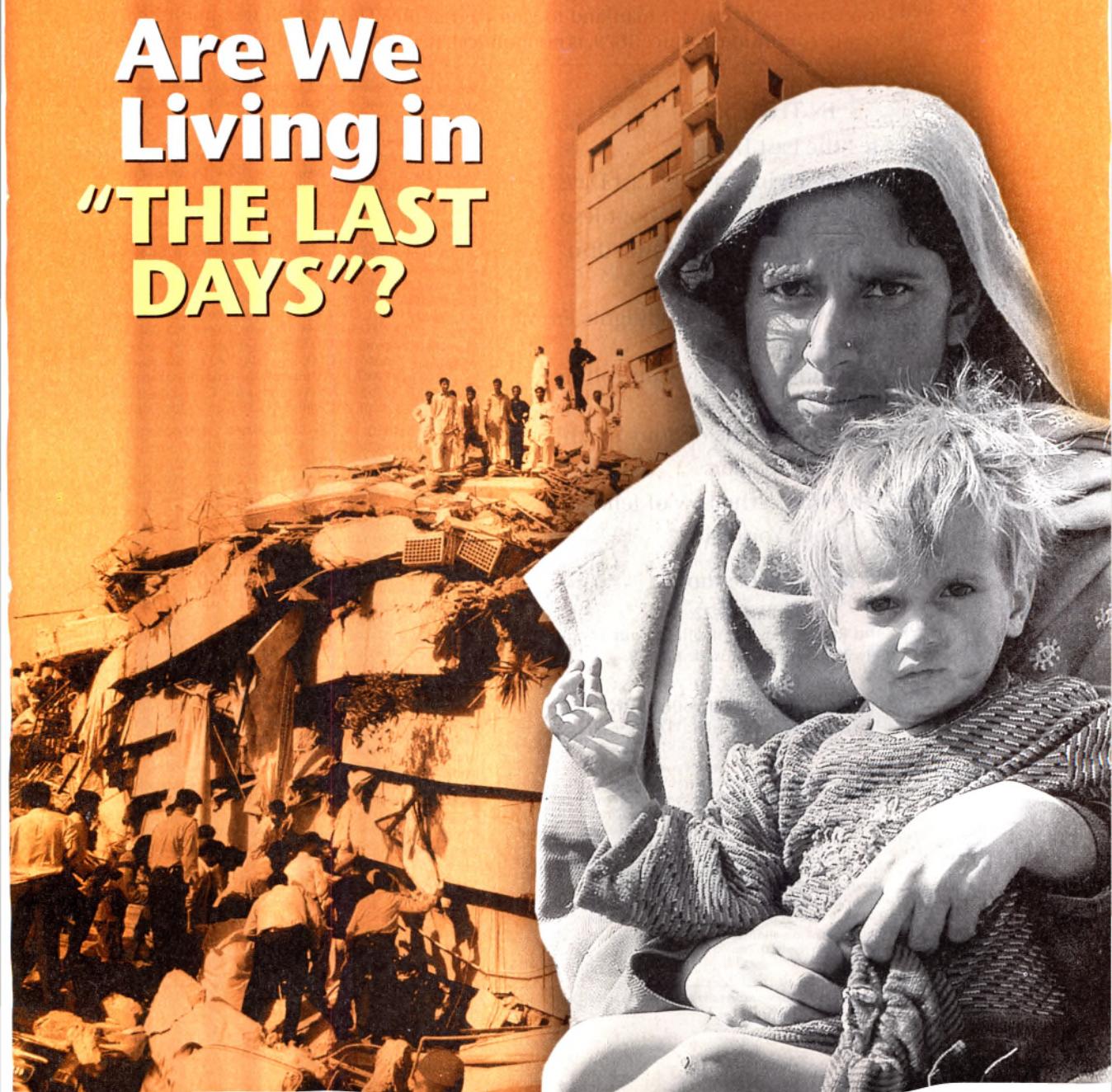


SEPTEMBER 15, 2006

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

## Are We Living in "THE LAST DAYS"?





# 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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# What Are "the Last Days"?

DO YOU wonder what the future holds for you and for your loved ones? Many people pay close attention to the news media to see how world events might affect their lives. Paying attention to God's inspired Word, however, gives us true insight. This is because the Bible long ago foretold not only the current state of affairs but also what is yet to come.

For example, when Jesus Christ was on earth, he spoke extensively about the Kingdom of God. (Luke 4:43) Naturally, people who heard him wanted to know when that marvelous Kingdom would come. Indeed, three days before Jesus was wrongfully put to death, his disciples asked him: "What will be the sign of your presence [in Kingdom power] and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (Matthew 24:3) Jesus told them that only Jehovah God knew the precise time when the Kingdom would take full control of the earth. (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32) However, Jesus and others did foretell certain developments on earth that would serve as proof that Christ was ruling in Kingdom power.

Before we examine the visible evidence that we are living in "the last days" of the present system of things, let us briefly consider an important event that happened in the invisible spirit realm. (2 Timothy 3:1) Jesus Christ became King in heaven in the year 1914.\* (Daniel 7:13, 14) Immediately after receiving Kingdom power, Jesus took action. The Bible tells us: "War broke out in heaven:

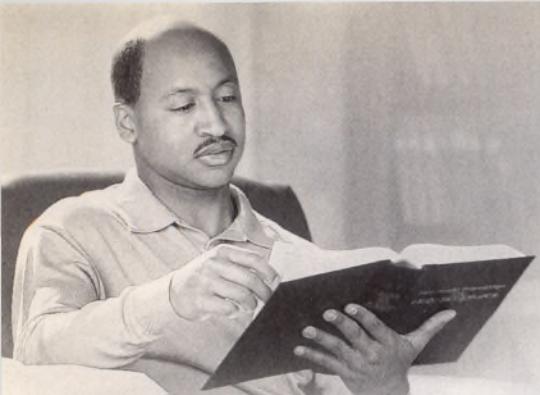


Michael and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled." (Revelation 12:7) "Michael the archangel" is Jesus Christ in his heavenly position.\* (Jude 9; 1 Thessalonians 4:16) The dragon is Satan the Devil. How did Satan and his wicked angelic followers, called demons, fare in the conflict? They lost that war and were "hurled down," or cast out of heaven, to the vicinity of the earth. (Revelation 12:9) On this account the "heavens and [those] who reside in them," that is, faithful spirit sons of God, rejoiced. Humans, though, have experienced no such rejoicing. "Woe for the earth," foretold the Bible, "because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." —Revelation 12:12.

Satan, in his fury, has brought woe—suffering and affliction—to those dwelling on earth. That woe, however, will be brief, "a short period of time." The Bible refers to this time as "the last days." We can be glad that soon the Devil's influence over the earth will be totally done away with. But what proof is there that we are living in the last days?

\* For more information, see *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* pages 218-19, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

\* See *The Watchtower*, July 15, 2006, pages 6-7.



# Are We Really Living in "the Last Days"?

**D**EVELOPMENTS in two areas have a bearing on identifying what the Bible calls the last days. The Scriptures foretell events that would take place during the time of "the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 24:3) The Bible also speaks of changes in the attitudes and actions of people living in "the last days." —2 Timothy 3:1.

World events combined with the behavior and traits of people prove that we are living in the last days and that God's Kingdom will soon bring everlasting blessings to those who love God. We begin by examining three features that Jesus said would mark the last days.

## "A Beginning of Pangs of Distress"

"Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom," said Jesus, "and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another." He added: "All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress." (Matthew 24:7, 8) Let us examine "these things" individually.

Vast numbers of people were slain in wars and ethnic disputes during the past century. "Three times as many people fell victim to war in [the 20th] century as in all the wars from the first century AD to 1899," states a scholarly report from the Worldwatch Institute. In his book *Humanity—A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*, Jonathan Glover writes: "An estimate for the period from 1900 until 1989 is that war killed 86 million people. . . . Death in twentieth-century war has

been on a scale which is hard to grasp. Any averaging out of the numbers of deaths is artificial, since about two-thirds (58 million) were killed in the two world wars. But, if these deaths had been spread evenly over the period, war would have killed around 2,500 people every day, that is over 100 people an hour, round the clock, for ninety years." Can you imagine the grief and pain this must have caused the millions of relatives and friends of those who lost their lives?

Despite the fact that the world produces plenty of food, the features characterizing the last days include food shortages. Researchers say that over the past 30 years, food production has outpaced population increase. Nevertheless, food shortages prevail in large areas of the world because many people do not have sufficient land to grow food or enough money to buy food. In developing countries, some 1.2 billion people subsist on a dollar (U.S.) a day or less. Of these, about 780 million suffer chronic hunger. According to the World Health Organization, annually malnutrition plays a major role in the deaths of over five million children.

What can be said about the foretold earthquakes? According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the number of earthquakes powerful enough to destroy buildings has averaged 17 a year since 1990 alone. On average, earthquakes strong enough to cause almost total destruction of buildings have occurred once each year. "Earthquakes have claimed hun-

dreds of thousands of lives in the last 100 years," states another source. One reason for this is that since 1914 many large population centers have developed in earthquake zones.

### Other Significant Developments

"There will be . . . in one place after another pestilences," said Jesus. (Luke 21:11) Medical science today is more advanced than ever before. Still, both old and new diseases continue to ravage mankind. A U.S. National Intelligence Council document states: "Twenty well-known diseases—including tuberculosis (TB), malaria, and cholera—have reemerged or spread geographically since 1973, often in more virulent and drug-resistant forms. At least 30 previously unknown disease agents have been identified since 1973, including HIV, Ebola, hepatitis C, and Nipah virus, for which no cures are available." According to a Red Cross report of June 28, 2000, during the preceding year, the number of people who died from infectious diseases was about 160 times greater than the number who died in natural disasters.

"The increasing of lawlessness" is another noteworthy feature of the last days. (Matthew 24:12) In most places around the earth today, people do not leave their homes unlocked or feel safe on the street at night. And what about the pollution of the air, the water, and the land that we see taking place, often because of illegal practices? This too is in fulfillment of what the Bible foretold. The book of Revelation speaks of God's appointed time to "bring to ruin those ruining the earth."—Revelation 11:18.

### What the People of the Last Days Are Like

Please open your Bible to 2 Timothy 3:1-5 and read it. The apostle Paul writes: "In the last days critical times hard to deal with will

be here." He then goes on to list 20 personality traits that would characterize ungodly people. Have you observed some of these characteristics in those living in your community? Consider what has been said in recent times about the people of today.

*"Lovers of themselves."* (2 Timothy 3:2) "[People are] insistent on doing their own thing as never before. [They] are becoming gods, and expect to be treated as such."—*Financial Times*, newspaper, England.

*"Lovers of money."* (2 Timothy 3:2) "The ego of materialism has in recent times overpowered the spirit of modesty. Unless you are seen as rich in society your life is not worth living."—*Jakarta Post*, newspaper, Indonesia.

*"Disobedient to parents."* (2 Timothy 3:2) "Parents are puzzled to find their 4-year-old ordering them around like he's [French King] Louis XIV or their 8-year-old screaming, 'I hate you!'"—*American Educator*, magazine, United States.

*"Disloyal."* (2 Timothy 3:2) "The vastly increased willingness of men to leave behind partners and children constitutes perhaps the single greatest change in moral values during the [past 40 years]."—*Wilson Quarterly*, magazine, United States.

*"Having no natural affection."* (2 Timothy 3:3) "Family violence is the dominant factor in the everyday life of communities around the world."—*Journal of the American Medical Association*, magazine, United States.

*"Without self-control."* (2 Timothy 3:3) "Many stories that occur on the newspaper's front page every morning reflect minds lacking self control, moral fibre and mercy towards their fellow human beings and even themselves. . . . If our society continues to favour aggression the way it is now, our society will soon enter a phase of moral annihilation."—*Bangkok Post*, newspaper, Thailand.

*"Fierce."* (2 Timothy 3:3) "Irrational anger and uncontrolled rage [are] seen on the road, in abuse within families, . . . and [in] the apparently gratuitous and unnecessary violence which often accompanies crime. Violence is experienced as random and unpredictable and people are left feeling disconnected and vulnerable."—*Business Day*, newspaper, South Africa.

*"Lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God."* (2 Timothy 3:4) "Sexual liberation has become a moral crusade, in which Christian morality is the enemy."—*Boundless*, an Internet magazine.

*"Having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power."* (2 Timothy 3:5) "[A former prostitute in the Netherlands] acknowledged that opposition to legalization [of prostitution] comes largely from religious groups. She paused, then said with a grin that when she was a prostitute, several [religious] ministers were among her regulars. 'Prostitutes always say their best clients are from the religious community,' she laughed."—*National Catholic Reporter*, newspaper, United States.

### What Lies Ahead?

The world today is filled with trouble, just as the Bible foretold. However, the prophecy about "the sign of [Christ's] presence and of the conclusion of the system of things" contains a positive feature. "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations," said Jesus. (Matthew 24:3, 14) The good news of God's Kingdom is being preached in more than 230 lands. Over six million people who come from "all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues" are actively engaged in the work of Kingdom proclamation. (Revelation 7:9) What has their zealous activity accomplished? This: The message of what the Kingdom is, what it will do, and how to receive its

blessings is within the reach of nearly everyone on the earth. Indeed, 'the true knowledge has become abundant in the time of the end.'—Daniel 12:4.

You have good reason to avail yourself of this knowledge. Consider what will happen after the good news has been preached to Jehovah's satisfaction. Jesus said: "Then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) It will be God's time to eliminate all wickedness on earth. Proverbs 2:22 states: "As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth; and as for the treacherous, they will be torn away from it." What about Satan and his demons? They will be cast into an abyss, where they will no longer be able to mislead the nations. (Revelation 20:1-3) Then "the upright . . . and the blameless are the ones that will be left over" in the earth. And they will enjoy wonderful Kingdom blessings.—Proverbs 2:21; Revelation 21:3-5.

### What Can You Do?

There is no doubt about it. The end of Satan's system is close at hand. Those who ignore the evidence that we are living in the last days will be caught off guard when the end comes. (Matthew 24:37-39; 1 Thessalonians 5:2) Therefore, Jesus said to his listeners: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare. For it will come in upon all those dwelling upon the face of all the earth. Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man."—Luke 21:34-36.

Only those standing in an approved condition before the Son of man, Jesus, will have the prospect of surviving the end of this system of things. How vital that we use the remaining time to seek the approval of Jehovah

God and Jesus Christ! In prayer to God, Jesus said: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) It is, then, the course of wisdom on your part to learn more about Je-

ovah God and his requirements. Jehovah's Witnesses in your community will be happy to assist you in understanding what the Bible teaches. You have our warm invitation to contact them or to write to the publishers of this magazine.

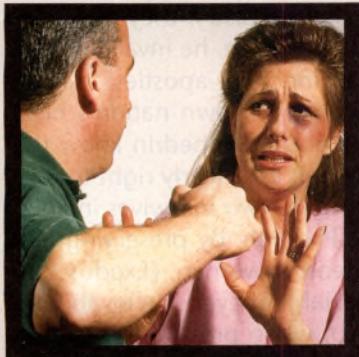
## FEATURES OF THE LAST DAYS

### MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS:

- Wars.—Matthew 24:6, 7.
- Food shortages.—Matthew 24:7.
- Earthquakes.—Matthew 24:7.
- Pestilences.—Luke 21:11.
- Increasing lawlessness.—Matthew 24:12.
- Ruining of the earth.—Revelation 11:18.



UNITED NATIONS/Photo by F. GRIFFING



### PEOPLE:

- Lovers of themselves.—2 Timothy 3:2.
- Lovers of money.—2 Timothy 3:2.
- Haughty.—2 Timothy 3:2.
- Disobedient to parents.—2 Timothy 3:2.
- Unthankful.—2 Timothy 3:2.
- Disloyal.—2 Timothy 3:2.
- Lacking natural affection.—2 Timothy 3:3.
- Without self-control.—2 Timothy 3:3.
- Fierce.—2 Timothy 3:3.
- Lovers of pleasures.—2 Timothy 3:4.
- Religious hypocrites.—2 Timothy 3:5.

### TRUE WORSHIPPERS:

- Possess abundant knowledge.  
—Daniel 12:4.
- Preach the good news worldwide.—Matthew 24:14.



## 'We Cannot Stop Speaking About Jesus'

THE year is 33 C.E., and the place is the imposing courtroom of the Jewish national tribunal in Jerusalem. In this setting, the Sanhedrin is about to try 12 followers of Jesus Christ. Why? Because they have been preaching about Jesus. The apostles Peter and John are standing before the court for the second time. This is the first trial for the other apostles.

The high priest addresses the 12 apostles regarding the order issued by the court on the former occasion. At that time, when ordered to stop teaching about Jesus, the apostles Peter and John replied: "Whether it is righteous in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves. But as for us, we cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard." After praying for courage, Jesus' disciples kept on proclaiming the good news.—Acts 4:18-31.

Aware that his previous threats were ineffective, at this second trial the high priest declares: "We positively ordered you not to keep teaching upon the basis of this name, and yet, look! you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you are determined to bring the blood of this man upon us."—Acts 5:28.

### Unfaltering Determination

Responding courageously, Peter and the other apostles say: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29) Indeed, rather than obey mere humans, we must



obey Jehovah when demands of men conflict with his commands.\*

The apostles' words affirming their allegiance to God should carry considerable weight with the members of the Sanhedrin. If asked about obedience to God, these leaders of Jewish society ought to respond unanimously: "Obey God." After all, do they not believe that God is the Sovereign Lord of the universe?

Apparently representing all the apostles, Peter states that in connection with their ministry, they obey God

rather than men. Hence, he invalidates the accusation regarding the apostles' alleged disobedience. From their own nation's history, the members of the Sanhedrin know that there are times when it is clearly right to obey God rather than men. Two midwives in Egypt feared God, not Pharaoh, by preserving alive males born to Hebrew women. (Exodus 1:15-17) King Hezekiah obeyed Jehovah, not King Sennacherib, when pressured to surrender. (2 Kings 19:14-37) The Hebrew Scriptures, with which the members of the Sanhedrin are familiar, stress that Jehovah expects his people to obey him.—1 Samuel 15:22, 23.

### Obedience Is Rewarded

At least one member of the high court is apparently affected by the words "we must obey God as ruler rather than men." Gamaliel, a highly esteemed judge in the Sanhe-

\* See the 2006 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses, September/October.



## HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED?

 How did the Gospel writer Luke obtain information about Gamaliel's statements made in a closed session of the Sanhedrin? Gamaliel's words may have been revealed to Luke through divine inspiration. Possibly, Paul (formerly one of Gamaliel's students) informed Luke about the content of Gamaliel's speech. Or Luke may have consulted a sympathetic member of the high court.

drin, prevails on the court to listen to his wise counsel delivered in a closed session. By citing past examples, Gamaliel points out that it is unwise to interfere with the work of the apostles. He concludes by saying: "Do not meddle with these men, but let them alone; . . . otherwise, you may perhaps be found fighters actually against God."—Acts 5:34-39.

Gamaliel's sensible words convince the high court to release the apostles. Though they are flogged, the apostles are in no way intimidated by this experience. Instead, the

Bible record says: "Every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus."—Acts 5:42.

How the apostles were blessed for maintaining that God's authority is supreme! True Christians today have the same attitude. Jehovah's Witnesses continue to look to Jehovah as their Supreme Ruler. If commanded to act contrary to God's directives, they respond as the apostles did: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men."



## "THEY CALLED TOGETHER THE SANHEDRIN"

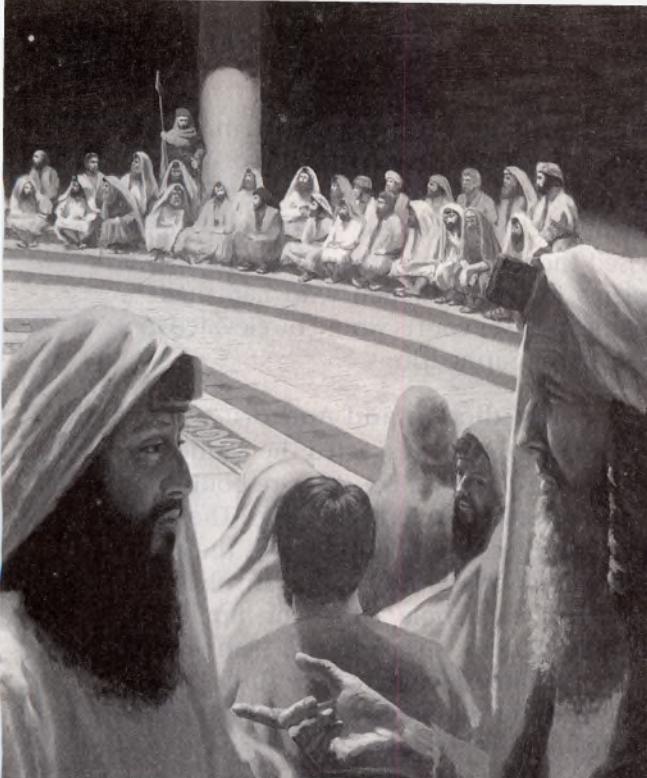
THE high priest and the rulers of the Jews were at a loss. What could they do to quiet the excitement surrounding Jesus Christ? They had succeeded in having him executed, but now Jesus' disciples were filling Jerusalem with talk of his resurrection. How could they be silenced? To decide, the high priest and his aides "called together the Sanhedrin," the supreme court of the Jewish people.—Acts 5:21.

In first-century Israel at that time, Roman Governor Pontius Pilate wielded supreme authority. But how did the Sanhedrin interact with Pilate? What were their respective jurisdictions? What was the composition of the Sanhedrin? And how did it operate?

### Development of the Sanhedrin

The Greek word rendered "Sanhedrin" literally means a "sitting down with." It was a general term for an assembly or a meeting. In Jewish tradition, it commonly referred to a religious judicial body, or court.

Writers of the Talmud, which was compiled during the centuries following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., represented the Sanhedrin as an ancient body. They imagined that it had always been composed of scholars who met to debate points of Jewish law and held that it dated from the time Moses assembled 70 older men to help him lead Israel. (Numbers 11:16, 17) Historians reject this idea. They say that not until



the Persian domination of Israel did something resembling the first-century Sanhedrin come into existence. Historians also hold that the learned academy of the Talmudists seems to fit in better, not with the Sanhedrin, but with second- and third-century rabbinic assemblies. So, then, when did the Sanhedrin come into existence?

The Bible reveals that exiles who returned to Judah from Babylon in 537 B.C.E. had a national organization. Nehemiah and Ezra mention princes, older men, nobles, and deputy rulers—perhaps the beginning of a future Sanhedrin.—Ezra 10:8; Nehemiah 5:7.

The period from the completion of the Hebrew Scriptures to the composition of the Gospel of Matthew was one of turmoil for the Jews. In 332 B.C.E., Alexander the Great took control of Judaea. After Alexander's death, Judaea came under two of the Greek kingdoms of his domain—first the Ptolemies, then the Seleucids. In accounts

of Seleucid domination, which began in 198 B.C.E., we find the first reference to a senate of the Jews. This assembly likely had limited powers, but it gave the Jews a semblance of self-government.

In 167 B.C.E., Seleucid King Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) tried to impose Greek culture on the Jews. He profaned Jerusalem's temple by sacrificing upon its altar a pig to Zeus. This provoked a revolt during which the Maccabees shook off Seleucid rule and set up the Hasmonaean dynasty.\* At the same time, the scribes and the Pharisees—leaders of the masses who backed the revolt—gained power in state administration at the expense of the priestly class.

The Sanhedrin as depicted in the Greek Scriptures was taking shape. It would become a national administrative council and the supreme judicial body for the interpretation of Jewish law.

### The Balance of Power

By the first century, Rome was in possession of Judaea. However, the Jews enjoyed a measure of freedom. It was Roman policy to grant subject peoples considerable self-determination. Hence, Roman officials did not concern themselves with duties performed by local courts, and they avoided problems that might arise because of cultural differences. The idea was to promote peace and the loyalty of the provincials by allowing them to observe their own customs and basically to govern themselves. Apart from appointing and deposing the high priest—who was president of the Sanhedrin—and levying taxes, the Romans intervened in Jewish affairs only when their own sovereignty and interests required this. As shown in connection with Jesus' trial, Rome

\* As to the Maccabees and the Hasmonaeans, see *The Watchtower*, November 15, 1998, pages 21-4, and June 15, 2001, pages 27-30.

seems to have guarded its power to inflict capital punishment.—John 18:31.

The Sanhedrin thus ran most internal Jewish affairs. It had officers to make arrests. (John 7:32) Lower courts tried minor crimes and civil cases without Roman interference. When the lower courts could not reach a decision in a case, it was referred to the Sanhedrin, whose rulings were final.

To justify its privileges, the Sanhedrin had to keep the peace and support Roman rule. But if the Romans suspected political offenses, they intervened and proceeded as they saw fit. One such case was the arrest of the apostle Paul.—Acts 21:31-40.

### Court Membership

The Sanhedrin had 71 members—the high priest and 70 of the nation's principal men. In Roman times it was made up of priestly nobles (mainly Sadducees), lay aristocrats, and learned scribes of the party of the Pharisees. The priestly aristocracy, supported by distinguished laymen, dominated the court.\* Whereas the Sadducees were conservative, the Pharisees were liberal and were chiefly commoners who had great influence with the people. According to the historian Josephus, the Pharisees' demands were reluctantly met by the Sadducees. Paul took advantage of their rivalry and the differences in belief between these groups when he defended himself before the Sanhedrin.—Acts 23:6-9.

The aristocratic nature of the Sanhedrin makes it probable that membership was permanent and that vacancies were filled through appointment by existing members. According to the Mishnah, new members had to be "priests, Levites, and Israelites

\* When the Bible speaks of "chief priests," it means present and past high priests and members of those families qualified to fill higher offices of the priesthood in the future.—Matthew 21:23.

whose daughters are permitted to marry the priests," that is, Jews who could produce genealogical records proving the purity of their descent. Since the high court supervised the judiciary of the whole country, it seems logical that men who had made a name in lower courts would be elevated to a seat in the Sanhedrin.

### Jurisdiction and Authority

The Jews highly respected the Sanhedrin, and judges in lower courts were bound, on pain of death, to accept its rulings. The court particularly concerned itself with the qualifications of priests and matters involving Jerusalem, its temple, and worship at the temple. Strictly speaking, the Sanhedrin's civil jurisdiction encompassed Judaea only. But since the Sanhedrin was considered supreme in interpretation of the Law, it exerted moral authority in Jewish communities worldwide. For example, the high priest and his council instructed leaders of the synagogues in Damascus to cooperate in the arrest of Christ's followers. (Acts 9:1, 2; 22:4, 5; 26:12) Likewise, Jews who visited Jerusalem for the festivals presumably took home news of the Sanhedrin's pronouncements.

According to the Mishnah, the Sanhedrin had sole jurisdiction in issues of national importance, in dealing with judges who defied its decisions, and in judging false prophets. Jesus and Stephen appeared before the court charged as blasphemers, Peter and John as subverters of the nation, and Paul as a profaner of the temple.—Mark 14:64; Acts 4:15-17; 6:11; 23:1; 24:6.

### Judgment of Jesus and His Disciples

Except for Sabbaths and holy days, the Sanhedrin sat in its decision chamber each day from the morning sacrifice to the evening offering. Trials were held during daylight hours only. Since capital sentences were

not pronounced until the day following the trial, such cases were not to be held on the eve of a Sabbath or of a festival. Witnesses were severely admonished regarding the seriousness of spilling innocent blood. Therefore, the nighttime trial and condemnation of Jesus held at Caiaphas' home on the eve of a festival was illegal. Worse still, the judges themselves sought false witnesses and persuaded Pilate to order Jesus' execution.—Matthew 26:57-59; John 11:47-53; 19:31.

Judges of capital cases, says the Talmud, endeavored to save the defendant during un hurried sessions. Yet, Stephen, like Jesus before him, received no such trial. His defense before the Sanhedrin led to his being stoned by a mob. Had it not been for Roman intervention, the apostle Paul may well have been killed under similar circumstances. In fact, judges of the Sanhedrin conspired to kill him.—Acts 6:12; 7:58; 23:6-15.

At least a few court members seem to have been principled men. A young Jewish ruler who spoke with Jesus may have been a member of the Sanhedrin. Although the man's riches were an obstacle, he must have had good qualities, since Jesus invited him to become His follower.—Matthew 19:16-22; Luke 18:18, 22.

Fear of what fellow judges might think may have caused Nicodemus, "a ruler of the Jews," to visit Jesus under cover of darkness. Yet, Nicodemus defended Jesus before the Sanhedrin by asking: "Our law does not judge a man unless first it has heard from him and come to know what he is doing, does it?" Nicodemus later provided "a roll of myrrh and aloes" to prepare Jesus' body for burial.—John 3:1, 2; 7:51, 52; 19:39.

Joseph of Arimathea, another member of the Sanhedrin, courageously asked Pilate for Jesus' body and laid it in his own new tomb. Joseph was "waiting for the kingdom of

God," but fear of the Jews prevented him from identifying himself as one of Jesus' disciples. To Joseph's credit, though, he did not vote in accord with the Sanhedrin in their plot to have Jesus killed.—Mark 15:43-46; Matthew 27:57-60; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38.

Sanhedrin member Gamaliel wisely counseled his fellow judges to let Jesus' disciples alone. "Otherwise," he said, "you may perhaps be found fighters actually against God." (Acts 5:34-39) What prevented the high court from recognizing that Jesus and his disciples had God's backing? Instead of acknowledging Jesus' miracles, the Sanhedrin reasoned: "What are we to do, because this man performs many signs? If we let him alone this way, they will all put faith in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." (John 11:47, 48) Lust for power perverted the justice of the Jewish high court. Likewise, instead of rejoicing when Jesus' disciples cured people, the religious leaders "became filled with jealousy." (Acts 5:17) As judges, they should have been God-fearing and just, but most of them were corrupt and dishonest.—Exodus 18:21; Deuteronomy 16:18-20.

### Divine Judgment

Because of Israel's disobedience to God's Law and rejection of the Messiah, Jehovah finally rejected the nation as his chosen people. In 70 C.E., the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem and its temple and brought an end to the whole Jewish system of things and eventually to the Sanhedrin itself.

Jehovah's appointed Judge, Jesus Christ, will determine whether any members of the first-century Sanhedrin merit a resurrection and who among them sinned against the holy spirit. (Mark 3:29; John 5:22) We can be certain that in making such decisions, Jesus will act with perfect justice.—Isaiah 11:3-5.

# A SEAL 'BELONGING TO JUCAL'

IN THE seventh century B.C.E., the Chaldean ruler Nebuchadnezzar overcame Jerusalem's defenses, burned the city, and demolished its walls. He captured and blinded Zedekiah, the king of Judah. Moreover, "all the nobles of Judah the king of Babylon slaughtered."—Jeremiah 39:1-8.

One of Judah's nobles, or princes, who likely met death at Babylonian hands was Jucal, the son of Shelemiah. Jucal's story has a sort of epilogue. Before considering it, though, let us see what the Scriptures say about Jucal and his day.

## "They Will Not Prevail Against You"

Jehovah commissioned the prophet Jeremiah to deliver a judgment message against Judah and Jerusalem. God told Jeremiah that Judah's kings, princes, priests, and people would "fight against" him. "But they will not prevail against you, for I am with you," said Jehovah.—Jeremiah 1:17-19.



Gabi Laron/Institute of Archaeology/  
Hebrew University ©Eilat Mazar

During the Babylonian siege against Judah's capital, Jerusalem, King Zedekiah twice sent messengers to Jeremiah to find out whether Nebuchadnezzar would withdraw from the city and to ask the prophet to pray for that outcome. One of the king's emissaries was Jucal, also known as Jehucal. Jeremiah's God-given message was that the Babylonians, or Chaldeans, would destroy the city. Any residents of Jerusalem who remained in it would die by famine, pestilence, and the sword. On the other hand, those going out to the Chaldeans would survive. How Jeremiah's words enraged the princes of Judah!—Jeremiah 21:1-10; 37:3-10; 38:1-3.

Jucal was one of the princes who urged Zedekiah: "Let this man [Jeremiah], please, be put to death, for . . . he is weakening the hands of the men of war." Wicked Jucal was also among those who threw Jeremiah into a miry cistern, from which the prophet was later rescued. (Jeremiah 37:15; 38:4-6) For obeying Jehovah, Jeremiah survived Jerusalem's destruction, but Jucal apparently died when the system in which he trusted was destroyed.

## IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Man's Quest for Everlasting Life

Is the Bible Too Restrictive?

Hope in Jehovah, and Be Courageous

## An Interesting Epilogue

It might be said that the epilogue to the account about Jucal was "written" in Jerusalem as recently as the year 2005. Archaeologists were digging at a site where they hoped to find King David's palace. What they found was an extensive stone structure that they



*Jeremiah did not bow to pressure to water down God's message*

believe was destroyed when the Babylonians took Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day.

Whether this is David's palace or not remains uncertain. Yet, archaeologists did identify one object found—the 0.4-inch-wide clay seal impression shown on page 14. It once sealed a document that has long since decayed. The impression reads: "Belonging to Yehuchal son of Shelemiyahu son of Shovi." This impression evidently was made with the seal of Jeremiah's opponent Yehuchal, or Jucal, the son of Shelemiyah.

Archaeologist Eilat Mazar, who deciphered the impression, writes that Jehuhal is only the "second royal minister," after Gemariah,

the son of Shaphan, whose name appears on a seal impression found in the City of David.\*

Faith in God's Word does not depend on the discovery of any artifact; but the fulfillment of inspired prophecy is a sound basis for belief in the Bible. Historical facts prove that Jeremiah accurately foretold the destruction of Jerusalem. The inglorious end of Jeremiah's opponents should strengthen our conviction that if we are faithful like Jeremiah, our enemies 'will not prevail against us because Jehovah is with us.'

\* For information about Gemariah and Shaphan, see the article "Are You Acquainted With Shaphan and His Family?" in *The Watchtower* of December 15, 2002, pages 19-22.

# Jehovah's Word Is Alive

## Highlights From the Book of Proverbs

KING SOLOMON of ancient Israel "could speak three thousand proverbs." (1 Kings 4:32) Do we have access to his wise sayings? Yes, we do. The Bible book of Proverbs, completed about 717 B.C.E., records many of Solomon's proverbs. Only the last two chapters are attributed to other writers—Agur the son of Jakeh and Lemuel the king. However, some believe Lemuel to be another name for Solomon.

The inspired sayings collected in the book of Proverbs have a twofold purpose—"for one to know wisdom and discipline." (Proverbs 1:2) These sayings help us to acquire wisdom, which is the ability to see things clearly and apply knowledge to solve problems. By means of them, we also receive discipline, or moral training. Paying attention to these proverbs and heeding their advice can affect our heart, contribute toward our happiness, and lead to success.

—Hebrews 4:12.

### 'ACQUIRE WISDOM AND TAKE HOLD OF DISCIPLINE' (Proverbs 1:1–9:18)

"True wisdom itself keeps crying aloud in the very street," says Solomon. (Proverbs 1:20) Why should we listen to its loud and clear voice? Chapter 2 cites many benefits of acquiring wisdom. How to seek intimacy with Jehovah is discussed in chapter 3. Solomon then says: "Wisdom is the prime thing. Acquire wisdom; and with

all that you acquire, acquire understanding. Take hold on discipline; do not let go."—Proverbs 4:7, 13.

What will help us to resist the immoral ways of the world? The 5th chapter of Proverbs answers: Exercise thinking ability, and recognize the seductive ways of the world. Consider, too, the high price of committing immorality. The following chapter warns against practices and attitudes that jeopardize our relationship with Jehovah. The 7th chapter provides an invaluable exposé of how an immoral person operates. In chapter 8, the value and appeal of wisdom is presented in a fascinating way. The 9th chapter, a stimulating conclusion to the proverbs



discussed up to that point, is presented as an exciting illustration that motivates us to pursue wisdom.

### **Scriptural Questions Answered:**

**1:7; 9:10**—In what way is the fear of Jehovah “the beginning of knowledge” and “the start of wisdom”? Without the fear of Jehovah, there can be no knowledge, for he is the Creator of all things and the Author of the Scriptures. (Romans 1:20; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17) He is the very Source of all true knowledge. Hence, knowledge begins with the reverential fear of Jehovah. Godly fear is also the start of wisdom because there can be no wisdom without knowledge. Moreover, a person who lacks the fear of Jehovah will not use whatever knowledge he has to honor the Creator.

**5:3**—Why is a prostitute called “a strange woman”? Proverbs 2:16, 17 describes a “strange woman” as someone “who has forgotten the very covenant of her God.” Anyone who worshipped false gods or made himself or herself a stranger to the Mosaic Law, including a prostitute, was called a stranger.—Jeremiah 2:25; 3:13.

**7:1, 2**—What is included in “my sayings” and “my own commandments”? In addition to Bible teachings, these include family rules, or regulations, set by parents for the good of the family members. Young ones need to abide by these as well as by the Scriptural teachings they receive from their parents.

**8:30**—Who is the “master worker”? Personified wisdom calls itself a master worker. More than serving as a literary device to explain the characteristics of wisdom, this personification figuratively refers to God’s first-born Son, Jesus Christ, in his prehuman existence. Long before his birth as a human on earth, he was ‘produced as the beginning of God’s way.’ (Proverbs 8:22) As “a master worker,” he actively worked with his Father

during the creation of all things.—Colossians 1:15-17.

**9:17**—What are “stolen waters,” and why are they “sweet”? Since the Bible likens enjoying sexual intimacy within marriage to drinking refreshing water drawn out of a well, stolen waters represent secretive immoral sexual relations. (Proverbs 5:15-17) The idea of getting away with something gives such waters their apparent sweetness.

### **Lessons for Us:**

**1:10-14**. We should guard against being lured into the bad ways of sinners by their promises of riches.

**3:3**. We should highly value loving-kindness and trueness and visibly display them as we would a priceless necklace. We also need to inscribe these qualities on our heart, making them an integral part of us.

**4:18**. Spiritual knowledge is progressive. To remain in the light, we must continue to manifest humility and meekness.

**5:8**. We ought to keep far away from all immoral influences, whether they come through music, entertainment, the Internet, or books and magazines.

**5:21**. Would a lover of Jehovah exchange his good relationship with the true God for a few moments of pleasure? Of course not! The strongest incentive for maintaining moral purity is the awareness that Jehovah sees our ways and holds us accountable.

**6:1-5**. In these verses, what fine advice we have against ‘going surety,’ or making an unwise financial commitment, in behalf of others! If, upon closer scrutiny, the action we have taken seems unwise, without delay we should ‘storm our fellowman’ with persistent requests and do all we can to set matters straight.

**6:16-19**. Herein are seven basic categories involving almost every type of wrongdoing. We should develop a hatred of them.

**6:20-24.** A Scriptural upbringing can protect one from getting caught in the trap of sexual immorality. Parents should not be negligent about providing such training.

**7:4.** We should develop an affection for wisdom and understanding.

### INDIVIDUAL PROVERBS TO GUIDE US (Proverbs 10:1–29:27)

The remainder of Solomon's proverbs are concise individual sayings. Presented mainly as contrasts, parallels, and comparisons, they convey powerful lessons in conduct, speech, and attitude.

Chapters 10 through 24 emphasize the value of the reverential fear of Jehovah. The proverbs in chapters 25 through 29 were transcribed by "the men of Hezekiah the king of Judah." (Proverbs 25:1) These proverbs teach dependence on Jehovah and other vital lessons.

#### *Scriptural Questions Answered:*

**10:6; footnote—How does 'the mouth of the wicked ones cover up violence'?** This may be so in the sense that by sweet talk the wicked cover up their malicious intent to harm others. Or it could be that since the wicked are generally treated with animosity, the hostility they receive from others silences them.

**10:10—How does "the one winking his eye" cause pain?**

"A good-for-nothing man" may not only resort to "crookedness of speech" but also try to hide his motives with body language, such as "winking his eye." (Proverbs 6:12, 13) This kind of deception can become a source of much mental distress to his victim.



*What does it mean to 'scatter knowledge about'?*

**10:29—What is "the way of Jehovah"?** The reference here is to the way Jehovah deals with mankind and not to the course of life we should follow. God's dealings with humans spell security for the blameless but ruin for the wicked.

**11:31—Why should the wicked one be rewarded more than the righteous one?** The reward here is measured in terms of the degree of chastisement each receives.

When the righteous person errs, the reward he receives for his errors is discipline. The wicked one sins deliberately and refuses to turn to doing good. He therefore deserves and receives a severe punishment.

**12:23—How does one 'cover knowledge'?** Covering knowledge does not mean that one does not display it at all. Rather, it means that one displays knowledge discreetly, not making a showy display of it by bragging.

**14:17—In what way is 'the man of thinking abilities hated'?** The Hebrew expression translated "thinking abilities" can mean either discernment or malicious thinking. A man of wicked ideas is, of course, hated. But so is the man of discernment who exercises his thinking abilities and chooses to be "no part of the world." —John 15:19.

**18:19—How is 'a brother who is transgressed against more than a strong town'?** Like a strong town under siege, such a person may rigidly refuse to make concessions. Contentions between him and the transgressor can easily become as much of a barrier as "the bar of a dwelling tower."

## **Lessons for Us:**

**10:11-14.** For our words to be upbuilding, our mind should be filled with accurate knowledge, our heart ought to be motivated by love, and wisdom should dictate what comes out of our mouth.

**10:19; 12:18; 13:3; 15:28; 17:28.** May our words be few and thoughtful.

**11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23.** Jehovah wants us to be honest in our business dealings.

**11:4.** It is foolish to pursue material wealth at the expense of personal Bible study, meeting attendance, prayer, and the field ministry.

**13:4.** To be "desirous" of a position of responsibility in the congregation or of life in the new world is in itself not enough. We must also be industrious and put forth diligent effort to meet the requirements.

**13:24; 29:15, 21.** A loving parent does not pamper his child or overlook his faults. Rather, a father or a mother takes corrective measures to root out such faults before they become deeply ingrained.

**14:10.** Since our innermost feelings can neither be precisely expressed at all times nor be always understood by onlookers, the emotional comfort that others can offer has its limitations. We may have to endure some difficulties by relying solely on Jehovah.

**15:7.** We should not pour out everything we know to a person all at once, just as a farmer does not pour out all his seeds in one location. The wise one scatters his knowledge a little at a time as the need may be.

**15:15; 18:14.** Maintaining a positive mental outlook will help us to find joy, even under distressing circumstances.

**17:24.** Unlike "the stupid one," whose eyes and mind wander instead of being focused on important matters, we should seek understanding so that we can act in wisdom.

**23:6-8.** We should be on guard against a hypocritical display of hospitality.

**27:21.** Praise can show us up for who we are. Humility is revealed if the praise moves us to acknowledge our indebtedness to Jehovah and encourages us to continue to serve him. A lack of humility is disclosed when praise fosters a feeling of superiority.

**27:23-27.** Using a pastoral setting, these proverbs emphasize the value of finding contentment in a simple life resulting from diligent work. They should especially impress on us the need to depend on God.\*

**28:5.** If we 'seek Jehovah' through prayer and a study of his Word, we "can understand everything" needed to serve him acceptably.

## **'WEIGHTY MESSAGES'**

**(Proverbs 30:1-31:31)**

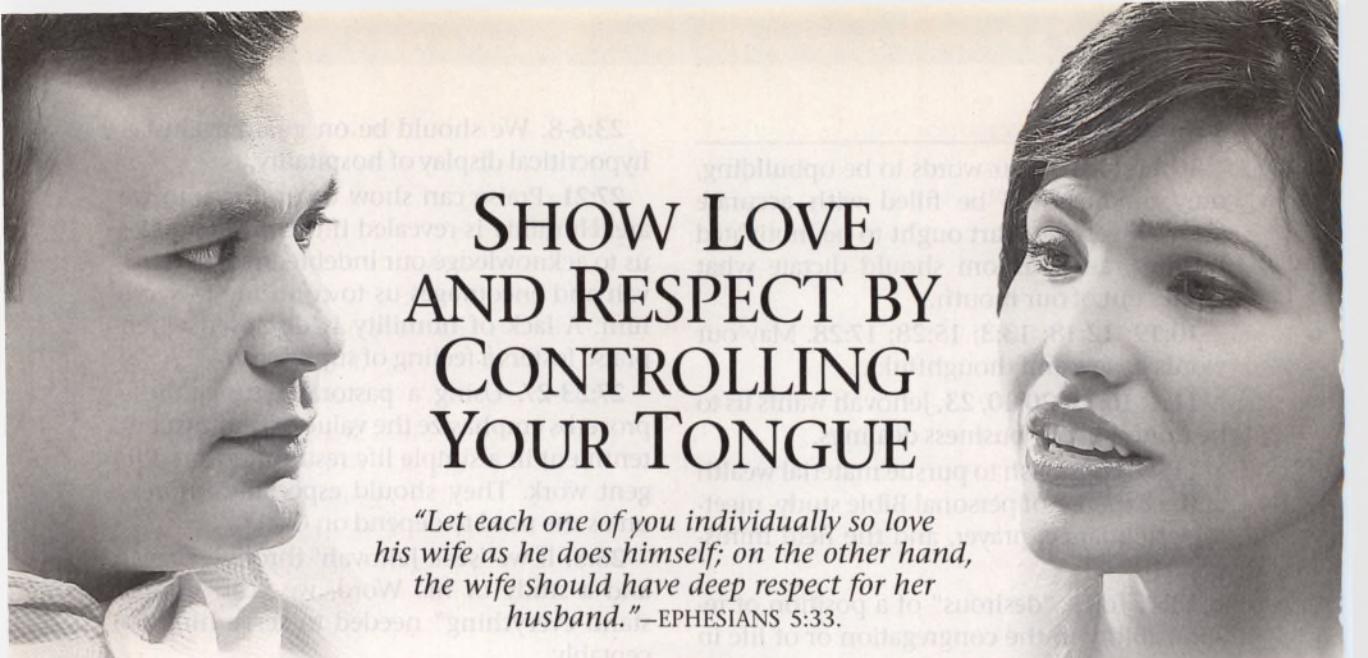
The Bible book of Proverbs concludes with two 'weighty messages.' (Proverbs 30:1; 31:1) By means of thought-provoking comparisons, the message of Agur illustrates the insatiableness of greed, and it shows how undetectable the persuasive ways of a seducer are with a maiden.\* It also warns against self-exaltation and angry speech.

The weighty message that Lemuel received from his mother contains sound advice about the use of wine and intoxicating liquor as well as about judging in righteousness. The description of a good wife ends with the statement: "Give her of the fruitage of her hands, and let her works praise her."—Proverbs 31:31.

Gain wisdom, accept discipline, cultivate godly fear, rely upon Jehovah. What valuable lessons the inspired proverbs teach! By all means, let us apply their advice and thus experience the happiness of "the man in fear of Jehovah."—Psalm 112:1.

\* See *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1991, page 31.

\* See *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1992, page 31.



# SHOW LOVE AND RESPECT BY CONTROLLING YOUR TONGUE

*"Let each one of you individually so love his wife as he does himself; on the other hand, the wife should have deep respect for her husband."—EPHESIANS 5:33.*

**S**UPPOSE you received a gift-wrapped package with a label that read: "Handle With Care." How would you treat that package? Surely you would take every precaution to avoid damaging it. What about the gift of marriage?

<sup>2</sup> To the young women Orpah and Ruth, the Israelite widow Naomi said: "May Jehovah make a gift to you, and do you find a resting-place each one in the house of her husband." (Ruth 1:3-9) Concerning a good wife, the Bible says: "The inheritance from fathers is a house and wealth, but a discreet wife is from Jehovah." (Proverbs 19:14) If you are married, you need to view your mate as a gift from God. How are you treating the gift that God has given you?

<sup>3</sup> Writing to Christians in the first century, the apostle Paul said: "Let each one of you individually so love his wife as he does himself; on the other hand, the wife should have deep respect for her husband." (Ephesians 5:

- 1, 2. What important question should all married people ask themselves, and why?
3. What admonition of Paul do husbands and wives do well to heed?

33) Consider how husbands and wives can heed this admonition with regard to their speech.

#### Beware of "an Unruly Injurious Thing"

<sup>4</sup> The Bible writer James says that the tongue is "an unruly injurious thing" that "is full of death-dealing poison." (James 3:8) James was aware of this vital truth: An unruly tongue is destructive. Undoubtedly, he was familiar with the Bible proverb that compares thoughtless words to "the stabs of a sword." In contrast, the same proverb says that "the tongue of the wise ones is a healing." (Proverbs 12:18) Indeed, words can have a powerful effect. They can hurt, or they can heal. What effect do your words have on your marriage mate? If you asked your spouse this, how would he or she answer?

<sup>5</sup> If hurtful speech has crept into your marriage, you can change the situation for

4. How can the tongue be a force for good or for bad?
- 5, 6. What factors make it difficult for some to restrain the tongue?

the better. However, effort will be required. Why? For one thing, there is the imperfect flesh to contend with. Inherited sin exerts a negative influence on the way we think about and speak to one another. "If anyone does not stumble in word," James wrote, "this one is a perfect man, able to bridle also his whole body."—James 3:2.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to human imperfection, family environment plays a role in the misuse of the tongue. Some people were raised in homes where parents were "not open to any agreement, . . . without self-control, fierce." (2 Timothy 3:1-3) Often, children who grow up in such an environment display similar traits when they become adults. Of course, neither imperfection nor deficient upbringing provides an excuse for harmful speech. Being aware of these factors, though, helps us to understand why restraining the tongue from speaking what is injurious is particularly challenging for some.

### 'Put Away Backbiting'

<sup>7</sup> Regardless of the cause, using hurtful speech in marriage could indicate a lack of love and respect for one's spouse. For good reason, Peter admonished Christians to "put away . . . all sorts of backbiting." (1 Peter 2:1) The Greek word translated "backbiting" means "insulting language." It conveys the idea of 'shooting people with words.' How well that describes the effects of an unruly tongue!

<sup>8</sup> Insulting speech may not seem so serious, but consider what happens when a husband or a wife uses such speech. Calling one's mate stupid, lazy, or selfish im-

7. What did Peter mean when he admonished Christians to "put away . . . all sorts of backbiting"?

8, 9. What can result from using insulting speech, and why should marriage mates avoid doing so?

plies that his or her entire character can be summed up by a label—a demeaning one at that! This is surely cruel. And what about sweeping assertions that highlight a mate's flaws? Are not such statements as "You're *always* late" or "You *never* listen to me" really exaggerations? They are bound to elicit a defensive response. That, in turn, may trigger a heated argument.—James 3:5.

<sup>9</sup> Conversation that is laced with insulting speech puts a strain on a marriage, and this too can have dire consequences. Proverbs 25:24 says: "Better is it to dwell upon a corner of a roof than with a contentious wife, although in a house in common." Of course, the same can be said of a contentious husband. Over time, cutting words from either mate will erode a relationship, perhaps causing a husband or a wife to feel unloved, even unlovable. Clearly, it is important to restrain the tongue. But how can this be done?

### 'Bridle the Tongue'

<sup>10</sup> "The tongue," states James 3:8, "not one of mankind can get it tamed." Nevertheless, just as a rider bridles a horse to control the animal's movements, we should do our best to bridle our tongue. "If any man seems to himself to be a formal worshiper and yet does not bridle his tongue, but goes on deceiving his own heart, this man's form of worship is futile." (James 1:26; 3:2, 3) These words show that how you use your tongue is a serious matter. It affects more than your relationship with your mate; it affects your very relationship with Jehovah God.—1 Peter 3:7.

<sup>11</sup> You are wise to take note of how you speak to your mate. If a stressful situation

10. Why is it important to control the tongue?

11. How might it be possible to prevent a disagreement from escalating into a heated argument?

develops, try to defuse the tension. Consider a situation that arose in the life of Isaac and his wife, Rebekah, as recorded at Genesis 27:46–28:4. “Rebekah kept saying to Isaac: ‘I have come to abhor this life of mine because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob ever takes a wife from the daughters of Heth like these from the daughters of the land, of what good is life to me?’” There is no indication that Isaac responded harshly. Instead, he sent their son Jacob away to find a God-fearing wife who was not likely to become a source of distress to Rebekah. Suppose that a disagreement arises between a husband and his wife. A subtle shift from “you” to “I” can prevent a minor disagreement from escalating into a heated argument. For example, instead of saying, “You never spend time with me!” why not say, “I wish we could spend more time together”? Focus on the problem, not just the person. Resist the tendency to analyze who is right and who is wrong. “Pursue the things making for peace and the things that are upbuilding to one another,” says Romans 14:19.

### **Put Away ‘Malicious Bitterness, Anger, and Wrath’**

<sup>12</sup> More is involved in restraining the tongue than watching what we say. After all, our words are a product of the heart rather than of the mouth. Jesus said: “A good man brings forth good out of the good treasure of his heart, but a wicked man brings forth what is wicked out of his wicked treasure; for out of the heart’s abundance his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45) Hence, to control your tongue, you may need to pray as did David: “Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one.” —Psalm 51:10.

12. To control the tongue, for what should we pray, and why?

<sup>13</sup> Paul urged the Ephesians to avoid not only the hurtful words but also the feelings behind them. He wrote: “Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you along with all badness.” (Ephesians 4:31) Note that before citing “screaming and abusive speech,” Paul mentioned “malicious bitterness and anger and wrath.” It is the rage that boils within that threatens to erupt in an outburst of hurtful speech. So ask yourself: ‘Do I harbor bitterness and wrath in my heart? Am I “disposed to rage”?’ (Proverbs 29:22) If this is true in your case, pray for God’s help to overcome these tendencies and to exercise self-control so that you can avoid letting your anger erupt. Psalm 4:4 says: “Be agitated, but do not sin. Have your say in your heart, upon your bed, and keep silent.” If tempers threaten to flare and you fear that you will lose self-control, follow the admonition of Proverbs 17:14: “Before the quarrel has burst forth, take your leave.” Momentarily step away from the situation until the danger passes.

<sup>14</sup> It is not easy to deal with wrath and anger, especially when it stems from what Paul called “malicious bitterness.” The Greek word that Paul used has been defined as characterizing a “resentful spirit which refuses reconciliation” and a ‘spite that keeps a score of wrongs.’ Sometimes hostility hangs like a dense fog between a husband and his wife, and the condition may persist for a long time. Cold disdain may result when a grievance has not been fully resolved. But harboring resentment for past wrongs is futile. What has happened cannot be undone. A wrong that has been forgiven should be forgotten. Love “does not keep account of the injury.”—1 Corinthians 13:4, 5.

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13. How can malicious bitterness, anger, and wrath lead to abusive speech?
  14. How can resentment affect a marriage?

<sup>15</sup> What if harsh language was common in the family in which you were raised and using it has become your custom? You can make changes in this regard. You have already set limits in a number of areas of life in which you will just not allow yourself to act in a certain way. Where will you choose to set the boundary when it comes to your speech? Will you stop before your words become abusive? You will want to adopt the limit described at Ephesians 4:29: "Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth." This requires that you "strip off the old personality with its practices, and clothe [yourself] with the new personality, which through accurate knowledge is being made new according to the image of the One who created it."—Colossians 3:9, 10.

15. What will help those accustomed to using harsh words to change their manner of speaking?

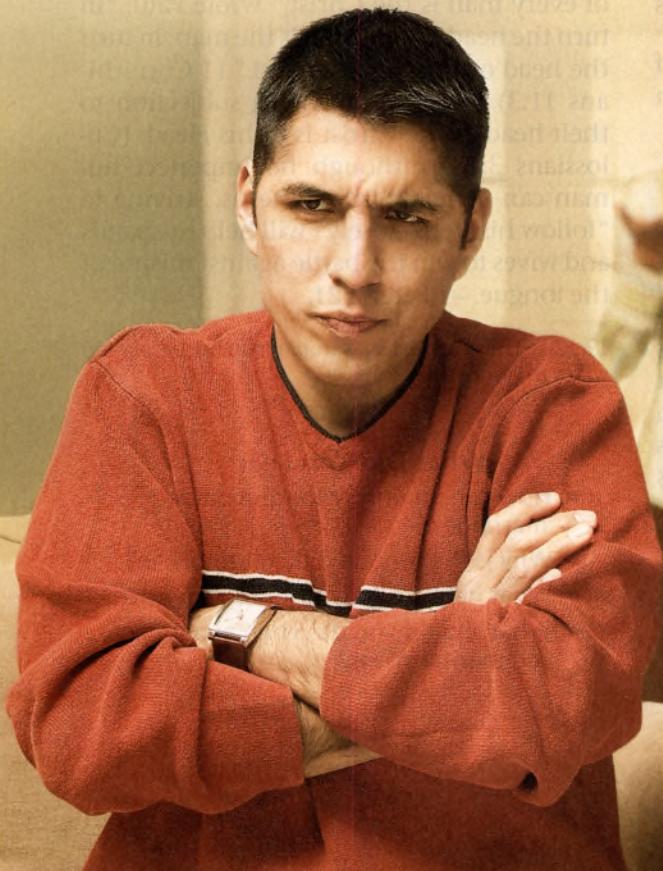
### "Confidential Talk"—A Must

<sup>16</sup> Little is accomplished—and damage can result—when a husband or a wife resorts to what has been called the silent treatment. This is not always a matter of punishing one's partner, as it may result from frustration or discouragement. Yet, refusing to talk to each other only heightens tension and does little to solve the problem at hand. As one wife put it, "once we do start talking again, we never discuss the problem."

<sup>17</sup> When marital tension persists, there is no shortcut. Proverbs 15:22 states: "There is a frustrating of plans where there is no confidential talk, but in the multitude of counselors there is accomplishment." You need to

16. Why is the silent treatment damaging to a marriage?

17. What should be done by Christians experiencing marital stress?





### *Elders provide Bible-based help*

sit down with your spouse and discuss the matter. By all means, listen to your mate with an open mind and heart. If it seems impossible to do so, why not take advantage of the provision of elders in the Christian congregation? They have knowledge of the Scriptures and are experienced in applying Bible principles. Such men are “like a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rainstorm.”—Isaiah 32:2.

### **You Can Win the Battle**

<sup>18</sup> Bridling our tongue is a struggle. So is controlling our actions. Describing the challenge that he faced, the apostle Paul wrote: “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells nothing good; for ability to wish is present with me, but ability to work out what is fine is not present. For the good that I wish I do not do, but the bad that I do not wish is what I practice. If, now, what I do not wish is what I do, the one working it out is no longer I, but the sin dwelling in me.” Because of “sin’s law that is in [our] members,” we are inclined to misuse our tongue and other parts of the body. (Romans 7:18-23) How-

18. What struggle is described at Romans 7:18-23?

ever, the battle must be fought—and it can be won with God’s help.

<sup>19</sup> In a relationship that is characterized by love and respect, there is no room for thoughtless, harsh words. Think of the example that Jesus Christ set in this regard. Jesus never used insulting speech with his disciples. Even on the last night of his life on earth when his apostles were arguing over who among them was the greatest, the Son of God did not scold them. (Luke 22:24-27) “Husbands,” admonishes the Bible, “continue loving your wives, just as the Christ also loved the congregation and delivered up himself for it.”—Ephesians 5:25.

<sup>20</sup> What, though, about a wife? She “should have deep respect for her husband.” (Ephesians 5:33) Would a wife who respects her husband scream at him, using abusive speech? “I want you to know that the head of every man is the Christ,” wrote Paul, “in turn the head of a woman is the man; in turn the head of the Christ is God.” (1 Corinthians 11:3) Wives are to be in subjection to their head as the Christ is to his Head. (Colossians 3:18) Although no imperfect human can perfectly imitate Jesus, striving to “follow his steps closely” will help husbands and wives to win the battle against misuse of the tongue.—1 Peter 2:21.

19, 20. How can Jesus’ example help husbands and wives to bridle their tongue?

### **What Did You Learn?**

- How can an unruly tongue damage a marriage?
- Why is the tongue difficult to bridle?
- What helps us to control our speech?
- What should you do when experiencing marital stress?

# "REJOICE WITH THE WIFE OF YOUR YOUTH"

*"Rejoice with the wife of your youth . . . Why should you, my son, be in an ecstasy with a strange woman?"*—PROVERBS 5:18, 20.

THE Bible is not prudish about sexual relations. At Proverbs 5:18, 19, we read: "Let your water source prove to be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth, a lovable hind and a charming mountain goat. Let her own breasts intoxicate you at all times. With her love may you be in an ecstasy constantly."

<sup>2</sup> Here the term "water source" refers to the source of sexual satisfaction. It is blessed in that the feeling of romantic love and ecstasy enjoyed between marriage mates is a gift from God. This intimacy, though, is to be experienced strictly within the marital arrangement. So King Solomon of ancient Israel, a writer of Proverbs, rhetorically asks: "Why should you, my son, be in an ecstasy with a strange woman or embrace the bosom of a foreign woman?"—Proverbs 5:20.

<sup>3</sup> On their wedding day, a man and a woman make a solemn commitment to love each other and to stay faithful. Nevertheless, many marriages are shattered by adultery. In fact, after analyzing more than two dozen studies, one researcher concluded that "25 percent of wives and 44 percent of husbands have had extramarital intercourse." The apostle Paul stated: "Do not be misled.

1, 2. Why can it be said that the romantic love between a husband and his wife is blessed?

3. (a) What is the sad reality for many marriages? (b) How does God view adultery?

Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men . . . will inherit God's kingdom." (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) There is no question about it. Adultery is a serious sin in God's eyes, and true worshippers must guard against marital infidelity. What will help us to 'keep marriage honorable, and the marriage bed without defilement'?—Hebrews 13:4.



### Beware of a Treacherous Heart

<sup>4</sup> In today's debased moral climate, many people "have eyes full of adultery and [are] unable to desist from sin." (2 Peter 2:14) They willfully pursue romantic relationships outside of marriage. In some lands a large number of women have entered the workforce, and the gender mix has created fertile soil for improper office romances to develop. Then, too, Internet chat rooms have made it easy for even the most timid of individuals to strike up intimate friendships online. Many married people fall into such traps without realizing what is happening to them.

<sup>5</sup> Consider how a Christian whom we will call Mary got caught in a situation that brought her dangerously close to committing sexual immorality. Her husband, who is not one of Jehovah's Witnesses, displayed very little affection for his family. Mary recalls a time some years ago when she met one of her husband's coworkers. The man was quite mannerly, and on a later occasion, he even expressed interest in Mary's religious beliefs. "He was so nice, so different from my husband," she says. Soon Mary and her husband's coworker were romantically involved. "I haven't committed adultery," she reasoned, "and the man is interested in the Bible. Maybe I can help him."

<sup>6</sup> Before her romantic attachment led to adultery, Mary came to her senses. (Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:19) Her conscience began working, and she proceeded to set matters straight. Mary's experience illustrates that "the heart is more treacherous

4. What are some ways that a married Christian could unwittingly get involved in a romantic relationship outside of marriage?
- 5, 6. How did one Christian woman become ensnared in a dangerous situation, and what do we learn from this?

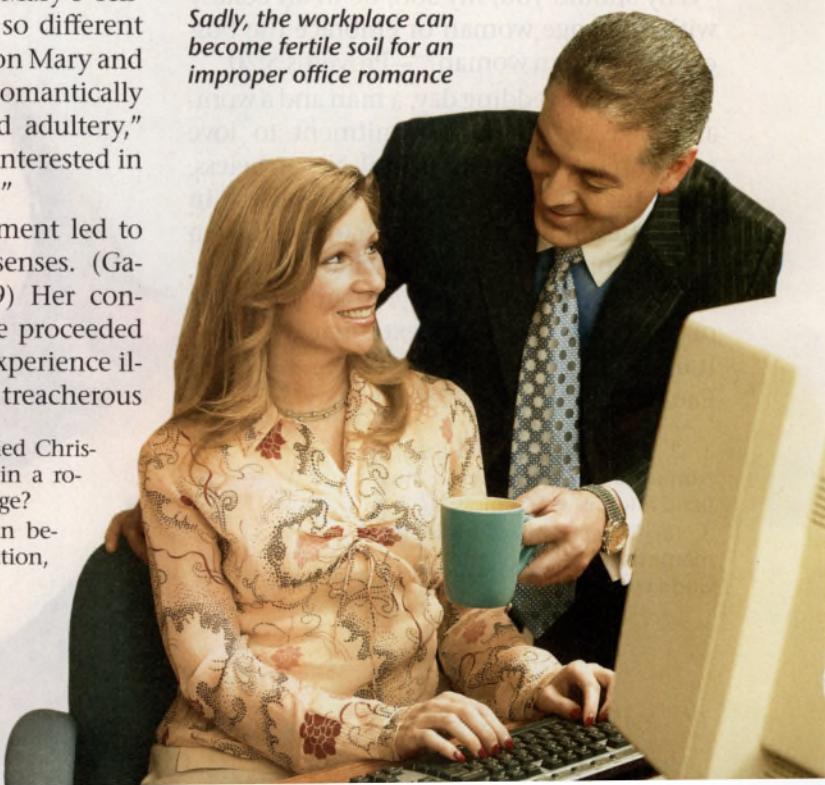
than anything else and is desperate." (Jeremiah 17:9) The Bible admonishes us: "More than all else that is to be guarded, safeguard your heart." (Proverbs 4:23) How can we do so?

### 'The Shrewd One Proceeds to Conceal Himself'

<sup>7</sup> "Let him that thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall," wrote the apostle Paul. (1 Corinthians 10:12) And Proverbs 22:3 states: "Shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself." Rather than overconfidently thinking, 'Nothing will happen to me,' you are wise to anticipate situations that could lead to problems. For example, avoid becoming the sole confidant of someone of the opposite sex who is experiencing perplexing difficulties in marriage. (Proverbs 11:14) Tell the person that marital problems are best discussed with his mate, with a mature Christian of

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7. When helping someone with marital difficulties, following what Scriptural advice will be a safeguard?

*Sadly, the workplace can become fertile soil for an improper office romance*



the same sex who wants his union to succeed, or with the elders. (Titus 2:3, 4) The elders in congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses set a fine example in this regard. When an elder needs to speak privately with a Christian sister, he does so in a public setting—such as at the Kingdom Hall.

<sup>8</sup> In the workplace and elsewhere, beware of situations that might foster intimacy. For example, spending extra hours working closely with someone of the opposite sex can set the stage for temptation. As a married man or woman, you should make it clear by your speech and your demeanor that you are simply not available. As one who pursues godly devotion, you would certainly not want to invite undue attention by flirting or by being immodest in your dress and grooming. (1 Timothy 4:8; 6:11; 1 Peter 3:3, 4) Having photos of your marriage mate and children around the workplace will serve as a visual reminder to you and to others that you have priorities. Be determined never to encourage—or even tolerate—seductive overtures from another.—Job 31:1.

### **"See Life With the Wife Whom You Love"**

<sup>9</sup> Safeguarding the heart calls for more than avoiding dangerous situations. A romantic attraction to someone outside the marriage could be an indication that a husband and a wife are not attentive to each other's needs. It might be that a wife is continually ignored or a husband is constantly criticized. Suddenly another person—whether encountered on the job or even in the Christian congregation—seems to possess the very qualities that are lacking in one's mate. Soon a bond forms, and the new

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8. What caution is essential in the workplace?
  9. What chain of events can make a new romantic relationship alluring?

relationship becomes almost irresistibly alluring. This subtle chain of events confirms the truthfulness of the Bible's statement: "Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire."—James 1:14.

<sup>10</sup> Rather than looking outside the marriage to satisfy their desires—whether for affection, for friendship, or for support during a challenging ordeal—husbands and wives should work to solidify a loving relationship with their mate. By all means, then, spend time together, and draw closer to each other. Reflect on what caused you to fall in love. Try to recapture the warmth you felt toward the person who became your spouse. Think of the good times you have enjoyed together. Pray to God about the matter. The psalmist David implored Jehovah: "Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one." (Psalm 51:10) Be determined to 'see life with the wife whom you love all the days of your life that God has given you under the sun.'—Ecclesiastes 9:9.

<sup>11</sup> Not to be overlooked in strengthening the marriage bond is the value of knowledge, wisdom, and discernment. Proverbs 24:3, 4 states: "By wisdom a household will be built up, and by discernment it will prove firmly established. And by knowledge will the interior rooms be filled with all precious and pleasant things of value." Included among the precious things filling a happy household are such qualities as love, loyalty, godly fear, and faith. Acquiring these calls for the knowledge of God. Married couples, then, should be serious students of the Bible. And how important are wisdom and discernment? Successfully coping

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10. How can husbands and wives solidify their relationship?
  11. What role do knowledge, wisdom, and discernment play in strengthening the marriage bond?

with day-to-day problems requires wisdom, the ability to apply Scriptural knowledge. A person with discernment is able to understand the thoughts and feelings of his or her mate. (Proverbs 20:5) "My son, to my wisdom O do pay attention," says Jehovah, through Solomon. "To my discernment incline your ears."—Proverbs 5:1.

### When There Is "Tribulation"

<sup>12</sup> No marriage is perfect. The Bible even says that husbands and wives will have "tribulation in their flesh." (1 Corinthians 7:28) Anxieties, sickness, persecution, and other factors can place stress upon a marriage. When problems arise, however, you need to look for solutions together as loyal marriage mates seeking to please Jehovah.

<sup>13</sup> What if the marriage is under stress because of the way that the mates treat each other? The search for a solution takes effort. For instance, it may be that a pattern of unkind speech has crept into their marriage and now characterizes it. (Proverbs 12:18) As discussed in the preceding article, this can have devastating effects. A Bible proverb says: "Better is it to dwell in a wilderness land than with a contentious wife along with vexation." (Proverbs 21:19) If you are a wife in such a marriage, ask yourself, 'Is my disposition making it difficult for my husband to be around me?' The Bible tells husbands: "Keep on loving your wives and do not be bitterly angry with them." (Colossians 3:19) If you are a husband, ask yourself, 'Is my demeanor cold, tempting my wife to seek comfort elsewhere?' Of course, there is no excuse for sexual immorality. Yet, the fact that such a tragedy could happen is good reason to discuss problems openly.

12. Why is it not surprising that married couples experience problems?
13. In what areas can a husband and a wife analyze themselves?



*'By knowledge will the interior rooms be filled with pleasant things'*

<sup>14</sup> Seeking solace in a romance outside of marriage is not the answer to marital problems. Where could such a relationship lead? To a new and better marriage? Some may think so. 'After all,' they argue, 'this person has the very qualities I need in a mate.' But such reasoning is false, for anyone who would leave his or her mate—or encourage you to leave yours—has a serious disregard for the sanctity of marriage. It is unreasonable to expect that relationship to result in a better marriage.

<sup>15</sup> Mary, mentioned earlier, gave sober thought to the consequences of her course, including the possibility of causing herself or someone else to lose God's favor. (Galatians 6:7) "As I began examining my feelings for my husband's coworker," she says, "I realized that if there was ever a chance that this man could come to a knowledge of the truth, I was working against it. Wrongdoing

- 14, 15. Why is looking outside of marriage not the answer to marital problems?

would adversely affect everyone involved and stumble others!"—2 Corinthians 6:3.

### The Strongest Incentive

<sup>16</sup> The Bible warns: "As a honeycomb the lips of a strange woman keep dripping, and her palate is smoother than oil. But the after-effect from her is as bitter as wormwood; it is as sharp as a two-edged sword." (Proverbs 5: 3, 4) The aftereffects of moral uncleanness are painful and can be deadly. They include a troubled conscience, sexually transmitted diseases, and the emotional devastation of the mate of the unfaithful individual. Surely this is reason not to start down a path that can lead to marital infidelity.

<sup>17</sup> The fundamental reason why marital unfaithfulness is wrong is that Jehovah, the Originator of marriage and the Bestower of sexual capacity, condemns it. Through the prophet Malachi, He says: "I will come near to you people for the judgment, and I will become a speedy witness against . . . the adulterers." (Malachi 3:5) Regarding what Jehovah sees, Proverbs 5:21 states: "The ways of man are in front of the eyes of Jehovah, and he is

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16. What are some aftereffects of moral uncleanness?
  17. What is the strongest reason to maintain marital fidelity?

### What Did You Learn?

- How may a Christian unwittingly become ensnared in a romantic relationship?
- What precautions can help one to keep from forming a romantic attachment outside the marriage?
- When experiencing problems, what should a married couple do?
- What is the strongest incentive for maintaining marital fidelity?

contemplating all his tracks." Yes, "all things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of him with whom we have an accounting." (Hebrews 4:13) The strongest incentive for maintaining marital fidelity, then, is the realization that no matter how secret an infidelity might be and how minor its physical or social consequences might seem, any act of sexual uncleanness damages our relationship with Jehovah.

<sup>18</sup> The example of Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob, shows that the desire to remain at peace with God is a powerful incentive. Having found favor in the eyes of Potiphar, a court official of Pharaoh, Joseph came to have a privileged position in Potiphar's household. Joseph was also "beautiful in form and beautiful in appearance," a fact that did not escape the notice of Potiphar's wife. Every day, she tried to seduce Joseph, but her efforts bore no fruit. What caused Joseph to resist all her advances? The Bible tells us: "He would refuse and would say to his master's wife: 'Here my master . . . has not withheld from me anything at all except you, because you are his wife. So how could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?'"—Genesis 39:1-12.

<sup>19</sup> Unmarried Joseph maintained moral chastity by refusing to get involved with another man's wife. "Drink water out of your own cistern," says Proverbs 5:15 to married men, "and tricklings out of the midst of your own well." Guard against even unwittingly forming romantic attachments outside of marriage. Put forth the effort to strengthen the bond of love in your own marriage, and work hard to resolve whatever marital difficulties you may encounter. By all means, "rejoice with the wife of your youth."—Proverbs 5:18.

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- 18, 19. What do we learn from Joseph's experience with Potiphar's wife?

## Questions From Readers

**What is the congregation's responsibility if a Christian driving an automobile has an accident that results in the death of others?**

The possibility of bloodguilt deserves consideration because the congregation needs to avoid community responsibility for blood-guiltiness. (Deuteronomy 21:1-9; 22:8) A driver who is responsible for a fatal accident may incur bloodguilt if he was careless or deliberately violated one of Caesar's safety or traffic laws. (Mark 12:14) But there are other factors to consider.

A manslayer who fled to one of Israel's cities of refuge had to stand trial. If the slaying was found to be unintentional, he would be allowed to remain in the city, safe from the avenger of blood. (Numbers 35:6-25) So if a Christian is responsible for someone's death in an accident, the elders should investigate matters to determine if there is a measure of bloodguilt. The government's view or a court's decision does not altogether determine what action the congregation will take.

For instance, a court may declare the person guilty of some technical violation of the law, but the investigating elders may determine that no bloodguilt exists because the driver had little or no control over the circumstances resulting in the fatality. Conversely, if the court dismisses the case, the elders may conclude that he actually is bloodguilty.

The decision of the elders investigating the case should be based on the Scriptures and the clearly established facts—an admission by the driver and/or the testimony of two or three reliable eyewitnesses. (Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:15, 16) If bloodguilt is established, a judicial committee should be formed. If the committee determines that the bloodguilty person is repentant, he will re-

ceive appropriate reproof from the Scriptures and will be restricted as regards privileges in the congregation. He would no longer serve as an elder or a ministerial servant. Other restrictions would also be imposed. And he is accountable to God for his carelessness, neglect, or lack of caution that resulted in the accident and fatality.—Galatians 6:5, 7.

To illustrate: If weather conditions were bad at the time of the accident, the driver should have exercised greater care. If he was drowsy, he should have stopped and rested until he was no longer sleepy, or he should have had someone else drive.

Suppose the driver was speeding. If any Christian exceeds the speed limit, this is a failure to render "Caesar's things to Caesar." It also betrays a disregard for the sacredness of life, for there is the possibility of fatal consequences. (Matthew 22:21) In this regard, consider something further. What kind of example would an elder be setting for the flock if he was careless about Caesar's traffic regulations or deliberately failed to obey them?—1 Peter 5:3.

Christians should not require that others be at a certain place at a time that would clearly be impossible without their exceeding the speed limit. In most cases, however, it is a matter of starting early enough or of changing one's schedule to allow for sufficient travel time. If that is done, the Christian will not be tempted to drive faster than he should, but he will be able to comply with the traffic laws of the governmental "superior authorities." (Romans 13:1, 5) This will help the driver to guard against fatal accidents with the possibility of bloodguilt. It will also enable him to set a fitting example and maintain a good conscience.—1 Peter 3:16.

# *His Delight Was in the Law of Jehovah*

ALBERT D. SCHROEDER, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, finished his earthly course on Wednesday, March 8, 2006. He was 94 years old and had spent more than 73 years in the full-time ministry.

Brother Schroeder was born in Saginaw, Michigan, U.S.A., in 1911.\* As a child, he learned much about the Bible from his maternal grandmother, who also instilled in him a love of reading Jehovah's Word. He studied Latin, German, and electrical engineering at the University of Michigan. As his appreciation for the Scriptures grew, however, he discontinued his secular studies to take up the full-time Kingdom-preaching work. In 1932 he became a member of the Bethel family in Brooklyn, New York.

In 1937, at the age of 26, Brother Schroeder was appointed to supervise the work of Jehovah's Witnesses in Britain. His zeal for the preaching work encouraged many there to take up the full-time service. One young man with whom he was associated at London Bethel was John E. Barr. They later served together for many years on the Governing Body.

Brother Schroeder's work in behalf of Je-



hovah's Witnesses did not go unnoticed during the war years. In August 1942 he was deported from Britain. After a harrowing wartime voyage across the Atlantic, he arrived back in Brooklyn in September.

At that time, Jehovah's servants were already anticipating that a great work would need to be done after World War II. Brother Schroeder was surprised and happy to receive his next assignment—to help develop the course of study

for the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. For some years, he served there as an instructor, helping to train missionaries. Students he taught in Gilead and later in the Kingdom Ministry School have fond memories of his classes. He took delight in instilling love for God's laws in his students and stressed the importance of getting to know Jehovah.

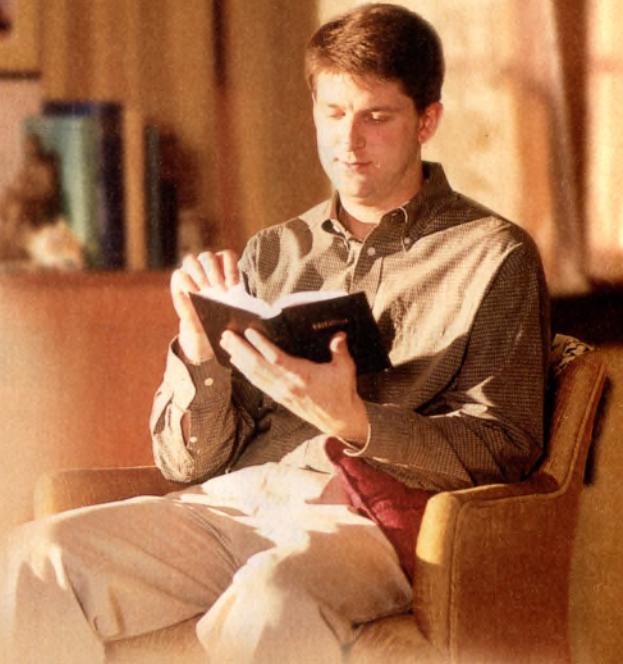
In 1956, Brother Schroeder married Charlotte Bowin, and in 1958 their son, Judah Ben, was born. Brother Schroeder was a fine Christian husband and father. In 1974, he began to serve on the Governing Body, where his insight was very much appreciated. He was a kind and humble man who, above all, wanted to magnify God's great name. We are confident that Brother Schroeder has received his heavenly reward as an anointed Christian who truly did 'take delight in the law of Jehovah.'—Psalm 1:2.

\* Brother Schroeder's life story was published in *The Watchtower* of March 1, 1988.

# "How I Do LOVE YOUR LAW!"

**P**SALM 119 is a song about its composer's feelings toward God's inspired message, or word. The psalmist sings: "In my heart I have treasured up your *saying*." "For your *statutes* I shall show a fondness." "My soul is crushed with longing for your *judicial decisions* all the time." "Your *reminders* are what I am fond of." "I have longed for your *orders*." "I shall show a fondness for your *commandments* that I have loved." "I will concern myself with your *regulations*." "How I do love your *law*! All day long it is my concern."—Psalm 119:11, 16, 20, 24, 40, 47, 48, 97.

What heartfelt appreciation the psalmist had for God's revealed word! Do you feel this way about the message of God's Word, the Bible? Would you like to cultivate such a fondness for it? If so, you first need to form the habit of reading the Bible regularly, daily if possible. Jesus Christ said: "Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth." (Matthew 4:4) Second, you should meditate on what you read. Reflecting upon the truth about God, his qualities, his will, and his purpose will enhance your appreciation for the Bible. (Psalm 143:5) And by



all means, apply its sound advice in day-to-day living.—Luke 11:28; John 13:17.

How will cultivating a fondness for what the Bible says benefit you? "Happy are those observing [God's] reminders," states Psalm 119:2. The reminders found in the Bible will help you to cope successfully with problems in life. (Psalm 1:1-3) You will gain wisdom, insight, and understanding, which will help you to 'restrain your feet from every bad path.' (Psalm 119:98-101) Knowing the truth about God and his purpose for the earth will make your life more meaningful and will brighten your hope for the future.—Isaiah 45:18; John 17:3; Revelation 21:3, 4.