

SEPTEMBER 1, 2001

THE WATCHTOWER  
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

IS  
THERE  
REALLY A  
DEVIL?



# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

September 1, 2001

Average Printing Each Issue: 23,042,000

Vol. 122, No. 17

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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Publication of *The Watchtower* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

The Bible translation used is the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*, unless otherwise indicated.

*The Watchtower* (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simoni, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589.

Changes of address should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

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Semimonthly

ENGLISH

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# Is There a Devil?

INDEPENDENT JOURNAL

*"There was a time in the history of the Christian Church when the devil, Beelzebub or Satan, the king of evil, was as real and forceful a figure as for a diminishing number of people 'God' still is today; a creation of the Jews and early Christians to give substance in half-human, half-bestial form to the wickedness they saw about them. Later Christians came to recognise that this was a fantasy figure with no basis in reality and quietly discarded him."—All in the Mind—A Farewell to God,' by Ludovic Kennedy.*



AS WRITER and broadcaster Ludovic Kennedy states, for centuries no one in Christendom doubted the reality of the Devil. Rather, Christians were at times "obsessed by the power of Satan and his demons," as Professor Norman Cohn puts it. (*Europe's Inner Demons*) This obsession was not limited to simple, uneducated peasants. The belief that the Devil materialized in the form of an animal to preside over evil and obscene rituals, for example, "belonged not to the folklore of the illiterate majority, but, on the contrary, to the worldview of the intellectual elite," says Professor Cohn. This "intellectual elite"—including learned clerics—was responsible for the witch-hunts that swept through Europe from the 15th to the 17th century, when church and civil authorities are said to have tortured and killed about 50,000 alleged witches.

Not surprisingly, many have rejected what they consider to be wild, superstitious notions about the Devil. Even back in 1726, Daniel Defoe derided people's belief that the Devil was a frightful monster "with bat's wings, horns, cloven foot, long tail, forked tongue, and the like." Such ideas, he said, were "weak fancied trifles" manufactured by "devil-raisers and devil-makers" who "cheated the ignorant world with a devil of their own making."

Is that how you see things? Do you agree that "the devil is in reality man's invention to account for his own sinfulness"? That statement appears in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, and many who profess to be Christians think that way. Christendom's theologians, says Jeffrey Burton Russell, have by and large "dismissed the Devil and the demons as superstitious relics."



The Judge - Lucifer/The Devil Illustrations For Donne's Divine Comedy/Dover Publications Inc.

As shown in this engraving by Gustave Doré, old superstitions depicted the Devil as half human, half beast.

Yet, to some people, the Devil is very real. They reason that there must be some kind of superhuman, malignant force behind the recurrent evils that pervade man's history. "The horrors that the twentieth century has produced," says Russell, provide one reason why "belief in the Devil, after a long lapse, is rapidly reappearing." According to author Don Lewis, a number of modern, educated people who "smile patronisingly" at the superstitious beliefs and fears of "their artless ancestors" are "once again becoming enthralled by the evil element in the supernatural."—*Religious Superstition Through the Ages*.

What, then, is the truth of the matter? Is the Devil simply superstitious nonsense? Or is he someone to be taken seriously even in the 21st century?

# The Devil More Than Just Superstition

"Everywhere the New Testament sees a great conflict between the forces of God and of good, on the one hand, and those of evil led by Satan, on the other."

This is not the conception of one writer or another, but is common ground. . . . The witness of the New Testament then is clear. Satan is a malignant reality, always hostile to God and to God's people."—"The New Bible Dictionary."

**W**HY, then, do many who profess Christianity—and who claim to believe the Bible—reject the idea that a real Devil exists? Because, in truth, they do not accept the Bible as God's Word. (Jeremiah 8:9) Bible writers, they say, reflected the philosophies of the nations around them and did not accurately convey the truth from God. Catholic theologian Hans Küng, for example, writes: "Mythological ideas of Satan with legions of devils . . . penetrated

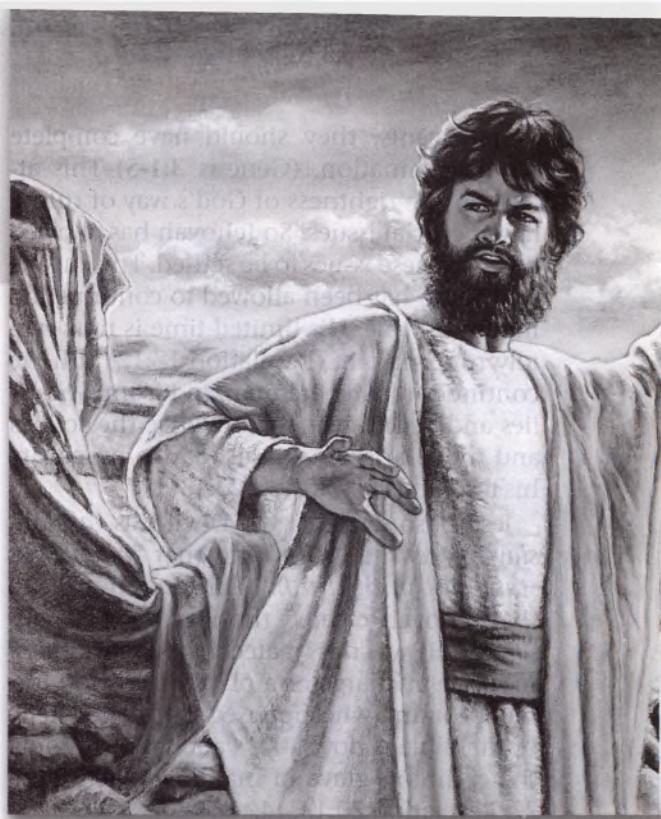
from Babylonian mythology into early Judaism and from there into the New Testament." —*On Being a Christian*.

But the Bible is not simply the word of men; it truly is the inspired Word of God. We are wise, therefore, to take seriously what it says about the Devil.—2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

### What Did Jesus Think?

Jesus Christ believed that the Devil was real. Jesus was not tempted by some evil inside himself. He was attacked by a real person whom he later called "the ruler of the world." (John 14:30; Matthew 4:1-11) He also believed that other spirit creatures supported Satan in his wicked schemes. He cured "demon-possessed" people. (Matthew 12:22-28) Even the atheistic publication *A Rationalist Encyclopædia* notes the significance of this when it says: "It has always been a rock of offence to theologians how the Jesus of the Gospels accepted the belief in devils." When Jesus spoke about the Devil and his demons, he was not simply repeating superstitions carried over from Babylonian mythology. He knew that they really existed.

We learn a lot about the Devil when we consider Jesus' words to religious teachers of his day: "You are from your father the Devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father. That one was a manslayer when he began, and he did not stand fast in the truth, because truth is not in him. When he speaks the lie, he speaks according to his own disposition, because he is a liar and the father of the lie." —John 8:44.



*Jesus knew that the Devil was a real person*

*and deserved a warning to his own children not to follow him.*

According to this, the Devil, a name meaning "slanderer," was "*a liar and the father of the lie.*" He was the first creature to lie about God, and he did so back in the garden of Eden. Jehovah had said that our original parents would "*positively die*" if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. Through the mouth of a serpent, Satan said that those words were not true. (Genesis 2:17; 3:4) Appropriately, he is called "*the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan.*" —Revelation 12:9.

The Devil lied about the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. The prohibition on eating from that tree, he argued, was unjustified; it was an abuse of power. Adam and Eve, he said, could "*be like God*" in determining for themselves what was good and what was bad. Satan implied that as free

moral agents, they should have complete self-determination. (Genesis 3:1-5) This attack on the rightness of God's way of ruling raised crucial issues. So Jehovah has allowed time for these issues to be settled. This means that Satan has been allowed to continue living for a while. His limited time is now rapidly running out. (Revelation 12:12) Still, he continues to alienate mankind from God by lies and deceit, using people like the scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus' day to propagate his teachings.—Matthew 23:13, 15.

Jesus also said that the Devil was "*a manslayer when he began*" and that "*he did not stand fast in the truth.*" This does not mean that Jehovah created the Devil as "*a manslayer.*" He was not created to be some kind of monster in charge of a place of fire and torment for any who opposed God. The "*hell*" of the Bible is not Satan's abode. It is simply the common grave of mankind.—Acts 2:25-27; Revelation 20:13, 14.

The Devil was originally "*in the truth.*" He was once part of Jehovah's heavenly family as a perfect spirit son of God. But he did not "*stand fast in the truth.*" He preferred his own ways and his own lying principles. "*He began,*" not when he was created as an angelic son of God, but when he willfully rebelled against Jehovah and lied to Adam and Eve. The Devil is like those people who rebelled against Jehovah in the time of Moses. Of them we read: "They have acted ruinously on their own part; they are not his children, the defect is their own." (Deuteronomy 32:5) The same could be said of Satan. He

became "*a manslayer*" when he rebelled and became responsible for the death of Adam and Eve and, in fact, the whole human family.—Romans 5:12.

### Disobedient Angels

Other angels joined Satan in his rebellion. (Luke 11:14, 15) These angels "forsook their own proper dwelling place" and materialized human bodies in order to enjoy sexual relationships with "*the daughters of men*" in Noah's day. (Jude 6; Genesis 6:1-4; 1 Peter 3:19, 20) "A third of the stars of heaven," or a minority of spirit creatures, have taken this course.—Revelation 12:4.

The highly symbolic book of Revelation depicts the Devil as "*a great fiery-colored dragon.*" (Revelation 12:3) Why? Not because he literally has a grotesque, ugly body. We do not know, in fact, what kind of body spirit creatures have, but likely Satan does not differ from other angelic spirit creatures in that respect. However, "*a great fiery-colored dragon*" is a fitting description of Satan's ravenous, frightful, powerful, and destructive spirit.

Satan and the demons are now severely restricted. They can no longer materialize as they apparently once could. Shortly after the establishment of God's Kingdom in the hands of Christ in 1914, they were cast down to the vicinity of the earth.—Revelation 12:7-9.

### The Devil Is a Formidable Foe

Even so, the Devil remains a formidable foe. He "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone." (1 Peter 5:8) He is no vague principle of evil residing in our imperfect flesh. True, we do have a daily struggle against our own sinful inclinations. (Romans 7:18-20) But the real struggle is "*against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places.*" —Ephesians 6:12.

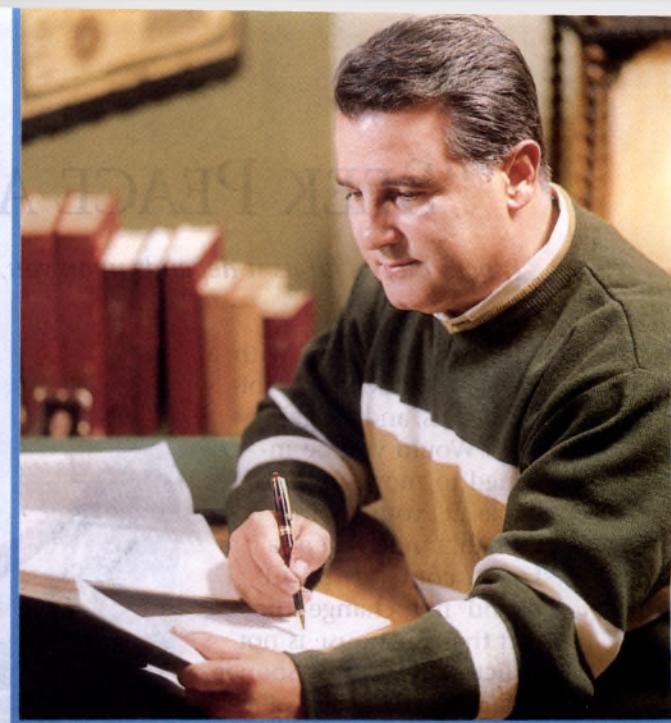
*"The whole world is lying  
in the power of the wicked one"*



How widespread is the Devil's influence? "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one," says the apostle John. (1 John 5:19) Of course, we do not want to become obsessed with the Devil or allow superstitious fear of him to paralyze us. We are wise, though, to stay alert to his efforts to blind us to the truth and to break our integrity to God.—Job 2:3-5; 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4.

The Devil does not always use brutal means to attack those who want to do God's will. At times, he makes himself seem like "an angel of light." The apostle Paul warned Christians of this danger when he wrote: "I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent seduced Eve by its cunning, your minds might be corrupted away from the sincerity and the chastity that are due the Christ."—2 Corinthians 11:3, 14.

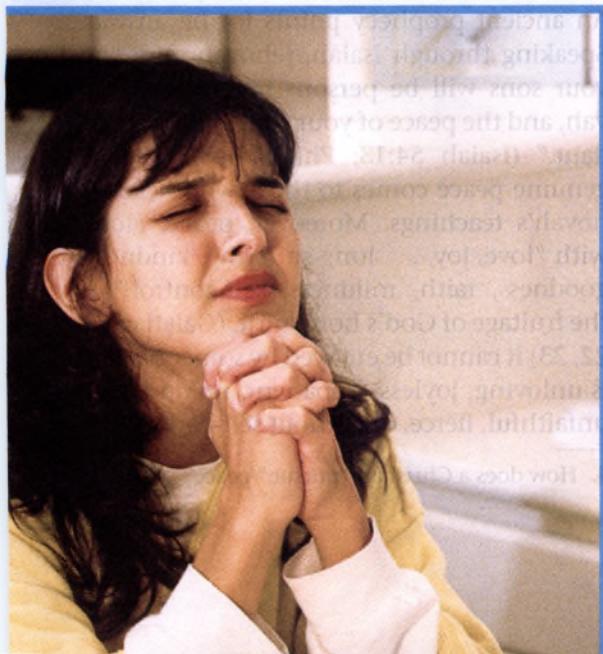
We therefore need to 'keep our senses, be watchful, and take our stand against him, solid in the faith.' (1 Peter 5:8, 9; 2 Corinthians 2:11) Avoid playing into Satan's hands by dabbling in anything that is connected with the occult. (Deuteronomy 18:10-12) Be a good student of God's Word, remembering that Jesus Christ repeatedly referred to God's



***Take your stand against  
the Devil by studying God's Word  
and praying regularly***

Word when he was tempted by the Devil. (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10) Pray for God's spirit. Its fruitage can help you to avoid the works of the flesh, which Satan promotes so effectively. (Galatians 5:16-24) Also, pray earnestly to Jehovah when you feel under pressure in some way from the Devil and his demons.—Philippians 4:6, 7.

There is no need to be in terror of the Devil. Jehovah promises real protection against anything Satan can do. (Psalm 91:1-4; Proverbs 18:10; James 4:7, 8) "Go on acquiring power in the Lord and in the mightiness of his strength," says the apostle Paul. Then you will "be able to stand firm against the machinations of the Devil."—Ephesians 6:10, 11.



# "SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT"

*"If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men."*—ROMANS 12:18.

**I**MAGINE a house with a weak foundation, rotten beams, and a sagging roof. Would you be inclined to move in and make it your home? Probably not. Even a fresh coat of paint would not change the fact that the house is not structurally sound. Sooner or later, it will likely collapse.

<sup>2</sup> Any peace originating in this world is like that house. It is built on a weak foundation—the promises and strategies of man, “to whom no salvation belongs.” (Psalm 146:3) History is a long series of conflicts between nations, ethnic groups, and tribes. True, there have been brief periods of peace, but what kind of peace? If two nations are at war and then peace is declared either because one nation is defeated or because both nations can see no further advantage in fighting, what kind of peace is that? The hatreds, suspicions, and jealousies that sparked the war are still there. Peace that is a mere facade, a ‘painting over’ of hostility, is not a durable peace.—Ezekiel 13:10.

<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, real peace does exist in this war-torn world. Where? Among the footstep followers of Jesus Christ, genuine Christians who heed Jesus’ words and strive to imitate his life course. (1 Corinthians

1, 2. What are some reasons why no man-made peace will last?

3. Why is the peace of God’s people different from any man-made peace?



11:1; 1 Peter 2:21) The peace that exists between true Christians of different races, social positions, and nationalities is genuine because it stems from the peaceful relationship they have with God, which is based on their faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Their peace is a gift from God, not something contrived by humans. (Romans 15:33; Ephesians 6:23, 24) It is a result of subjecting themselves to the “Prince of Peace,” Jesus Christ, and worshiping Jehovah, “the God of love and of peace.”—Isaiah 9:6; 2 Corinthians 13:11.

<sup>4</sup> Peace does not come automatically to imperfect individuals. Hence, Peter said that each Christian should “seek peace and pursue it.” (1 Peter 3:11) How can we do that? An ancient prophecy points to the answer. Speaking through Isaiah, Jehovah said: “All your sons will be persons taught by Jehovah, and the peace of your sons will be abundant.” (Isaiah 54:13; Philippians 4:9) Yes, genuine peace comes to those who heed Jehovah’s teachings. Moreover, peace, along with “love, joy, . . . long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control,” is the fruitage of God’s holy spirit. (Galatians 5: 22, 23) It cannot be enjoyed by someone who is unloving, joyless, impatient, unkind, evil, unfaithful, fierce, or without self-control.

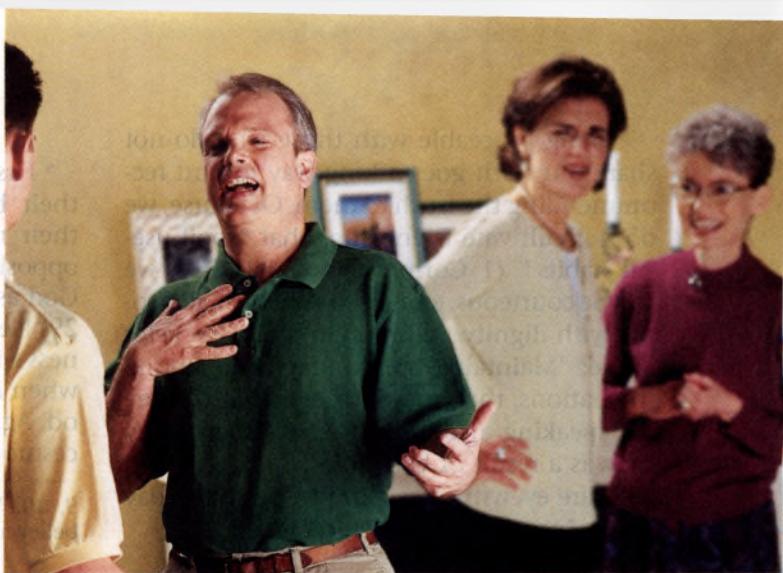
4. How does a Christian “pursue” peace?

## "Peaceable With All Men"

<sup>5</sup> Peace has been defined as "a state of tranquillity or quiet." Such a definition would cover many situations in which there is an absence of strife. Why, even a dead person is at peace! To enjoy true peace, however, one needs to be more than just peaceful. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "Happy are the peaceable, since they will be called 'sons of God.'" (Matthew 5:9) Jesus was speaking to individuals who would later have the opportunity of becoming spiritual sons of God and receiving immortal life in heaven. (John 1:12; Romans 8:14-17) And eventually, all of faithful mankind who do not have a heavenly hope will enjoy "the glorious freedom of the children of God." (Romans 8:21) Only the peaceable can have such a hope. The Greek word for "peaceable" literally means "peacemakers." There is often a difference between being peaceful—at peace—and being peaceable. Being peaceable in the Scriptural sense implies actively promoting peace, sometimes making peace where it was previously lacking.

<sup>6</sup> With this in mind, consider the apostle Paul's counsel to the Romans: "If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men." (Romans 12:18) Paul was not telling the Romans simply to have calm dispositions, although that would help. He was encouraging them to *make* peace. With whom? With "all men"—family members, fellow Christians, even those who did not share their beliefs. He encouraged the Romans to make peace with others 'as far as it depended upon them.' No, he did not want them to compromise their beliefs for the sake of

5, 6. (a) What is the difference between being peaceful and being peaceable? (b) Toward whom do Christians strive to be peaceable?



*Peacemakers avoid an air of superiority*

peace. Rather than unnecessarily antagonizing others, they were to approach them with peaceful intent. Christians were to do so whether they were dealing with those inside or outside the congregation. (Galatians 6:10) In harmony with this, Paul wrote: "Always pursue what is good toward one another and to all others."—1 Thessalonians 5:15.

<sup>7</sup> How can we be peaceable with those who do not share our beliefs and who may even oppose them? For one thing, we avoid displaying an air of superiority. For example, it would hardly be peaceable to speak of specific individuals by using derogatory terms. Jehovah has revealed his judgments against organizations and classes, but we have no right to speak of any individual as if he were already condemned. Really, we do not judge others, even our opposers. After telling Titus to counsel Christians in Crete about their dealings with human authorities, Paul said to remind them "to speak injuriously of no one, not to be belligerent, to be reasonable, exhibiting all mildness toward all men."—Titus 3:1, 2.

7, 8. How and why are Christians peaceable toward those who do not share their beliefs?

<sup>8</sup> Being peaceable with those who do not share our faith goes a long way toward recommending the truth to them. Of course, we do not cultivate friendships that “spoil useful habits.” (1 Corinthians 15:33) Still, we can be courteous, and we should treat all people with dignity and human kindness. Peter wrote: “Maintain your conduct fine among the nations, that, in the thing in which they are speaking against you as evildoers, they may as a result of your fine works of which they are eyewitnesses glorify God in the day for his inspection.”—1 Peter 2:12.

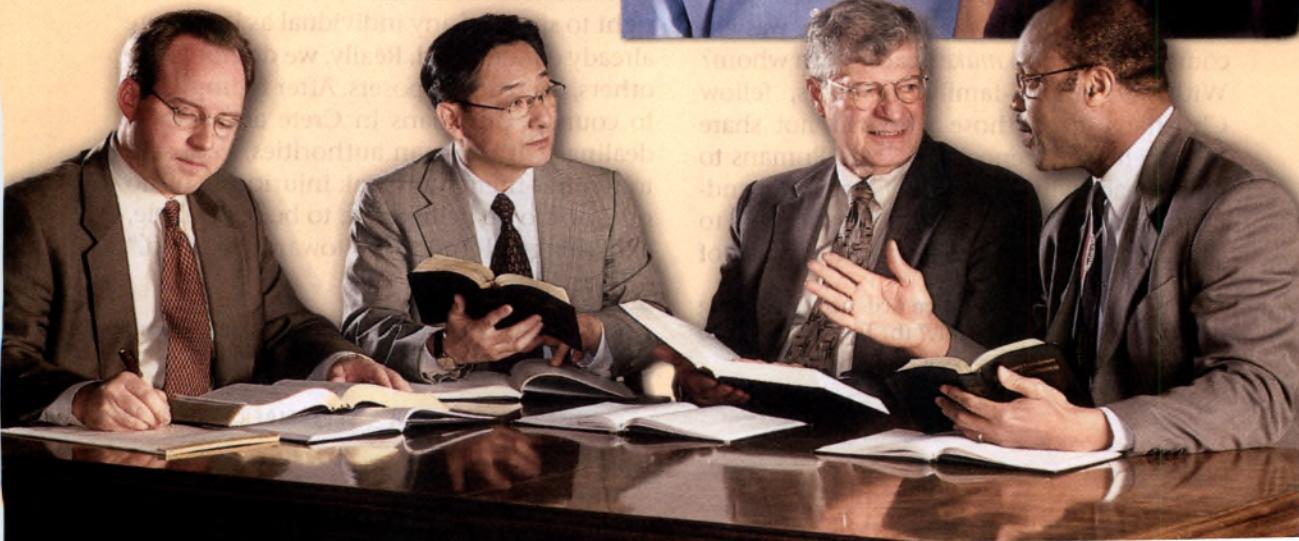
### Peaceable in the Ministry

<sup>9</sup> First-century Christians were known for their boldness. They did not water down their message, and when confronted with opposition, they were determined to obey God as ruler rather than men. (Acts 4:29; 5:29) Nevertheless, they did not confuse boldness with rudeness. Consider Paul’s approach when he defended his faith before King Herod Agrippa II. Herod Agrippa had an incestuous relationship with his sister, Bernice.

<sup>9, 10.</sup> What example of dealing peaceably with unbelievers did the apostle Paul set?



***Christians are peacemakers in the ministry, in the home, and in the congregation***



However, Paul did not set out to lecture Agrippa on morals. Rather, he emphasized points they agreed on, crediting Agrippa with being an expert on Jewish customs and a believer in the prophets.—Acts 26:2, 3, 27.

<sup>10</sup> Was Paul insincerely flattering the man who could grant him freedom? No. Paul followed his own advice and spoke the truth. Nothing he said to Herod Agrippa was untrue. (Ephesians 4:15) But Paul was a peacemaker and knew how to become “all things to people of all sorts.” (1 Corinthians 9:22) His objective was to defend his right to preach about Jesus. As a good teacher, he began by mentioning something that he and Agrippa could agree on. Thus Paul helped that immoral king to see Christianity in a more favorable light.—Acts 26:28-31.

<sup>11</sup> How can we be peacemakers in our ministry? Like Paul, we should avoid arguments. Granted, at times we need to “speak the word of God fearlessly,” boldly defending our faith. (Philippians 1:14) But in most cases our primary objective is to preach the good news. (Matthew 24:14) If a person sees the truth about God’s purposes, he can then begin to cast off false religious ideas and cleanse himself of unclean practices. To the extent possible, therefore, it is good to emphasize things that will appeal to our listeners, starting with things we hold in common with them. It would be counterproductive to antagonize a person who, if approached tactfully, might listen to our message.—2 Corinthians 6:3.

### Peacemakers in the Family

<sup>12</sup> Paul said that those who marry “will have tribulation in their flesh.” (1 Corinthians 7:28) Various hardships will be encountered. Among other things, some couples will have disagreements from time to time. How should these be handled? In a peaceable way.

11. How can we be peacemakers in our ministry?
12. In what ways can we be peacemakers in the family?

A peacemaker will endeavor to stop a conflict from escalating. How? First, by guarding the tongue. When used to make sarcastic and insulting remarks, this small member can truly be “an unruly injurious thing, . . . full of death-dealing poison.” (James 3:8) A peacemaker uses his tongue to build up rather than to tear down.—Proverbs 12:18.

<sup>13</sup> Being imperfect, all of us occasionally say things that we later regret. When this happens, be quick to make amends—to make peace. (Proverbs 19:11; Colossians 3:13) Avoid getting bogged down in “debates about words” and “violent disputes about trifles.” (1 Timothy 6:4, 5) Instead, look beneath the surface and try to understand your mate’s feelings. If harsh words are spoken to you, do not reply in kind. Remember that “an answer, when mild, turns away rage.”—Proverbs 15:1.

<sup>14</sup> At times, you may need to consider the counsel of Proverbs 17:14: “Before the quarrel has burst forth, take your leave.” Step back from the volatile situation. Later, when emotions have cooled, you will probably be able to solve the problem amicably. In some cases, it might be advisable to call upon a mature Christian overseer for help. Such experienced and empathetic men can be a refreshing aid when marital peace is threatened.—Isaiah 32:1, 2.

### Peacemakers in the Congregation

<sup>15</sup> Sadly, some first-century Christians gave evidence of a spirit of jealousy and contentiousness—the very opposite of peace. James said: “This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is the earthly, animal, demonic. For where jealousy and

13, 14. How can we preserve peace when we err in speech or when emotions run high?

15. According to James, what bad spirit had developed among some Christians, and why is that spirit “earthly,” “animal,” and “demonic”?

contentiousness are, there disorder and every vile thing are." (James 3:14-16) Some believe that the Greek word translated "contentiousness" has to do with selfish ambition, a jockeying for position. It is for good reason that James labels it "earthly, animal, demonic." Throughout history, world rulers have acted contentiously, like wild animals battling against one another. Contentiousness truly is "earthly" and "animal." It is also "demonic." This insidious trait was first manifested by the power-hungry angel who set himself against Jehovah God and became Satan, the ruler of the demons.

<sup>16</sup> James urged Christians to resist developing a contentious spirit, for it works against peace. He wrote: "From what source are there wars and from what source are there fights among you? Are they not from this source, namely, from your cravings for sensual pleasure that carry on a conflict in your members?" (James 4:1) Here, "cravings for sensual pleasure" could refer to a greedy craving for material things or to a desire for prominence, control, or influence. Like Satan, some in the congregations evidently wanted to be shining ones rather than 'lesser ones,' as Jesus said his true followers would be. (Luke 9:48) Such a spirit can rob the congregation of peace.

<sup>17</sup> Today, we must also resist the tendency toward materialism, jealousy, or vain ambition. If we are genuine peacemakers, we will not feel threatened if some in the congregation are more skilled than we are at certain endeavors, nor will we discredit them in the eyes of others by questioning their motives. If we possess a noteworthy ability, we will not use it to make ourselves look better than others, as if to imply that the congregation will prosper only because of our proficiency and

16. How did some first-century Christians manifest a spirit like that of Satan?
17. How can Christians today be peacemakers in the congregation?

know-how. Such a spirit would cause division; it would not bring peace. Peacemakers do not flaunt their talents, but they modestly use them to serve their brothers and bring honor to Jehovah. They realize that in the end, it is love—not ability—that identifies a true Christian.—John 13:35; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

### "Peace as Your Overseers"

<sup>18</sup> Congregation elders take the lead in being peacemakers. Jehovah foretold regarding his people: "I will appoint peace as your overseers and righteousness as your task assigners." (Isaiah 60:17) In line with these prophetic words, those who serve as Christian shepherds work hard to promote peace among themselves and among the flock. Elders can keep peace among themselves by displaying the peaceable and reasonable "wisdom from above." (James 3:17) With their varied backgrounds and experiences in life, elders in a congregation will sometimes have different viewpoints. Does this mean that they lack peace? Not if such a situation is handled properly. Peacemakers modestly express their thoughts and then respectfully listen to those of others. Instead of insisting on his own way, a peacemaker will prayerfully consider his brother's viewpoint. If no Bible principle is violated, there is usually room for

18. How do elders promote peace among themselves?

### Do You Recall?

- What does it mean to be peaceable?
- How can we be peaceable when dealing with non-Witnesses?
- What are some ways of cultivating peace in the family?
- How can elders promote peace in the congregation?

varied points of view. When others disagree with him, a peacemaker will yield to and support the decision of the majority. Thus he will show himself reasonable. (1 Timothy 3: 2, 3) Experienced overseers know that preserving the peace is more important than getting one's own way.

<sup>19</sup> Elders promote peace with members of the flock by supporting them and by not being unduly critical of their efforts. Granted, at times some may need to be readjusted. (Galatians 6:1) But the Christian overseer's work is not primarily to administer discipline. He of-

19. How do elders act as peacemakers within the congregation?

ten gives commendation. Loving elders strive to see the good in others. Overseers appreciate the hard work of fellow Christians, and they have confidence that their fellow believers are doing their best.—2 Corinthians 2:3, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Hence, in the family, in the congregation, and in dealing with those who do not share our beliefs, we strive to be peaceable, to work for peace. If we diligently cultivate peace, we will contribute to the happiness of the congregation. At the same time, we will be protected and strengthened in many ways, as we will see in the following article.

20. In what way does the congregation benefit if all are peacemakers?

## Once We Were Wolves—Now We Are Sheep!

When Sakina and I were little girls, we were neighbors. Sakina was big and sturdy, whereas I was small and thin. We used to wrangle often, but one day we had a serious scuffle. From that day onward, we neither spoke to each other nor greeted each other. Eventually, we both moved away and lost track of each other.

In 1994, I began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, and little by little my personality changed. Four years later while attending our special assembly day in Bujumbura, Burundi, I was astonished to meet up with Sakina. I was glad that she was present, but our greeting was rather subdued. Later that day, I could hardly believe my eyes when I noticed her among the baptism candidates! She too had changed radically. She



was no longer the combative person with whom I had so often quarreled. How wonderful it was to see her give public evidence of her dedication to God by submitting to water baptism!

When she came up from the water, I hurried to hug her and whispered into her ear: "You remember how we fought?" "Yes," she said, "I remember, but that was in the past. I am a new person now."

Both of us are happy to have found the Bible truth that unites and to have changed our wolflike personalities into those of sheep belonging to the Great Shepherd, Jehovah God. Really, Bible truth does change lives.

# HOW CAN THE PEACE OF THE CHRIST CONTROL IN OUR HEARTS?

*"Let the peace of the Christ control in your hearts, for you were, in fact, called to it in one body."*—COLOSSIANS 3:15.

CONTROL is a distasteful word to many, since it brings to mind images of coercion and manipulation. Paul's exhortation to fellow Christians in Colossae, "Let the peace of the Christ control in your hearts," might therefore strike some as being unreasonable. (Colossians 3:15) Are we not free moral agents? Why should we let anything or anyone control in our hearts?

<sup>2</sup> Paul was not telling the Colossians to surrender their free will. The Greek term translated "control" at Colossians 3:15 is related to the word for the umpire who awarded the prize in the athletic contests of those days. Contestants had a degree of freedom within the rules of the game, but in the end, the umpire decided who had followed the rules and therefore won the contest. Similarly, we have freedom to make many decisions in life, but as we do so, the peace of the Christ should always be "umpire"—or, as translator Edgar J. Goodspeed renders it, "the ruling principle" in our hearts.

<sup>3</sup> What is "the peace of the Christ"? It is the tranquillity, the inner calm, that we gain when we become Jesus' disciples and learn that we are loved and approved by Jehovah God and by his Son. When Jesus was about to

leave his disciples, he told them: "I give you my peace. . . . Do not let your hearts be troubled nor let them shrink for fear." (John 14:27) For almost 2,000 years, that peace has been enjoyed by faithful anointed members of the body of Christ, and today their companions, the "other sheep," share in it. (John 10:16) That peace should be a controlling influence in our hearts. When we are under severe trial, it can help us to avoid being paralyzed by fear or being excessively troubled. Let us see how this is true when we face injustice, when we are beset by anxiety, and when we feel unworthy.

## When We Face Injustice

<sup>4</sup> King Solomon observed: "Man has dominated man to his injury." (Ecclesiastes 8:9) Jesus knew the truth of those words. While in heaven, he saw the gross injustices that humans inflicted upon one another. On earth, he personally suffered the greatest injustice when he, a sinless man, was accused of blasphemy and put to death as a criminal. (Matthew 26:63-66; Mark 15:27) Today, injustice is still rampant, and true Christians have suffered more than their share, being "objects of hatred by all the nations." (Matthew 24:9) Yet, despite horrific experiences in Nazi

- 1, 2. In what way does "the peace of the Christ" control in a Christian's heart?
3. What is "the peace of the Christ"?

4. (a) How did Jesus become acquainted with injustice? (b) How have Christians responded to being victims of injustice?

death camps and in the Soviet Gulag, despite being victims of mob violence, false accusations, and lying attacks, the peace of the Christ has kept them firm. They have imitated Jesus, of whom we read: "When he was being reviled, he did not go reviling in return. When he was suffering, he did not go threatening, but kept on committing himself to the one who judges righteously."—1 Peter 2:23.

<sup>5</sup> On a far smaller scale, we may believe that someone has been treated unfairly within the Christian congregation. In such a case, we may feel as did Paul, who said: "Who is stumbled, and I am not incensed?" (2 Corinthians 11:29) What can we do? We should ask ourselves, 'Is it really an injustice?' Often, we do not know all the facts. We might be reacting strongly after listening to someone who claims to be in the know. With good reason, the Bible states: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word." (Proverbs 14:15) So we need to be cautious.

<sup>6</sup> Suppose, though, that we personally have been the victim of a perceived injustice. How would a person with the peace of the Christ in his heart react? We may see the need to talk with the individual who we feel has wronged us. Thereafter, rather than discuss the matter with anyone who will listen, why not commit the case to Jehovah in prayer and trust in him to see to it that justice is done? (Psalm 9:10; Proverbs 3:5) It may well be that having done so, we will be content to resolve the matter in our heart and "keep silent." (Psalm 4:4) In most cases, Paul's admonition will apply: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also."—Colossians 3:13.

5. When we hear of an apparent injustice in the congregation, what should we first consider?
6. How can we respond to perceived injustices within the congregation?



*Before his accusers, Jesus committed himself to Jehovah*

<sup>7</sup> Whatever we do, though, we need to remember that while we cannot control what happened, we can control our reaction. If we respond in an unbalanced way to a perceived injustice, that may have a more harmful effect on our peace than the injustice itself. (Proverbs 18:14) We could even be stumbled and stop associating with the congregation until we feel that justice has been served. The psalmist wrote that for those loving Jehovah's laws "there is no stumbling block." (Psalm 119:165) The truth is, everyone experiences injustice from time to time. Never permit such unfortunate experiences to interfere with your serving Jehovah. Instead, let the peace of the Christ control in your heart.

### When We Are Beset by Anxiety

<sup>8</sup> Anxiety is a very real part of life in these "last days." (2 Timothy 3:1) True, Jesus said: "Quit being anxious about your souls as to

7. What should we always remember in our dealings with our brothers?
8. What are some things that cause anxiety, and what can anxiety result in?

what you will eat or about your bodies as to what you will wear." (Luke 12:22) But not all anxiety stems from concern about material things. Lot was "greatly distressed" because of the depravity of Sodom. (2 Peter 2:7) Paul was beset by "anxiety for all the congregations." (2 Corinthians 11:28) Jesus was in such agony on the night preceding his death that "his sweat became as drops of blood falling to the ground." (Luke 22:44) Clearly, not all anxiety is evidence of a weak faith. Whatever causes it, however, if anxiety is intense and prolonged, it can rob us of peace. Anxiety has overwhelmed some, making them feel unable to continue handling the responsibilities involved in serving Jehovah. The Bible says: "Anxious care in the heart of a man is what will cause it to bow down." (Proverbs

12:25) What can we do, then, if we are afflicted by anxiety? <sup>9</sup> In some situations, we may be able to take practical measures. If a medical problem is at the root of our anxious state, it would be prudent to give attention to it, although such matters are for personal decision.\* (Matthew 9:12) If we are weighed down by many responsibilities, it might be possible to delegate some of these to others. (Exodus 18:13-23) What, though, of those—like parents—who have heavy responsibilities that cannot be delegated? What of a Christian living with an opposed mate? What of a family in dire economic straits or living in a war zone? Clearly, we cannot eliminate all sources of anxiety in this system of things. Still, we can preserve the peace of the Christ in our hearts. How?

<sup>10</sup> Seeking comfort in God's Word is one way. King David wrote: "When my disquieting thoughts became many inside of me,

\* In some cases, anxiety may be caused or intensified by medical conditions, such as clinical depression.

9. What are some practical steps that may be taken to relieve anxiety, but what causes of anxiety cannot be removed?

10. What are two ways in which a Christian can seek to relieve anxiety?

*Like the warm embrace of a loving father, Jehovah's consolations can soothe our anxiety.*



your own consolations began to fondle my soul." (Psalm 94:19) Jehovah's "consolations" can be found in the Bible. Regularly consulting that inspired Book will help to preserve the peace of the Christ in our hearts. The Bible states: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter." (Psalm 55:22) In a similar vein, Paul wrote: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6, 7) Earnest and regular prayer will help us to preserve our peace.

<sup>11</sup> Jesus was an excellent example in this regard. On occasion, he prayerfully spoke with his heavenly Father for hours at a time. (Matthew 14:23; Luke 6:12) Prayer helped him to endure the worst of trials. On the night before his death, his distress grew very intense. His reaction? He prayed "more earnestly." (Luke 22:44) Yes, the perfect Son of God was a man of prayer. How much more, then, should his imperfect followers cultivate the habit of prayer! Jesus taught his disciples "always to pray and not to give up." (Luke 18:1) Prayer is real and vital communication with the One who knows us better than we know ourselves. (Psalm 103:14) If we are to preserve the peace of the Christ in our hearts, we will "pray incessantly."—1 Thessalonians 5:17.

### Conquering Our Limitations

<sup>12</sup> Jehovah views each one of his servants as precious. (Haggai 2:7, footnote) Nevertheless, many find this difficult to accept. Some may be discouraged because of advancing

11. (a) How was Jesus a fine example in the matter of prayer? (b) How should we view prayer?
12. For what reasons may some feel that their service is inadequate?

age, growing family obligations, or deteriorating health. Others may feel disadvantaged because of coming from a wretched background. Still others might be tormented over past mistakes, doubting that Jehovah can ever forgive them. (Psalm 51:3) What can be done about such feelings?

<sup>13</sup> The peace of the Christ will assure us of Jehovah's love. We can restore that peace in our hearts by reflecting on the fact that Jesus never said that our value is measured by comparing what we do with what others do. (Matthew 25:14, 15; Mark 12:41-44) What he did stress was loyalty. He told his disciples: "He that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved." (Matthew 24:13) Jesus himself was "despised" by men, yet he had no doubt that his Father loved him. (Isaiah 53:3; John 10:17) And he told his disciples that they too were beloved. (John 14:21) To emphasize this, Jesus said: "Do not two sparrows sell for a coin of small value? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore have no fear: you are worth more than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:29-31) What warm assurance of Jehovah's love!

<sup>14</sup> Jesus also said: "No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him." (John 6:44) Since Jehovah has drawn us to follow Jesus, He must want us to be saved. Jesus told his disciples: "It is not a desirable thing with my Father who is in heaven for one of these little ones to perish." (Matthew 18:14) Therefore, if you are serving with a complete heart, you can exult in your fine works. (Galatians 6:4) If you are tormented by past mistakes, be assured that Jehovah will

13. What Scriptural comfort is there for those who feel inadequate?
14. What assurance do we have that Jehovah values each one of us?



### *Endurance counts greatly with God*

forgive "in a large way" truly repentant ones. (Isaiah 43:25; 55:7) If for any other reason you are feeling discouraged, remember that "Jehovah is near to those that are broken at heart; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves."—Psalm 34:18.

<sup>15</sup> Satan would like nothing better than to rob you of your peace. He is the perpetrator of the inherited sin that all of us struggle with. (Romans 7:21-24) He would surely like you to feel that your imperfection makes your service unacceptable to God. Never allow the Devil to demoralize you! Be aware of his designs, and let that awareness make you determined to endure. (2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11-13) Remember, "God is greater than our hearts and knows all things." (1 John 3:20) Jehovah sees more than our failings. He also sees our motives and intentions. Take comfort, then, in the psalmist's words: "Jehovah will not forsake his people, nor will he leave his own inheritance."—Psalm 94:14.

15. (a) How does Satan try to rob us of our peace?  
(b) What confidence in Jehovah can we have?

### **United in the Peace of the Christ**

<sup>16</sup> Paul wrote that we should let the peace of the Christ control in our hearts because we were "called to it in one body." The anointed Christians to whom Paul wrote were called to be part of the body of Christ, as are the remaining ones of the anointed today. Their "other sheep" companions are united with them as "one flock" under "one shepherd," Jesus Christ. (John 10:16) Together, a worldwide "flock" of millions are letting the peace of the Christ control in their hearts. Knowing that we are not alone helps us to endure. Peter wrote: "Take your stand against [Satan], solid in the faith, knowing that the same things in the way of sufferings are being accomplished in the entire association of your brothers in the world."—1 Peter 5:9.

<sup>17</sup> May all, then, continue to cultivate peace, that vital fruit of God's holy spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Those who are found by Jehovah to be spotless, unblemished, and in peace will eventually be blessed with eternal life on a paradise earth, where righteousness will dwell. (2 Peter 3:13, 14) We have every reason to let the peace of the Christ control in our hearts.

16. In what way are we not alone as we strive to endure?

17. What incentive do we have to let the peace of the Christ control in our hearts?

### **Do You Recall?**

- What is the peace of the Christ?
- How can the peace of the Christ control in our hearts when we face injustice?
- How does the peace of the Christ help us to handle anxiety?
- How does the peace of the Christ comfort us when we feel unworthy?

# "What Is Brewing in FRANCE?"

"Liberty, beloved liberty," are words from "La Marseillaise," France's national anthem. Without a doubt, liberty is something to be valued. Yet, recent events in France are causing concern that basic freedoms are being undermined. That is why, on Friday, November 3, 2000, tens of thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses distributed a total of 12 million copies of a special tract entitled "What Is Brewing in France? Could Freedom Regress?"

FOR several years now, Jehovah's Witnesses in France have been under attack by various politicians and antisect groups. This has led to difficulties for Witnesses on an individual, congregational, and national level. However, on June 23, 2000, the *Conseil d'État*, France's highest administrative court, rendered a landmark decision that confirmed the prevailing opinion of 31 lower courts in over 1,100 cases. The high court confirmed that the worship practiced by Jehovah's Witnesses is entirely in harmony with French law and that their Kingdom Halls are entitled to the same fiscal exemptions accorded to other religions.

However, in total disregard of this decision, the French Ministry of Finance contin-

## *Que se trame-t-il en France ?*

### **Les libertés pourraient-elles régresser ?**

À l'aube du nouveau millénaire, le pluralisme religieux et la diversité des convictions constituent un fait de société en France. Un débat public s'est engagé à ce sujet et des informations contradictoires ont commencé à circuler. Cette situation entretient la confusion et le trouble.

Présents en France depuis un siècle, les Témoins de Jéhovah, qui se révèlent dans plus d'un millier d'édifices du culte ouverts à tous, entendent réagir en rendant publiques les informations suivantes :

#### *La position favorable du Conseil d'État*

Le Conseil d'État, par deux arrêts du 23 juin 2000, a reconnu le culte chrétien des Témoins de Jéhovah.

La plus haute instance juridictionnelle de la République française confirme ainsi la position dominante déjà prise par 31 cours et tribunaux administratifs qui, lors des cinq dernières années, ont reconnu ce culte chrétien par 152 jugements et arrêts.

Dès le 13 janvier 1905, le Conseil d'État avait reconnu que les Témoins de Jéhovah étaient bien un culte. Le commissaire du gouvernement soulignait que ces chrétiens se livrent à des activités religieuses et déclarait : " Il y a là, sans aucun doute, tous les éléments qui caractérisent habituellement un culte."

Le 23 juin 2000, le Conseil d'État a donc rappelé que, selon la loi du 9 décembre 1905 relative à la séparation des églises et de l'Etat, l'exercice du culte chrétien des Témoins de Jéhovah est conforme à l'ordre public et publicain. Le commissaire du gouvernement fait état explicitement de la conséquence de cette décision de justice : " en termes de reconnaissance officielle par le Juge, il résulte qu'il suppose de culte pour les Témoins de Jéhovah, reconnaissant que l'infringement une analyse revenue en 1995 par le rapport de la commission parlementaire sur les 'sectes en France' "

*Ce document est diffusé à 12 millions d'exemplaires*



ues to refuse Jehovah's Witnesses the tax exemption provided for by law to religious organizations. The Ministry has imposed a 60-percent tax on the contributions made by Witnesses and friends associated with the 1,500 local congregations in France. This case is under litigation at present.

The aim of the aforementioned campaign was to expose this paradox and to



highlight the risks implicit in such arbitrary taxation and in proposed laws that would undermine religious freedom for all.\*

### A Long Day

At two o'clock in the morning, Witnesses in some congregations begin the distribution outside train stations and factories and then at airports. At six, Paris comes to life. Some 6,000 volunteers are posted at strategic points to meet commuters on their way to work. One young woman comments: "What you are doing for religious freedom is good. It's not just Jehovah's Witnesses who are involved." In Marseilles, over 350 Witnesses hand out the tract at metro stations and on the street. Within one hour, national radio announces the campaign, telling its listeners not to be surprised if they are approached by Jehovah's Witnesses. In Strasbourg, home of the European Court of Human Rights, travelers at the central station line up patiently to receive their copy. A lawyer comments that, while not sharing our convictions, he is following our case with interest, since our struggle is important and just.

At eight o'clock, in spite of heavy rain, 507 Witnesses in the Alpine city of Grenoble comb the streets or put the tract in letter

boxes. Car and tram drivers, seeing that something is going on, stop their vehicles to ask for a tract. In the western city of Poitiers, travelers arriving by train at nine have already received the tract at their point of departure. In Mulhouse, near the German border, 40,000 copies have already been handed out.

By ten o'clock, many congregations have distributed over half of their tracts. As the morning progresses, very few people refuse, and a number of interesting conversations have resulted. In Besançon, just over 50 miles from the Swiss border, a young man expresses interest in the Bible and asks why God permits suffering. The Witness invites him to continue the discussion at the nearby Kingdom Hall, where a Bible study is immediately started in the brochure *What Does God Require of Us?*

At noon many Witnesses use their lunch break to preach for one or two hours. Throughout the afternoon, the distribution continues, with numerous congregations finishing by three or four that afternoon. In the champagne capital of Reims, some people who have studied or associated with Jehovah's Witnesses in the past express their desire to renew contact with the congregation. In Bordeaux three home Bible studies are started. In the same city, a Witness enters a shop to buy a newspaper and sees a pile of tracts on the counter. The shopkeeper, a former Witness, had received the tract and, realizing its importance, had made photocopies to hand out herself.

In Le Havre, Normandy, a Protestant lady who heard on the radio that Jehovah's Witnesses' contributions are being taxed is shocked. She eagerly accepts the tract and congratulates the Witnesses for speaking out

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Can Anything Really Unite People?

Jehovah's Blessing Makes Us Rich

Enoch Walked With God in  
an Ungodly World



against such an injustice. At 7:20 p.m., regional TV news in Lyons comments on the distribution, saying: "This morning it was easier to dodge between the raindrops than to avoid the tracts of Jehovah's Witnesses." Two Witnesses are interviewed and explain the reasons for the campaign.

Witnesses wanting to have a share after their secular work distribute some tracts to returning commuters and place others in letter boxes. In such towns as Brest and Limoges—famous for its porcelain—people leaving the cinema at 11:00 p.m. are among the last of the day to receive the document. Remaining tracts are collected and distributed the following morning.

### Results

One Witness wrote: "Our adversaries think that they are weakening us. In fact, the opposite is taking place." In most congregations, over 75 percent of the Witnesses had a share that day, some spending 10, 12, or 14 hours

in this activity. In Hem, in the north of France, after working a night shift, one Witness distributed the tract from five in the morning until three in the afternoon. In nearby Denain, where there has been a congregation since 1906, 75 Witnesses spent 200 hours distributing the tract on Friday. Others, in spite of old age, infirmity, and bad weather, were also determined to have a share. In Le Mans, for example, a trio in their 80's spent two hours putting the tract into letter boxes, and a Witness in a wheelchair handed out the tract in front of the train station. And how encouraging it was to see numerous previously inactive Witnesses taking part in this special activity!

Without a doubt, this distribution resulted in a great witness. People from all walks of life, many of whom are rarely contacted in their homes, received a copy of the tract. Numerous individuals felt that this action accomplished far more than the protection of the Witnesses' interests. Many viewed it as a defense of freedom of conscience and worship for all Frenchmen. As evidence of this, members of the public asked for additional copies of the tract to give to friends, colleagues, or relatives.

Yes, Jehovah's Witnesses in France are proud to make known Jehovah's name and to defend Kingdom interests. (1 Peter 3:15) It is their sincere hope that they can "go on leading a calm and quiet life with full godly devotion and seriousness" and that thousands more will join them in praising their heavenly Father, Jehovah.—1 Timothy 2:2.



## SPIRITUAL LIGHT SHINES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

AS TOLD BY  
**NAJIB SALEM**

In the first century C.E., the light of God's Word shone from the Middle East and reached the far corners of the earth. During the 20th century, that light returned to illuminate that part of the world once again.

Let me tell you how that occurred.

I WAS born in 1913 in the town of Amioun, in northern Lebanon. That was the last year of relative stability and calm in the world, for World War I broke out the following year. When the war ended in 1918, Lebanon, then known as the pearl of the Middle East, was deeply exhausted both economically and politically.

In 1920, when postal services again began to operate in Lebanon, mail was received from Lebanese people who lived abroad. Among them were my uncles Abdullah and George Ghantous. They wrote to their father, Habib Ghantous, my grandfather, tell-

ing him about God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) Merely relating to his fellow towns-men the contents of his sons' letters brought my grandfather ridicule. The townspeople spread the rumor that Habib's sons were encouraging their father to sell his land, buy a donkey, and go preaching.

### Early Spread of Light

The following year, 1921, Michel Aboud, who had been living in Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A., returned to Tripoli, Lebanon. He had become a Bible Student, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called. Although the majority of Brother Aboud's friends and relatives

did not respond to the Bible message, two well-known persons did, a professor, Ibrahim Atiyeh, and a dentist, Hanna Shammas. Dr. Shammas, in fact, made his house and clinic available for Christian meetings.

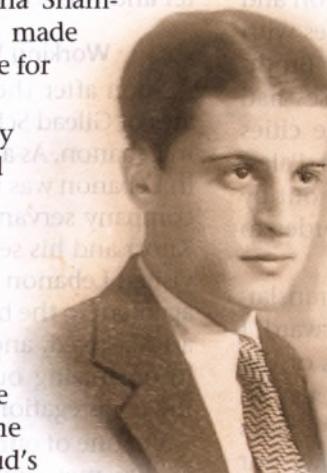
I was still a young boy when Brother Aboud and Brother Shammas visited Amioun, where I lived. Their visit affected me deeply, and I began to accompany Brother Aboud in the preaching work. For 40 years the two of us were regular companions in the ministry, until Brother Aboud's death in 1963.

Between 1922 and 1925, the light of Bible truth spread widely in many villages in northern Lebanon. Some 20 to 30 persons met to discuss the Bible in private homes, such as ours in Amioun. The clergy sent children to hammer on tin cans and shout and scream in an effort to disrupt our meetings, so we sometimes met in the pine forest.

When I was young, my zeal for the ministry—and for attending every Christian meeting—earned me the appellation Timothy. The school director ordered me to stop attending what he termed "those meetings." When I refused, I was expelled from school.

#### **Witnessing in Bible Lands**

Soon after my baptism in 1933, I started in the pioneer service, as the full-time ministry is called by Jehovah's Witnesses. Although we were few in number then, not only did we preach to most villages in the northern part of Lebanon but we also reached Beirut and its suburbs and all the way to the south of Lebanon. In those early years, we usually traveled on foot or rode a donkey, as did Jesus Christ and his first-century followers.



*Najib in 1935*

In 1936, Yousef Rahhal, a Lebanese Witness who had lived in the United States for many years, returned to Lebanon for a visit. He brought with him sound equipment and a couple of phonographs. We mounted the equipment on a 1931 Ford automobile and traveled throughout Lebanon and Syria, carrying the Kingdom message to remote areas. The amplifier could be heard at a distance of over six miles. People went up to the roofs of their houses to hear what they described as voices coming from heaven. Those in the fields left their work and came closer to listen.

One of my last journeys with Yousef Rahhal was to Aleppo, Syria, in the winter of 1937. Before he returned to the United States, we also traveled to Palestine. There we visited the cities of Haifa and Jerusalem, as well as villages in the country. One of our contacts was with Ibrahim Shehadi, with whom I had earlier become acquainted through correspondence. Ibrahim had progressed in Bible knowledge to the point that during our visit, he began sharing with us in the house-to-house ministry.—Acts 20:20.

I was also eager to meet Professor Khalil Kobrossi, a staunch Catholic who had been studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses through correspondence. How had he obtained the address of the Witnesses in Lebanon? Well, at a store in Haifa, the shopkeeper had wrapped some of Khalil's groceries in paper torn from one of the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses. That paper had our address on it. We had a fine visit together, and later, in 1939, he came to Tripoli to be baptized.

In 1937, Petros Lagakos and his wife arrived in Tripoli. During the next few years, the three of us covered most of Lebanon and Syria, calling on people at their homes with the Kingdom message. By the time Brother Lagakos died in 1943, the Witnesses had carried spiritual light to most of the cities and villages of Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. At times, about 30 of us started out by car or bus as early as 3:00 a.m. in order to reach remote areas.

In the 1940's, Ibrahim Atiyeh translated *The Watchtower* into Arabic. Afterward, I would make four handwritten copies of the magazine and send them to Witnesses in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt. In those days during World War II, opposition to our preaching was great, but we kept in contact with all lovers of Bible truth in the Middle East. I personally drew up maps of cities and surrounding villages, and we made a point of reaching them with the good news.

In 1944, while World War II was still raging, I married Evelyn, the daughter

of my pioneer companion Michel Aboud. We eventually had three children, a daughter and two sons.

### Working With the Missionaries

Soon after the war ended, the first graduates of Gilead School for missionaries arrived in Lebanon. As a result, the first congregation in Lebanon was formed, and I was appointed company servant. Then, in 1947, Nathan H. Knorr and his secretary, Milton G. Henschel, visited Lebanon and provided much encouragement to the brothers. Soon more missionaries arrived, and they were a big help to us in organizing our ministry and in conducting congregation meetings.

On one of our trips to a remote area in Syria, we met opposition from a local bishop. He accused us of distributing what he called Zionistic publications. Ironically, prior to 1948 the clergy often labeled us "Communists." On this occasion, we were arrested and interrogated for two hours, during which time an excellent witness was given.

*With a sound car in the Lebanon Mountains, 1940*





*Above clockwise from top left: Najib, Evelyn, their daughter, Brother Aboud and Najib's oldest son, 1952*



*Below (front row):  
Brothers Shammas, Knorr,  
Aboud, and Henschel at Najib's  
home, Tripoli, 1952*

In the end, the judge who listened to the case declared: "Although I curse the beard [a figure of speech referring to the bishop] that has made charges against you, I have to thank it for having given me this opportunity to meet you and learn about your teachings." He then apologized for the inconvenience to us.

While en route to Beirut on a bus ten years later, I began talking with a man seated next to me, an agricultural engineer. After a few minutes of listening to our beliefs, he said that he had heard similar talk from a friend in Syria. Who was the friend? The judge who had listened to our case ten years earlier!

During the 1950's, I visited Witnesses in Iraq and shared in witnessing from door to door with them. I also made many journeys to Jordan and the West Bank. In 1951, I was one of a group of four Witnesses who went to Bethlehem. We observed the Lord's Evening

Meal there. Early that day all those present for the occasion had gone by bus to the Jordan River, where 22 were baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah. Whenever we faced opposition in that area, we would say: "We have come to tell you that one of your own native sons will become King over the entire earth! Why are you upset? You should be joyful!"

#### **Preaching Amid Difficulties**

People in the Middle East are generally goodhearted, humble, and hospitable. Many listen to the message of God's Kingdom with interest. Really, nothing could be more refreshing than knowing that soon this Bible promise will be fulfilled: "God himself will be with [his people]. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."—Revelation 21:3, 4.



*Najib and his wife,  
Evelyn*

I have found that most people who oppose our activity really do not understand our work and the message that we bear. The clergymen of Christendom have done so much to misrepresent us! Hence, during the civil war that started in Lebanon in 1975 and lasted for more than 15 years, the Witnesses faced many difficulties.

At one time, I was conducting a Bible study with a family who had been zealous churchgoers. Their good progress in learning Bible truths irritated the clergymen. As a result, one night a local religious group incited its members to storm the family's shop, and they burned merchandise worth at least \$10,000, U.S. That same night, they came and abducted me. However, I was able to reason with their leader, explaining that if they were really Christians, they would not behave in a barbaric manner. At that, he commanded the car to stop and ordered me to step out.

On another occasion, I was kidnapped by four militiamen. After many threats, their leader, who had said he was going to shoot me, suddenly changed his mind, and I was released. Two of these men are now in prison for murder and robbery, and the other two have been executed.

#### **Other Opportunities to Witness**

I have often had opportunity to fly from one country to another. Once during a flight from Beirut to the United States, I sat next to Charles Malek, a former Lebanese minister of foreign affairs. He listened carefully, appreciating every verse I read to

him from the Bible. Finally, he said that he had gone to a school in Tripoli where his teacher was Ibrahim Atiyeh, the man to whom my father-in-law had introduced Bible truth!

Mr. Malek said that Ibrahim had taught him to respect the Bible.

During another flight, I sat next to a Palestinian representative to the United Nations. I had the opportunity to tell him the good news of God's Kingdom. He eventually introduced me to his brother's family in New York, and I often visited them there. I also had a relative who worked in the United Nations building in New York. My visit to his office one day lasted three hours, during which time I was able to give him a witness regarding God's Kingdom.

I am 88 years old now, and I am still able to have an active share in caring for congregation responsibilities. My wife, Evelyn, is still serving Jehovah by my side. Our daughter married a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses, who now serves as an elder in a congregation in Beirut. Their daughter is a Witness too. Our youngest son and his wife are Witnesses, and their daughter is also in the truth. As for our oldest son, the Christian faith was inculcated in his heart, and I hope that in time, he will come to embrace it.

In 1933, I was appointed to serve as a pioneer—the first one in the Middle East. I could not have found anything better to do with my life than to serve Jehovah as a pioneer all of these past 68 years. And I am determined to go on walking in the spiritual light he provides.

# How You Can Make Good Decisions

FREE will is a gift from God. Without it, we would be little more than robots, with no control over our actions. With it, however, we face challenges. Possessing free will, we have to make decisions as we go through life.

Of course, many decisions are quite trivial. Others, such as what career to choose or whether to get married, can affect our whole future. Still others affect other people. Some decisions that parents make have a profound effect on their children. Moreover, we have to render an account to God for many decisions we make.—Romans 14:12.

## The Need for Help

Humans do not have a good record when it comes to decision making. One of the very first human decisions on record was disastrous. Eve decided to partake of the fruit that God had expressly forbidden. Her choice, based on selfish desire, led to her husband's joining her in disobeying God, and the result was great suffering for mankind. In many cases, humans still base their decisions more on selfish desires than on right principles. (Genesis 3:6-19; Jeremiah 17:9) And when faced with serious decisions, we are frequently conscious of our limitations.

Not surprisingly, then, when making big decisions, many seek help from sources higher than humans. The Bible records an occasion when Nebuchadnezzar, in the midst of a military campaign, had a decision to make. Although he was a king, he felt the need "to resort to divination," consult the spirits. Hence, the record says: "He has shaken the ar-



rows. He has asked by means of the teraphim; he has looked into the liver." (Ezekiel 21:21) Similarly today, many consult fortune-tellers and astrologers and in other ways seek help from the spirits. But these are deceptive and misleading.—Leviticus 19:31.

There is One who is completely reliable and who throughout history has helped humans to make wise decisions. That one is none other than Jehovah God. For example, in ancient times, God gave his nation, Israel, the Urim and the Thummim—likely, sacred lots that were cast when the nation faced situations of grave importance. Through the Urim and the Thummim, Jehovah gave direct answers to questions and helped the elders of Israel to be sure that their decisions were in harmony with his will.—Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21.

Consider another example. When Gideon was called to lead the armies of Israel against Midian, he had to decide whether to accept such a lofty privilege. Gideon, wanting reassurance that Jehovah would support him, asked for a miraculous sign. He prayed that a fleece left out overnight would become wet with dew but the ground around it remain dry. The next night, he asked that the fleece

would remain dry while the ground around it be soaked with dew. Jehovah kindly gave Gideon the signs that he requested. As a result, Gideon made the right decision and, with divine support, totally defeated Israel's enemies.—Judges 6:33-40; 7:21, 22.

### What About Today?

Today, Jehovah still offers help to his servants when they are faced with important decisions. How? Should we, like Gideon, ask for 'fleece tests,' signs from Jehovah to show us the way to go? One couple wondered whether they should move to serve where there was a greater need for Kingdom preachers. To help them decide, they arranged a test. They put their house up for sale at a certain price. If the house sold by a certain date at the stated price or higher, they would take it as an indication that God wanted them to make the move. If the house failed to sell, they would conclude that God did not want them to move.

The house failed to sell. Was that an indication that Jehovah did not want this couple to serve where the need was greater? Of course, it would be presumptuous to state categorically what Jehovah does or does not do for his servants. We cannot say that today Jehovah never intervenes to demonstrate his will for us. (Isaiah 59:1) However, we do not have a right to *expect* such intervention in our major decisions, in effect leaving our decision making to God. Why, even Gideon for most of his life had to make decisions without miraculous signs from Jehovah!

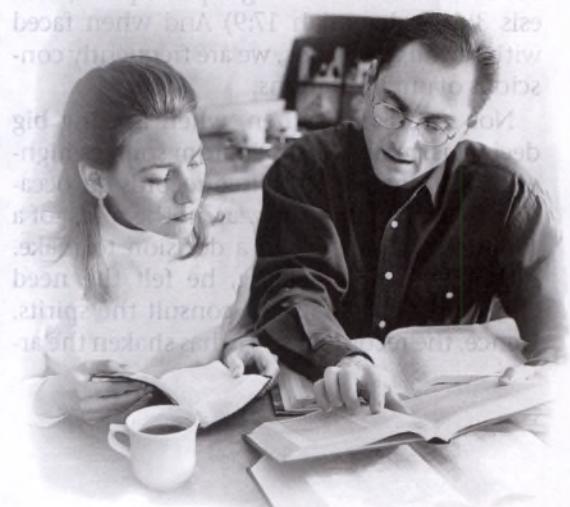
Still, the Bible does say that divine guidance is available. It foretells of our time: "Your own ears will hear a word behind you saying: 'This is the way. Walk in it, you people,' in case you people should go to the right or in case you should go to the left." (Isaiah 30:21) When we are faced with important choices, it is perfectly appropriate to seek to make sure that our decisions are in harmony with God's will and reflect his superior wisdom.

How? By consulting his Word and allowing it to be 'a lamp to our foot, and a light to our roadway.' (Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 2:1-6) To do this, we need to cultivate the habit of taking in accurate knowledge from the Bible. (Colossians 1:9, 10) And when faced with a decision, we need carefully to research *all* Bible principles having to do with the matter. Such research will enable us to "make sure of the more important things."—Philippians 1:9, 10.

We should also talk to Jehovah in prayer, confident that he will listen to us. How comforting it is to explain to our loving God the decision we have to make and the alternatives we are considering! Then, we can confidently ask for guidance in making the right decision. Often, holy spirit will remind us of Bible principles that apply, or it might help us to understand more clearly a scripture that relates to our situation.—James 1:5, 6.

Jehovah also provides mature ones in the congregation with whom we can discuss our decisions. (Ephesians 4:11, 12) In consulting others, though, we should not follow the course of those who approach one person af-

**Consult God's Word before making important decisions**





*Speak to Jehovah about the decisions you have to make*



ter another until they finally find someone who says what they want to hear. Then they follow his advice. We should also remember the warning example of Rehoboam. When he was faced with a serious decision, he received excellent advice from the older men who had served with his father. However, rather than follow their counsel, he consulted the young men who grew up with him. Following their advice, he made a very bad decision and as a result lost a large part of his kingdom.—1 Kings 12:1-17.

When seeking counsel, do so from those who are experienced in life and have a good knowledge of the Scriptures and a reverent regard for right principles. (Proverbs 1:5; 11:14; 13:20) When possible, take time to meditate on the principles involved and on all the information you have gathered. As you come to see things in the light of Jehovah's Word, the right decision will likely become more evident.—Philippians 4:6, 7.

### The Decisions We Make

Some decisions are easily made. When commanded to stop witnessing, the apostles

knew that they had to keep preaching about Jesus, and they immediately informed the Sanhedrin of their decision to obey God rather than man. (Acts 5:28, 29) Other decisions may need more thought because there is no direct Bible statement touching on the matter. Still, Bible principles will usually shed light on the best decision to make. For example, although many forms of entertainment available today did not exist in the time of Jesus, there are clear Bible statements about what pleases Jehovah and what displeases him. Thus, any Christian who indulges in entertainment that promotes violence, immorality, or rebelliousness has made a bad decision.—Psalm 97:10; John 3:19-21; Galatians 5:19-23; Ephesians 5:3-5.

Sometimes, two decisions may both be correct. Serving where the need is greater is a wonderful privilege and can lead to great blessings. But if a person for some reason decides not to do so, he can still do fine work in his home congregation. On occasion, we may face a decision that will give us the opportunity to demonstrate the depth of our devotion to Jehovah or what is most important in our lives. Thus, Jehovah allows us to use our free will to show what our heart condition really is.

Frequently, others are affected by our decisions. For example, first-century Christians rejoiced to be free of many of the restrictions of the Law. This meant, for instance, that they could either accept or reject food that was unclean under the Law. Still, they were encouraged to consider the consciences of others when deciding whether to exercise this freedom. Paul's words on the matter could apply to many decisions that we make: "Keep from becoming causes for stumbling." (1 Corinthians 10:32) A desire not to stumble others



**You can discuss your major decisions  
with mature Christians**

How we love our neighbor might help determine many of the decisions we make. After all, love of neighbor is the second greatest commandment.—Matthew 22: 36, 39.

**The Outcome of Our Decisions**

Decisions made in good conscience and based on Bible principles will always have a good outcome in the long run. In the short run, of course, they may result in some personal sacrifice. When the apostles told the Sanhedrin of their decision to keep preaching about Jesus, they were flogged before they were released. (Acts 5:40) When the three Hebrews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—decided that they would not bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, they put their lives in danger. They were prepared to face the possibility that their decision might mean their death. But they knew that they would have God's approval and blessing.—Daniel 3:16-19.

If we encounter difficulties after making a conscientious decision, that is no reason for assuming that the decision was wrong. "Time and unforeseen occurrence" can adversely affect the outcome of even the best-intentioned decisions. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) Moreover, Jehovah sometimes allows adversity to test the depth of our commitment. Jacob had to wrestle all night with an angel before receiving a blessing. (Genesis 32:24-26) We too may have to wrestle with adversity, even when we are doing the right thing. Still, when our decisions are in harmony with God's will, we can be confident that he will help us to endure and that he will finally bless us.—2 Corinthians 4:7.

Hence, when making an important decision, do not rely on your own wisdom. Search for Bible principles that apply. Speak to Jehovah about the matter. Where possible, consult with mature fellow Christians. Then be courageous. Exercise your God-given free will in a responsible way. Make a good decision and demonstrate to Jehovah that your heart is upright before him.

## Questions From Readers

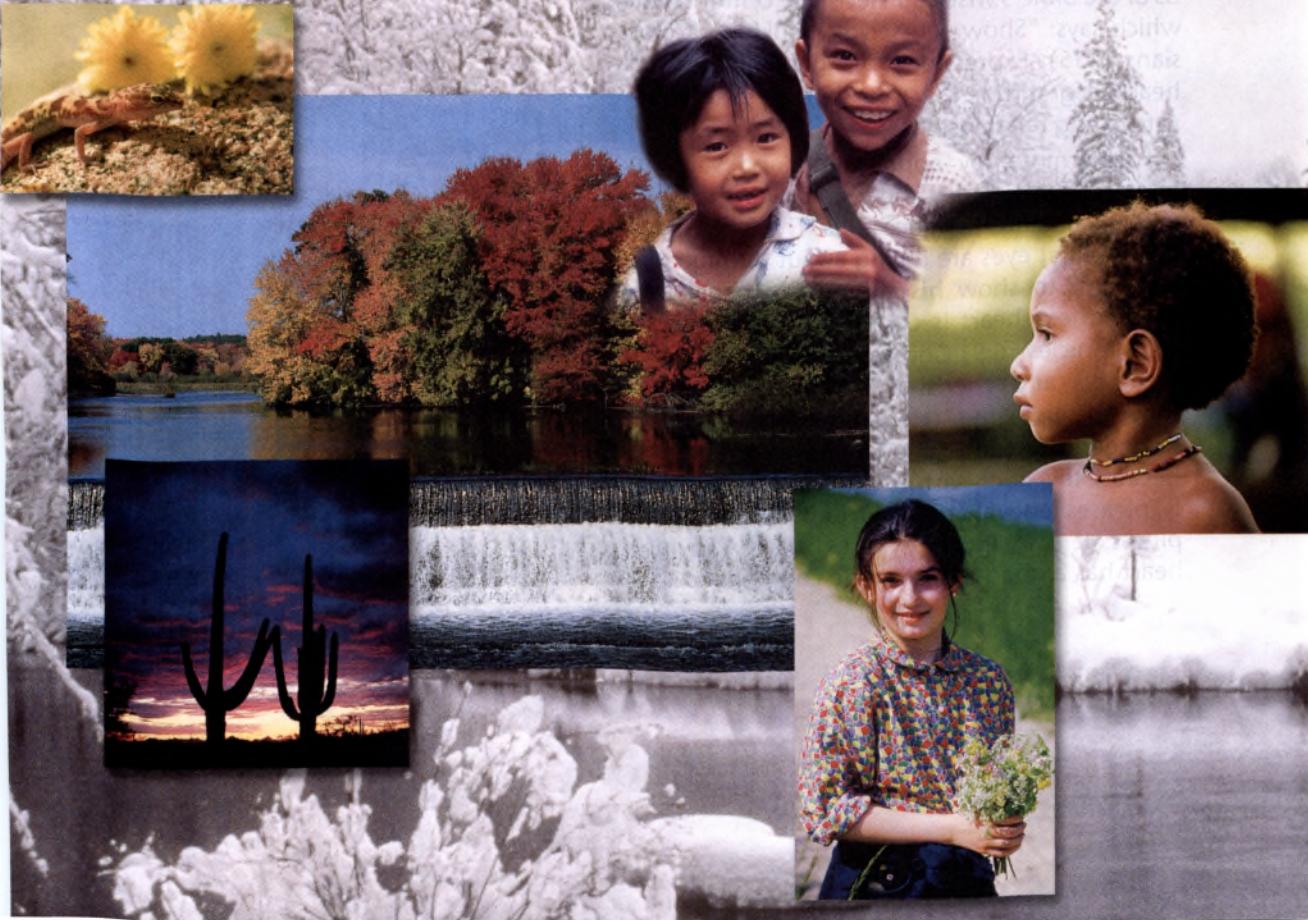
Colossians 1:16 says about God's Son that "all other things have been created through him and for him." In what sense were all things created "for" God's Son, Jesus?

Jehovah used his only-begotten Son as the master worker in creating all other things, that is, all things besides Jesus himself. (Proverbs 8:27-30; John 1:3) Rightly, the Son derives pleasure from these works, and in this sense they are "for" him.

We know that human parents expect to, and often do, derive much pleasure from what they produce—their sons and daughters. Thus, the Bible proverb speaks of "a son in whom [his fa-

ther] finds pleasure." (Proverbs 3:12; 29:17) Similarly, Jehovah God derived enjoyment from Israel when his people were faithful. (Psalm 44:3; 119:108; 147:11) He also derives joy from the faithfulness of his loyal ones down to our time.—Proverbs 12:22; Hebrews 10:38.

Thus, it was right that God would have his coworker, Jesus, derive pleasure from his accomplishments. In fact, Proverbs 8:31 says that the Son 'was glad at the productive land of his earth, and the things he was fond of were with the sons of men.' It is in this sense that Colossians 1:16 says: "All other things have been created through him and for him."



# Be Grateful and Be Happy

"THE impulse of gratitude is a fundamental human experience," said the *Calgary Herald*, a Canadian newspaper. The *Herald* quoted some nine-year-old elementary school students who were asked by their teacher to write about all the things for which they were thankful. One youth said that he was grateful for his family 'because they had cared for him.' A young girl too was thankful for her family, saying: "They keep me safe, healthy, care for me, love me, feed me, and if it wasn't for my parents, I wouldn't be here on this earth."

Ingratitude leads to chronic dissatisfaction. According to philosopher-theologian J. I. Packer, "we're built to live in dependence on God and mutual dependence on each other." This reminds us of the Bible's wise counsel made centuries ago, which says: "Show yourselves thankful." (Colossians 3:15) Expressions of thankfulness and heartfelt gratitude toward others help to cultivate caring relationships.

Furthermore, by appreciating and valuing one another, we also show ourselves thankful to Jehovah, and he notices this. The Bible says: "[Jehovah's] eyes are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him." (2 Chronicles 16:9) God assures us that he remembers and cherishes the love humans show for his name. (Hebrews 6:10) Yes, we have good reason to show ourselves grateful because this godly virtue, when expressed daily, pleases Jehovah and contributes to our happiness. It is as Proverbs 15:13 says: "A joyful heart has a good effect on the countenance."

