, and some people have experienced that "the word of God is alive and exerts power." (Hebrews 4:12) This power can change lives, as is exemplified by the following experience.

A man named Cleveland had just returned home from work when one of Jehovah's Witnesses called on him. After sharing some points from the Scriptures, the Witness left with him the Bible study aid *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*. Little did Cleveland realize how much God's Word would exert power in his life.

Cleveland used to pray three times a day, asking God to help him find the correct way to worship Him. Cleveland was convinced that his parents did not worship in the right way, but after examining other religions, he became disillusioned. Though he had heard about Jehovah's Witnesses, he questioned whether they had the truth. Despite his reservations, Cleveland agreed to study the Bible with the Witness who called at his door. Why? Because he wanted to prove the Witnesses wrong!

Soon Cleveland learned that the immoral relationships he was having with two different women were displeasing to God. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) After only two studies, he mustered up the courage to break off his ties with the women. He also began attending Christian meetings at the Kingdom Hall. But this proved to be another test.

Cleveland was deeply involved in his community's soccer team, and its games were interfering with his meeting attendance. What would he do? In spite of intense pressure from his teammates, coach, and friends, Cleveland decided to quit the soccer team. Yes, God's Word



was beginning to exert power, influencing him for the good!

The power of God's Word became manifest again when Cleveland began to share his Bible knowledge with others. (Acts 1:8) As a result, two of his former teammates began attending the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. After Cleveland qualified to become a publisher of the good news, he found great joy in the ministry, using God's Word to help others.

Continuing to be moved by the power of God's Word, Cleveland eventually symbolized his dedication to Jehovah by water baptism and is privileged to serve as a full-time minister and as a ministerial servant in the congregation.

In Jamaica and around the world, thousands of people have come to learn that, indeed, God's Word "is alive and exerts power."



# LOYALLY SUBMIT TO GODLY AUTHORITY

*"Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Statute-giver, Jehovah is our King."*

—ISAIAH 33:22.

**I**N 1513 B.C.E., the nation of Israel came into existence. At that time, it had no capital city, no homeland, and no visible king. Its subjects were former slaves. However, that new nation was unique in yet another way. Jehovah God was its invisible Judge, Statute-giver, and King. (Exodus 19:5, 6; Isaiah 33:22) No other nation could make that claim!

<sup>2</sup> Since Jehovah is a God of order, as well as a God of peace, we would expect that any nation he ruled would be well organized. (1 Corinthians 14:33) That certainly was the case with Israel. But how could an earthly, visible organization be directed by an invisible God? We do well to consider the way Jehovah governed that ancient nation, noting in particular how his dealings with Israel highlight the importance of loyally submitting to godly authority.

## How Ancient Israel Was Governed

<sup>3</sup> Although Jehovah was Israel's invisible King, he appointed faithful men as his visible

1. What factors made ancient Israel unique among nations?
2. What question arises regarding the way Israel was organized, and why is the answer of importance to us?
3. What practical arrangements did Jehovah make for the guidance of his people?

*Do you consider any assignment in Jehovah's service a privilege?*

representatives. There were chieftains, heads of paternal houses, and older men to serve the people as counselors and judges. (Exodus 18:25, 26; Deuteronomy 1:15) However, we must not conclude that without divine guidance those responsible men could somehow judge matters with flawless discernment and understanding. They were not perfect, and they could not read the hearts of their fellow worshipers. Still, God-fearing judges could give their fellow believers helpful counsel because it was based on Jehovah's Law.—Deuteronomy 19:15; Psalm 119:97-100.

<sup>4</sup> There was more to being a judge than knowing the Law, however. Being imperfect, the older men had to be alert to curb any of their own wayward tendencies—such as

4. What tendencies were Israel's faithful judges anxious to avoid, and why?



*"Why, then, should you lift yourselves up above the congregation of Jehovah?"*

selfishness, partiality, and greed—that might pervert their judgment. Moses told them: "You must not be partial in judgment. You should hear the little one the same as the great one. You must not become frightened because of a man, *for the judgment belongs to God.*" Yes, Israel's judges were judging for God. What an awe-inspiring privilege that was!—Deuteronomy 1:16, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Jehovah made other provisions to care for the spiritual needs of his people. Even before they arrived in the Promised Land, he commanded them to build the tabernacle, the center of true worship. He also set up a priesthood to teach the Law, to offer animal sacrifices, and to burn the morning and evening incense. God installed Moses' older brother, Aaron, as Israel's first high priest and appointed Aaron's sons to assist their father with his duties.—Exodus 28:1; Numbers 3:10; 2 Chronicles 13:10, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Caring for the spiritual needs of several million people was an enormous task, and the priests were relatively few in number. So provision was made for them to be assisted by other members of the tribe of Levi. Jehovah told Moses: "You must give the Levites to Aaron and his sons. They are given ones, given to him from the sons of Israel."—Numbers 3:9, 39.

<sup>7</sup> The Levites were well organized. They were divided according to the three families—the Gershonites, the Kohathites, and the Merarites—each with an assignment of work to do. (Numbers 3:14-17, 23-37) Some assign-

5. In addition to setting up judges, what other provisions did Jehovah make to care for his people?

6, 7. (a) What was the relationship between the priests and the nonpriestly Levites? (b) What lesson can we draw from the fact that the Levites performed a variety of tasks? (Colossians 3:23)



ments may have seemed more important than others, but all were essential. The work of the Kohathite Levites brought them into close proximity with the sacred ark of the covenant and the furnishings of the tabernacle. However, every Levite, whether a Kohathite or not, enjoyed marvelous privileges. (Numbers 1:51, 53) Sadly, some did not appreciate their privileges. Rather than loyally submitting to godly authority, they became dissatisfied and gave in to pride, ambition, and jealousy. A Levite named Korah was of that number.

#### **"Must You Men Also Try to Secure the Priesthood?"**

<sup>8</sup> Korah was not the head of the paternal house of Levi, nor was he the head of the families of the Kohathites. (Numbers 3:30, 32) Nevertheless, he was a respected chief-tain in Israel. Korah's duties might have brought him into close association with Aaron and his sons. (Numbers 4:18, 19) Seeing firsthand the imperfections of these men, Korah might have reasoned: 'These priests

8. (a) Who was Korah? (b) What might have caused Korah to begin viewing the priests from a purely human standpoint?

are decidedly imperfect, yet I am expected to be in subjection to them! Not long ago Aaron made a golden calf. Worshiping that calf caused our people to fall into idolatry. Now Aaron, Moses' brother, is serving as high priest! What favoritism! And what of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu? Why, they showed such gross disrespect for their privileges of service that Jehovah had to put them to death!\* (Exodus 32:1-5; Leviticus 10:1, 2) Whatever Korah's reasoning might have been, it is clear that he began to view the priesthood from a human standpoint. That led to his rebellion against Moses and Aaron and, ultimately, against Jehovah.—1 Samuel 15:23; James 1:14, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Being a man of influence, it was not difficult for Korah to rally to himself others of like mind. He, along with Dathan and Abiram, found 250 sympathizers—all chieftains of the assembly. Together they approached Moses and Aaron and said: "The whole assembly are all of them holy and Jehovah is in their midst. Why, then, should you lift yourselves up above the congregation of Jehovah?"—Numbers 16:1-3.

<sup>10</sup> The rebels should have known better than to challenge Moses' authority. Not long before, Aaron and Miriam had done just that. Why, they had even used reasoning similar to that of Korah! According to Numbers 12:1, 2, they asked: "Is it just by Moses alone that Jehovah has spoken? Is it not by us also that he has spoken?" Jehovah was listening. He commanded Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to assemble at the entrance of the tent of meeting so that He could indicate his choice of leader. Then, in unambiguous terms Jehovah

\* Aaron's other two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, were exemplary in their service to Jehovah.—Leviticus 10:6.

9, 10. What accusation did Korah and his fellow rebels make against Moses, and why should they have known better?

said: "If there came to be a prophet of yours for Jehovah, it would be in a vision I would make myself known to him. In a dream I would speak to him. Not so my servant Moses! He is being entrusted with all my house." Following that, Jehovah temporarily struck Miriam with leprosy.—Numbers 12:4-7, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Korah and those who sided with him must have been aware of that incident. Their rebellion was inexcusable. Still, Moses tried patiently to reason with them. He urged them to be more appreciative of their privileges, saying: "Is it such a little thing for you men that the God of Israel has separated you men from the assembly of Israel to present you to himself?" No, it was not "a little thing"! The Levites already had so much. What more could they desire? Moses' further words exposed the reasonings of their heart: "Must you men also try to secure the priesthood?"\* (Numbers 12:3; 16:9, 10) How, though, did Jehovah react to this rebellion against godly authority?

### Israel's Judge Intervenes

<sup>12</sup> When Jehovah gave the Law to Israel, he told the people that if they were obedient, they would become "a holy nation" and that the nation could remain holy as long as they accepted Jehovah's arrangement. (Exodus 19:5, 6) Now, with an open rebellion afoot, it was time for Israel's Judge and Statute-giver to intervene! Moses said to Korah: "You and all your assembly, be present

\* Korah's fellow conspirators, Dathan and Abiram, were Reubenites. As such, they apparently did not covet the priesthood. In their case, they resented Moses' leadership and the fact that up to that time, their expectation of reaching the Promised Land had not been fulfilled.—Numbers 16:12-14.

11. How did Moses deal with the situation involving Korah?

12. On what did Israel's continued good relationship with God depend?

before Jehovah, you and they and Aaron, tomorrow. And take each one his fire holder, and you men must put incense upon them and present each one his fire holder before Jehovah, two hundred and fifty fire holders, and you and Aaron each his fire holder.”—Numbers 16:16, 17.

<sup>13</sup> According to God’s Law, only the priests could offer incense. The very idea of a non-priestly Levite offering incense before Jehovah should have shaken those rebels to their senses. (Exodus 30:7; Numbers 4:16) Not so Korah and his supporters! The next day he “got all the assembly together against [Moses and Aaron] at the entrance of the tent of meeting.” The record tells us: “Jehovah now spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ‘Separate yourselves from the midst of this assembly, that I may exterminate them in an instant.’” But Moses and Aaron pleaded for the lives of the people to be spared. Jehovah consented to their pleas. As for Korah and his crowd, “a fire came out from Jehovah and proceeded to consume the two hundred and fifty men offering the incense.”—Numbers 16:19-22, 35.\*

<sup>14</sup> Strangely enough, the Israelites who saw how Jehovah dealt with the rebels still did not learn their lesson. “The next day the whole assembly of the sons of Israel began to murmur against Moses and Aaron, saying: ‘You men, you have put Jehovah’s people to death.’” The Israelites were taking the side of

\* In patriarchal times, each family head represented his wife and children before God, even offering sacrifices in their behalf. (Genesis 8:20; 46:1; Job 1:5) However, when the Law was instituted, Jehovah appointed male members of Aaron’s family as priests through whom sacrifices should be offered. The 250 rebels were apparently not willing to cooperate with this adjustment in procedure.

13. (a) Why was it presumptuous on the part of the rebels to offer incense before Jehovah? (b) How did Jehovah deal with the rebels?
14. Why did Jehovah take firm action against the assembly of Israel?

the conspirators! Finally, Jehovah’s patience came to an end. No one—not even Moses or Aaron—could intercede for the people now. Jehovah caused a scourge to afflict the disobedient ones, “and those dead from the scourge amounted to fourteen thousand seven hundred, aside from those dead on account of Korah.”—Numbers 16:41-49.

<sup>15</sup> It was so unnecessary for all those people to lose their lives. If only they had reasoned matters out. They could have asked themselves such questions as: ‘Who appeared before Pharaoh at the risk of their lives? Who demanded that the Israelites be set free? Who alone was invited to ascend Mount Horeb after Israel’s deliverance to speak face-to-face with God’s angel?’ Surely the remarkable record of Moses and Aaron gave proof of their loyalty to Jehovah and their love for the people. (Exodus 10:28; 19:24; 24:12-15) Jehovah took no pleasure in putting the rebels to death. Still, when it became evident that the people were going to persist in their rebellion, he took decisive action. (Ezekiel 33:11) All of this is of great significance to us today. Why?

### Identifying the Channel Today

<sup>16</sup> Today, there is a new “nation” that has Jehovah as its invisible Judge, its Statute-giver, and its King. (Matthew 21:43) That “nation” came into existence in the first century C.E. By that time, the tabernacle of Moses’ day had been replaced with a beautiful temple in Jerusalem, where Levites were still officiating. (Luke 1:5, 8, 9) However, in the year 29 C.E., another temple, a spiritual one,

15. (a) For what reasons should the Israelites have accepted without hesitation the leadership of Moses and Aaron? (b) What has this account taught you about Jehovah?
16. (a) What evidence should have convinced first-century Jews that Jesus was Jehovah’s representative? (b) Why did Jehovah replace the Levitical priesthood, and with what?



*Appointed elders represent the royal priesthood*

channel that Jehovah uses to provide his people with instruction and spiritual direction.—Matthew 24:45-47.

<sup>18</sup> Representing the royal priesthood are appointed elders, who serve in positions of responsibility in congregations of Jehovah's people around the earth. These men deserve our respect and wholehearted support, whether they are of the anointed or not. Why? Because, through his holy spirit, Jehovah has appointed the older men to their positions. (Hebrews 13:7, 17) How can that be?

<sup>19</sup> These older men meet the requirements that are set out in God's Word, which is a product of God's spirit. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) Hence, their appointment can be said to be by holy spirit. (Acts 20:28) The older men, or elders, must be thoroughly familiar with God's Word. Like the Supreme Judge who appointed them, the elders also must hate anything that resembles partiality in judgment.—Deuteronomy 10:17, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Rather than challenge their authority, we truly appreciate our hardworking elders!

- 
18. What connection is there between appointed elders and the royal priesthood?
  19. In what way are elders appointed by holy spirit?
  20. What do you appreciate about hardworking elders?

### What Have You Learned?

- What loving provisions did Jehovah make to care for the Israelites?
- Why was Korah's rebellion against Moses and Aaron inexcusable?
- What lesson is there for us in the way Jehovah dealt with the rebels?
- How can we show that we appreciate Jehovah's arrangements today?

17. (a) What group makes up the royal priesthood today? (b) How does Jehovah use the royal priesthood?

Their record of faithful service, often over many decades, inspires our trust. They faithfully prepare for and conduct congregation meetings, work side by side with us in preaching the “good news of the Kingdom,” and provide Scriptural advice when we need it. (Matthew 24:14; Hebrews 10:23, 25; 1 Peter 5:2) They visit us when we are sick and comfort us when we mourn. They loyally and unselfishly support Kingdom interests. Jehovah’s spirit is upon them; they have his approval.—Galatians 5:22, 23.

<sup>21</sup> Of course, the older men are not perfect. Mindful of their limitations, they do not try to lord it over the flock, “God’s inheritance.” Rather, they consider themselves ‘fellow workers for the joy of their brothers.’

21. Of what must the elders be conscious, and why?

(1 Peter 5:3; 2 Corinthians 1:24) Humble, hardworking elders love Jehovah, and they know that the closer they come to imitating him, the more good they will be able to do in the congregation. With this in mind, they constantly strive to cultivate such godly qualities as love, compassion, and patience.

<sup>22</sup> How happy we are to have Jehovah as our invisible Ruler, Jesus Christ as our High Priest, members of the anointed royal priesthood as our teachers, and faithful Christian older men as our counselors! Although no organization directed by humans can be perfect, we are delighted to be able to serve God in the company of faithful fellow believers, who gladly submit to godly authority!

22. How has reviewing the account of Korah strengthened your faith in Jehovah’s visible organization?

## STIRRED BY “THE MAGNIFICENT THINGS OF GOD”

*“We hear them speaking in our tongues about the magnificent things of God.”*

—ACTS 2:11.

ONE late spring morning in the year 33 C.E., an amazing thing happened to a group of men and women, disciples of Jesus Christ who were gathered in a private home in Jerusalem. “Suddenly there occurred from heaven a noise just like that of a rushing stiff breeze, and it filled the whole house in which they were sitting. And tongues as if of fire became visible to them . . . , and they all became filled with holy spirit and started to speak with different tongues.”—Acts 2:2-4, 15.

<sup>2</sup> A large crowd gathered in front of the

1, 2. What amazing thing occurred in Jerusalem at Pentecost 33 C.E.?

house. Among them were foreign-born Jews, “reverent men” who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival of Pentecost. They were astonished because each of them heard the disciples speak in his native tongue “about the magnificent things of God.” How could that be when those speaking were all Galileans?—Acts 2:5-8, 11.

<sup>3</sup> One of those Galileans was the apostle Peter. He explained that a few weeks earlier, Jesus Christ had been murdered by unrighteous men. However, God had raised his Son

3. What message did the apostle Peter deliver to the crowd at Pentecost?



from the dead. Thereafter, Jesus appeared to many of his disciples, including Peter and others who were now present. Just ten days earlier, Jesus had ascended to heaven. He it was who had poured out the holy spirit upon his disciples. Did this have any implications for those celebrants of Pentecost? Yes, indeed. Jesus' death laid the groundwork for them to obtain forgiveness of their sins and to receive "the free gift of the holy spirit" if they exercised faith in him. (Acts 2:22-24, 32, 33, 38) So how did those onlookers respond to "the magnificent things of God" that they heard? And how can this account help us to evaluate our own service to Jehovah?

### Moved to Action!

<sup>4</sup> Having received the holy spirit, the disciples in Jerusalem lost no time in sharing the good news of salvation with others, beginning with the crowd who had gathered that morning. Their preaching fulfilled a remarkable prophecy, recorded eight centuries earlier by Joel, the son of Pethuel: "I shall pour out my spirit on every sort of flesh, and your sons and your daughters will certainly prophesy. As for your old men, dreams they will dream. As for your young men, visions they will see. And even on the menservants and

*Peter announced that Jesus had been raised from the dead*

on the maidservants in those days I shall pour out my spirit . . . before the coming of the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah."

—Joel 1:1; 2:28, 29, 31; Acts 2:17, 18, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Did this mean that God was going to raise up a whole generation of prophets, both male and female, in the manner of David, Joel, and Deborah, and use them to foretell future events? No. Christian 'sons and daughters, menservants and maidservants' would prophesy in the sense that they would be impelled by Jehovah's spirit to declare "the magnificent things" that Jehovah had done and would still do. So they would serve as spokesmen for the Most High.\* How, though, did the crowd react?—Hebrews 1:1, 2.

<sup>6</sup> After the crowd heard Peter's explanation, many of them were moved to action. They "embraced his word heartily" and "were baptized, and on that day about three thousand souls were added." (Acts 2:41) As natural Jews and Jewish proselytes, they already had a basic knowledge of the Scriptures. That, coupled with faith in what they learned from Peter, provided the basis for them to be baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit." (Matthew 28:19) After their baptism "they continued devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles." At the same time, they

\* When Jehovah appointed Moses and Aaron to speak to Pharaoh in behalf of his people, He told Moses: "I have made you God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your own brother *will become your prophet*." (Exodus 7:1) Aaron served as a prophet, not in the sense of foretelling future events, but by becoming Moses' spokesman, or mouthpiece.

5. In what sense did first-century Christians prophesy? (See footnote.)

6. Upon hearing Peter's discourse, what were many of the crowd moved to do?

4. What prophecy of Joel was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E.?

began sharing their newfound faith with others. Indeed, "day after day they were in constant attendance at the temple with one accord, . . . praising God and finding favor with all the people." As a result of this witnessing activity, "Jehovah continued to join to them daily those being saved." (Acts 2:42, 46, 47) Christian congregations sprang up in many of the lands where these new believers lived. No doubt this increase was, at least in part, due to their zealous efforts to preach the "good news" when they returned home.  
—Colossians 1:23.

### The Word of God Exerts Power

<sup>7</sup> What of those who are desirous of becoming servants of God today? They too need to study God's Word carefully. As they do, they come to know Jehovah as a God who is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth." (Exodus 34:6; Acts 13:48) They learn of Jehovah's kind provision of the ransom through Jesus Christ, whose shed blood can cleanse them from all sin. (1 John 1:7) They also come to appreciate God's purpose to have "a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) Love for the Source of these "magnificent things" wells up in them, and they are moved to preach these precious truths. They then become dedicated, baptized servants of God and continue "increasing in the accurate knowledge of God."<sup>\*</sup>—Colossians 1:10b; 2 Corinthians 5:14.

\* Of the great throng that was present for the annual observance of the Lord's Evening Meal that was held on March 28, 2002, millions are not yet actively serving Jehovah. It is our prayer that the heart of many of these interested ones will soon be moved to reach out for the privilege of being publishers of the good news.

7. (a) What attracts people of all nations to Jehovah's organization today? (b) What potential for further increase do you see in the worldwide field and locally? (See footnote.)

<sup>8</sup> The knowledge that God's servants acquire from their Bible study is not superficial. Such knowledge stirs their heart, changes their way of thinking, and becomes part of them. (Hebrews 4:12) For example, a woman named Camille was employed as a caregiver to the elderly. One of her clients was Martha, one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Since Martha was severely affected by dementia, she was in need of constant supervision. She had to be reminded to eat—even to swallow her food. However, one thing was indelibly impressed upon Martha's mind, as we shall see.

<sup>9</sup> One day, Martha saw Camille weeping because of distress over some personal problems. Martha put her arms around Camille and invited her to study the Bible with her. But could a person in Martha's condition conduct a Bible study? Yes, she could! Although she had lost much of her memory, Martha had not forgotten her magnificent God; nor had she forgotten the precious truths that she had learned from the Bible. During the study, Martha instructed Camille to read each paragraph, look up the cited Scriptures, read the question at the bottom of the page, and then answer it. This went on for some time, and despite Martha's limitations, Camille progressed in Bible knowledge. Martha realized that Camille needed to associate with others who were interested in serving God. With that in mind, she gave her student a dress and a pair of shoes, so that Camille would have something appropriate to wear when she attended her first meeting at the Kingdom Hall.

<sup>10</sup> Camille was moved by Martha's loving interest, example, and conviction. She concluded that what Martha was trying

- 8-10. (a) How does the experience of one Christian woman prove that God's Word "exerts power"? (b) What has this experience taught you about Jehovah and his dealings with his servants? (Exodus 4:12)



*Does your personal appearance reflect well on the God you worship?*

to teach her from the Bible was of vital importance, since Martha had forgotten almost everything but what she had learned from the Scriptures. Later, when Camille was transferred to another facility, she realized that it was time for her to take action. At the first opportunity, she walked into a Kingdom Hall, wearing the dress and shoes that Martha had given her, and asked for a Bible study. Camille made fine progress and was baptized.

### Stirred to Reflect Jehovah's Standards

<sup>11</sup> Today, there are more than six million Witnesses of Jehovah who, like Martha and now Camille, are preaching the "good news of the kingdom" worldwide. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) Like the first-century Christians, they are deeply moved by "the



magnificent things of God." They appreciate that they are privileged to bear Jehovah's name and that he has poured out his spirit upon them. Consequently, they make every effort "to walk worthily of Jehovah to the end of fully pleasing him," applying his standards in every aspect of their lives. Among other things, this includes respecting God's standards in dress and grooming.—Colossians 1:10a; Titus 2:10.

<sup>12</sup> Yes, Jehovah has set standards with regard to our personal appearance. The apostle Paul outlined some of God's requirements in this regard. "I desire the women to adorn themselves in well-arranged dress, with modesty and soundness of mind, not with styles of hair braiding and gold or pearls or very expensive garb, but in the way that befits women professing to reverence God, namely,

11. In addition to being zealous in the preaching work, how can we demonstrate that we have been stirred by the Kingdom message?

12. What specific counsel on dress and grooming do we find recorded at 1 Timothy 2:9, 10?

**Christian parents must take an interest in the appearance of family members**

through good works."\* What do we learn from these words?—1 Timothy 2:9, 10.

<sup>13</sup> Paul's words show that Christians should "adorn themselves in well-arranged dress." They are not to be sloppy, untidy, or unkempt in their appearance. Virtually anyone, even those of modest means, can meet such reasonable standards by ensuring that their clothing is neat, clean, and presentable. For example, every year Witnesses in one South American country walk for miles through the jungle and then travel for hours by canoe in order to attend their district convention. It is not uncommon for someone to fall into the river or to snag his garments on a bush in the course of the journey. So when the conventioners arrive in the area where the convention is to be held, their appearance is often somewhat disheveled. They therefore take time to sew on buttons, repair zippers, and wash and iron the clothes they are going to wear to the convention. They cherish their invitation to feed at Jehovah's table, and they want to dress appropriately.

<sup>14</sup> Paul further indicated that we should dress with "modesty and soundness of mind." This means that our appearance should not be showy, bizarre, provocative, re-



vealing, or faddish. In addition, we should dress in a manner that reflects 'reverence for God.' That gives food for thought, does it not? It is not simply a matter of dressing appropriately when attending congregation meetings and then throwing all caution to the wind at other times. Our personal appearance should always reflect a reverent, honorable attitude because we are Christians and ministers 24 hours a day. It goes without saying that our work clothes and school clothes will be appropriate for the nature of the tasks we will be performing. Still, we should dress modestly and with dignity. If our dress always reflects our belief in God, we will never feel obligated to hold back from witnessing informally because of embarrassment over our appearance.—1 Peter 3:15.

### **'Do Not Be Loving the World'**

<sup>15</sup> The counsel recorded at 1 John 2:15, 16 also provides guidance in our choice of dress and grooming. We read: "Do not be loving either the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father

<sup>16</sup> (a) Why is it important that we avoid imitating the world in matters of dress and grooming? (1 John 5:19) (b) For what practical reason should we avoid fads in dress and grooming?

\* Although Paul's words were addressed to Christian women, the same principles apply to Christian men and young people.

13. (a) What is meant by "well-arranged dress"? (b) Why can we say that Jehovah's standards are reasonable?

14. (a) What does it mean to dress with "modesty and soundness of mind"? (b) What is involved for us to dress 'as people who profess to reverence God'?

is not in him; because everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world."

<sup>16</sup> How timely that counsel is! In an age where peer pressure has never been more intense, we must not allow the world to dictate our dress. Styles of dress and grooming have deteriorated in recent years. Even the dress code of business and professional people does not always provide a reliable standard of what is appropriate for Christians. This is a further reason why we should always be conscious of the need to "quit being fashioned after this system of things" if we are to live according to God's standards and thus "adorn the teaching of our Savior, God, in all things."—Romans 12:2; Titus 2:10.

<sup>17</sup> Before deciding whether to purchase an item of clothing, it is wise to ask yourself: 'Why does this style appeal to me? Is it identified with some well-known entertainer—someone I admire? Has it been adopted by members of a street gang or by a group that promotes an independent, rebellious spirit?' We should also look closely at the garment. If it is a dress or a skirt, what about the length? The cut? Is the garment modest, appropriate, and dignified, or is it tight-fitting, provocative, or sloppy? Ask yourself, 'Will my wearing this garment give cause for stumbling?' (2 Corinthians 6:3, 4) Why should that be of concern to us? Because the Bible says: "Even the Christ did not please himself." (Romans 15:3) Christian family heads must take an interest in the appearance of family members. Out of respect for the glorious God whom they worship, family heads should not hesitate to offer firm, loving counsel when such is necessary.—James 3:13.

17. (a) What questions could we consider when shopping for clothing or choosing a style? (b) Why should family heads take an interest in the personal appearance of family members?

<sup>18</sup> The message that we bear emanates from Jehovah, who is the very epitome of dignity and holiness. (Isaiah 6:3) The Bible urges us to imitate him "as beloved children." (Ephesians 5:1) Our dress and grooming can reflect either well or badly on our heavenly Father. Surely we want to make his heart glad!—Proverbs 27:11.

<sup>19</sup> How do you feel about "the magnificent things of God" that you have learned? Really, how privileged we are to have learned the truth! Because we exercise faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven. (Acts 2:38) As a result, we have freeness of speech before God. We do not fear death as do those who have no hope. Rather, we have Jesus' assurance that one day "all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) Jehovah has been gracious in revealing all these things to us. In addition, he has poured out his spirit upon us. Therefore, gratitude for all these good gifts should move us to respect his elevated standards and to praise him with zeal, declaring these "magnificent things" to others.

18. What motivates you to give careful attention to your dress and grooming?

19. What benefits come from making known "the magnificent things of God" to others?

### How Would You Answer?

- What "magnificent things" did the people hear about at Pentecost 33 C.E., and how did they respond?
- How does one become a disciple of Jesus Christ, and what does discipleship include?
- Why is it important for us to pay attention to our dress and grooming?
- What factors should be considered when determining whether a garment or style is suitable?



# YOGA

## Just an Exercise or Something More?

HAVING a slim and healthy body is very much on people's minds today. This has caused many to turn to gyms and health clubs for help. For the same reason, thousands of people in the Western world have turned to the Eastern art of yoga.

People suffering from stress, depression, and frustration have also turned to yoga for solace and solutions. Particularly since the 1960's, the decade of hippies and flower children, has interest in Eastern religions and their mystic practices spread throughout the West. Transcendental meditation, a close adjunct of yoga, has been popularized by film stars and rock musicians. In view of the growing interest in yoga, we might ask: 'Is yoga simply an exercise routine that will give the practitioner a healthy, slim body and some peace of mind? Can yoga be practiced without any religious overtones? Is yoga suitable for Christians?'

### The Background of Yoga

The origin of the word "yoga" is related to that of the English word "yoke." It can mean to join or yoke together or to bring under a yoke, to harness or control. To a Hindu, yoga is a technique or a discipline that leads to union with a great supernatural force or spirit. It has been described as "the yoking of all the powers of body, mind and soul to God."

How far back in history can yoga be traced? Figures of people seated in various yoga positions appear on seals found in the Indus Valley, in present-day Pakistan. The Indus Valley civilization is dated by archaeologists to between the third and the second millenniums B.C.E., very close in time to the Mesopotamian culture. Artifacts from both areas portray a man, representing a deity, crowned with animal horns and surrounded by animals, reminiscent of Nimrod, the "mighty hunter." (Genesis 10:8, 9) The Hin-

dus claim that the figures sitting in yoga positions are images of the god Siva, lord of the animals and lord of yoga, who is often worshiped through the lingam, a phallic symbol. Thus, the book *Hindu World* calls yoga "a code of ascetic practices, mainly pre-Aryan in origin, containing relics of many primitive conceptions and observances."

The methods of yoga were at first handed down orally. Then they were put into detailed, written form by the Indian yogic sage Patañjali as the *Yoga Sutra*, which remains the basic instruction book of yoga. According to Patañjali, yoga is "a methodical effort to attain perfection, through the control of the different elements of human nature, physical and psychical." From its inception until the present time, yoga has been an integral part of Eastern religions, now particularly Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. Some practitioners of yoga believe that it will lead them to attain moksha, or liberation, through a merging with an all-pervading spirit.

So once again we ask: 'Can yoga be practiced simply as a physical exercise to develop a healthy body and a relaxed mind, without any involvement with religion?' In view of its background, the answer would have to be no.

### Where Can Yoga Take You?

The objective of yoga as a discipline is to lead a person to the spiritual experience of being "yoked" to or merged with a superhuman spirit. But which spirit would that be?

In *Hindu World*, author Benjamin Walker says of yoga: "It may have been an early system of magical ritualism, and yoga still retains in its meaning an overtone of occultism and sorcery." Hindu philosophers admit that the practice of yoga can give supernatural powers, even though they usually claim

that this is not the ultimate goal of yoga. For example, in the book *Indian Philosophy*, former president of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, says of the yogi that "control of the body through postures results in an indifference to the extremes of heat and cold. . . . The yogin can see and hear at a distance . . . Transmission of thought from one individual to another without the intervention of the normal communicating mechanisms is quite possible. . . . The yogi can make his body invisible."

The image of a yogi sleeping on a bed of nails or walking on hot coals may appear to be a hoax to some and a joke to others. But these are common occurrences in India, as is the practice of standing on one leg while staring directly at the sun for hours and breath control that allows a person to be buried in sand for long periods of time. In June 1995, *The Times of India* reported that a three-and-a-half-year-old girl lay in a trance as a car weighing more than 1,600 pounds was allowed to run over her abdomen. To the amazement of the crowd, when she awoke she was totally unharmed. The report added: "It was sheer yogic power."

Without a doubt, no normal human is capable of performing any of these tasks. Hence, a Christian must ask: Of what are these feats an indication? Are they from Jehovah God, "the Most High over all the earth," or are they from some other source? (Psalm 83:18) The Bible is clear on this point. When the Israelites were on the verge of entering the Promised Land, which was occupied by the Canaanites, Jehovah told the sons of Israel through Moses: "You must not learn to do according to the detestable things of those nations." What "detestable things"? Moses warned against "anyone who employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone who looks for omens or a sorcerer." (Deuteronomy 18:9, 10) These

things are detestable to God because they are works of the demons and of the fallen flesh.  
—Galatians 5:19-21.

### Not a Choice for Christians

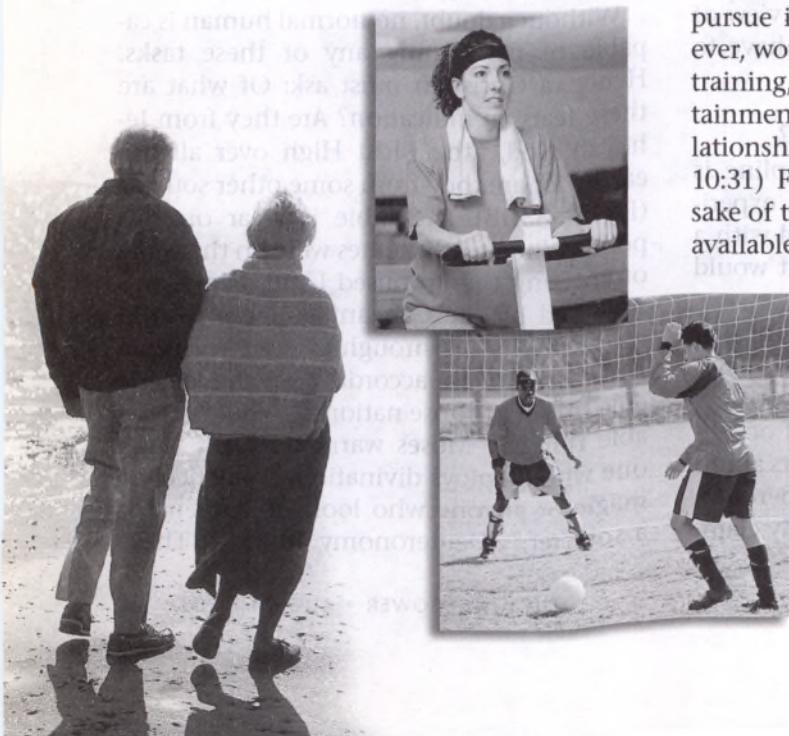
Whatever health instructors may say to the contrary, yoga does not stop with physical exercises. The book *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* relates the experiences of two yoga novitiates who were under the guidance of a guru. One is quoted as saying: "I made superhuman efforts to hold my breath as long as possible, and only breathed when I was on the point of fainting. . . . One day, at high noon, I thought I saw a bright moon, which seemed to move and sway from side to side. Another time I imagined myself enveloped in thick darkness at midday. My director . . . was greatly pleased when I mentioned these visions to him. . . . The time was not far distant, he assured me,

**Many enjoy healthy activities that do not involve exposure to spiritism**

when I should experience much more surprising results from my penance." The second man relates: "He obliged me to stare at the sky every day without blinking my eyes or changing my position. . . . Sometimes I thought I saw sparks of fire in the air; at others I seemed to see fiery globes and other meteors. My teacher was much pleased with the success of my efforts."

The strange sights were evidently what the gurus felt were proper results along the way to the true aim of yogic exercises. Yes, the ultimate goal of yoga is moksha, explained as the merging with some impersonal great spirit. It is described as "the (intentional) stopping of the spontaneous activity of the mind stuff." This is clearly contrary to the goal set out for Christians, who are given the admonition: "Present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason. And quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."—Romans 12:1, 2.

The choice of what physical exercise to pursue is a personal one. Christians, however, would not allow anything—be it bodily training, eating, drinking, clothing, entertainment, or something else—to mar their relationship with Jehovah God. (1 Corinthians 10:31) For those exercising simply for the sake of their health, there are many avenues available that do not involve exposure to the dangers of spiritism and occultism. By keeping clear of practices and beliefs that are rooted in false religion, we may look forward to God's blessing of a righteous new system of things in which we can enjoy perfect health in body and mind for an eternity.—2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:3, 4.





## OLD AND SATISFIED WITH YEARS

AS TOLD BY  
**MURIEL SMITH**

A loud knock shook my front door. I had just returned home for lunch after a busy morning in the preaching work. As was my habit, I was boiling water for a cup of tea and was about to put my feet up for my half-hour break. The knock sounded very insistent, and as I made my way to the door, I wondered just who could be calling at this time. I soon found out. The two men on my doorstep introduced themselves as police officers. They stated that they were there to search my house for literature produced by Jehovah's Witnesses—a banned organization.

Why were Jehovah's Witnesses under ban in Australia, and how did I come to be one of them? It all started with a gift from my mother in the year 1910, when I was ten years of age.

**M**Y FAMILY lived in a wooden cottage in the North Sydney suburb of Crows Nest. I came home from school one day to find my mother talking to a man at the front door. I was curious about the identity of this strange man who was dressed in a suit and

carried a bag full of books. I shyly excused myself and went into the house. However, just a few minutes later, Mother called me. She said: "This man has some lovely books, and they're all about the Scriptures. Now, since you're going to have another birthday



*When I was about five years old and at age 19, when I met my husband, Roy*



soon, you can either have a new dress or these books. Which would you like?"

"Oh, Mummy, I'll have the books thank you," I responded.

So at age ten, I came to have the first three volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures*, by Charles Taze Russell. The man at the door explained to my mother that she would need to help me to understand the books, as they would likely be too difficult for me. Mother said that she would be glad to do so. Sadly, soon after this event, Mother died. Father diligently looked after my brother, my sister, and me, but there were now extra responsibilities for me to carry, and these seemed to overwhelm me. Yet, another tragedy was just around the corner.

The first world war erupted in 1914, and just one year later, our dear father was killed. Now orphaned, my brother and sister were sent to live with relatives, and I was sent to a Catholic boarding college. Sometimes, I was distressed by loneliness. Still, I am grateful for the opportunity I was given to pursue my love of music, in particular the piano. The years passed, and I graduated from the board-

ing college. In 1919, I married Roy Smith, a musical-instrument salesman. In 1920, we started a family, and again I was engrossed in the day-to-day cares of life. But what about those books?

#### A Neighbor Shares Spiritual Truth

Through all those years, the "Bible books" traveled with me. Though I had never really read them, deep down I knew that the message they contained was important. Then, one day in the late 1920's, Lil Bimson, one of our neighbors, came to visit. We went into the lounge, sat down, and had some tea.

"Oh, you've got those books!" she suddenly exclaimed.

"What books?" I asked, puzzled.

She pointed to *Studies in the Scriptures* sitting in the bookcase. Lil borrowed them and took them home that day and eagerly read them. Her excitement over what she read soon became very evident. Lil obtained more literature from the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known. Moreover, she could not hold back from telling us all the things that she was learning. One of the books she obtained was *The Harp of God*, and it soon ended up in our house. My career in Jehovah's service finally started when I made time to read this Bible-based publication. At last, I found answers to fundamental questions that my church had not been able to give me.

Happily for me, Roy paid particular attention to the message of the Bible, and both of us became avid Bible students. Previously, Roy had been a member of the Freemasons. Now our family was united in true worship, and twice a week one of the brothers conducted a Bible study with the entire family. Further encouragement came when we began attending the meetings held by the Bible Students. The venue in Sydney was a small

rented hall in the suburb of Newtown. At that time, there were fewer than 400 Witnesses in the entire country, so for most of the brothers, attending meetings meant traveling a considerable distance.

For our family, attending the meetings meant regularly crossing Sydney Harbour. Before the Sydney Harbour Bridge was built in 1932, every crossing had to be made by vehicle ferry. Despite the time and cost of this journey, we endeavored not to miss any of the spiritual meals Jehovah was providing. The effort to establish ourselves solidly in the truth was worthwhile, since the second world war was brewing, and the issue of neutrality was going to affect our family directly.

#### A Time of Tests and Rewards

The early 1930's were exciting times for me and my family. I was baptized in 1930, and in 1931, I was present at that memorable convention when we all stood up and agreed to take on the beautiful name Jehovah's Witnesses. Roy and I endeavored to live up to that name by sharing in all the preaching methods and campaigns that the organization encouraged. For example, in 1932 we engaged in a special booklet campaign designed to reach the masses of people who came to see the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. A special highlight for us was the use of sound cars, and we were privileged to have our family car fitted with a sound system. With this technology, we made the streets of Sydney echo with recorded Bible lectures given by Brother Rutherford.

However, times were again changing and becoming increasingly difficult. By 1932 the Great Depression weighed heavily on Australia, so Roy and I decided to simplify our lives. One way we did this was by moving closer to the congregation, and thus we greatly reduced our travel costs. Economic pressures, though, paled into insignificance as the terror of World War II gripped the globe.

By obeying Jesus' command to be no part of the world, Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide became a target of persecution, and Australia was no exception. Provoked by wartime hysteria, some labeled us Communists. These opposers erroneously claimed that Jehovah's Witnesses were using the four radio stations they owned in Australia to send messages to the Japanese army.

Young brothers who were called up for army service faced much pressure to compromise. I am pleased to say that all three of our sons took a stand for their beliefs and maintained their neutrality. Our eldest son, Richard, received an 18-month prison sentence. Our second son, Kevin, was able to register as a conscientious objector. Sadly, though, our youngest son, Stuart, died in a motorcycle accident on his way to complete his court defense regarding the neutrality issue. This tragedy was truly stressful. Yet, maintaining our focus on the Kingdom and Jehovah's promise of a resurrection helped us to endure.

#### They Missed the Real Prize

In January 1941, Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia were placed under ban. But, as did the apostles of Jesus, Roy and I obeyed God as ruler rather than men, and for two and a half years, we continued to operate underground. It was during this time that the two plainclothes policemen I mentioned earlier knocked on my door. What happened?

Well, I invited them in. As they entered the house, I asked, "Do you mind if I just finish my cup of tea before you search the house?" Amazingly, they agreed, and I went into the kitchen to pray to Jehovah and gather my thoughts. When I returned, one policeman entered our study area and took everything he could see with the Watchtower logo on it, including the literature in my witnessing bag and my Bible.



**Our car and the caravan we named Mizpah**

publisher lists and other important information in the house. Thankfully, the brothers had warned us to be prepared for such searches, and I had carefully hidden these documents. I placed them in envelopes and put them at the bottom of my tins of tea, sugar, and flour. I also had some stored in the aviary, which was near the garage. So the police had walked right past the very information they wanted.

#### **Entering the Full-Time Service**

By 1947, our older children had started their own families. At this time, Roy and I decided that it was within our reach to take up the full-time ministry. There was a need in the South Australian field, so we sold our home and purchased a caravan, or trailer, which we named Mizpah, meaning "Watchtower." This style of living allowed us to preach in remote areas. Often, we worked in unassigned rural territory. I have many fond memories of that time. One of the studies I conducted was with a young woman named Beverly. Before progressing to baptism, she left the area. Imagine my joy when years later a sister approached me at a convention and identified herself as Beverly! What happiness it brought me after all those years to see her serving Jehovah along with her husband and children.

In 1979, I was privileged to attend the Pioneer Service School. One of the things emphasized at that school was that to endure in the pioneer ministry, one has to have a good personal study routine. I certainly found that to be true. Study, meetings, and the ministry have been my whole life. I count it a privilege to have served as a regular pioneer for over 50 years.

"Are you sure that you don't have any other literature hidden away in cartons?" he then asked. "We have information that you attend a meeting every week in a hall at the end of this road and that you take a lot of literature there."

"That's true," I replied, "but it's not there now."

"Yes, we know that, Mrs. Smith," he said. "We also know that the literature is stored in the homes of people around the district."

In our son's bedroom, they found five cartons containing copies of the booklet *Freedom or Romanism*.

"Are you sure you haven't got anything else in the garage?" he asked.

"No, there's nothing there," I said.

He then opened up a cupboard in the dining room. He found blank forms, which were used to fill out the congregation report. He took these and then insisted on looking in the garage.

"Come this way then," I said.

They followed me out to the garage and after inspecting it, they finally left.

Well, those policemen thought they had a wonderful prize with those five cartons! However, they left the real prize behind. You see, in those days, I was serving as the congregation secretary, and I had congregation

## Coping With Health Problems

The last several decades, though, have presented me with some special challenges. In 1962, I was diagnosed with glaucoma. At that time, the treatment available was somewhat limited, and my eyesight deteriorated quite rapidly. Roy's health also declined, and in 1983 he experienced a very serious stroke that left him partially paralyzed and unable to speak. He passed away in 1986. He had given me much practical support during my full-time service, and I truly miss him.

In spite of those setbacks, I tried to keep up a good spiritual routine. I bought a sturdy car, one suitable for field service in our



*With my husband, Roy, in 1971*

semirural area, and continued my pioneer service with the help of my daughter Joyce. My sight progressively worsened until I completely lost the sight in one eye. The doctors replaced it with a glass one. Still, with the use of a magnifying glass and the large-print literature, I was able to spend three to five hours a day studying by using the little sight left in my one eye.

Study time has always been very precious to me. So you can imagine what a terrible shock it was that while studying one afternoon, quite suddenly, I could not see a thing. It was as though someone had switched off the light. My sight was now completely gone.

How have I continued to study? Well, even though I am now quite deaf, I rely on the audiocassettes and the loving support of my family to keep me spiritually strong.

## Enduring to the End

Now, as a centenarian, a few other things have gone wrong with my health, and I have had to slow down considerably. Sometimes, I feel a little lost. In fact, now that I can't see at all, sometimes I actually *am* lost! I would love to have some Bible studies again, but with my health the way it is, I can no longer go out and find them. Initially, this depressed me. I had to learn to accept my limitations and work within them. This has not been easy. Still, what a privilege it is that every month, I am able to report some time spent talking about our great God, Jehovah. When opportunities come my way to talk about the Bible, such as when nurses, tradesmen, and others drop by, I grab them—tactfully, of course.

One of my most satisfying blessings is to see four generations of my family faithfully worshiping Jehovah. Some of these have reached out to serve as pioneer ministers in places where the need is great, as elders or ministerial servants, and at Bethel. Of course, like many of my generation, I anticipated that the end of this system would arrive a lot sooner. But what an increase I have seen during my seven decades of service! It gives me great satisfaction to have been involved in something so grand.

The nurses who visit me comment that it must be my faith that keeps me going. I agree with them. Being active in Jehovah's service makes for the best life possible. Like King David, I can truly say that I am old and satisfied with years.—1 Chronicles 29:28.

(Sister Muriel Smith died on April 1, 2002, as this article was being finalized. Just one month short of 102 years of age, she was truly exemplary in faithfulness and endurance.)

## Questions From Readers

### Did Abel know that an animal sacrifice was needed to gain God's favor?

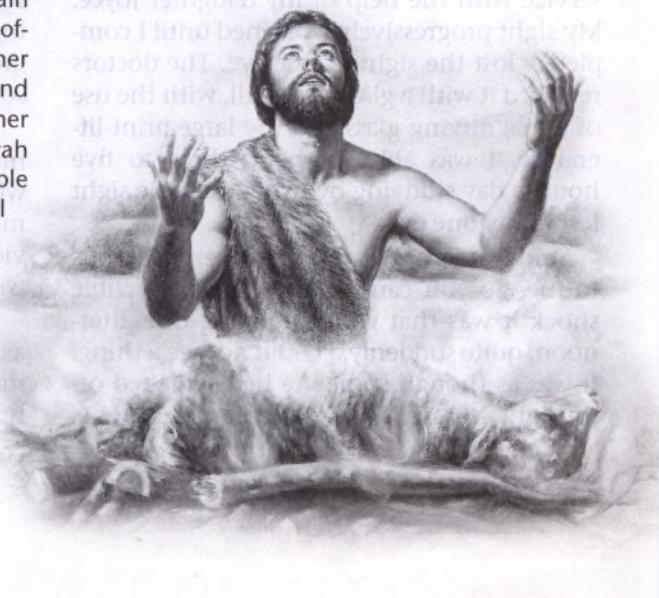
The Bible account of Cain and Abel making their offerings is very brief. At Genesis 4:3-5, we read: "It came about at the expiration of some time that Cain proceeded to bring some fruits of the ground as an offering to Jehovah. But as for Abel, he too brought some firstlings of his flock, even their fatty pieces. Now while Jehovah was looking with favor upon Abel and his offering, he did not look with any favor upon Cain and upon his offering."

There is no mention in the Bible that prior to this event Jehovah had given any specific information about sacrifices or about what kind of sacrifices would be acceptable to him. Thus, Cain and Abel evidently made their offerings solely of their own volition. They were barred from access to their parents' original Paradise home; they began to feel the effects of sin; and they were alienated from God. In their sinful and pitiful state, they must have felt strongly the need to turn to God for help. Offering God a gift was likely a voluntary gesture on their part toward gaining God's favor.

As matters turned out, Abel's offering was accepted by God, but Cain's was not. Why? Was it because Abel offered the right things and Cain did not? We cannot be sure that the type of offering had no bearing on matters, since neither of them had been told what was acceptable and what was not. However, it is likely that either type was acceptable. In the Law that Jehovah eventually gave the nation of Israel, acceptable sacrifices included not only animals or animal parts but also roasted grain, sheaves of barley, fine flour, baked goods, and wine. (Leviticus 6:19-23; 7:11-13; 23:10-13) Evidently, it was not the substance alone of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel that caused God to accept one and reject the other.—Compare Isaiah 1:11; Amos 5:22.

Centuries later, the apostle Paul stated: "By faith Abel offered God a sacrifice of greater worth than Cain, through which faith he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness respecting his gifts." (Hebrews 11:4) Thus, it was because of faith that Abel was recognized as righteous by God. But faith in what? Faith in Jehovah's promise that he would provide the Seed, who would 'bruise the head of the serpent' and restore the peace and perfection that mankind once enjoyed. From the statement that the Seed would be 'bruised in the heel,' Abel might have reasoned that a sacrifice involving the shedding of blood was needed. (Genesis 3:15) Nonetheless, the fact remains that it was Abel's expression of faith that made his "a sacrifice of greater worth than Cain."

By the same token, Cain was rejected, not because he offered the wrong kind of sacrifice, but because he lacked faith, as indicated by his actions. Jehovah had clearly pointed out to Cain: "If you turn to doing good, will there not be an exaltation?" (Genesis 4:7) God did not reject Cain on account of any displeasure over his offering. Rather, it was "because his own works were wicked"—marked by jealousy, hatred, and finally murder—that Cain was rejected by God.—1 John 3:12.



# Earnest Effort

## When Is It Blessed by Jehovah?

"**L**ET me go, for the dawn has ascended." "I am not going to let you go until you first bless me."

"What is your name?"

"Jacob."

"Your name will no longer be called Jacob but Israel, for you have contended with God and with men so that you at last prevailed."

—Genesis 32:26-28.

That intriguing dialogue was the result of a remarkable demonstration of athletic agility by 97-year-old Jacob. Though the Bible does not describe him as an athlete, he wrestled, or grappled, all night long with an angel. Why? Jacob was deeply concerned about Jehovah's promise to his forefather—his heritage.

Many years earlier Jacob's brother Esau forfeited to him the right of firstborn in exchange for a bowl of stew. Now word reaches Jacob that Esau is approaching with 400 men. Understandably anxious, Jacob seeks confirmation of Jehovah's promise that his family will prosper in the land across the Jordan River. In harmony with his prayers, Jacob takes decisive action. He sends generous gifts to the advancing Esau. He also makes defensive moves, dividing his camp in



two and transporting his wives and children across the ford of Jabbok. With strenuous effort and many tears, he now exerts himself further by grappling all night with an angel so that "he might implore favor for himself."

—Hosea 12:4; Genesis 32:1-32.

Consider an earlier example, Rachel, Jacob's second wife and first love. Rachel is well aware of Jehovah's promise to bless Jacob. Her sister Leah, Jacob's first wife, is blessed with four sons while Rachel remains barren. (Genesis 29:31-35) Rather than give in to self-pity, she keeps entreating Jehovah in prayer and takes positive action in harmony with her prayers. As her ancestress Sarah did with Hagar, Rachel brings her maid-servant Bilhah and offers her to Jacob as a secondary wife in order that, as Rachel says, "I,

even I, may get children from her.”\* Bilhah bears two sons to Jacob—Dan and Naphtali. At Naphtali’s birth Rachel declares the extent of her emotional effort: “With strenuous wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister. I have also come off winner!” Rachel is further blessed with two sons of her own, Joseph and Benjamin.—Genesis 30:1-8; 35:24.

Why did Jehovah bless the physical and emotional efforts of Jacob and Rachel? They kept Jehovah’s will in focus and cherished their heritage. They prayed earnestly for his blessing in their lives and took positive action in harmony with God’s will and their own petitions.

Like Jacob and Rachel, many today can testify that diligent effort is required to receive Jehovah’s blessing. Their efforts are often accompanied with tears, discouragement, and frustration. One Christian mother, Elizabeth, recalls the earnest effort it took to get back to attending Christian meetings regularly after a long absence. With five little boys, an unbelieving husband, and a 20-mile drive to the nearest Kingdom Hall, it was a challenge. “Trying to get to the meetings reg-

\* Concubinage was in existence before the Law covenant and was recognized and regulated by the Law. God did not see fit to restore the original standard of monogamy that he had established in the garden of Eden until the appearance of Jesus Christ, but he did protect the concubine by legislation. Concubinage logically worked toward a more rapid increase in the population of Israel.

ularly required a good deal of self-discipline, which I knew was good for me and for my sons. It helped them to see that this was a course worth pursuing.” Jehovah blessed her efforts. Of her three sons who are active in the Christian congregation, two are in the full-time ministry. Rejoicing in their spiritual advancement, she says: “They have surpassed me in spiritual growth.” What a blessing for her earnest effort!

### Earnest Effort That Jehovah Blesses

Putting forth earnest effort and working hard surely have their rewards. The more effort we put into a project or an assignment, the more satisfaction we receive in return. This is how Jehovah made us. “Every man should eat and indeed drink and see good for all his hard work. It is the gift of God,” wrote King Solomon. (Ecclesiastes 3:13; 5:18, 19) To receive a blessing from God, though, we must make sure that our efforts are properly directed. For example, is it reasonable to expect Jehovah’s blessing on a life-style that delegates spiritual matters to a secondary place? Could a dedicated Christian hope for Jehovah’s approval if he accepts employment or promotions that would mean regularly missing faith-building association and instruction at Christian meetings?—Hebrews 10:23-25.

A lifetime of hard work in the pursuit of a secular career or material prosperity will not necessarily mean that one will “see good” if it is done to the exclusion of spiritual things. Jesus described the consequences of misdirected effort in his illustration of the sower. Regarding the seed “sown among the thorns,” Jesus explained that “this is the one hearing the word, but the anxiety of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.” (Matthew 13:22) Paul also warned of the same trap and added that those who

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

To Whom Should You Be Loyal?

“I Set the Pattern for You”

How Can Thinking Ability  
Safeguard You?

pursue a materialistic course "fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and ruin." What is the antidote for such a spiritually ruinous way of life? Paul continued: 'Flee from these things and rest your hope, not on uncertain riches, but on God, who furnishes us all things richly for our enjoyment.'—1 Timothy 6:9, 11, 17.

Regardless of our age or how long we have served Jehovah, all of us can benefit from imitating the earnest effort demonstrated by Jacob and Rachel. In their quest for divine approval, they never lost sight of their heritage, no matter how frightening or frustrating their circumstances might have been. Today, the pressures and difficulties we face may be just as frightening, frustrating, or even depressing. The temptation is to give up in the struggle and become another casualty of Satan's assault. He may use any of the means at his disposal, be it entertainment or recreation, sports or hobbies, careers or material prosperity, to achieve his designs. Desirable results are often promised but seldom realized. Those who are deceived or enticed to indulge in such pursuits very often find that they end largely in disappointment. Like Jacob and Rachel of old, let us cultivate the spirit of an earnest contender and prevail over Satan's machinations.

The Devil would like nothing better than to see us resign ourselves to defeat, feeling that 'the situation is hopeless. There is nothing that can be done. It is no use.' How vital, then, for us all to guard against developing a fatalistic attitude, thinking 'nobody loves me' and 'Jehovah has forgotten me.' Succumbing to such thoughts is self-destructive. Could it indicate that we have dropped our hands and are no longer contending until we receive a blessing? Remember, Jehovah blesses our earnest effort.

## Keep Contending for Jehovah's Blessing

Our spiritual well-being depends to a great extent on our appreciating two basic truths about our life as a servant of Jehovah. (1) No one has a monopoly on problems, ailments, or difficult situations in life, and (2) Jehovah listens to the outcries of those earnestly appealing to him for help and a blessing.—Exodus 3:7-10; James 4:8, 10; 1 Peter 5:8, 9.

No matter how difficult your circumstances or how limited you may feel, do not give in to "the sin that easily entangles us"—lack of faith. (Hebrews 12:1) Continue to contend until you receive a blessing. Exercise patience, remembering aged Jacob, who wrestled all night for a blessing. Like the farmer who sows in the spring and waits for the harvest, patiently look for Jehovah's blessing on your spiritual activity, no matter how limited you may feel your activity is. (James 5:7, 8) And always bear in mind the psalmist's words: "Those sowing seed with tears will reap even with a joyful cry." (Psalm 126:5; Galatians 6:9) Stand firm, and remain in the ranks of the contenders.



# A Lesson From the Stork



**E**VEN the stork in the heavens—it well knows its appointed times . . . But as for my people, they have not come to know the judgment of Jehovah." (Jeremiah 8:7) With those words, the prophet Jeremiah sounded Jehovah's judgment against the apostate people of Judah, who had left Jehovah their God and turned to the worship of foreign deities. (Jeremiah 7:18, 31) Why did Jeremiah choose the stork as an object lesson for the unfaithful Jews?

To the Israelites, the stork, and especially the white stork, was a familiar sight as it migrated through Bible lands. The Hebrew name for this large, long-legged wading bird is the feminine form of a word that means "loyal one; one of loving-kindness." This is fitting, for unlike most other birds, male and female white storks remain paired for life. After wintering in warmer regions, most storks return year after year, often to the same nest that they have used before.

The stork's instinctive behavior illustrates the quality of loyalty in other remarkable ways. Both male and female birds share in incubating the eggs and feeding the chicks. The book *Our Magnificent Wildlife* explains: "As parents, storks are exceptionally faithful. A male stork in Germany flew into high-tension wires and was electrocuted. His mate continued to incubate the eggs alone for 3 days, during which she left the nest only once for a short time to look for food. . . . In another case, when the female stork was shot, the father reared the young."

Indeed, by instinctively showing faithfulness to its lifelong mate and tender care for its young, the stork lives up to the meaning of its name—"loyal one." Thus, storks served well as a powerful lesson to the unfaithful and wayward Israelites.

To many people today, loyalty and faithfulness are quaint ideas—admirable but not practical. The proliferation of divorce, abandonment, embezzlement, and other forms of deceit demonstrates that loyalty is no longer valued. In contrast, the Bible places a high value on loyalty that is motivated by love and kindness. It urges Christians to "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Ephesians 4:24) Yes, the new personality helps us to be loyal, but we can also learn a lesson about loyalty from the stork.

