

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

MAY 15, 2005



A WORLD
WITHOUT POVERTY
IS NEAR



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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Can Man Bring an END TO POVERTY?

MILLIONS have grown up without experiencing poverty. They have never had to go to bed hungry or fall asleep shivering from the cold. Still, many of those individuals feel sorry for the poor and go out of their way to help them.

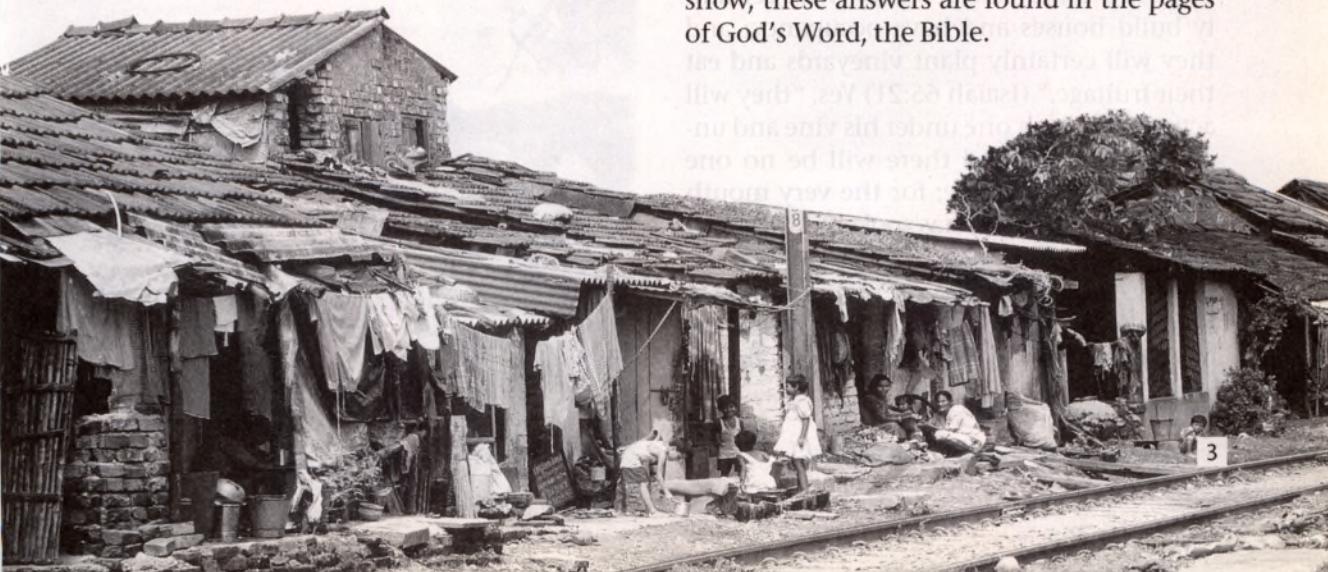
Poverty, however, remains a harsh reality for people who are plagued by civil war, floods, droughts, and other problems. These factors are a nightmare to African subsistence farmers. Some have been forced to leave their homes and move to big cities or to live as refugees in a new country. Other rural dwellers move to cities because they are enticed by promises of a better life.

Overcrowded cities often become breeding grounds for poverty. There is very little space, if any at all, to plant crops. Employment is usually hard to find. Out of sheer desperation, many turn to a life of crime. City dwellers cry out for help, but human governments are unable to solve the growing problem of poverty. Referring to a United Nations report released in

November 2003, *The Independent* of London stated: "The world is getting hungrier." It added: "Across the world an estimated 842 million people are today undernourished—and that figure is again climbing, with an additional 5 million hungry people every year."

The South Africa branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses at times receives letters from poverty-stricken people. For example, a man from Bloemfontein wrote: "I'm unemployed, and I steal in the city whenever there's a chance. If I don't, we are hungry for days—not to mention the bitter cold. There's absolutely no work. Many are roaming the streets in search of work and something to eat. I know of others who search the dustbins for food. Some commit suicide. Many like me are depressed and hopeless. It seems that there's no hope for the future. Does God, who created us with the need to eat and clothe ourselves, not see this?"

There are comforting answers to this man's concerns. As the following article will show, these answers are found in the pages of God's Word, the Bible.



A World WITHOUT POVERTY Is Near

PICTURES of Paradise, such as the one on the cover of this magazine, appeal to people who live in poverty. A paradise was a reality for the first human couple, Adam and Eve. Their home was the garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:7-23) Although that Paradise was lost, belief in a future paradise—in a new world without poverty—is not just a dream. It is solidly based on the promises contained in the Bible.

Consider the promise that Jesus Christ made on the last day of his life on earth. One of the evildoers who died with Jesus showed faith in God's ability to solve man's problems. He said: "Jesus, remember me when you get into your kingdom." These words show that the evildoer believed that Jesus would rule as King and that the dead would be brought back to life. Jesus answered: "Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise."—Luke 23:42, 43.

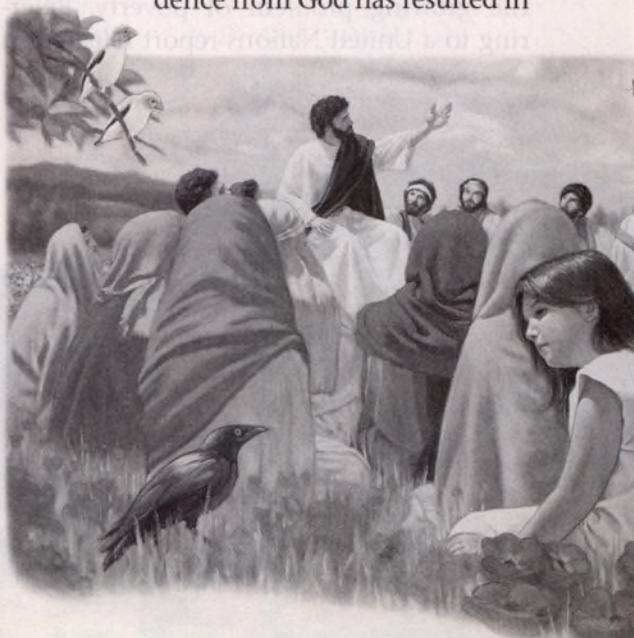
Speaking of those who will live in Paradise, the Bible states: "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage." (Isaiah 65:21) Yes, "they will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble; for the very mouth of Jehovah of armies has spoken it."—Micah 4:4.

Why, though, is poverty permitted to exist now? What help does God give to the poverty-stricken? When will poverty finally end?

Why Has Poverty Been Permitted?

The Paradise that Adam and Eve were placed in was lost as a result of the rebellion initiated by a wicked angel, Satan the Devil. Using a serpent as his mouthpiece, Satan seduced Eve into breaking God's law against eating the fruit of a certain tree. He deceived her into believing that independence from God would bring her a better life. When Eve offered the forbidden fruit to Adam, he too ate, turning his back on God in favor of his wife.—Genesis 3:1-6; 1 Timothy 2:14.

The rebellious couple were rightly driven out of Paradise and from then on had to struggle to survive. Until today, Jehovah has allowed Satan to rule over sinful mankind, making evident the results of disobedience to God. Human history has proved that mankind cannot bring about Paradise on earth. (Jeremiah 10:23) Rather, independence from God has resulted in





Tukiso and Maseiso with the missionary who studied the Bible with Tukiso

disastrous problems, including poverty.—Ecclesiastes 8:9.

However, the poor are not left helpless in this trouble-filled world. God's inspired Word, the Bible, contains sound guidance for them.

"Never Be Anxious"

When speaking to a large audience that included many poor people, Jesus said: "Observe intently the birds of heaven, because they do not sow seed or reap or gather into storehouses; still your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they are? . . . So never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' For all these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you."

—Matthew 6:26-33.

A poor person does not need to steal. (Proverbs 6:30, 31) He will be provided for if he puts God first in his life. Consider the case of Tukiso, a man in Lesotho, southern Africa. In 1998, foreign troops entered Lesotho to quell an uprising against the



Maseiso at the door of her home with the missionary who studied the Bible with her

government. As a result of that war, shops were looted, people lost their jobs, and there were dire food shortages.

Tukiso lived in the poorest part of the capital. Many of his neighbors had looted shops in order to survive. When Tukiso came back to his one-room dwelling place, he found that Maseiso, the woman with whom he was living, had many goods that she had looted. "Take these things outside," Tukiso said, explaining that it was against God's law to steal. Maseiso obeyed. The neighbors mocked them and helped themselves to the stolen food.

Tukiso took this stand because of what he had learned in his study of the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Did his obedience to God's law result in starvation? No. Some time later, the elders in the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses that he attended made contact with Tukiso and brought him some food. In fact, Jehovah's Witnesses in neighboring South Africa had sent more than two tons of relief aid for their Christian brothers and sisters in Lesotho. Maseiso was moved by Tukiso's obedience to God and by the loving aid of the congregation. She too began to study the Bible. Eventually, the two of them got legally married and thus qualified to be baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses. They are still serving God faithfully.

Jehovah God cares for the poor. (See the box entitled "How Does God View the Poor?") He has lovingly made provision to help others like Tukiso and Maseiso to learn more about him. And in his Word, he has provided practical advice for day-to-day living.

A Fine Provision

Jehovah's Witnesses have always tried to reflect God's concern for the poor. (Galatians 2:10) Often when disaster strikes a land and true Christians are affected, arrangements are made for necessary help to be given. More important, the Witnesses show concern for the spiritual needs of all, including the poor. (Matthew 9:36-38) During the past 60 years, thousands of trained ministers have volunteered to serve as missionaries in

foreign lands. For example, it was a missionary couple from Finland who by learning the Sesotho language were able to teach Tukiso and Maseiso to become disciples of Jesus. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Such missionary work often involves sacrificing a comfortable life in an affluent country and moving to a poor land.

Stealing to survive is not an option for true Christians. Instead, they have faith in Jehovah God's ability to provide. (Hebrews 13: 5, 6) One way that Jehovah provides for his people is through the worldwide organization of his worshipers, who care for one another.

Another way that Jehovah helps the poor is by giving them practical advice on daily living. For example, the Bible commands:

HOW DOES GOD VIEW THE POOR?

The Bible describes the Creator of mankind as "the One giving bread to the hungry ones." (Psalm 146:7) It contains over one hundred verses that highlight God's concern for the poor.

For instance, when Jehovah gave his Law to the ancient nation of Israel, he commanded Israelite farmers not to harvest the edges of their fields completely. They were not to collect leftover fruit by going over an olive tree or a vine a second time. These laws were a loving provision for aliens, orphans, widows, and other afflicted ones.—Leviticus 19:9, 10; Deuteronomy 24:19-21.

Moreover, God commanded the Israelites: "You people must not afflict any widow or fatherless boy. If you should afflict him at all, then if he cries out to me at all, I shall unfailingly hear his outcry; and my anger will indeed blaze, and I shall certainly kill you with the sword, and your wives must become widows and your sons fatherless boys." (Exodus 22:22-24) Sadly, many wealthy Israelites ig-

nored those words. For this and other wrongdoing, Jehovah God gave the Israelites various warnings through his prophets. (Isaiah 10:1, 2; Jeremiah 5:28; Amos 4:1-3) Eventually, God caused the Assyrians and later the Babylonians to conquer Israelite territory. Many Israelites were killed, and the survivors were taken captive to foreign lands.

God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ, reflected his Father's loving concern for the poor. Explaining the purpose of his ministry, Jesus said: "Jehovah's spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to declare good news to the poor." (Luke 4:18) This does not mean that Jesus limited his ministry to the poor. He lovingly helped rich people too. However, when doing so, Jesus often expressed his concern for the poor. For example, he gave this advice to one rich ruler: "Sell all the things you have and distribute to poor people, and you will have treasure in the heavens; and come be my follower."—Luke 14:1, 12-14; 18:18, 22; 19:1-10.

"Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work, that he may have something to distribute to someone in need." (Ephesians 4:28) Many unemployed people have been able to create jobs for themselves, doing hard work, such as planting and caring for a vegetable garden. The Bible also helps poor people to save money by teaching them to avoid bad habits, such as the abuse of alcohol.—Ephesians 5:18.

A World Without Poverty—When?

The Bible indicates that we are living in "the last days" of Satan's rule. (2 Timothy 3:1) Soon, Jehovah God will send Jesus Christ to judge mankind. What will happen at that time? Jesus gave the answer in one of his illustrations. He said: "When the Son of

man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."—Matthew 25:31-33.

The sheep of this illustration are those who submit to Jesus' kingship. Jesus likened them to sheep because they follow him as their Shepherd. (John 10:16) These sheep-like ones will gain life under Jesus' perfect rulership. It will be a happy life in a new world free of poverty. Goatlike humans, who reject Jesus' rule, will be destroyed forever. —Matthew 25:46.

God's Kingdom will bring an end to wickedness. Then poverty will be a thing of the past. Instead, the earth will be inhabited by people who love and care for one another. That such a new world is possible can be seen in the loving international brotherhood of Jehovah's Witnesses, for Jesus said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves."—John 13:35.

Jehovah God and his Son care deeply about the poor. (Mark 12:41-44; James 2:1-6) Reflecting his concern for the poor, Jehovah holds within his memory millions of poor people who have died. All such ones will be resurrected into a new world free from poverty.—Acts 24:15.

The international brotherhood of Jehovah's Witnesses shows that the new world is possible



Families Fortified by the Knowledge of God

THE "Berlin Wall." That is what a married couple in Argentina called an actual wall that they had built to divide their house in two! They had irreconcilable differences; they simply could not stand each other.

Sadly, the situation of that couple is not unique. Many families are plagued by strife, infidelity, and outright hostility. This is regrettable, since the family is an institution established by God himself. (Genesis 1:27, 28; 2:23, 24) This divine gift is an ideal setting for showing deep love. (Ruth 1:9) By meeting their God-given obligations, family members can honor Jehovah and be a blessing to one another.*

Inasmuch as God instituted the family arrangement, we need to let his perspective shape our understanding of how families should function. His Word provides much practical counsel designed to help families succeed, especially when challenges arise. As to the role of husbands, the Bible says: "Husbands ought to be loving their wives as their own bodies." When the husband fulfills this requirement, it is a pleasure for his wife to have "deep respect for her husband."—Ephesians 5: 25-29, 33.

Concerning the relationship between parents and their children, the apostle Paul wrote: "Fathers, do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) This, in turn, creates a warm family atmosphere, which makes it easier for children to obey their parents.—Ephesians 6:1.

The foregoing points illustrate the Bible's

* See 2005 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses, May/June.

sound advice on family life. By applying divine principles, many enjoy happiness in the home. Take, for example, the couple in Argentina mentioned at the outset. After they studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses for three months, they both began to apply its wise counsel on marriage. They worked hard to improve communication, to be sympathetic to the needs of each other, and to become forgiving. (Proverbs 15:22; 1 Peter 3:7; 4:8) They learned to control their anger and to turn to God for help when things seemed to be getting out of control. (Colossians 3:19) Soon, the "Berlin Wall" came down!

God Can Build a Family

Knowledge and application of God's standards can fortify a family to withstand pressures. This is vital, for it was prophesied that the family arrangement would experience a vicious attack in our day. Paul foretold the current breakdown of morality and human society. He said that "the last days" would be characterized by disloyalty, the absence of "natural affection," and disobedience to parents, even among those "having a form of godly devotion."—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

JEHOVAH CHERISHES THE FAMILY ARRANGEMENT

"God blessed them and God said to them: 'Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth.'"—Genesis 1:28.

"Happy is everyone fearing Jehovah . . . Your wife will be like a fruit-bearing vine in the innermost parts of your house."

—Psalm 128:1, 3.

To God “every family in heaven and on earth owes its name.”

—EPHESIANS 3:15

Trying to please God can help counteract such detrimental effects on the family. Many families have found that a spiritual solution is required to help them meet many of the challenges they face. If family members desire to maintain a good relationship with God, they above all need to apply Bible principles and realize that “unless Jehovah himself builds the house, it is to no avail that its builders have worked hard on it.” (Psalm 127:1) The greatest success in promoting domestic happiness comes from putting God first in family life.—Ephesians 3:14, 15.

In Hawaii a man named Dennis discovered how true that is. Although he was a professed Christian, abusive speech and fights became a way of life for him. After serving in the army, he became even more aggressive and hateful. “I was always in conflict,” he recalls. “I didn’t care what happened to me, and I wasn’t afraid to die. The profanity and fighting continued. My wife, who was one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, encouraged me to study the Bible.”

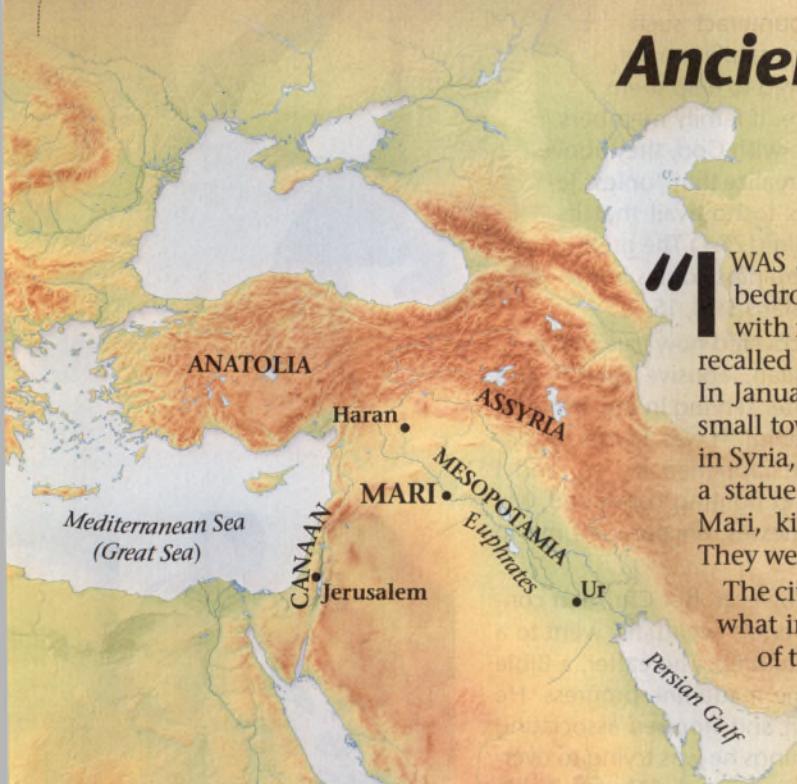
Dennis resisted his wife’s efforts. However, her Christian conduct softened his negative attitude. Dennis eventually went to a Christian meeting with his wife and children. Thereafter, a Bible study was started with Dennis, and he made fine progress. He gave up a 28-year-long smoking habit and stopped associating with friends who engaged in all the things he was trying to overcome. Thankful to Jehovah, Dennis commented: “My family life got better. We went to the meetings and in the ministry as a family. My two children were no longer afraid of me, for I learned to control my temper and stopped using abusive speech. We could talk and enjoy having Bible discussions. If it were not for Bible truth, I wouldn’t be here today; I was so temperamental.”

Families can attain happiness when they work hard to do Jehovah’s will. Experience has shown that even if one member of a family applies Bible principles, things are better than if no one does. Building a Christian household is hard work, requiring skill and time. But members of such families have the assurance that Jehovah will crown their building efforts with success. They can echo the psalmist’s words: “My help is from Jehovah.”—Psalm 121:2.



Mari

Ancient Queen of the Desert



“I WAS a little giddy upon arriving in my bedroom that night after celebrating with my companions our good fortune,” recalled French archaeologist André Parrot. In January of 1934, at Tell Hariri, near the small town of Abu Kemal on the Euphrates in Syria, Parrot and his team had unearthed a statue bearing the inscription: “Lamgi-Mari, king of Mari, high priest of Enlil.” They were thrilled at the discovery.

The city of Mari had at last been found! Of what interest is this discovery to students of the Bible?

Why of Interest?

Though the existence of Mari was known from ancient texts, its exact location long remained a mystery. According to Sumerian scribes, Mari was the seat of a dynasty that may at one time have held sway over all of Mesopotamia. Built on the banks of the Euphrates, Mari was strategically situated at the crossroads of trade routes linking the Persian Gulf with Assyria, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Mediterranean Coast. Goods including wood, metal, and stone—all sorely lacking in Mesopotamia—transited the city. Taxes on them greatly enriched Mari, enabling her to assert her authority over the re-

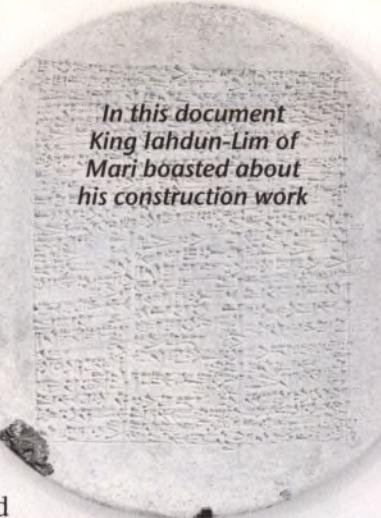
gion. This predominance ended, however, when Syria was conquered by Sargon of Akkad.

For some 300 years after Sargon's conquest, Mari was ruled by a series of military governors. Under them, the city regained a measure of prosperity. By the time of her last ruler, Zimri-Lim, however, Mari was on the decline. Zimri-Lim attempted to consolidate his empire through a series of military conquests, treaties, and marriage alliances. But about 1760 B.C.E., King Hammurabi of Babylon conquered and destroyed the city, putting an end to what Parrot called "a civilization that was one of the lights of the ancient world."

When Hammurabi's troops razed Mari, they inadvertently rendered a huge service to modern-day archaeologists and historians. In toppling the unbaked mud-brick walls, they buried certain buildings up to a height of 15 feet in some places, thus preserving them from the ravages of time. Archaeologists have unearthed the ruins of temples and palaces, along with a host of artifacts and thousands of inscriptions that shed light on ancient civilization.

Why are the ruins of Mari of interest to us? Consider the time when the patriarch Abraham walked the earth. Abraham was born in the year 2018 B.C.E., 352 years after the great Flood. His was the tenth generation from Noah. At God's command, Abraham left his native city, Ur, and went to Haran. In the year 1943 B.C.E., when Abraham was 75 years of age, he left Haran for the land of Canaan. "The migrations of Abraham from Ur to Jerusalem [in Canaan] are situated historically at the time of Mari," says Italian archaeologist Paolo Matthiae. The discovery of Mari, therefore, has value

*In this document
King Iahdun-Lim of
Mari boasted about
his construction work*



Document: Musée du Louvre, Paris; statue: © Mission archéologique
française de Tell Harrin - Mari (Syrie)

*The discovery of this statue of
Lamgi-Mari resulted in the
positive identification of Mari*

in that it can help us to envisage the world in which God's faithful servant Abraham lived.*—Genesis 11:10-12:4.

What Do the Ruins Reveal?

Religion flourished in Mari as it did elsewhere in Mesopotamia. It was considered man's duty to serve the gods. The will of the gods was always sought before making any important decision. Archaeologists have found the vestiges of six temples. Included among them are the Temple of Lions (considered by some to be a temple of Dagan, Biblical Dagon) and the sanctuaries of Ishtar, the goddess of fertility, as well as of the sun-god Shamash. These temples originally contained a statue of the deity to whom offerings and supplications were made. Devotees placed smiling effigies of themselves in prayer on benches in the sanctuary, in the belief that their image prolonged the act of worship. Parrot noted:

* It is also quite likely that the Jewish exiles taken to Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. skirted the ruins of Mari.



Ebih-II, the superintendent of Mari, in prayer

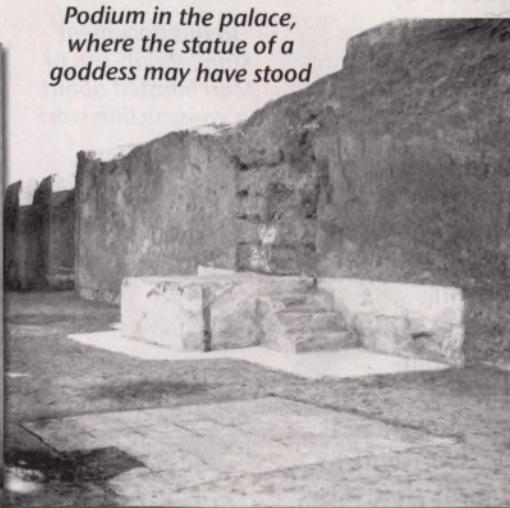
"The statue, like the candle in Catholic worship today but to an even greater degree, was in actual fact a substitute for the believer."

The most spectacular discovery in the ruins of Tell Hariri was the remains of a huge palace complex, known by the name of its last occupant, King Zimri-Lim. French archaeologist Louis-Hugues Vincent described it as "the jewel of archaic Oriental architecture." Covering over six acres, it contained some 300 rooms and courtyards. Even in antiquity, this palace was considered one of the marvels of the world. "Such

A palace bathroom



Podium in the palace, where the statue of a goddess may have stood



Ruins of Mari, showing unbaked mud-brick construction

was its fame," comments Georges Roux in his book *Ancient Iraq*, "that the King of Ugarit, on the Syrian coast, did not hesitate to send his son 600 kilometres [370 miles] inland for the sole purpose of visiting 'the house of Zimri-Lim.'

Before reaching a spacious courtyard, visitors gained access to the fortified palace via a single entrance flanked by towers. Seated on a throne placed on a dais, Mari's last king, Zimri-Lim, handled military, commercial, and diplomatic affairs; handed down judgments; and received visitors and embassies. Accommodations were available for guests, who were regularly wined and dined by the king during sumptuous banquets. Dishes included roasted, grilled, or boiled beef, mutton, gazelle, fish, and poultry—all served with spicy garlic sauces and an assortment of vegetables and cheeses. Dessert consisted of fresh, dried, or crystallized fruit and cakes baked in in-

tricate molds. To quench their thirst, guests were served beer or wine.

Sanitation was not absent from the palace. Bathrooms were discovered that had terra-cotta tubs and seatless toilets. The floors and lower part of the walls of these rooms were protected with a coating of bitumen. Wastewater was drained via brick gutters, and clay pipes waterproofed with bitumen are still operational after some 3,500 years. When three women from the royal harem were struck with a fatal disease, the instructions were strict. Such a sickly woman was to be isolated and kept in quarantine. "None should drink from her cup, eat at her table, sit on her seat."

What Can We Learn From the Archives?

Parrot and his team discovered some 20,000 cuneiform tablets written in Akkadian. The tablets consisted of letters and administrative and economic texts. Of these archives, only one third have been published. Nevertheless, they consist of 28 volumes. Of what value are they? "Before the discovery of the Mari archives," says Jean-Claude Margueron, director of the Mari Archaeological Mission, "we knew almost nothing of the history, institutions, and daily life in Mesopotamia and Syria



*The victory stele of Naram-Sin,
conqueror of Mari*

at the beginning of the second millennium. Thanks to them, it has been possible to write whole chapters of history." As Parrot commented, the archives "reveal surprising similarities between the peoples that they mention and what the Old Testament tells us of the period of the Patriarchs."

The tablets found at Mari also shed light on certain Bible passages. For example, the tablets indicate that taking possession of an enemy's harem was "a fundamental fact of royal conduct at the time." The counsel of the traitor Ahithophel to King David's son Absalom to have relations with his father's concubines was by no means original.—2 Samuel 16:21, 22.

There have been 41 archaeological campaigns to Tell Hariri since 1933. So far, however, only 20 of Mari's 270 acres have been examined. Likely, many fascinating discoveries will yet be made in Mari, the ancient queen of the desert.

About 20,000 cuneiform tablets were found in the ruins of the palace

Victory stele: Musée du Louvre, Paris; palace ruins: © Mission archéologique française de Tell Hariri - Mari (Syrie)



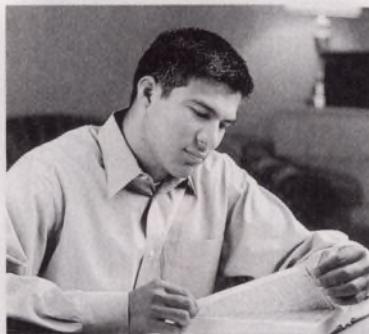
COMMON SENSE

Why So Uncommon?

"WHAT is the matter with him? He should know better," remarks an observer. Shaking his head in disbelief, another walks away muttering, "If he had a little common sense, he would never have done that." Have you perhaps heard similar comments? What, though, is "common sense"?

The word "sense" is defined as "accurate appreciation," "understanding," and "practical wisdom or judgement." It implies that a person has the ability to judge and decide with intelligence. Common sense evidently requires that we use thinking ability. Many people would rather let others do their thinking for them. They allow the media, their peers, or popular opinion to make decisions for them.

Common sense seems to be so lacking in today's world that an observant man once noted, 'Common sense, in truth, is very uncommon.' How can we acquire common



*A wealth of sound advice
is found in the Bible*

sense? What are its benefits?

How Acquired?

While it takes time, sustained thought, and consistent effort to develop good sense and fine judgment, common sense is certainly attainable. Consider three factors that can help us to acquire common sense.

Study the Bible, and follow its advice. The Bible, written in the finest language and with clear logic, is an excellent aid in gaining wisdom and good sense. (Ephesians 1:8) For example, the apostle Paul admonishes fellow Christians: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things." (Philippians 4:8) If we consistently follow this advice, sound judgment and prudent behavior will result.

Learn from experience. Associating common sense with experience in life, a Swiss poet stated: "Common sense is . . . composed of experience and prevision [foresight]." Indeed, "anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps." (Proverbs 14:15) Common sense may be developed through observation, training, and experience. We can

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Whatever Happened to World Unity?

Jehovah Safeguards Those Who Hope in Him

When Marital Disagreements Arise



learn to do things better over a period of time. Learning from our mistakes, however, calls for humility and meekness. The self-assuming, haughty, and headstrong spirit of people in these last days is not a manifestation of common sense.—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Choose associates wisely. In using wisdom and common sense, we are also helped or hindered by our associates. Proverbs 13:20 states: “He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly.” We do not have to accept the mentality or ideas of those who disobey God and ignore his Word. Proverbs 17:12 puts the matter this way: “Let there be an encountering by a man of a bear bereaved of its cubs rather than anyone stupid in his foolishness.”

Of What Benefit?

Developing common sense is advantageous. It makes life more interesting and can save us time. Common sense may even reduce the frustration that often comes from doing things thoughtlessly. Those lacking good judgment make life harder for themselves. “The hard work of the stupid ones makes them weary,” states the Bible. (Ecclesiastes 10:15) Such individuals may toil endlessly and tire themselves out; yet, they accomplish virtually nothing truly worthwhile.

The Bible provides a wealth of practical advice on cleanliness, communication, industriousness, coping with poverty, and many

Common sense may be acquired through observation, training, and experience

other aspects of life. Millions can testify that the difference between success and failure in their lives has depended on the degree to which they have applied Bible principles, helping them to manifest wisdom.

Common sense enables us to do more than simply follow a set of detailed instructions or rules. It helps us to fulfill our responsibilities. However, common sense is not a substitute for taking in knowledge. “A wise person will listen and take in more instruction,” says Proverbs 1:5. We must also learn to analyze the information we gather, drawing proper conclusions from it. This helps us to ‘walk in wisdom.’—Proverbs 28:26.

Modesty goes hand in hand with common sense. Although we may want to care for many responsibilities, we need to use good judgment and stay within the limits of our strength. True, the apostle Paul tells us to have “plenty to do in the work of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 15:58) Yet, this admonition must be balanced with the principle recorded at Ecclesiastes 9:4: “A live dog is better off than a dead lion.” Taking proper care of our health as we serve Jehovah may allow us to live longer and to continue to be active. Common sense can help us to find a reasonable balance that permits us to get necessary things accomplished without losing our joy. Yes, common sense brings many benefits.



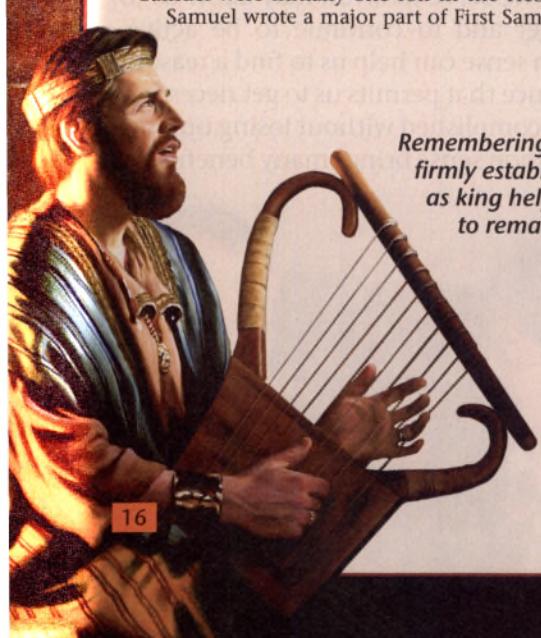
Jehovah's Word Is Alive

Highlights From the Book of Second Samuel

DOES recognizing Jehovah's sovereignty require our perfect obedience? Does a man of integrity always do what is right in God's eyes? What kind of individual does the true God find "agreeable to his heart"? (1 Samuel 13:14) The Bible book of Second Samuel gives satisfying answers to these questions.

Second Samuel was written by Gad and Nathan, two prophets who were close to King David of ancient Israel.* Completed in about 1040 B.C.E., toward the end of David's 40-year kingship, the book is primarily about David and his relationship with Jehovah. This thrilling narrative relates how a strife-torn nation becomes a prosperous united kingdom under a valiant king. The gripping drama is packed with human emotions expressed with deep intensity.

* Even though Samuel did not have a part in writing it, the book bears his name because the two books of Samuel were initially one roll in the Hebrew canon. Samuel wrote a major part of First Samuel.



A detailed illustration of King David, shown from the waist up. He has a beard and is wearing a blue robe with gold embroidery and a golden headband. He is playing a large, brown harp with both hands. The background is dark and textured.

Remembering who had firmly established him as king helped David to remain humble

DAVID BECOMES

"GREATER AND GREATER"

(2 Samuel 1:1–10:19)

David's response to the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan reveals his feelings for them and for Jehovah. In Hebron, David is appointed king over the tribe of Judah. Saul's son Ish-bosheth is made king over the rest of Israel. David goes on "getting greater and greater," and some seven and a half years later, he is made king over all Israel.—2 Samuel 5:10.

David captures Jerusalem from the Jebusites and makes it the capital of his kingdom. His first attempt to transfer the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem results in disaster. However, the second attempt succeeds, and David dances for joy. Jehovah makes a covenant with David for a kingdom. David subdues his enemies as God continues to be with him.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

2:18—Why were Joab and his two brothers identified as the three sons of Zeruiah, their mother? In the Hebrew Scriptures, genealogies were usually reckoned through the father. Zeruiah's husband may have died prematurely, or he could have been considered unsuitable for inclusion in the Sacred Record. It is possible that Zeruiah was listed because she was David's sister or half sister. (1 Chronicles 2:15, 16) The only reference to the father of the three brothers is in connection with his burial place at Bethlehem.—2 Samuel 2:32.

3:29—What is meant by “a man taking hold of the twirling spindle”? Women customarily did the weaving of cloth. Therefore, this expression may refer to men who were unfit for such activities as warfare and who were thus obliged to do the work usually done by a woman.

5:1, 2—How long after Ish-bosheth’s assassination was David made king over all Israel? It seems reasonable to conclude that Ish-bosheth began his two-year-long kingship shortly after Saul’s death, about the same time David began his in Hebron. David ruled over Judah from Hebron for seven and a half years. Soon after being made king over all Israel, he shifted his capital to Jerusalem. Hence, about five years elapsed after Ish-bosheth’s death before David became king over all Israel.—2 Samuel 2:3, 4, 8-11; 5:4, 5.

8:2—How many Moabites were executed after Israel’s conflict with them? The number may have been determined by measuring rather than by counting. It seems that David had the Moabites lie down side by side on the ground in a row. Next, he had the row measured with the length of a line, or a cord. Apparently, two line measures, or two thirds of the Moabites, were put to death, and one line measure, or one third of them, were spared.

Lessons for Us:

2:1; 5:19, 23. David inquired of Jehovah before taking up residence in Hebron and prior to going up against his enemies. We too should seek Jehovah’s guidance before making decisions that affect our spirituality.

3:26-30. Revenge reaps sad consequences.—Romans 12:17-19.

3:31-34; 4:9-12. David’s lack of vindictiveness and ill will is exemplary.

5:12. We should never forget that Jehovah has educated us in his ways and made a good relationship with him possible.

6:1-7. Though David was well-meaning, his attempt to move the Ark in a wagon was in violation of God’s command and resulted in failure. (Exodus 25:13, 14; Numbers 4:15, 19; 7:7-9) Uzzah’s grabbing hold of the Ark also shows that good intentions do not change what God requires.

6:8, 9. In a trialsome situation, David first became angry, then afraid—perhaps even blaming Jehovah for the tragedy. We must guard against blaming Jehovah for problems that result from ignoring his commands.

7:18, 22, 23, 26. David’s humility, exclusive devotion to Jehovah, and interest in exalting God’s name are qualities for us to imitate.

8:2. A prophecy uttered some 400 years earlier is fulfilled. (Numbers 24:17) Jehovah’s word always comes true.

9:1, 6, 7. David kept his promise. We too must endeavor to keep our word.

JEHOVAH RAISES UP CALAMITY AGAINST HIS ANOINTED (2 Samuel 11:1-20:26)

“Here I am raising up against you calamity out of your own house,” Jehovah says to David, “and I will take your wives under your own eyes and give them to your fellowman, and he will certainly lie down with your wives under the eyes of this sun.” (2 Samuel 12:11) What is the reason for this pronouncement? It is David’s sin with Bath-sheba. Though repentant David is forgiven, he is not spared the consequences of his sin.

First the child that Bath-sheba gives birth to dies. Then David’s virgin daughter Tamar is raped by her half brother Amnon. Her full brother Absalom murders Amnon in revenge. Absalom conspires against his own father and proclaims himself king in Hebron. David is forced to flee Jerusalem. Absalom has relations with ten of his father’s concubines left behind to take care of the house.

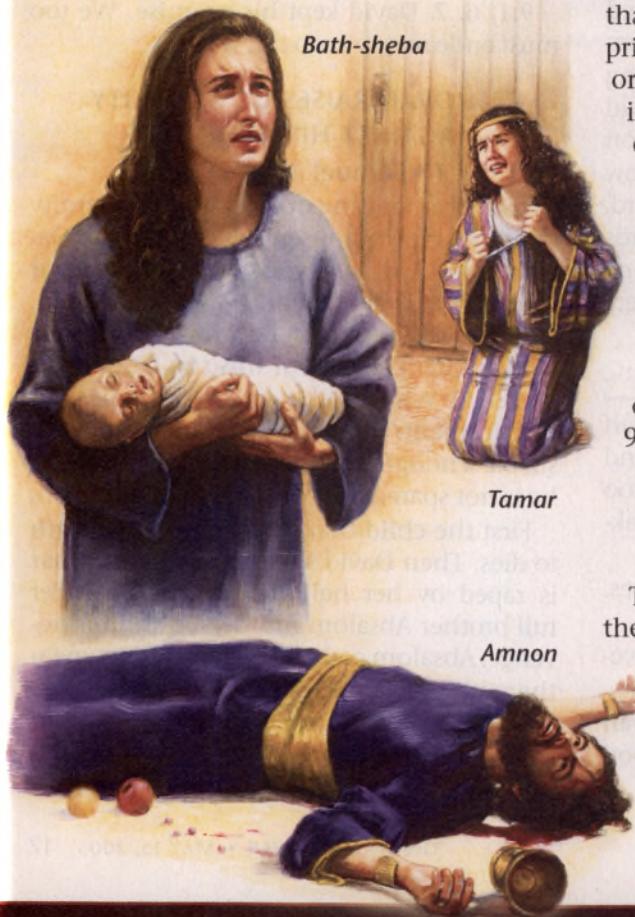
David returns to his kingship only after Absalom is killed. A revolt by the Benjaminite Sheba ends in Sheba's death.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

14:7—What is symbolized by “the glow of my charcoals”? The glow of slow-burning charcoal is used to denote a living offspring.

19:29—Why did David respond the way he did to Mephibosheth’s explanation? Upon hearing Mephibosheth, David must have realized that he erred when he took Ziba’s words at face value. (2 Samuel 16:1-4; 19:24-28) Very likely, this irritated David, and he did not want to hear anything further about the matter.

*“Here I am raising up
against you calamity
out of your own house”*



Lessons for Us:

11:2-15. The candid account of David’s shortcomings testifies to the fact that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

11:16-27. When we commit a serious sin, we should not try to cover it over as David did. Rather, we should confess our sin to Jehovah and seek help from the elders in the congregation.—Proverbs 28:13; James 5:13-16.

12:1-14. Nathan set a fine example for appointed elders in the congregation. They are to help those who fall into sin to correct their course. The elders must discharge this responsibility skillfully.

12:15-23. Having the correct view of what befell him helped David to respond properly to adversity.

15:12; 16:15, 21, 23. When it appeared that Absalom would ascend to the throne, pride and ambition led the brilliant counselor Ahithophel to become a traitor. Having intelligence without humility and loyalty can be a snare.

19:24, 30. Mephibosheth was truly appreciative of David’s loving-kindness. He willingly submitted to the king’s decision about Ziba. Appreciation for Jehovah and his organization should move us to be submissive.

20:21, 22. The wisdom of one person can avert a disaster for many.—Ecclesiastes 9:14, 15.

LET US FALL INTO THE HAND OF JEHOVAH” (2 Samuel 21:1-24:25)

There is a famine for three years because of the bloodguilt that Saul incurred by putting the Gibeonites to death. (Joshua 9:15)

In order to avenge that bloodguilt, the Gibeonites ask for seven sons of Saul for execution. David gives them into the Gibeonites’ hands, and the

drought ends with a downpour of rain. Four Philistine giants come to "fall by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants."—2 Samuel 21:22.

David commits a serious sin by ordering an illegal census. He repents and chooses to fall "into the hand of Jehovah." (2 Samuel 24:14) As a result, 70,000 die from pestilence. David follows Jehovah's command, and the scourge is halted.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

21:8—How can it be said that Saul's daughter Michal had five sons, when 2 Samuel 6:23 states that she died childless? The most widely accepted explanation is that these were the sons of Michal's sister Merab, who married Adriel. Likely, Merab died early, and childless Michal brought up the boys.

21:9, 10—For how long did Rizpah keep up a vigil for her two sons and the five grandsons of Saul who were put to death by the Gibeonites? These seven were hanged "in the first days of harvest"—March or April. Their dead bodies were left exposed on a mountain. Rizpah guarded the seven bodies by day and by night until Jehovah showed by ending the drought that his anger had subsided. Any heavy downpour of rain would have been very unlikely before the completion of the harvest season in October. Hence, Rizpah may have kept up the vigil for as long as five or six months. Thereafter, David had the bones of the men buried.

24:1—Why did taking a count of people constitute a serious sin for David? The taking of a census was not in itself forbidden in the Law. (Numbers 1:1-3; 26:1-4) The Bible does not say what objective moved David to number the people. However, 1 Chronicles 21:1 indicates that Satan incited him to do so. In any event, his military chief, Joab, knew that David's decision to register the people was wrong, and he tried to dissuade David from doing it.

Lessons for Us:

22:2-51. How beautifully David's song portrays Jehovah as the true God, worthy of our implicit trust!

23:15-17. David had such a deep respect for God's law on life and blood that on this occasion, he refrained from doing what even resembled a violation of that law. We must cultivate such an attitude toward all of God's commands.

24:10. David's conscience moved him to repentance. Is our conscience sensitive enough to respond in that way?

24:14. David well knew that Jehovah is more merciful than humans are. Do we have such conviction?

24:17. David felt regret that his sin brought suffering upon the entire nation. A repentant wrongdoer should feel remorse over the reproach his action may have brought upon the congregation.

Being 'Agreeable to God's Heart' Is Within Our Reach

The second king of Israel proved to be 'a man agreeable to Jehovah's heart.' (1 Samuel 13:14) David never questioned Jehovah's righteous standards, and he did not seek to pursue a course of independence from God. Each time David erred, he acknowledged his sin, accepted discipline, and corrected his ways. David was a man of integrity. Are we not wise to be like him, particularly when we err?

The life story of David vividly illustrates that recognizing Jehovah's sovereignty is a matter of accepting His standards of good and bad and striving to abide by them as integrity keepers. This is within our reach. How grateful we can be for the lessons we learn from the book of Second Samuel! The inspired message contained in its pages is, indeed, alive and exerts power.—Hebrews 4:12.

COMING TO KNOW JEHOVAH'S WAYS

"Make me know . . . your ways, that I may know you."—EXODUS 33:13.

MOSES had been reared in the household of Pharaoh and had been educated in the wisdom esteemed by the nobility of Egypt. Yet, Moses realized that he was not an Egyptian. He was born to Hebrew parents. In his 40th year, he went out to make an inspection of his brothers, the sons of Israel. When he saw an Egyptian mistreat one of the Hebrews, Moses was not indifferent. He struck down the Egyptian. Moses chose to side with Jehovah's people and thought that God was using him to provide deliverance for his brothers. (Acts 7:21-25; Hebrews 11:24, 25) When this incident became known, Egypt's royal house viewed Moses as an outlaw, and he had to flee for his life. (Exodus 2:11-15) If Moses was to be used by God, he had to become better acquainted with Jehovah's ways. Would Moses be teachable?—Psalm 25:9.

² For the next 40 years, Moses lived as an exile and a shepherd. Instead of letting himself be consumed with bitterness because his Hebrew brothers apparently did not appreciate him, Moses submitted to what God permitted. Although many years passed during which he received no apparent recognition, Moses allowed Jehovah to shape him. Not as a personal estimate, but under the influence of God's holy spirit, he later wrote: "The man Moses was by far the meekest of all the men who were upon the surface of the ground." (Numbers 12:3) Jehovah used Moses in out-

1, 2. (a) Why did Moses react as he did when he saw an Egyptian mistreat a Hebrew? (b) To be suitable for Jehovah's service, what did Moses need to learn?

standing ways. If we too seek meekness, Jehovah will bless us.—Zephaniah 2:3.

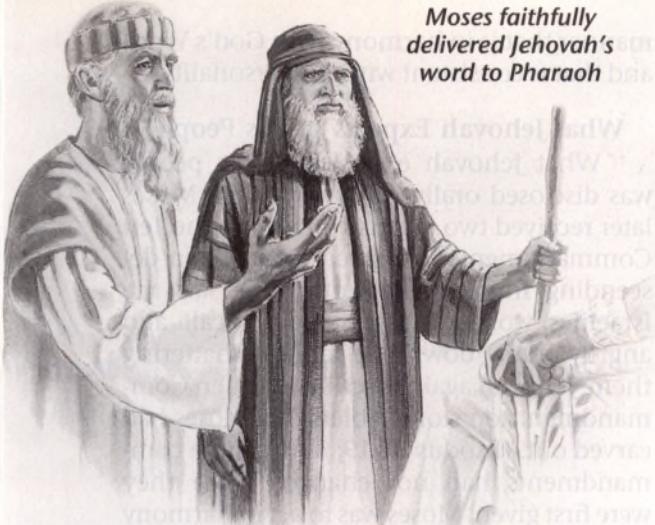
Given a Commission

³ One day an angel representing Jehovah spoke to Moses near Mount Horeb on the Sinai Peninsula. Moses was told: "Unquestionably I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their outcry as a result of those who drive them to work; because I well know the pains they suffer. And I am proceeding to go down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a land good and spacious, to a land flowing with milk and honey." (Exodus 3:2, 7, 8) In this regard, God had work for Moses to do, but it had to be done Jehovah's way.

⁴ Jehovah's angel continued: "Now come and let me send you to Pharaoh, and you bring my people the sons of Israel out of Egypt." Moses hesitated. He did not feel qualified, and in himself, he was not. However, Jehovah assured Moses: "I shall prove to be with you." (Exodus 3:10-12) Jehovah empowered Moses to perform miraculous signs that would serve as credentials proving that he had truly been sent by God. Moses' brother, Aaron, was to go along as spokesman. Jehovah would teach them what should be said and done. (Exodus 4:1-17) Would Moses faithfully fulfill that assignment?

⁵ Israel's older men initially believed Mo-

3, 4. (a) What commission did Jehovah give Moses? (b) What support was provided for Moses? 5. Why did Israel's attitude present a challenge to Moses?



Moses faithfully delivered Jehovah's word to Pharaoh

ses and Aaron. (Exodus 4:29-31) Soon, however, “the officers of the sons of Israel” blamed Moses and his brother for making them “smell offensive” before Pharaoh and his servants. (Exodus 5:19-21; 6:9) When the Israelites were leaving Egypt, they were alarmed to see Egyptian chariots in pursuit. With the Red Sea before them and war chariots behind them, the Israelites felt trapped, and they blamed Moses. How would you have reacted? Though the Israelites had no boats, at Jehovah’s direction Moses urged the people to break camp. Then God pushed back the waters of the Red Sea, and the seabed became dry land so that Israel could pass through.—Exodus 14:1-22.

An Issue Greater Than Deliverance

⁶ On commissioning Moses, Jehovah emphasized the importance of the divine name. Respect for that name and the One whom it represents was vital. When asked about his name, Jehovah told Moses: “I shall prove to be what I shall prove to be.” Further, Moses was to tell the sons of Israel: “Jehovah the God of your forefathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob,

6. What did Jehovah emphasize when commissioning Moses?

has sent me to you.” Jehovah added: “This is my name to time indefinite, and this is the memorial of me to generation after generation.” (Exodus 3:13-15) Jehovah is still the name by which God is known to his servants around the earth.—Isaiah 12:4, 5; 43:10-12.

⁷ Appearing before Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron delivered their message in the name of Jehovah. But Pharaoh arrogantly said: “Who is Jehovah, so that I should obey his voice to send Israel away? I do not know Jehovah at all and, what is more, I am not going to send Israel away.” (Exodus 5:1, 2) Pharaoh proved to be both hardhearted and deceitful, yet Jehovah urged Moses to deliver messages to him again and again. (Exodus 7:14-16, 20-23; 8:1, 2, 20) Moses could see that Pharaoh was irritated. Would any good come from confronting him again? Israel was eager for deliverance. Pharaoh was adamant in his refusal. What would you have done?

⁸ Moses delivered yet another message, saying: “This is what *Jehovah* the God of the Hebrews has said: ‘Send my people away that they may serve me.’” God also said: “By now I could have thrust my hand out that I might strike you and your people with pestilence and that you might be effaced from the earth. But, in fact, for this cause I have kept you in existence, for the sake of showing you my power and in order to have my name declared in all the earth.” (Exodus 9:13-16) Because of what would be done with hardhearted Pharaoh, Jehovah purposed to demonstrate his power in a way that would serve notice on all who defy him. This would include Satan the Devil, the one whom Jesus Christ later called “the ruler of the world.” (John 14:30; Romans 9:17-24) As foretold,

7. What did God urge Moses to do despite Pharaoh’s arrogance?

8. What benefit came from the way that Jehovah dealt with the situation involving Pharaoh, and how should those events affect us?

Jehovah's name was declared around the earth. His long-suffering led to preservation for the Israelites and a vast mixed multitude that joined them in worshiping him. (Exodus 9:20, 21; 12:37, 38) Since then, the declaration of Jehovah's name has benefited millions more who have taken up true worship.

Dealing With a Difficult People

⁹ The Hebrews knew the divine name. Moses used that name when speaking to them, but they did not always show proper respect for the One to whom it belongs. Soon after Jehovah miraculously delivered the Israelites from Egypt, what happened when they did not quickly find suitable drinking water? They murmured against Moses. Next they complained about the food. Moses cautioned them that their murmuring was not merely against him and Aaron but against Jehovah. (Exodus 15:22-24; 16:2-12) At Mount Sinai, Jehovah gave the Israelites the Law, and this was accompanied by supernatural displays. The people, however, disobediently made a golden calf for worship and claimed that they were having "a festival to Jehovah."—Exodus 32:1-9.

¹⁰ How was Moses to deal with a people whom Jehovah himself described as stiff-necked? Moses petitioned Jehovah: "If, please, I have found favor in your eyes, make me know, please, your ways, that I may know you, in order that I may find favor in your eyes." (Exodus 33:13) In caring for Jehovah's modern-day Witnesses, Christian overseers shepherd a far more humble flock. Yet, they similarly pray: "Make me know your own ways, O Jehovah; teach me your own paths." (Psalm 25:4) Knowledge of Jehovah's ways enables overseers to deal with situations in a

9. How did Moses' own people show disrespect for Jehovah?

10. Why is Moses' request recorded at Exodus 33:13 of special interest to Christian overseers today?

manner that is in harmony with God's Word and that is consistent with his personality.

What Jehovah Expects of His People

¹¹ What Jehovah expected of his people was disclosed orally at Mount Sinai. Moses later received two tablets containing the Ten Commandments in written form. Upon descending from the mountain, he saw the Israelites worshiping the molten calf and angrily threw down the tablets, shattering them. Jehovah again inscribed the Ten Commandments on stone tablets that Moses had carved out. (Exodus 32:19; 34:1) These commandments had not changed since they were first given. Moses was to act in harmony with them. God also impressed upon Moses the sort of person that He is, thus showing Moses how to conduct himself as Jehovah's representative. Christians are not under the Mosaic Law, but what Jehovah told Moses embodies many basic principles that have not changed and that continue to apply to all who worship Jehovah. (Romans 6:14; 13:8-10) Let us consider a few of these.

¹² Give Jehovah exclusive devotion. The nation of Israel was present when Jehovah declared that he requires exclusive devotion. (Exodus 20:2-5) The Israelites had seen abundant evidence that Jehovah is the true God. (Deuteronomy 4:33-35) Jehovah made it clear that regardless of what other nations were doing, he would not tolerate any form of idolatry or spiritism among his people. Their devotion to him was to be no mere formality. All of them were to love Jehovah with their whole heart, their whole soul, and all their vital force. (Deuteronomy 6:5, 6) This would involve their speech, their conduct—indeed, every aspect of their lives. (Leviticus 20:27; 24:15, 16; 26:1) Jesus Christ also

11. What guidelines did Jehovah provide for Moses, and why are we interested in them?

12. How should Jehovah's exacting exclusive devotion have affected Israel?



Jehovah disclosed his requirements to Moses

made it clear that Jehovah requires exclusive devotion.—Mark 12:28-30; Luke 4:8.

¹³ *Strictly obey Jehovah's commandments.* The people of Israel needed to be reminded that when they entered into a covenant relationship with Jehovah, they vowed to obey him strictly. They enjoyed much personal freedom, but in matters on which Jehovah had given them commandments, they had to be strictly obedient. Doing so would give evidence of their love for God and would benefit them and their offspring because all of Jehovah's requirements were for their good.—Exodus 19:5-8; Deuteronomy 5:27-33; 11:22, 23.

¹⁴ *Give priority to spiritual matters.* The nation of Israel was not to allow caring for physical needs to crowd out attention given to

13. Why did Israel owe God strict obedience, and what should motivate us to obey him? (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

14. How did God emphasize to Israel the importance of giving priority to spiritual pursuits?

spiritual activities. The Israelites' lives were not to be devoted solely to mundane pursuits. Jehovah set aside time each week that he designated as sacred, time used exclusively for activity related to worship of the true God. (Exodus 35:1-3; Numbers 15:32-36) Each year, additional time was to be set aside for specified holy conventions. (Leviticus 23:4-44) These would provide opportunities to recount Jehovah's mighty acts, to be reminded of his ways, and to express gratitude to him for all of his goodness. As the people expressed their devotion to Jehovah, they would grow in godly fear and love and would be helped to walk in his ways. (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13) The wholesome principles embodied in those instructions benefit Jehovah's servants today.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

Appreciating Jehovah's Qualities

¹⁵ Appreciation for Jehovah's qualities would also help Moses in dealing with the people. Exodus 34:5-7 states that God passed by before Moses' face and declared: "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, preserving loving-kindness for thousands, pardoning error and transgression and sin, but by no means will he give exemption from punishment, bringing punishment for the error of fathers upon sons and upon grandsons, upon the third generation and upon the fourth generation." Take time to meditate on those words. Ask yourself: 'What does each quality mean? How did Jehovah demonstrate it? How can Christian overseers display this quality? How should the particular quality influence what each one of us does?' Consider just a few examples.

15. (a) Why was appreciation for Jehovah's qualities beneficial to Moses? (b) What questions might help us to think deeply about each of Jehovah's qualities?

¹⁶ Jehovah is “a God merciful and gracious.” If you have the reference work *Insight on the Scriptures*, why not read what it says under “Mercy”? Or do research on that subject with the use of the *Watch Tower Publications Index* or the computer program *Watchtower Library* (CD-ROM).^{*} Use a concordance to find scriptures referring to mercy. You will see that in addition to allowing for a lightening of punishment at times, Jehovah’s mercy includes tender compassion. It moves God to take action to bring his people relief. As evidence of this, God provided for the Israelites both physically and spiritually during their trek to the Promised Land. (Deuteronomy 1:30-33; 8:4) Jehovah mercifully allowed for forgiveness when mistakes were made. He showed mercy toward his ancient people. How much more so should his present-day servants show compassion to one another! —Matthew 9:13; 18:21-35.

¹⁷ Jehovah’s mercy is coupled with graciousness. If you have a dictionary, read what it says under “gracious.” Compare this with scriptures that speak of Jehovah as being gra-

* All published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

16. How might we deepen our appreciation for God’s mercy, and why is doing this important?
17. How can our understanding of Jehovah’s graciousness promote true worship?

What Did You Learn?

- Why was meekness important for Moses, and why is it vital for us?
- What good was accomplished by repeatedly confronting Pharaoh with Jehovah’s word?
- What are some outstanding principles that Moses was taught and that also apply to us?
- How can we deepen our understanding of Jehovah’s qualities?

Meditate on
Jehovah’s
qualities



cious. The Bible shows that graciousness on Jehovah’s part includes loving concern for disadvantaged ones among his people. (Exodus 22:26, 27) In any country, aliens as well as others may find themselves at a disadvantage. When teaching his people to be impartial and to show kindness toward such ones, Jehovah reminded them that they too had been aliens—in Egypt. (Deuteronomy 24:17-22) What about us as God’s people today? Graciousness on our part helps to unite us and to attract others to the worship of Jehovah.—Acts 10:34, 35; Revelation 7:9, 10.

¹⁸ Kind concern for people of other nations, however, was not to override Israel’s love for Jehovah and his moral standards. Thus, the Israelites were taught not to take up the ways of the surrounding nations, not to adopt their religious customs and immoral life-styles. (Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-4) That also applies to us today. We are to be a holy people, even as our God, Jehovah, is holy.—1 Peter 1:15, 16.

- ¹⁹ So that Moses would understand His
18. What do we learn from the limitations that Jehovah taught Israel regarding the ways of people of other nations?
 19. How can understanding Jehovah’s view of wrongdoing safeguard his people?

ways, Jehovah made it clear that although he does not approve of sin, he is slow to anger. He allows time for people to learn his requirements and comply with them. When there is repentance, Jehovah pardons sin, but he does not give exemption from deserved punishment for serious wrongs. He cautioned Moses that future generations could be affected, for good or for bad, by what the Israelites did. Having appreciation for Jehovah's ways can safeguard God's people from blaming God for situations that they have brought on themselves or from concluding that he is slow.

²⁰ If you desire to deepen your own knowledge of Jehovah and his ways, continue to do research and to meditate when you read the Bible. Carefully examine the various fascinating aspects of Jehovah's personality. Prayerfully consider how you might imitate God and conform your life more fully to his purpose. This will help you to avoid pitfalls, to deal appropriately with fellow believers, and to aid others in coming to know and love our magnificent God.

20. What can help us to deal appropriately with fellow believers and with those we meet in our ministry? (Psalm 86:11)

'KEEP YOURSELF RESTRAINED UNDER EVIL'

"A slave of the Lord does not need to fight, but needs to be gentle toward all, . . . keeping himself restrained under evil."—2 TIMOTHY 2:24.

HOW do you react when you are confronted by those who are not favorably disposed toward you or toward what you represent? In his description of the last days, the apostle Paul foretold that people would be "blasphemers, . . . slanderers, without self-control, fierce." (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 12) You may encounter such individuals in your ministry or in other activities.

² Not everyone who indulges in verbal abuse lacks all interest in what is right. Extreme hardship or frustration may cause

1. When engaged in Christian activity, why do we occasionally encounter people who speak harshly?
2. What scriptures can help us to deal wisely with people who speak harshly to us?



people to lash out at whoever is around them. (Ecclesiastes 7:7) Many act this way because they live and work in an environment where rough speech is common. This does not make such speech acceptable for us as Christians, but it does help us to understand why other people use it. How should we react to harsh speech? Proverbs 19:11 states: "The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger." And Romans 12:17, 18 advises us: "Return evil for evil to no one. . . . If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men."

³ If we truly are peaceable, this will be

3. How is peaceableness involved in the message we preach?

evident in the spirit that we show. It will be reflected in what we say and do, perhaps also in our facial expression and in our tone of voice. (Proverbs 17:27) When sending his apostles out to preach, Jesus counseled them: "When you are entering into the house, greet the household [“wish the house peace,” *The New English Bible*]; and if the house is deserving, let the peace you wish it come upon it; but if it is not deserving, let the peace from you return upon you." (Matthew 10:12, 13) The message that we bear is good news. The Bible calls it "the good news of peace," "the good news of the undeserved kindness of God," and "this good news of the kingdom." (Ephesians 6:15; Acts 20:24; Matthew 24:14) Our objective is, not to criticize the other person's beliefs or to argue with him about his viewpoints, but to share with him good news from God's Word.

⁴ Without really listening, a householder may abruptly state, "I am not interested." In many cases, it is possible to say, "I was hoping to read just this one brief text from the Bible." He may not object to that. In other cases, it may be appropriate to say: "I was hoping to tell you about a time when there will be no injustice and all people will learn to love one another." If that does not promptly elicit a request for an explanation, you might add: "But evidently this is not a convenient time for you." Even if the householder's response is not peaceable, should we conclude that he is "not deserving"? Regardless of the reaction, remember the Bible's counsel to be "gentle to-

4. What might you say when told "I am not interested" before you even have an opportunity to state the reason for your visit?

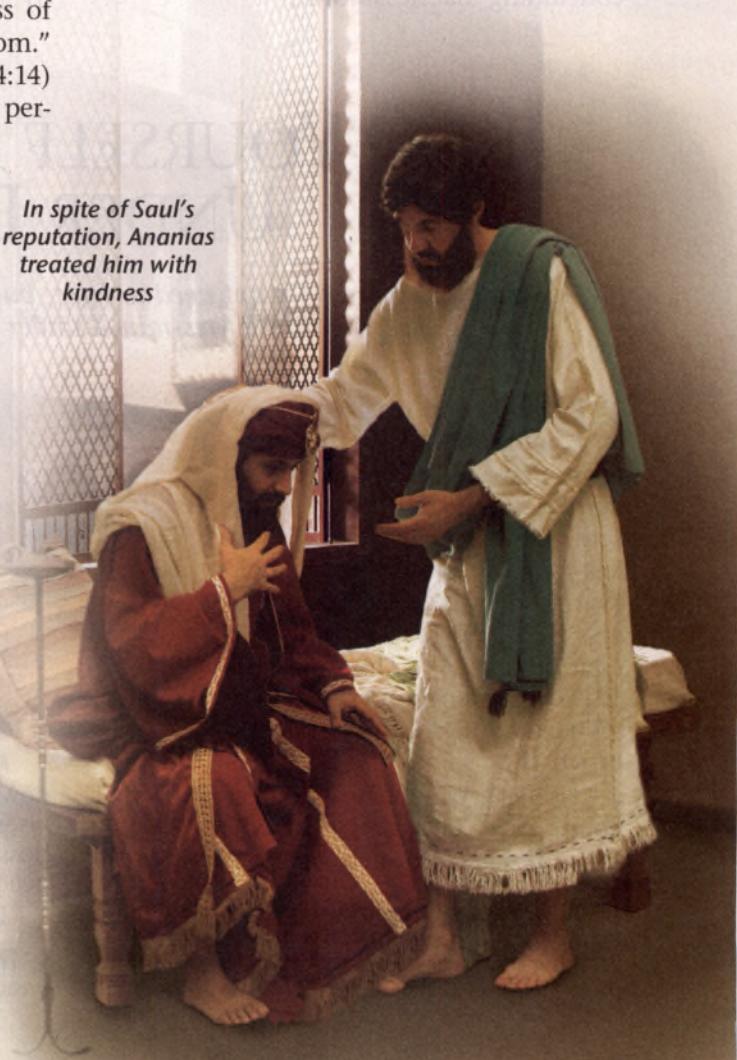
ward all, . . . restrained under evil."—2 Timothy 2:24.

Insolent but Misguided

⁵ In the first century, a man named Saul was well-known for his disrespectful speech, even for his violent behavior. The Bible says that he was "breathing threat and murder against the disciples of the Lord." (Acts 9: 1, 2) He later acknowledged that he had been "a blasphemer and a persecutor and an inso-

5, 6. How did Saul deal with Jesus' followers, and why did he act that way?

In spite of Saul's reputation, Ananias treated him with kindness



lent man." (1 Timothy 1:13) Although some of his relatives may already have become Christians, he said of his own attitude toward Christ's followers: "Since I was extremely mad against them, I went so far as to persecuting them even in outside cities." (Acts 23:16; 26:11; Romans 16:7, 11) There is no evidence that the disciples tried to engage Saul in public debate while he was conducting himself in that manner.

⁶ Why did Saul act like that? Years later, he wrote: "I was ignorant and acted with a lack of faith." (1 Timothy 1:13) He was a Pharisee, educated "according to the strictness of the ancestral Law." (Acts 22:3) Though Saul's teacher Gamaliel was evidently somewhat broad-minded, high priest Caiaphas, with whom Saul came to be associated, proved to be fanatic. Caiaphas had been a ringleader in the plot that led to the execution of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 26:3, 4, 63-66; Acts 5:34-39) After that, Caiaphas saw to it that the apostles of Jesus were flogged, and he sternly ordered them to quit preaching on the basis of Jesus' name. Caiaphas presided over the Sanhedrin at the emotionally charged session during which Stephen was taken away to be stoned. (Acts 5:27, 28, 40; 7:1-60) Saul observed the stoning, and Caiaphas authorized him to follow through on further efforts to suppress the followers of Jesus by arresting them in Damascus. (Acts 8:1; 9:1, 2) Under this influence, Saul thought that his conduct gave evidence of zeal for God, but he actually lacked real faith. (Acts 22:3-5) As a result, Saul failed to realize that Jesus was the true Messiah. But Saul came to his senses when the resurrected Jesus miraculously spoke to him on the road to Damascus.—Acts 9:3-6.

⁷ Shortly after this, the disciple Ananias was dispatched to witness to Saul. Would you have been eager to make that call? Ananias

7. What happened to Saul as a result of his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus?

was apprehensive, but he spoke to Saul in a kind way. Saul's attitude had changed as a result of his miraculous encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:10-22) He came to be known as the apostle Paul, a zealous Christian missionary.

Mild-Tempered but Courageous

⁸ Jesus was a zealous Kingdom proclaimer who was mild-tempered but courageous in dealing with people. (Matthew 11:29) He reflected the spirit of his heavenly Father, who urges the wicked to turn from their bad ways. (Isaiah 55:6, 7) In dealing with sinners, Jesus took note when there was evidence of a change for the better, and he encouraged such individuals. (Luke 7:37-50; 19:2-10) Rather than judging others on the basis of outward appearances, Jesus imitated his Father's kindness, forbearance, and long-suffering with a view to leading them to repentance. (Romans 2:4) It is Jehovah's will that people of all sorts should repent and be saved.—1 Timothy 2:3, 4.

⁹ Giving Jehovah's view of Jesus Christ, the Gospel writer Matthew quotes these prophetic words: "Look! My servant whom I chose, my beloved, whom my soul approved! I will put my spirit upon him, and what justice is he will make clear to the nations. He will not wrangle, nor cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the broad ways. No bruised reed will he crush, and no smoldering flaxen wick will he extinguish, until he sends out justice with success. Indeed, in his name nations will hope." (Matthew 12:17-21; Isaiah 42:1-4) Consistent with those prophetic words, Jesus did not indulge in noisy arguments. Even when under pressure, he spoke the truth in a manner that appealed to honesthearted ones.—John 7:32, 40, 45, 46.

8. How did Jesus reflect his Father's attitude toward people who had done bad things?

9. What can we learn from the way that Isaiah 42:1-4 was fulfilled in Jesus?

¹⁰ During his ministry, Jesus spoke to many Pharisees. Though some of them endeavored to trap him in his speech, Jesus did not conclude that all of them had bad motives. Simon, a Pharisee who was somewhat critical, evidently wanted to get a closer look at Jesus and invited him for a meal. Jesus accepted the invitation and witnessed to those present. (Luke 7: 36-50) On another occasion, a prominent Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus under cover of night. Jesus did not reproach him for waiting until it was dark. Instead, he witnessed to Nicodemus about the love shown by God in sending his Son in order to open the way of salvation to those who would exercise faith. Jesus also kindly pointed out the importance of obedience to God's arrangement. (John 3:1-21) Nicodemus later spoke up in behalf of Jesus when a favorable report about Jesus was belittled by other Pharisees.—John 7:46-51.

¹¹ Jesus was not blind to the hypocrisy of those who were trying to entrap him. He did not allow opposers to lead him into fruitless debates. When appropriate, however, he did give brief, powerful replies by stating a principle, using an illustration, or quoting a scripture. (Matthew 12:38-42; 15:1-9; 16:1-4) At other times, Jesus simply did not answer when it was evident that no good would be accomplished by doing so.—Mark 15:2-5; Luke 22:67-70.

¹² Occasionally, Jesus was shouted at by people under the control of unclean spirits. When that happened, he exercised restraint and even used his God-given power to bring relief. (Mark 1:23-28; 5:2-8, 15) If some peo-

10, 11. (a) Although Pharisees were among Jesus' most vocal opposers, why did he witness to some of them? (b) What sort of replies did Jesus occasionally give to opposers, but what did he not do?

12. Even when he was shouted at, how was Jesus able to help people?



ple become angry and shout at us when we are engaging in the ministry, we similarly need to exercise restraint, and we should endeavor to handle such a situation in a kind and tactful manner.—Colossians 4:6.

Within the Family

¹³ The need for Jesus' followers to exercise restraint often becomes most evident within the family. A person whose heart is deeply touched by Bible truth longs for his family to respond in the same way. But as Jesus said, family members may show hostility. (Matthew 10:32-37; John 15:20, 21) There are various reasons for this. For instance, while Bible teachings can help us to become honest, responsible, and respectful, the Scriptures also teach that in any situation our higher responsibility is to our Creator. (Ecclesiastes 12: 1, 13; Acts 5:29) A family member who feels that his influence in the family is somehow being diminished because of our loyalty to Jehovah may take offense. When dealing with such a situation, how important it is

13. Why do people sometimes oppose a family member who begins to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses?

that we follow Jesus' example of showing restraint!—1 Peter 2:21-23; 3:1, 2.

¹⁴ Many now serving Jehovah had a marriage mate or other family member who was opposed to the changes they were making when they began studying the Bible. The opposers may have heard negative comments about Jehovah's Witnesses, and perhaps they feared that there would be an undesirable influence on the household. What caused them to change their attitude? In many cases, good example was a big factor. Because the believer steadfastly applied Bible counsel—regularly attending Christian meetings and participating in the ministry while also caring for family responsibilities and showing restraint in the face of any verbal abuse—family opposition sometimes softened.—1 Peter 2:12.

¹⁵ An opposer may also have refused to listen to any explanation from the Bible because of prejudice or pride. That was true of a man in the United States who said that he

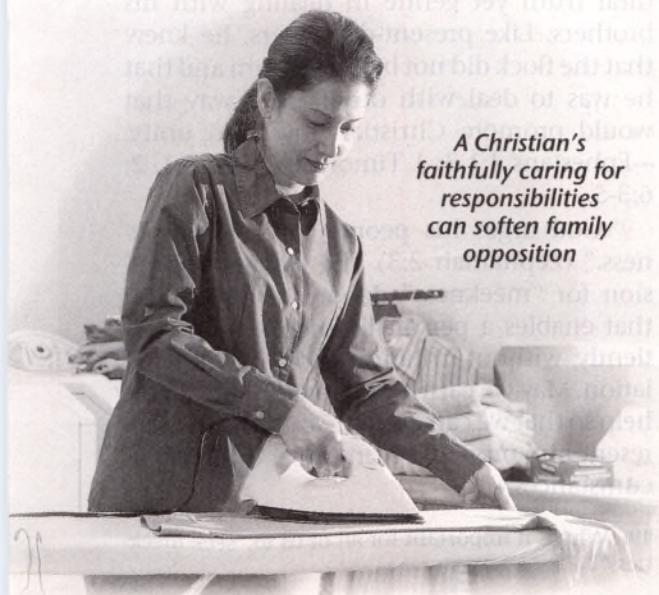
14-16. What brought about changes in some who formerly opposed their family members?

was very patriotic. One time, when his wife was at a convention, he took all his clothes and moved out. Another time, he left home with a gun and threatened to kill himself. He blamed her religion for any unreasonable conduct on his part. But she endeavored to keep applying Bible counsel. Twenty years after she became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, he did too. In Albania a woman became angry because her daughter studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and then got baptized. On 12 occasions the mother destroyed her daughter's copy of the Bible. Then one day she opened a new Bible that her daughter had left on a table. By chance, it opened to Matthew 10:36, and the mother realized that what was said there applied to her. Still, concerned about the daughter's welfare, the mother accompanied her to the boat when she was going to depart with other Witnesses for a convention in Italy. When the mother saw the love, hugs, and smiles of the group and heard their happy laughter, her feelings began to change. Soon after this, she agreed to study the Bible. Today she endeavors to help others who initially oppose.

¹⁶ In one instance, a knife-wielding husband confronted his wife, hurling bitter accusations at her as she approached the Kingdom Hall. She gently replied: "Come into the Kingdom Hall, and see for yourself." He did, and in time he became a Christian elder.

¹⁷ Even if everyone in your household is a Christian, there may be times when the family situation becomes tense and words even become harsh because of human imperfection. It is noteworthy that Christians in ancient Ephesus were counseled: "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) Evidently, the environment

17. If the situation sometimes gets tense in a Christian home, what Scriptural counsel can help?



*A Christian's
faithfully caring for
responsibilities
can soften family
opposition*

that surrounded Christians in Ephesus, their own imperfection and, in some cases, their former way of life influenced them. What would help them to change? They needed to “be made new in the force actuating [their] mind.” (Ephesians 4:23) As they studied God’s Word, meditated on how it should influence their lives, associated with fellow Christians, and earnestly prayed, the fruitage of God’s spirit would be more fully manifest in their lives. They would learn to “become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another just as God also by Christ freely forgave [them].” (Ephesians 4:32) Regardless of what others may do, we need to exercise restraint, being kind, compassionate, forgiving. Indeed, we must “return evil for evil to no one.” (Romans 12:17, 18) Showing genuine love in imitation of God is always the right thing to do.
—1 John 4:8.

Counsel for All Christians

¹⁸ Counsel to keep ourselves “restrained under evil” applies to all Christians. (2 Timothy 2:24) But it was first directed to Timothy, who needed it when he served as an elder in

18. Why was the counsel found at 2 Timothy 2:24 appropriate for an elder in ancient Ephesus, and how can it benefit all Christians?

What Did You Learn?

- When you are confronted with insolent speech, what scriptures can help you?
- Why did Saul act in an insolent manner?
- How does Jesus’ example help us to deal appropriately with all sorts of people?
- What benefits may come from exercising restraint in our speech at home?



Christians promote love and unity

Ephesus. Some in the congregation there were quite vocal in making known their views and were teaching wrong doctrine. Because they did not fully discern the objective of the Mosaic Law, they failed to appreciate the importance of faith, love, and a good conscience. Pride created strife as they engaged in debates over words, while missing the point of Christ’s teachings and the importance of godly devotion. To handle this situation, Timothy was to be firm for Scriptural truth yet gentle in dealing with his brothers. Like present-day elders, he knew that the flock did not belong to him and that he was to deal with others in a way that would promote Christian love and unity.
—Ephesians 4:1-3; 1 Timothy 1:3-11; 5:1, 2; 6:3-5.

¹⁹ God urges his people to “seek meekness.” (Zephaniah 2:3) The Hebrew expression for “meekness” denotes a disposition that enables a person to endure injury patiently, without irritation and without retaliation. May we earnestly petition Jehovah for help so that we can exercise restraint and represent him properly, even under difficult circumstances.

19. Why is it important for all of us to “seek meekness”?

Questions From Readers

Why were David and Bath-sheba not put to death for committing adultery, whereas their newborn son died?

The Mosaic Law stipulated: "In case a man is found lying down with a woman owned by an owner, both of them must then die together, the man lying down with the woman and the woman. So you must clear away what is bad out of Israel." (Deuteronomy 22:22) If Jehovah God had allowed the judicial case of David and Bath-sheba's sin to be handled by human judges under the Law, the adulterous couple would have been executed. Since the human judges could not read hearts, they were to render judgment on the basis of the conduct of the wrongdoers as established by the facts. An act of adultery called for the death sentence. The Israelite judges were not authorized to pardon that sin.

On the other hand, the true God can read hearts and forgive sins if he sees a basis for doing so. Since the case involved David, with whom He had made the Kingdom covenant, Jehovah chose to make an exception and deal with the matter himself. (2 Samuel 7:12-16) "The Judge of all the earth" has the right to make such a choice.—Genesis 18:25.

What did Jehovah see as he examined David's heart? The superscription to Psalm 51 says that this psalm reveals David's feelings "when Nathan the prophet came in to him after he had had relations with Bath-sheba." Psalm 51:1-4 states: "Show me favor, O God, according to your loving-kindness. According to the abundance of your mercies wipe out my transgressions. Thoroughly wash me from my

error, and cleanse me even from my sin. For my transgressions I myself know, and my sin is in front of me constantly. Against you, you alone, I have sinned, and what is bad in your eyes I have done." Jehovah must have viewed this intense remorse in David's heart as an evidence of genuine repentance and decided that there was a basis for showing mercy to the wrongdoers. Moreover, David himself was a merciful person, and Jehovah shows mercy to the merciful. (1 Samuel 24:4-7; Matthew 5:7; James 2:13) Hence, when David acknowledged his sin, Nathan told him: "Jehovah, in turn, does let your sin pass by. You will not die."—2 Samuel 12:13.

David and Bath-sheba were not to escape all consequences of their sin. "Because you have unquestionably treated Jehovah with disrespect by this thing," Nathan told David, "also the son himself, just born to you, will positively die." Their child grew sick and died despite the fasting and mourning that David carried on for seven days.—2 Samuel 12:14-18.

Some find it difficult to understand why the son had to die, since Deuteronomy 24:16 states: "Children should not be put to death on account of fathers." But we must remember that if the case had been handled by human judges, the parents as well as the unborn child in the womb would have lost their lives. The loss of the son might also have helped David to realize more keenly how displeased Jehovah was with his sin with Bath-sheba. We can be confident that Jehovah dealt with the matter justly, for "perfect is his way."—2 Samuel 22:31.



David manifested true repentance



ON WHAT FOUNDATION ARE YOU BUILDING?

THE durability of a building depends largely on the strength of its substructure, or foundation. The Bible sometimes uses this principle in a figurative sense.

The prophet Isaiah, for example, refers to Jehovah God as the one "laying the foundation of the earth." (Isaiah 51:13) This foundation consists of the unchangeable laws of God that control the movement of the earth and hold it in its place. (Psalm 104:5) God's Word, the Bible, also speaks of "the foundations" on which human society rests. These are justice, law, and order. When they are "torn down," or undermined, by injustice, corruption, and violence, there is a breakdown in social order.—Psalm 11:2-6; Proverbs 29:4.

This principle also applies on a personal level. Concluding his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ said: "Everyone that hears these sayings of mine and does them will be likened to a discreet man, who built his house upon the rock-mass. And the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and lashed against that house, but it did not cave in, for it had been founded upon the rock-mass. Furthermore, everyone hearing these sayings of mine and not doing them will be likened to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and struck against that house and it caved in, and its collapse was great."—Matthew 7:24-27.

On what foundation are you building your life? Is it on the unstable sands of godless human philosophy, which will result in structural collapse? Or are you building on the solid rock-mass of obedience to the sayings of Jesus Christ, which will help you to weather the figurative storms in life?