

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

MAY 1, 2003

What
Would You
Like to
Ask God?





THE WATCHTOWER®

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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What Would You Like to Ask God?

PEOPLE around the earth have serious questions about life. Do you?

Many have presented their questions to religious instructors but have not received satisfying answers. Others have pondered these questions privately. Some have prayed for direction.

Is it really possible for you to get answers from God about matters that perplex you? Among the questions that many have said they would like to ask God are these.

Who really are you, God?

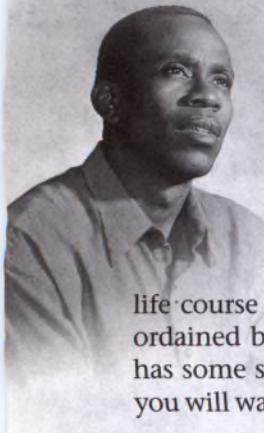
The way that humans view God is influenced by their culture, by the religion of their parents, and possibly by their own choice. Some people use a name for the Deity; others simply call him God. Does it really matter? Is there just one true God who reveals himself and his name to us?

Why is there so much suffering?

If a person's reckless or immoral way of life has ruined his health or reduced him to poverty, he may complain. But he may well know why he is suffering.

However, many others suffer grievously through no fault of their own. Some have chronic illnesses. Others struggle against seemingly insurmountable odds to have a roof over their heads and enough food for their families. Millions are victims of crime, war, indiscriminate violence, natural disasters, or injustice at the hands of people in authority.

Understandably, many ask: 'Why have such conditions become so widespread? Why does God permit all this suffering?'



Why am I here? What is the purpose of life?

These questions often spring from the frustration felt by a person whose daily activity fails to bring real satisfaction—and that is true of many people. Millions of others believe that the life course of each person is somehow foreordained by God. Is that so? If God indeed has some special purpose for you, no doubt you will want to know what it is.

Of all the books in the world, there is one that clearly says that it is inspired of God. As you would expect of a message that is truly from God for all mankind, this book is available in far more languages than any other book ever written. It is the Holy Bible. In it, the Creator of heaven and earth, God himself, reveals who he is and what his name is. Do you know that name? Do you know what the Bible says about the kind of Person God is? Do you know what it says about what God requires of you?

How Some Received Answers



MILLIONS of people pray. Some are convinced that their prayers are answered. Others wonder whether their prayers are ever heard. Still others seek answers but have not thought about presenting their requests in prayer to God.

The Bible identifies the true God as the "Hearer of prayer." (Psalm 65:2) If you pray, are you sure that your prayers are directed to the true God? Are your prayers ones that he will answer?

For many people in all parts of the earth, the answer has proved to be *yes!* How did they receive answers? What did they learn?

God—Who Is He?

A schoolteacher in Portugal who had been educated by nuns and priests sincerely practiced her faith. When the church changed and abandoned practices that she had been taught were important, she became confused. Travel acquainted her with Oriental ways of worship, and she began to wonder

whether there is one true God. How should she worship? When she asked her priest about things in the Bible, her questions were brushed aside, and she was disappointed.

The Catholic church had circulated a pamphlet in this schoolteacher's city warning parishioners not to converse with Jehovah's Witnesses. But her questions persisted. One day when the Witnesses called at her door, she listened and showed interest in what she heard. It was the first time she had talked with them.

To get answers to her many questions, this woman began to study the Bible with the Witnesses. Each week, she had a long list of questions waiting for them. She wanted to know God's name, whether there is only one true God, whether he approves of the use of images in worship, and much more. She observed that all the answers she received were from the Bible, not personal opinions, so she was surprised and delighted with what she was learning. Gradually, she received an-

swers to her many questions. Today, she worships Jehovah with spirit and truth, as Jesus Christ said "true worshipers" would do.—John 4:23.

In Sri Lanka, a family regularly read the Bible together, but they were not getting answers to many questions that were important to them. Although they needed help, their priest could not provide it. However, Jehovah's Witnesses visited and left helpful Bible literature with the family. Later, when Jehovah's Witnesses gave the family satisfying answers to their Bible questions, they agreed to a Bible study. What they learned in their studies interested them very much.

Still, childhood indoctrination at church hindered the wife from seeing that the Father of Jesus Christ is "the only true God," as Jesus himself said. (John 17:1, 3) She had been taught that Jesus is equal to the Father and that this "mystery" is not to be questioned. In sincerity and desperation, she prayed to Jehovah, using his name, and asked him to show her who Jesus is. Then she carefully examined the relevant scriptures once again. (John 14:28; 17:21; 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6) As if scales fell from her eyes, she now saw clearly that Jehovah—the Creator of heaven and earth and the Father of Jesus Christ—is the true God.—Isaiah 42:8; Jeremiah 10:10-12.

Suffering—Why?

The man Job suffered to an extreme degree. All his children were killed in a storm, and he was reduced to poverty. He also suffered a painful illness and endured pressure from false friends. In the midst of all of this, Job made some rash statements. (Job 6:3) But God considered the circumstances. (Job 35:15) He knew what was in Job's heart and provided the counsel that Job needed. He does that for people today too.

In Mozambique, Castro was just ten years old when his mother died. He was devastat-

ed. "Why did she have to die and leave us?" he asked. Though he had been raised by God-fearing parents, nothing made sense to him now. What could satisfy his mind and his heart? He found comfort in reading a small Chichewa Bible and discussing it with his older brothers.

Gradually, Castro came to appreciate that his mother had died, not because of injustice on the part of God, but because of inherited imperfection. (Romans 5:12; 6:23) The Bible's promise of a resurrection gave him the greatest comfort because he saw in it the basis for confidence that he would see his mother again. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) Sadly, just four years later, his father died. But this time Castro was better able to cope with the loss. Today, he loves Jehovah and loyally uses his life in God's service. The joy he has found is evident to all who know him.

Many people who have lost loved ones find comfort in the same Bible truths that brought comfort to Castro. Some who have experienced great hardship because of the actions of wicked people ask, as did Job: "Why is it that the wicked themselves keep living?" (Job 21:7) When people really listen to what God says by way of reply in his Word, they learn that God's way of handling matters actually works out for their own good.

—2 Peter 3:9.

Barbara, who was raised in the United States, did not personally experience the horrors of war. But she grew up in the midst of a world at war. Reports of war atrocities were daily news. During her studies at school, she was puzzled by events of history that unfolded in ways that seemed unpredictable. What accounted for it? Did God care about what was happening? She believed that God exists, but she had mixed feelings about him.

However, Barbara's outlook on life gradually changed as a result of association with

Jehovah's Witnesses. She listened to them and studied the Bible with them. She attended meetings at a Kingdom Hall. She even attended one of their large conventions. Moreover, when she asked questions, she observed that she was not getting different opinions from different Witnesses. Rather, the Witnesses spoke in agreement because their thinking was based on the Bible.

The Witnesses pointed to evidence from the Bible that the world is influenced by Satan the Devil, its ruler, and that it reflects his spirit. (John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 5:19) They explained that events that puzzled Barbara were foretold in the Bible. (Daniel, chapters 2, 7, and 8) God foretold them because he has the ability to see into the future when he chooses to do so. Some of those events were brought about by God. Others he simply permitted to occur. The Witnesses showed Barbara that the Bible also foretells good and bad events of our day and explains their meaning. (Matthew 24:3-14) They showed her the Bible's promises of a new world in which righteousness will prevail and suffering will be a thing of the past.

—2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:3, 4.

Gradually, Barbara began to understand that while Jehovah God is not responsible for human suffering, he does not prevent it by forcing humans to obey his commandments when they choose to do otherwise. (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20) God has made provisions by which we can live forever in happiness, but he is giving us the opportunity now to demonstrate whether we will live in harmony with his righteous ways. (Revelation 14:6, 7) Barbara resolved to learn God's requirements and to live by them. She also found among Jehovah's Witnesses the sort of love that Jesus said would identify his true followers.—John 13:34, 35.

You too can benefit from the provisions that helped her.

Life That Has Meaning

Even those for whom life seems to be going well may seek answers to questions that perplex them. For instance, Matthew, a young man in Britain, had always felt a deep yearning to find the true God and the purpose of life. His father died when Matthew was 17 years old. Thereafter, Matthew obtained a university degree in music. He then experienced a growing awareness of the futility of his materialistic way of life. He left home to live in London, and there he became involved with drugs, the club scene, astrology, spiritism, and Zen Buddhism and other philosophies—all in a search for a satisfying way of life. In desperation he cried out to God to help him find the truth.

Two days later Matthew met an old friend and explained his predicament. This man had studied with Jehovah's Witnesses. When Matthew was shown 2 Timothy 3:1-5, he was amazed at how accurately the Bible describes the world around us. When he read the Sermon on the Mount, it touched his heart. (Matthew, chapters 5-7) At first, he hesitated because he had read some material that was critical of Jehovah's Witnesses, but finally he decided to attend meetings at a nearby Kingdom Hall.

Matthew enjoyed what he heard and started to study the Bible with one of the congregation elders. He soon realized that what he was learning was what he had been seeking, the answer to his earlier prayer to God. He experienced benefits as he abandoned practices that are displeasing to Jehovah. As he cultivated a wholesome fear of God, he was moved to bring his life into harmony with God's commandments. Matthew learned that such a life has real meaning. —Ecclesiastes 12:13.

It was not foreordained that Matthew or others mentioned in this article would find a satisfying way of life. Nevertheless, they learned that Jehovah God has a loving pur-



**Earnestly pray to God,
using his personal name**

**Study the Bible with those who
truly teach what it contains**



**Attend meetings at
the Kingdom Hall**

pose that embraces all who gladly choose to obey his commandments. (Acts 10:34, 35) That purpose includes eternal life in a world free from war, liberated from sickness and hunger—free even from death. (Isaiah 2:4; 25:6-8; 33:24; John 3:16) Is that what you want? If so, you can learn more about finding the key to a satisfying life by attending the Bible-based meetings at a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. You are warmly invited to do so.



DO YOU ASK, “WHERE IS JEHOVAH?”

“They have become far off from me . . . And they have not said, ‘Where is Jehovah?’” —JEREMIAH 2:5, 6.

“WHENCE is God?” That question has been asked by many people. Some of them have simply been trying to understand a basic fact about the Creator, namely, where is he located? Others have voiced the question after a widespread calamity or when they personally felt hard-pressed and could not understand why God did not intervene. Yet others do not inquire at all because they reject the very idea that God exists.—Psalm 10:4.

² There are, of course, many who recognize the abundant proof that there is a God. (Psalm 19:1; 104:24) Some of these are content with simply having some form of religion. But intense love for truth has impelled millions of others, in all lands, to search for the *true* God. Their effort has not been in vain because he “is not far off from each one of us.”—Acts 17:26-28.

³ When a person really does find Jehovah, he realizes that “God is a Spirit,” invisible to human eyes. (John 4:24) Jesus referred to the true God as “my Father who is *in heaven*.” What does that mean? That the realm inhabited by our heavenly Father is, in a spiritual sense, a lofty one, even as the physical heavens of outer space are high above the earth. (Matthew 12:50; Isaiah 63:15) Though we cannot see God with our physical eyes, how-

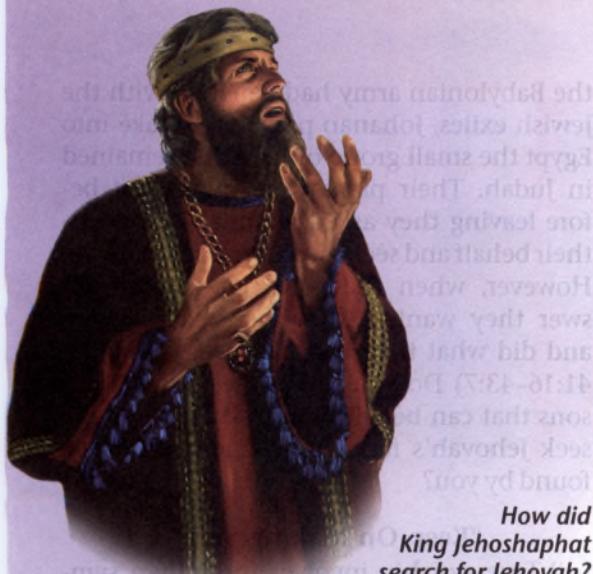
1. When people ask, “Where is God?,” what may they have in mind?
2. Who succeed in their search for God?
3. (a) Where is God’s place of dwelling? (b) What is implied by the Scriptural question, “Where is Jehovah?”

ever, he makes it possible for us to know him and to learn much about his purposes. (Exodus 33:20; 34:6, 7) He answers questions asked by sincere people who seek the meaning of life. On matters that affect our lives, he provides a sound basis for us to determine his position, that is, how he views such matters and whether our desires are in harmony with his purposes. He wants us to make inquiry about such things and to put forth earnest effort to find the answers. Through the prophet Jeremiah, Jehovah reproved the people of ancient Israel because they failed to do this. They knew the name of God, but they did not ask, “Where is Jehovah?” (Jeremiah 2:6) Jehovah’s purpose was not their chief concern. They were not looking for his guidance. When faced with decisions, large and small, do you ask, “Where is Jehovah?”

Those Who Inquired of God

⁴ When still a young man, David, the son of Jesse, developed strong faith in Jehovah. He knew Jehovah as “the living God.” David had personally experienced Jehovah’s protection. Impelled by faith and by love for “the name of Jehovah,” David slew the heavily armed Philistine giant Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:26, 34-51) However, David’s success did not make him self-confident. He did not reason that whatever he did now, Jehovah would bless him. Repeatedly during the years that followed, David inquired of Jehovah when confronted with decisions. (1 Samuel 23:2;

4. How can we benefit from David’s example in inquiring of Jehovah?



**How did
King Jehoshaphat
search for Jehovah?**

30:8; 2 Samuel 2:1; 5:19) He continued to pray: "Make me know your own ways, O Jehovah; teach me your own paths. Make me walk in your truth and teach me, for you are my God of salvation. In you I have hoped all day long." (Psalm 25:4, 5) What a fine example for us to follow!

⁵ In the days of King Jehoshaphat, the fifth king in the royal line descended from David, the combined forces of three nations came up to war against Judah. Faced with this national emergency, Jehoshaphat "set his face to search for Jehovah." (2 Chronicles 20:1-3) This was not the first time that Jehoshaphat had searched for Jehovah. The king had shunned the Baal worship indulged in by the apostate northern kingdom of Israel and had chosen to walk in Jehovah's ways. (2 Chronicles 17:3, 4) So now when he was confronted with a crisis, how did Jehoshaphat "search for Jehovah"?

⁶ In a public prayer that he offered in Jerusalem at this critical time, Jehoshaphat indicated that he had called to mind Jehovah's almighty power. He had thought deeply about

5, 6. How did Jehoshaphat search for Jehovah at different times in his life?

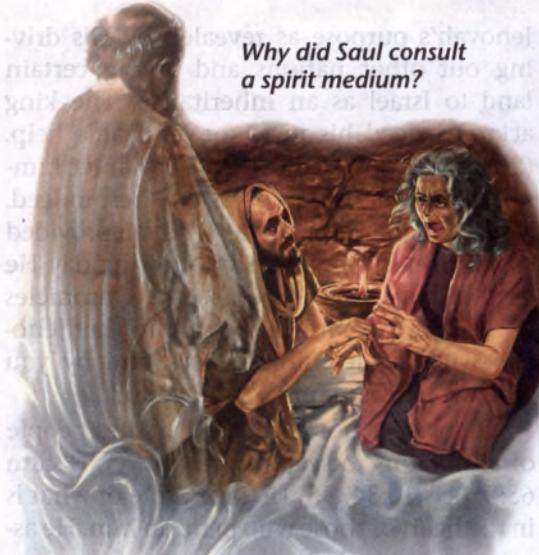
Jehovah's purpose as revealed by His driving out other nations and giving certain land to Israel as an inheritance. The king acknowledged his need for Jehovah's help. (2 Chronicles 20:6-12) Did Jehovah let himself be found on that occasion? Yes, indeed. Through Jahaziel, a Levite, Jehovah provided specific direction, and the following day He gave victory to His people. (2 Chronicles 20:14-28) How can you be certain that Jehovah will also let himself be found by you when you turn to him for direction?

⁷ Jehovah is not partial. He invites people of all nations to seek him in prayer. (Psalm 65:2; Acts 10:34, 35) He takes note of what is in the heart of those who petition him. He assures us that he hears the prayers of the righteous ones. (Proverbs 15:29) He lets himself be found by some who formerly showed no interest in him but who now humbly seek his direction. (Isaiah 65:1) He even hears the prayers of those who have failed to keep his law but who now humbly repent. (Psalm 32: 5, 6; Acts 3:19) Yet, when the heart of a person is not submissive to God, that person's prayers are in vain. (Mark 7:6, 7) Consider some examples.

They Asked but Did Not Receive

⁸ After the prophet Samuel told King Saul that he had been rejected by God because of his disobedience, Saul prostrated himself to Jehovah. (1 Samuel 15:30, 31) But it was mere outward show. Saul's desire was, not to be obedient to God, but to be honored before the people. Later, when the Philistines were warring against Israel, Saul went through the formality of inquiring of Jehovah. However, when he received no answer, he consulted a spirit medium, though he knew that this was condemned by Jehovah.

-
7. Whose prayers does God hear?
 8. What made King Saul's prayers unacceptable to Jehovah?



Why did Saul consult a spirit medium?

(Deuteronomy 18:10-12; 1 Samuel 28:6, 7) Summing up the matter, 1 Chronicles 10:14 says of Saul: "He did not inquire of Jehovah." Why? Because Saul's prayers were not grounded in faith. Hence, it was as if he had not prayed at all.

⁹ Similarly, as the end of the kingdom of Judah approached, more prayers were offered and Jehovah's prophets were consulted. However, the people were mixing idolatry with professed reverence for Jehovah. (Zephaniah 1:4-6) Though they went through the motions of inquiring of God, they did not prepare their hearts to submit to his will. King Zedekiah pleaded with Jeremiah to inquire of Jehovah for him. Jehovah had already told the king what he ought to do. But lacking faith and yielding to the fear of men, the king did not obey the voice of Jehovah, and Jehovah gave him no other reply that would be more to the king's liking.—Jeremiah 21:1-12; 38:14-19.

¹⁰ After Jerusalem had been destroyed and

9. What was wrong with Zedekiah's plea for Jehovah's direction?

10. What was wrong with the way Johanan sought Jehovah's direction, and what do we learn from his error?

the Babylonian army had departed with the Jewish exiles, Johanan prepared to take into Egypt the small group of Jews that remained in Judah. Their plans were made, but before leaving they asked Jeremiah to pray in their behalf and seek direction from Jehovah. However, when they did not get the answer they wanted, they went right ahead and did what they had planned. (Jeremiah 41:16-43:7) Do you see in these events lessons that can benefit you so that when you seek Jehovah's face, he will let himself be found by you?

"Keep On Making Sure"

¹¹ True worship involves more than symbolizing our dedication by water immersion, attending congregation meetings, and sharing in the public ministry. Our entire way of life is involved. Daily we are subjected to pressures—some subtle, some more obvious—that could turn us away from the path that is in accord with godly devotion. How will we react to these? When writing to faithful Christians in Ephesus, the apostle Paul urged them: "Keep on making sure of what is acceptable to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:10) The wisdom of doing that is illustrated by many situations reported in the Scriptures.

¹² After the ark of the covenant had been returned to Israel and had been kept for many years at Kiriath-jearim, King David desired to transfer it to Jerusalem. He consulted with chiefs of the people and said that the Ark would be moved 'if it seemed good to them and it was acceptable with Jehovah.' But he neglected to search adequately to ascertain Jehovah's will on the matter. If he had done so, the Ark would never have been loaded onto a wagon. It would have been carried by Kohathite Levites on their shoulders,

11. Why do we need to apply Ephesians 5:10?

12. Why was Jehovah displeased when David had the ark of the covenant moved to Jerusalem?

as God had clearly instructed. Though David frequently inquired of Jehovah, he failed to do so in a proper way on this occasion. The result was disastrous. David later acknowledged: "Jehovah our God broke through against us, for we did not search after him according to the custom."—1 Chronicles 13:1-3; 15:11-13; Numbers 4:4-6, 15; 7:1-9.

¹³ When the Ark was finally transported by the Levites from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem, a song composed by David was sung. It included the heartfelt reminder: "Search after Jehovah and his strength, seek his face constantly. Remember his wonderful acts that he has performed, his miracles and the judicial decisions of his mouth."—1 Chronicles 16:11, 12.

¹⁴ Before his death, David counseled his son Solomon: "If you search for [Jehovah], he will let himself be found by you." (1 Chronicles 28:9) Upon taking the throne, Solomon went to Gibeon, where the tent of meeting was located, and sacrificed to Jehovah. There Jehovah invited Solomon: "Ask! What shall I give you?" In response to Solomon's request, Jehovah freely gave him wisdom and knowledge to judge Israel, and to that He added riches and honor. (2 Chronicles 1:3-12) Using the architectural plan provided by Jehovah to David, Solomon built a magnificent temple. But in the matter of his own marital affairs, Solomon failed to search for Jehovah. Solomon married women who were not worshipers of Jehovah. In his later years, they inclined his heart away from Jehovah. (1 Kings 11:1-10) No matter how prominent, wise, or knowledgeable we may seem to be, it is important to "keep on making sure of what is acceptable to the Lord"!

13. In a song sung when the Ark was successfully moved, what reminder was included?

14. How can we benefit from Solomon's good example and from his errors later in life?

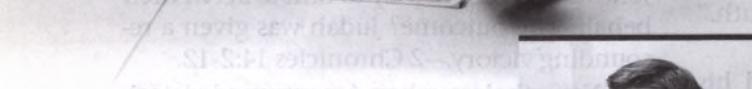
¹⁵ The need for this is reinforced by the record of the kingship of Asa, a great-grandson of Solomon. Eleven years after Asa became king, Zerah the Ethiopian led a million-man army against Judah. Would Jehovah deliver Judah? Over 500 years earlier, Jehovah had clearly stated what his people could expect if they listened to him and kept his commandments and what they could expect if they did not. (Deuteronomy 28:1, 7, 15, 25) At the beginning of his reign, Asa had removed from his realm altars and pillars used in false worship. He had urged the people "to search for Jehovah." Asa had not waited until faced with calamity before doing that. So with faith in Jehovah, Asa could pray to him to act in their behalf. The outcome? Judah was given a resounding victory.—2 Chronicles 14:2-12.

¹⁶ Nevertheless, when Asa returned victorious, Jehovah sent Azariah to meet the king and to say: "Hear me, O Asa and all Judah and Benjamin! Jehovah is with you as long as you prove to be with him; and if you search for him, he will let himself be found by you, but if you leave him he will leave you." (2 Chronicles 15:2) With renewed zeal, Asa promoted true worship. But some years later, when again faced with war, Asa failed to search for Jehovah. He did not consult God's Word, and he did not call to mind what Jehovah had done when the Ethiopian army had invaded Judah. Foolishly he made an alliance with Syria.—2 Chronicles 16:1-6.

¹⁷ For this, Jehovah caused Hanani the seer to reprove Asa. Even at that point, when Jehovah's view of the matter was explained, Asa could have benefited. Instead,

15. When Zerah the Ethiopian came against Judah, why could Asa pray with confidence that Jehovah would deliver Judah?

16, 17. (a) Although Asa was victorious, what reminder did Jehovah give him? (b) When Asa acted unwisely, what help was given him, but how did he react? (c) How can we benefit from considering Asa's conduct?



*Pray, study, and meditate
to ascertain 'where Jehovah is'*

Do Not Forget to Ask

¹⁸ When under stress, even one who has built up a fine record in Jehovah's service may fall short. When Job was smitten by a loathsome disease, lost his children and material possessions, and was falsely accused by his companions, his thoughts came to be all wrapped up in himself. Elihu reminded him: "No one has said, 'Where is God my Grand Maker?'" (Job 35:10) Job needed to get his attention focused on Jehovah and to consider how He viewed the situation. Job humbly accepted that reminder, and his example can help us to do the same.

¹⁹ The people of Israel knew the record of God's dealings with their nation. But all too often they did not call it to mind when handling specific situations in their lives. (Jeremiah 2:5, 6, 8) When faced

with decisions in life, they pursued their own pleasure instead of asking, "Where is Jehovah?"—Isaiah 5:11, 12.

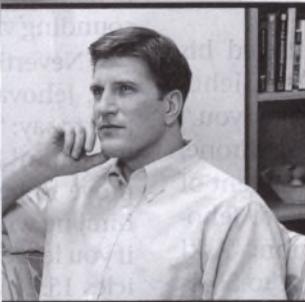
Keep On Asking, "Where Is Jehovah?"

²⁰ When Elijah's public ministry ended, his attendant Elisha took the official garment that had fallen from Elijah, went to the Jordan, struck the water, and asked: "Where is Jehovah the God of Elijah, even He?" (2 Kings 2:14) Jehovah answered by showing that his spirit was now on Elisha. What can we learn from this?

he became offended and put Hanani in the house of the stocks. (2 Chronicles 16:7-10) How sad! What about us? Do we search for God but then refuse to accept counsel? When a concerned and caring elder uses the Bible to counsel us because we are getting entangled with the world, do we show appreciation for the loving help being given us to know "what is acceptable to the Lord"? *quarrel with your wife about what you have done; if she goes to her friends, tell her, 'I am not the one who caused you to leave me.'*

How Would You Answer?

- With what intent should we be asking, "Where is Jehovah?"
- How can we today find the answer to the question, "Where is Jehovah?"
- Why do some prayers for divine direction go unanswered?
- What Bible examples illustrate the need to "keep on making sure of what is acceptable to the Lord"?



18. How can we benefit from Elihu's words to Job?
19. What did the people of Israel often fail to do?
- 20, 21. (a) Who today have shown the spirit of Elisha in seeking Jehovah's direction? (b) How can we imitate and benefit from their example of faith?

²¹ Something comparable happened in modern times. Certain anointed Christians who had taken the lead in the preaching work passed off the earthly scene. Those who were then entrusted with oversight examined the Scriptures and prayed to Jehovah for direction. They did not fail to ask, "Where is

Jehovah?" As a result, Jehovah has continued to lead his people and to prosper their activity. Do we imitate their faith? (Hebrews 13:7) If so, we will stay close to Jehovah's organization, respond to its direction, and share fully in the work that it is doing under the direction of Jesus Christ.—Zechariah 8:23.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Help in Maintaining the Sanctity of Blood

THROUGHOUT the earth Jehovah's servants have demonstrated loyalty to God in connection with the sanctity of blood. (Acts 15:28, 29) Help to the Christian brotherhood has been provided by the faithful and discreet slave class. (Matthew 24:45-47) Let us see what the results were in the Philippines.

The Philippines branch reports: "In 1990 we were informed that representatives from Brooklyn Bethel would be holding a seminar here in the Philippines. Brothers were invited from several Asian branches, including Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The purpose was to help set up Hospital Information Services at their branches and also to arrange for Hospital Liaison Committees. In the Philippines the committees were initially established in four major cities." The committees would endeavor to locate doctors willing to cooperate with us regarding the Christian stand on blood. They would also aid brothers when difficulties involving blood arose.

Remegio was selected to serve on the Hospital Liaison Committee in Baguio. As time went by, doctors began to take note of this service. Remegio remembers one occasion when a number of doctors meeting with a Hospital Liaison Com-



mittee wanted to know how to treat the Witness patients who refused blood. Remegio said:

"The doctors started asking questions, but I found myself stymied because the questions were very technical."

He prayed to Jehovah for help in handling this challenge. Remegio continued: "After each question, other doctors raised their hands and told how they had coped with a similar situation." Remegio was

happy for the help, especially since the question-and-answer period went on for two hours.

There are now 21 committees throughout the country, with a total of 77 brothers serving on them. Danilo, a Witness who is a medical doctor, says: "Doctors realize that their Witness patients are supported by an organization that lovingly cares for them." One physician was initially reluctant to perform surgery on a brother without transfusing blood. However, the brother was firm in his stand. The surgery was performed and was a success. Hospital Information Services reports: "The doctor was just amazed at the brother's recovery. He said: 'Based on what has happened here, should any of your members need to have this type of surgery without blood, I'll be happy to do it.'"

WHERE CAN TRUE COMFORT BE FOUND?

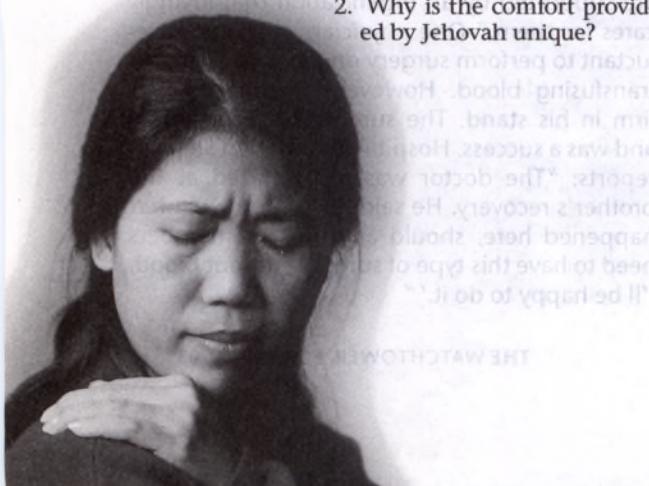
"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . comforts us in all our tribulation."

—2 CORINTHIANS 1:3, 4.

CRIPPLING illness may leave a person feeling that his life is in ruins. Earthquakes, storms, and famine leave people destitute. War may result in the death of family members, may destroy homes, or may force homeowners to abandon possessions. Injustice may make people feel that there is no place to which they can turn for relief. Those affected by such woes are desperately in need of comfort. Where can it be found?

² Some individuals and organizations endeavor to provide comfort. Kind words are appreciated. Physical relief efforts help to meet short-term needs. But only Jehovah, the true God, can undo all the damage and provide the sort of help that is needed so that such calamities will never occur again. Regarding him, the Bible says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation through the comfort

1. What circumstances may cause people to feel a great need for comfort?
2. Why is the comfort provided by Jehovah unique?



with which we ourselves are being comforted by God." (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) How does Jehovah comfort us?

Getting at the Root of the Problems

³ The entire human family inherited imperfection as a result of Adam's sin, and that gives rise to countless problems that eventually lead to death. (Romans 5:12) The situation is aggravated by the fact that Satan the Devil is "the ruler of this world." (John 12:31; 1 John 5:19) Jehovah did more than express sorrow over the unhappy situation that confronts humankind. He sent his only-begotten Son as a ransom to provide deliverance, and He told us that we can be relieved of the effects of Adamic sin if we exercise faith in His Son. (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10) God also foretold that Jesus Christ, who has been entrusted with all authority in heaven and on earth, will destroy Satan and his entire wicked system of things.—Matthew 28:18; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 6:2; 20:10.

⁴ To strengthen our confidence in his promises, God has preserved abundant evidence that whatever he foretells comes to pass. (Joshua 23:14) He included in the Bible a record of what he has done to deliver his servants in the face of humanly impossible

3. How does the comfort that God gives get at the root of mankind's problems?
4. (a) What has Jehovah provided to strengthen our confidence in his promises of relief? (b) How does Jehovah help us to discern when the relief will come?



The Bible shows us that Jehovah brought comfort by delivering his people

odds. (Exodus 14:4-31; 2 Kings 18:13-19:37) And through Jesus Christ, Jehovah demonstrated that his purpose includes healing people of "every sort of infirmity," even resurrecting the dead. (Matthew 9:35; 11:3-6) When will all of this take place? In answer, the Bible contains a description of the last days of this old system, which precede God's new heavens and new earth. Jesus' description matches the times we are living in.—Matthew 24:3-14; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.



Comfort to a People in Distress

⁵ From the way that Jehovah dealt with ancient Israel, we learn how he brought comfort to them in times of distress. He reminded them of the kind of God he is. This strengthened their confidence in his promises. Jehovah caused his prophets to use vivid contrasts between him as the true and living God and idols, which could help neither themselves nor their worshipers. (Isaiah 41:10; 46:1; Jeremiah 10:2-15) When telling Isaiah, "Comfort, comfort my people," Jehovah moved his prophet to use illustrations and descriptions.

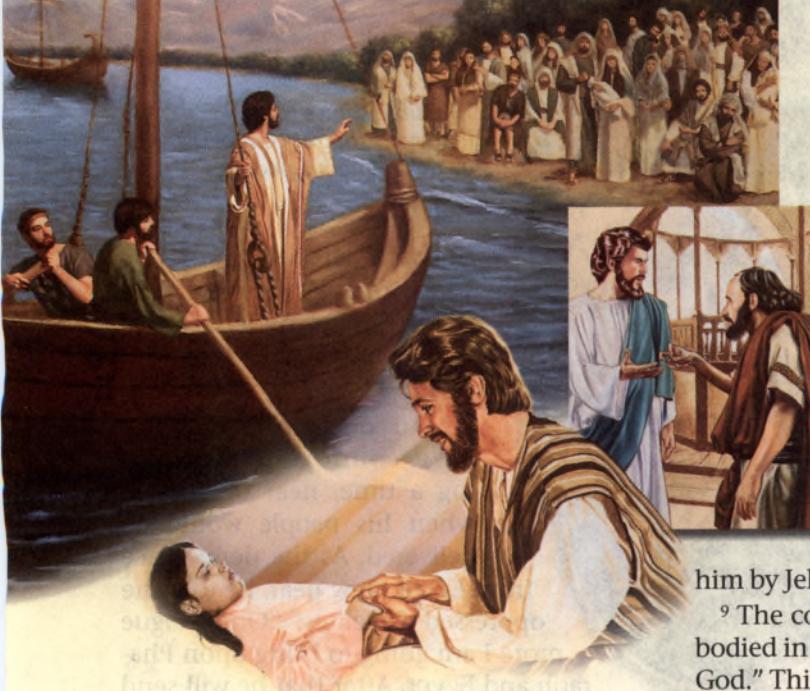
5. When giving comfort to ancient Israel, to what did Jehovah direct their attention?

tions of His works of creation in order to emphasize the greatness of Jehovah as the only true God.—Isaiah 40:1-31.

⁶ On occasion, Jehovah gave comfort by specifying a time, near or distant, when his people would be delivered. As the deliverance from Egypt drew near, he told the oppressed Israelites: "One plague more I am going to bring upon Pharaoh and Egypt. After that he will send you away from here." (Exodus 11:1) When a three-nation alliance invaded Judah in the days of King Jehoshaphat, Jehovah told them that He would intervene in their behalf "tomorrow." (2 Chronicles 20:1-4, 14-17) Their deliverance from Babylon, on the other hand, was recorded by Isaiah nearly 200 years in advance, and further details were provided through Jeremiah almost a hundred years before the deliverance occurred. How encouraging those prophecies were to God's servants when the time for deliverance drew near!—Isaiah 44:26-45:3; Jeremiah 25:11-14.

⁷ It is of note that the promises that brought comfort to God's people frequently contained information about the Messiah. (Isaiah 53:1-12) Generation after generation, this imparted hope to faithful people as they faced numerous trials. At Luke 2:25, we read: "Look! there was a man in Jerusalem named

6. What indications did Jehovah sometimes give as to when deliverance would be experienced?
7. What was often included in the promises of deliverance, and how did this affect faithful people in Israel?



Jesus provided comfort by teaching, by healing, and by resurrecting the dead

being dominated by some political regime. The people wanted to make Jesus king, but he said that he would “give his soul a ransom in exchange for many.” (Matthew 20:28; John 6:15) It was not yet the time for him to assume kingship, and the authority for him to rule was going to be conferred on him by Jehovah, not by restless crowds.

⁹ The comfort that Jesus brought was embodied in “the good news of the kingdom of God.” This was the message Jesus proclaimed wherever he went. (Luke 4:43) He emphasized the relevance of that message to people’s everyday problems by demonstrating what he as the Messianic Ruler would do for mankind. He gave suffering individuals renewed reason to live by restoring sight and speech (Matthew 12:22; Mark 10:51, 52), curing disabled limbs (Mark 2:3-12), cleansing fellow Israelites of loathsome diseases (Luke 5:12, 13), and relieving them of other grievous sicknesses. (Mark 5:25-29) He brought great relief to grieving family members by raising their children from the dead. (Luke 7: 11-15; 8:49-56) He demonstrated his ability to control dangerous storms and to satisfy the needs of large crowds for food. (Mark 4: 37-41; 8:2-9) Moreover, Jesus taught them principles of living that could help them to deal constructively with existing problems and that would fill hearts with hope for righteous rulership under the Messiah. Thus as

Comfort Provided Through Christ

⁸ As Jesus Christ carried out his earthly ministry, he did not always provide the help that the people thought they needed. Some longed for a Messiah who would free them from the hated yoke of Rome. But Jesus did not advocate revolution; he told them to “pay back . . . Caesar’s things to Caesar.” (Matthew 22:21) God’s purpose involved far more than liberating people from

8. How did the help that Jesus gave compare with what many people thought they needed?

9. (a) What was the message of comfort that Jesus proclaimed? (b) How did Jesus demonstrate the relevance of the message to the situations that people were personally facing? (c) For what did Jesus’ ministry lay a basis?

Jesus carried on his ministry, he not only comforted those who listened with faith but also laid a basis for encouraging people for thousands of years to come.

¹⁰ More than 60 years after Jesus had laid down his human life in sacrifice and been resurrected to heavenly life, the apostle John was inspired to write: "My little children, I am writing you these things that you may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one. And he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for the whole world's." (1 John 2:1, 2) Because of the benefits of Jesus' perfect human sacrifice, we are greatly comforted. We know that we can have forgiveness of sins, a clean conscience, an approved relationship with God, and the prospect of eternal life.—John 14:6; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:24-28; 1 Peter 3:21.

The Holy Spirit as Comforter

¹¹ While with his apostles on the last evening before his sacrificial death, Jesus spoke about yet another provision that his heavenly Father had made to comfort them. Jesus said: "I will request the Father and he will give you another helper [comforter; Greek, *pa-ra'kle·tos*] to be with you forever, the spirit of the truth." Jesus assured them: "The helper, the holy spirit, . . . will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you." (John 14:16, 17, 26) How did the holy spirit actually bring comfort to them?

¹² The apostles had received extensive teaching by Jesus. They would certainly never forget the experience, but would they re-

10. What is made possible as a result of Jesus' sacrifice?

11. What further provision for comfort did Jesus promise before his death?

12. How has the role of the holy spirit as an aid to the memory of Jesus' disciples helped to bring comfort to many?

member what he actually said? Would important instructions be lost because of their imperfect memories? Jesus assured them that the holy spirit would 'bring back to their minds all the things he had told them.' Thus, some eight years after Jesus' death, Matthew was able to write the first Gospel, in which he recorded Jesus' heartwarming Sermon on the Mount, his numerous illustrations concerning the Kingdom, and his detailed discussion of the sign of his presence. More than 50 years later, the apostle John was able to write a reliable account filled with extensive details about the last few days of Jesus' earthly life. How encouraging these inspired records have been right down to our day!

¹³ More than simply bringing words back to their minds, the holy spirit taught the disciples and guided them to a fuller understanding of God's purpose. While Jesus was yet with his disciples, he told them things that they did not then clearly understand. Later, however, moved by holy spirit, John, Peter, James, Jude, and Paul wrote explanations of further developments in God's purpose. Thus the holy spirit served as a teacher, giving valuable assurance of divine direction.

¹⁴ The miraculous gifts of the spirit also helped to make clear that God had transferred his favor from fleshly Israel to the Christian congregation. (Hebrews 2:4) The fruitage of that spirit in the lives of individuals was also an important factor in identifying those who truly were Jesus' disciples. (John 13:35; Galatians 5:22-24) And the spirit strengthened the members of that congregation to be bold and fearless witnesses.—Acts 4:31.

13. How did the holy spirit serve as a teacher to early Christians?

14. In what ways did the holy spirit help Jehovah's people?



Jesus received help from above

kill him, David turned to God as his Helper: "O God, hear my prayer," he begged. "In the shadow of your wings I take refuge." (Psalm 54:2, 4; 57:1) Did David receive help? Yes, he did. During that period, Jehovah used Gad the prophet and Abiathar the priest to convey direction to David, and He used Jonathan the son of Saul to strengthen the young man. (1 Samuel 22:1, 5; 23:9-13, 16-18) Jehovah also allowed the Philistines to make a raid on the land, thus diverting Saul from his pursuit.—1 Samuel 23:27, 28.

¹⁷ Jesus Christ was himself under intense pressure as the end of his earthly life drew near. He was fully aware of how his conduct could affect the name of his heavenly Father and of what it could mean to the future of all humankind. He prayed earnestly, even "getting into an agony." God saw that Jesus received the support that he needed during that difficult time.—Luke 22:41-44.

¹⁸ So vicious was the persecution of Christians after the founding of the first-century congregation that all except the apostles were dispersed from Jerusalem. Men

17. Under intense pressure, where did Jesus turn for help?

18. What comfort did God give to early Christians who were severely persecuted?

Do You Recall?

- Why is the comfort from God of greatest value?
- What comfort is provided through Christ?
- How has the holy spirit proved to be a comforter?
- Give examples of the comfort provided by God when his servants were under severe pressure.

Help When Under Extreme Pressure

¹⁵ All who are devoted to Jehovah and who are loyal to him experience persecution of some sort. (2 Timothy 3:12) However, many Christians have come under pressure that is extremely severe. In modern times, some have been hounded by mobs and thrown into concentration camps, prisons, and labor camps under inhuman conditions. Governments have taken on the role of active persecutors, or they have allowed lawless elements to run wild with impunity. Further, Christians have faced grave health problems or serious family crises. Pressure may also be experienced by a mature Christian who helps one fellow believer after another to deal with difficult situations. In such cases, the one who gives encouragement may also be in need of receiving it.

¹⁶ When King Saul was pursuing David to

15. (a) What pressures have been faced by Christians past and present? (b) Why may those who give encouragement sometimes be in need of receiving it?

16. When David was under great pressure, how did he receive help?

and women were physically dragged from their homes. What comfort did God provide them? The assurance from his Word that they had "a better and an abiding possession," an unfailing inheritance in the heavens with Christ. (Hebrews 10:34; Ephesians 1:18-20) As they continued to preach, they saw evidence that God's spirit was with them, and their experiences gave them further reason to rejoice.—Matthew 5:11, 12; Acts 8:1-40.

¹⁹ In time, Saul (Paul), who himself had been a violent persecutor, became an object of persecution because he had become a Christian. On the island of Cyprus, there was a sorcerer who tried to hinder Paul's ministry by resorting to fraud and distortion. In Galatia, Paul was stoned and left for dead. (Acts

19. Though Paul suffered severe persecution, how did he feel about the comfort that God gives?

13:8-10; 14:19) In Macedonia he was beaten with rods. (Acts 16:22, 23) After mob violence in Ephesus, he wrote: "We were under extreme pressure beyond our strength, so that we were very uncertain even of our lives. In fact, we felt within ourselves that we had received the sentence of death." (2 Corinthians 1:8, 9) But in that same letter, Paul wrote those comforting words quoted in paragraph 2 of this article.—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

²⁰ How can you share in giving such comfort? There are many in our day who need it when experiencing grief, either because of a calamity that strikes many thousands or because of tribulation that afflicts only them. In the following article, we will consider how to give comfort in either case.

20. What are we going to consider in the next article?

GIVE COMFORT TO THOSE WHO GRIEVE

"Jehovah has anointed me . . . to comfort all the mourning ones."

—ISAIAH 61:1, 2.

JEHOVAH, the God of all real comfort, teaches us to be concerned when others experience calamity. He teaches us to "speak consolingly to the depressed souls" and to comfort all who mourn. (1 Thessalonians 5:14) When such help is needed, we provide it for fellow worshipers. We also show love to those outside the congregation, even to those who may not have given evidence of any love for us in the past.—Matthew 5:43-48; Galatians 6:10.

1, 2. To whom should we give comfort, and why?

² Jesus Christ read and applied to himself the prophetic commission: "The spirit of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah is upon me, for the reason that Jehovah has anointed me to tell good news to the meek ones. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, . . . to comfort all the mourning ones." (Isaiah 61:1, 2; Luke 4:16-19) Modern-day anointed Christians have long recognized that this commission also applies to them, and the "other sheep" gladly join them in that work.—John 10:16.

³ When disasters strike and people are left brokenhearted, they often ask, "Why does God permit calamities?" The Bible clearly answers that question. However, it may take time for someone who has not been a student of the Bible to appreciate the answer fully. Help is provided in the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses.* As a start, however, it has proved to be a comfort to some people just to see in the Bible a text such as the one found at Isaiah 61:1, 2, since it expresses God's desire for humans to receive comfort.

⁴ Young people, as well as older ones, need comfort. A depressed teenager in Poland asked an acquaintance for advice. With gentle probing, the friend, who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses, learned that the girl was overwhelmed with questions and doubts: "Why is there so much evil? Why do people suffer? Why does my paralyzed sister suffer? Why is my heart not healthy? The Church says that God wants it so. But if this is the case, I will stop believing in him!" The Witness prayed silently to Jehovah and then said: "I am glad that you asked me about this. I will try to help you." She related that she had her own doubts as a child and that Jehovah's Witnesses helped her. She ex-

plained: "I learned that God does not make people suffer. He loves them, wants what is best for them, and will soon bring about major changes on the earth. Sickness, the problems of old age, and death will be gone, and obedient people will live forever—right here on this planet." She showed the girl Revelation 21:3, 4; Job 33:25; Isaiah 35:5-7 and 65:21-25. After a long discussion, the girl said, with evident relief: "Now I know what I live for. May I come to see you again?" A Bible study was held with her twice a week.

With the Comfort God Gives

⁵ When we seek to comfort others, words of sympathy are certainly in order.

We endeavor to convey to the grieving person by word and tone of voice that we deeply care about his situation.

This is not accomplished by the use of hollow platitudes. The Bible tells us that "through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4) In view of this,

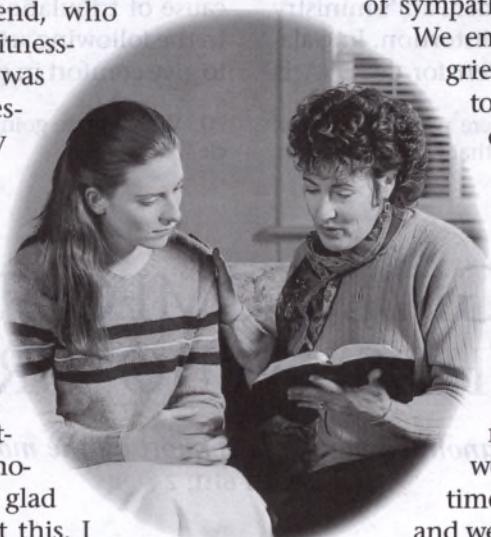
we can explain at a suitable time what God's Kingdom is, and we can show from the Bible

how it will solve present problems. Then we can reason on why it is a dependable hope. In this way, we will impart comfort.

⁶ To get the full benefit from the comfort offered, a person needs to know the true God, the kind of Person he is, and the de-

5. When we express sympathy, what will provide real comfort?

6. What should we help people to appreciate so that they can get the full benefit from the comfort in the Scriptures?



* See the books *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, chapter 8; *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, pages 393-400, 427-31; *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?*, chapter 10; and the brochure *Does God Really Care About Us?*

3. When people ask, "Why does God permit calamities?", how might we help them?

4. How was a Witness in Poland able to help a distressed schoolgirl, and how can that experience help you to help others?

pendability of his promises. When we seek to help a person who is not already a worshiper of Jehovah, it is good to explain the following points. (1) The comfort found in the Bible is from Jehovah, the true God. (2) Jehovah is the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth. He is a God of love and is abundant in loving-kindness and truth. (3) We can be strengthened to deal with situations if we draw close to God by gaining accurate knowledge from his Word. (4) The Bible contains scriptures that relate to specific trials faced by different individuals.

⁷ Some have conveyed a spiritual blessing to grieving ones who are acquainted with the Bible by reading 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. When doing so, they have emphasized the expression "*the comfort we get also abounds through the Christ.*" This scripture may help a person to realize that the Bible is a source of comfort to which he ought to give more consideration. It can also provide the basis for further discussion, perhaps on other occasions. If a person feels that his troubles are the result of bad things he has done, then we might tell him, without being judgmental, that it is a comfort to know what is recorded at 1 John 2: 1, 2 and Psalm 103:11-14. In these ways we truly comfort others with the comfort that God gives.

When Life Is Marred by Violence or Economic Hardship

⁸ The lives of countless millions have been marred by violence—criminal violence in a community or the violence of war. How can we comfort them?

⁹ True Christians take care that in neither word nor deed do they take sides with one

7. (a) What can be accomplished by emphasizing that the comfort God gives "abounds through the Christ"? (b) How might you comfort someone who realizes that his conduct has been bad?

8, 9. How can comfort appropriately be given to people who have suffered violence?

faction or the other in the world's conflicts. (John 17:16) But they appropriately use the Bible to show that present harsh conditions will not go on forever. They may read Psalm 11:5 to show how Jehovah feels about those who love violence or Psalm 37:1-4 to point out God's encouragement not to take it upon ourselves to repay in kind but to trust in God. The words of Psalm 72:12-14 show how the Greater Solomon, Jesus Christ, now ruling as heavenly King, feels about innocent people who suffer violence.

¹⁰ Some people have lived through one conflict after another as contending factions fought for control. They take for granted that war and its aftermath are a part of life. The only hopeful prospect they see is that things might be better for them if they could escape to another land. But most of them never succeed in doing that, and a number who have tried have lost their lives in the attempt. Those who do get to another land often find that they have simply exchanged one set of problems for another. Psalm 146:3-6 might be used to help such people to place their hope in something more reliable than emigrating. The prophecy at Matthew 24:3, 7, 14 or 2 Timothy 3:1-5 might help them to see the bigger picture and the meaning of the conditions they are enduring, namely, that we are living in the conclusion of the old system of things. Such texts as Psalm 46:1-3, 8, 9 and Isaiah 2:2-4 might help them to realize that there truly is hope for a peaceful future.

¹¹ During a period of ongoing war in West Africa, a woman fled from her home under a hail of bullets. Her life came to be filled with fear, sadness, and heartbreaking disappointment. Later, while the family was living in another country, her husband decided to

10. If you have lived through years of warfare, how can the cited scriptures comfort you?

11. What texts comforted a woman in West Africa, and why?

burn their marriage certificate, send away his then pregnant wife and their ten-year-old son, and become a priest. When Philippians 4:6, 7 and Psalm 55:22 were shared with her, along with Scriptural articles from *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*, she at last found comfort and a purpose in life.

¹² Economic ruin has spoiled the lives of many millions of people. Sometimes this too is because of war and its aftermath. At other times, unwise government policies and greed and dishonesty by those in power have combined to wipe out savings and have forced people to forfeit their possessions. Others have never had many of this world's goods. All such can be comforted to know that God assures relief for those who trust in him and guarantees a righteous world in which people will enjoy the work of their hands. (Psalm 146:6, 7; Isaiah 65:17, 21-23; 2 Peter 3:13) When a Witness in one Asian land heard a customer express anxious concern over the economic situation there, she explained that what was happening there was part of a pattern of events occurring around the world. A discussion of Matthew 24:3-14 and Psalm 37:9-11 led to a regular Bible study.

¹³ When people have suffered for many years or have been disappointed by many hollow promises, they may be like the Israelites in Egypt who "out of discouragement" did not listen. (Exodus 6:9) In such cases, it may be beneficial to highlight ways in which the Bible can help them to cope successfully with present problems and to avoid pitfalls that needlessly spoil life for many. (1 Timo-

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12. (a) What relief do the Scriptures offer to those who are hard-pressed economically? (b) How was a Witness in Asia able to help a customer?
 13. (a) When people have been disappointed by empty promises, how might we use the Bible to help them? (b) If people feel that bad conditions prove that there is no God, how might you endeavor to reason with them?

thy 4:8b) Some may view the bad conditions they live under as proof that there is no God or that he does not care about them. You might reason on appropriate scriptures to help them to realize that God has provided help but many have not accepted it.—Isaiah 48:17, 18.

When Faced With Storms and Earthquakes

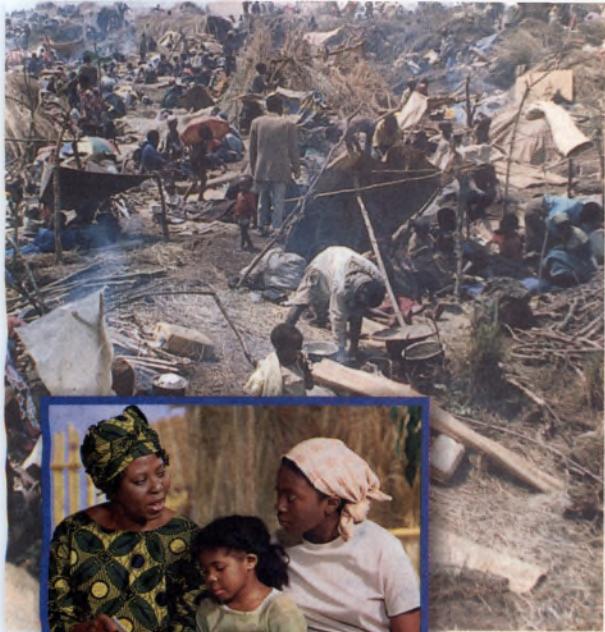
¹⁴ Disaster may strike as a result of a storm, an earthquake, a fire, or an explosion. Grief may be widespread. What can be done to bring comfort to survivors?

¹⁵ People need to know that someone cares. After a terrorist attack in one country, many were left in a state of shock. A number of them lost family members, bread-winners, friends, employment, or whatever sense of security they thought they had. Jehovah's Witnesses reached out to those in their communities, expressing sympathy for their great losses and offering words of comfort from the Bible. Many deeply appreciated the concern.

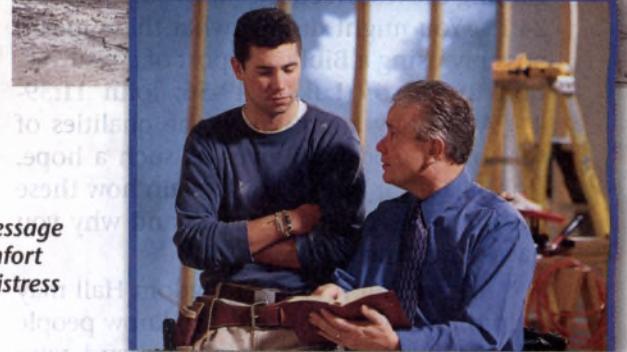
¹⁶ In El Salvador a strong earthquake in 2001 was followed by a massive mud slide that claimed many lives. The 25-year-old son of a Witness and two sisters of the son's fiancée were killed. The mother of the young man along with his fiancée promptly got busy in the field service. Many said to them that it was God who took those who died or that it was God's will. The Witnesses quoted Proverbs 10:22 to show that God does not want us to have pain. They read Romans 5:12 to show that death was brought through the sin of man, not because it is the will of God. They also pointed to the message of comfort

- 14, 15. When one disaster left many in a state of shock, how did Jehovah's Witnesses show their concern?

16. When disaster struck a region in El Salvador, why was the field service of local Witnesses very effective?



Refugee camp: UN PHOTO 186811/J. Isaac



*Sharing a message
of real comfort
in times of distress*

found at Psalm 34:18, Psalm 37:29, Isaiah 25:8, and Revelation 21:3, 4. People readily listened, especially since the two women themselves had lost family members in the disaster, and many Bible studies were started.

¹⁷ When disaster strikes, you may encounter someone who is in need of immediate physical help. This may involve calling a doctor, helping a person to get to a clinic, or doing whatever is possible to provide food and shelter. In 1998 during one such disaster in Italy, a journalist observed that Jehovah's Witnesses "operate in a practical way, holding out a hand to those who suffer, without worrying about which religion they belong to." In some areas, events prophesied for the last days cause great suffering. In those places, Jehovah's Witnesses point out the Bible prophecies, and they comfort people

17. In times of disaster, what kinds of help may we give?

with the Bible's assurance that the Kingdom of God will bring true security to mankind.
—Proverbs 1:33; Micah 4:4.

When a Family Member Has Died

¹⁸ Every day millions of people grieve over the death of a loved one. You may meet those who mourn when you are sharing in the Christian ministry or when caring for the affairs of daily life. What can you say or do that will bring comfort?

¹⁹ Is the person in emotional turmoil? Is the house filled with grieving relatives? There may be much that you would like to say, but discretion is important. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7) Perhaps the fitting thing is to express sympathy, leave an appropriate Bible publication (a brochure, a magazine, or a tract), and then call after a few days to see whether

18-20. When there has been a death in a family, what might you say or do to bring comfort?

further help can be given. At a suitable time, offer to share some encouraging thoughts from the Bible. This can have a calming and healing effect. (Proverbs 16:24; 25:11) You cannot raise the dead, as Jesus did. But you can share what the Bible says about the condition of the dead, though this may not be the time to try to refute wrong views. (Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Ezekiel 18:4) You can read together the Bible's promises regarding the resurrection. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) You might discuss what these mean, possibly using a Biblical report of a resurrection to do so. (Luke 8:49-56; John 11:39-44) Also draw attention to the qualities of the loving God who gives us such a hope. (Job 14:14, 15; John 3:16) Explain how these teachings have benefited you and why you have confidence in them.

²⁰ An invitation to the Kingdom Hall may help the grieving one to get to know people who truly love their neighbors and who know how to build one another up. A woman in Sweden found that this is what she had been looking for all her life.—John 13:35; 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

²¹ When you know that someone is experiencing grief, whether inside the Christian

^{21, 22.} (a) What is required of us if we are to give comfort? (b) How can you give comfort to someone who already knows the Scriptures well?

What Is Your Comment?

- Whom do many people blame for calamities, and how can we help them?
- What might we do to help others to benefit fully from the comfort that the Bible offers?
- What situations are bringing grief to many in your area, and how can you comfort them?



*The very presence of a friend
can be comforting*

congregation or outside, do you at times feel unsure about what to say or do? The Greek word often rendered “comfort” in the Bible literally means “a calling to one’s side.” Being a true comforter implies making yourself available to those who are grieving.—Proverbs 17:17.

²² What if the person you want to comfort already knows what the Bible says about death, the ransom, and the resurrection? The very presence of a friend who shares the same beliefs can be comforting. If he wants to talk, be a good listener. Do not feel that you need to give a speech. If scriptures are read, treat these as expressions of God that strengthen the hearts of both of you. Express the strong conviction that both of you have in the certainty of what they promise. By reflecting godly compassion and by sharing the precious truths contained in God’s Word, you can help those who are grieving to draw consolation and strength from “the God of all comfort,” Jehovah.—2 Corinthians 1:3.

They Serve the Christian Brotherhood on an *International Scale*

HAVE you heard of the terms "international servants" and "international volunteers"? Witnesses of Jehovah who make up these groups volunteer their time and skills to help in the construction of facilities that print and distribute the Bible's Kingdom message. Such volunteers also help in the construction of Assembly Halls and Kingdom Halls, which serve as centers of Bible instruction. Presently, these volunteers assist with construction projects in 34 different countries, mainly in lands with limited resources. What special challenges and joys do such ministers experience as they serve the Christian brotherhood on an international scale? How do they feel about the "sacred service" they perform? (Revelation 7:9, 15) To find out, let us meet some volunteers who served in Mexico.

Volunteers from abroad first arrived in Mexico in May 1992. Soon thereafter, they took the lead in expanding the branch, which supervises the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in Mexico. The expansion consisted of 14 newly constructed buildings, including residences for volunteers serving at the branch office, a printery, and an office building.

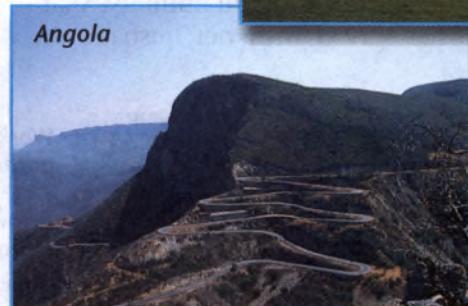
To assist in this construction project, more than 730 volunteers from Canada, Great Britain, the United States, and other countries served shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of volunteers from all parts of Mexico. In addition, over 28,000 Witnesses associated with some 1,600 congregations located in the general area of the branch office assisted



Ecuador



Colombia



Angola

with the construction activities during the weekends. All served with a willing spirit and freely offered their skills. They counted it a privilege to serve Jehovah in this way. Throughout the building project, they kept in mind the inspired words found at Psalm 127:1: "Unless Jehovah himself builds the house, it is to no avail that its builders have worked hard on it."

Challenges They Face

What are the challenges that international volunteers face while they serve in a foreign assignment? Here are some of their

observations. Curtis and Sally, a couple from the United States, have helped with construction projects in Germany, India, Mexico, Paraguay, Romania, Russia, Senegal, and Zambia. Curtis relates: "The first challenge was leaving our daughter, who served as a pioneer [full-time minister], and our home congregation in Minnesota. My wife and I were associated with that congregation for 24 years, and we felt very comfortable there."

Sally notes: "Living under unfamiliar conditions is a challenge, perhaps even more so for a woman than for a man, but I learned that it is possible to adjust. I even learned to put up with insects, lots of them!" She adds: "In one country, ten of us volunteers shared an apartment without a kitchen and with only two bathrooms. There I learned to be more patient."

Learning a new language is another challenge that requires effort and humility. Sharon, who has served with her husband on

construction projects in different countries, says: "Not knowing the language of the country where you serve is a challenge. In the beginning, it is hard to draw close to your spiritual brothers and sisters when you cannot freely express your feelings. That is frustrating. But the brothers whom we meet in our foreign assignments are very patient with us and are deeply interested in our well-being. Before long, we are somehow communicating."

Sharing in the Ministry Takes Courage

While such self-sacrificing volunteers contribute much to the progress of the construction work, they realize that they are, first and foremost, preachers of the good news of God's Kingdom. Therefore, they fully support the preaching work being carried out by the congregations with which they associate. Åke and Ing-Mari, a couple who assisted with construction projects in Gu-



*Work begins on the new facilities
at the Mexico branch*



*Below: Some members of the Construction
Department in front of part of the new facilities*



The garden at the branch



deloupe, Malawi, Mexico, and Nigeria, admit that using another language when sharing in the field ministry in a foreign country takes courage.

Ing-Mari relates: "At first our participation was limited, since we always accompanied local Witnesses and, out of embarrassment, often let them do the talking. However, one morning we decided to go out in the field service by ourselves. We set out on shaky legs and with rapidly beating hearts. We met a young woman who listened to my prepared presentation. I read a scripture and placed some literature. Then the woman said: 'Tell me something. I have a relative who studies the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. How can I too get a study?' I was speechless. Then I composed myself and offered her a Bible study."

Ing-Mari adds: "Imagine my joy and my gratitude to Jehovah for blessing our initiative and our desire to share the truth." This woman made good progress and was baptized as a Witness at a district convention in Mexico City. Åke and Ing-Mari summarize their ministry this way: "We very much value our assignments on the different construction projects, but nothing surpasses the joy and satisfaction of helping a person embrace the truth."

A Self-Sacrificing Spirit

True, volunteers who leave family and friends make sacrifices to serve their brothers in foreign lands, but they also experience unsurpassed joys. What are they?

Howard, who has served with his wife, Pamela, in Angola, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guyana, Mexico, and Puerto Rico explains: "It is a privilege to meet brothers and sisters in different countries and to experience firsthand the bond of love that exists in our international brotherhood. We often read about it, but when you live and serve



Construction volunteers enjoy supporting the preaching work with local congregations

with others from different cultures and backgrounds, you appreciate our precious brotherhood even more."

Gary, who has helped with construction projects in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Zambia, also feels that this program has benefited him greatly. He relates: "The training I received over the years by association with mature brothers serving at the branches in the countries to which I have been assigned has helped me to be better equipped for challenges in my assignments. It has been faith-strengthening because it provides an opportunity to experience the unity that characterizes Jehovah's worldwide organization—a unity that transcends differences in language, race, or culture."

Meanwhile, construction activity in Mexico was completed, and the expanded branch facilities were dedicated this year. Motivated by their love for God, international servants and international volunteers have greatly contributed to the expansion of true worship in Mexico and elsewhere. Their willing and self-sacrificing spirit to serve their Christian brothers on an international scale is much appreciated by Jehovah's Witnesses around the world.

Does Jehovah Notice What You Do?

HOW would you answer that question? Many would say: 'I believe that God noticed the accomplishments of men like Moses, Gideon, and David, but I doubt that he is interested in anything I can do. I am certainly no Moses, Gideon, or David.'

It is true that some faithful men in Bible times performed extraordinary acts of faith. They 'defeated kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, stayed the force of fire, and escaped the edge of the sword.' (Hebrews 11: 33, 34) Others, though, displayed their faith in less spectacular ways, and the Bible assures us that God noticed their acts of faith too. To illustrate, consider the Scriptural examples of a shepherd, a prophet, and a widow.

A Shepherd Offers a Sacrifice

What do you remember about Abel, the second son of Adam and Eve? You may recall that he died a martyr's death, something that few of us are likely to experience. But Abel first came to God's attention for another reason.

One day, Abel took some of the choicest animals of his flock and offered a sacrifice to God. His gift might be considered relatively modest today, but Jehovah took note of it

and expressed his approval. That is not all, however. Nearly four thousand years later, Jehovah inspired the apostle Paul to write about it in the book of Hebrews. After so many years, God had not forgotten that simple sacrifice!

—Hebrews 6:10; 11:4.
How did Abel decide what type of sacrifice to offer? The Bible does not say, but he must have given the matter some thought. He was a shepherd, so it is not unexpected that he offered some of his flock.

Notice, though, that he gave the choicest—the "fatty pieces." (Genesis 4:4) It is also possible that he meditated on Jehovah's words to the serpent in the garden of Eden: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel." (Genesis 3:15; Revelation 12:9) Although not understanding the identity of "the woman" and her "seed," Abel may have realized that the 'bruising of the heel' of the woman's seed would involve the shedding of blood. He surely recognized that nothing could be more valuable than a living, breathing creature. In any event, the sacrifice he offered was truly appropriate.

Like Abel, Christians today offer sacrifices to God. They offer, not firstlings of the flock, but "a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit

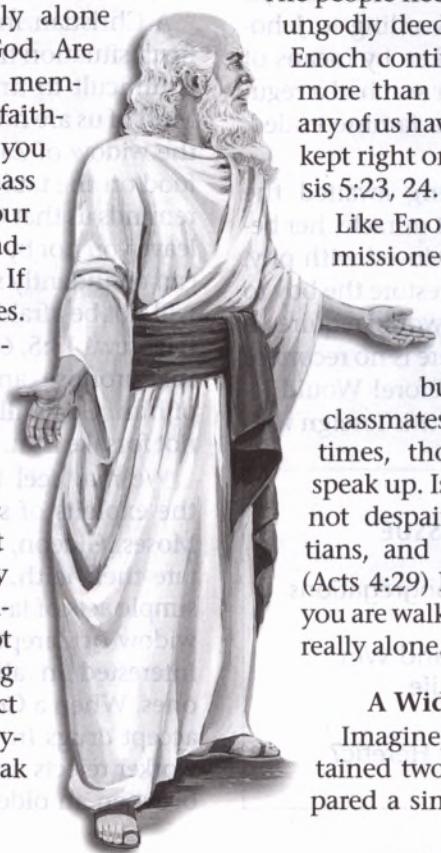


of lips which make public declaration to [God's] name." (Hebrews 13:15) Our lips make public declaration when we share our faith with others.

Would you like to improve the quality of your sacrifice? Then give careful thought to the needs of the people in your territory. What are their concerns? Their interests? What aspects of the Bible's message would appeal to them? During each witnessing period, analyze the calls you have made with a view to improving your effectiveness. And when you speak about Jehovah, do so with conviction, from the heart. Make your sacrifice a real "sacrifice of *praise*."

A Prophet Preaches to Unreceptive Neighbors

Consider now the prophet Enoch. He may have been totally alone as a witness of Jehovah God. Are you, like Enoch, the only member of your family who is faithfully serving Jehovah? Are you the only student in your class or the only worker at your place of employment who adheres to Bible principles? If so, you may face challenges. Friends, relatives, classmates, or workmates may urge you to transgress God's laws. "No one will ever know what you have done," they may say. "We won't tell." They may insist that it is foolish to worry about the Bible's moral standards because God does not care what you do. Resenting that you do not think and act like them, they may do everything in their power to break down your resistance.



Admittedly, it is not easy to face such pressure, but it is not impossible. Think about Enoch, the seventh man in line from Adam. (Jude 14) By the time Enoch was born, most people were past all moral sense. Their speech was disgraceful; their conduct was "shocking." (Jude 15) They acted in much the same way that many people do today.

How did Enoch cope? The answer to that question is of interest to us today. Although Enoch may then have been the only man on earth who worshiped Jehovah, he was not really alone. Enoch walked with God.—Genesis 5:22.

Pleasing God was the focus of Enoch's life. He knew that walking with God meant more than merely living a clean, moral life. Jehovah expected him to preach. (Jude 14, 15)

The people needed to be warned that their ungodly deeds had not gone unnoticed. Enoch continued to walk with God for more than 300 years—far longer than any of us have endured. Until he died, he kept right on walking with God.—Genesis 5:23, 24.

Like Enoch, we too have been commissioned to preach. (Matthew 24:

14) In addition to witnessing from house to house, we try to reach relatives, business acquaintances, and classmates with the good news. Sometimes, though, we may hesitate to speak up. Is that the case with you? Do not despair. Imitate the early Christians, and pray to God for boldness. (Acts 4:29) Never forget that as long as you are walking with God, you are never really alone.

A Widow Prepares a Meal

Imagine, an unnamed widow obtained two blessings because she prepared a simple meal! She was, not an

Israelite, but a foreigner who lived in the tenth century B.C.E. in the town of Zarephath. Near the end of a long period of drought and famine, the widow's food supply was running out. All she had left was a handful of flour and enough oil to make one last meal for herself and her son.

At this point, a visitor approached. It was God's prophet Elijah, who asked to share the widow's meager fare. There was little enough for her and her son, and certainly she had nothing to spare for the visitor. But Elijah assured her, by Jehovah's word, that if she shared her food with him, she and her son would not go hungry. It took faith to believe that the God of Israel would notice her, a foreign widow. Yet, she believed Elijah, and Jehovah rewarded her. "The large jar of flour itself did not get exhausted, and the small jar of oil itself did not fail, according to Jehovah's word that he had spoken by means of Elijah." The woman and her son had a regular supply of food until the famine ended.

—1 Kings 17:8-16.

However, another blessing awaited the widow. Some time after that miracle, her beloved son fell ill and died. Moved with pity, Elijah implored Jehovah to restore the boy to life. (1 Kings 17:17-24) That would require an unprecedented miracle. There is no record of anyone being resurrected before! Would Jehovah again show mercy to this foreign wid-

ow? He did. Jehovah empowered Elijah to restore the boy to life. Jesus later observed regarding this privileged woman: "There were many widows in Israel . . . Yet Elijah was sent . . . to Zarephath in the land of Sidon to a widow."—Luke 4:25, 26.

Today's economic climate is far from stable, even in industrialized lands. Some large corporations have laid off employees who have been loyal workers for decades. Faced with the prospect of unemployment, a Christian might be tempted to spend an inordinate amount of time at work, hoping that his company will retain him. Doing so may leave him little time to attend Christian meetings, to share in the field ministry, or to care for the emotional and spiritual needs of his family. However, he feels that he must keep that job at almost any cost.

A Christian in such an economically difficult situation has a right to be concerned. It is difficult to find employment these days. Most of us are not striving to get rich, but like the widow of Zarephath, we do want to put food on the table. However, the apostle Paul reminds us that God said: "I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you." We can confidently say: "Jehovah is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5, 6) Paul staked his very life on that promise, and Jehovah always took care of him. God will do the same for us if we do not forsake him.

We may feel that we could never match the exploits of such spiritual individuals as Moses, Gideon, and David, but we can imitate their faith. And we can remember the simple acts of faith that Abel, Enoch, and the widow of Zarephath performed. Jehovah is interested in all acts of faith—even small ones. When a God-fearing student refuses to accept drugs from a peer, when a Christian worker rejects immoral advances on the job, or when an older Witness faithfully attends

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Christ Speaks to the Congregations

Remain Steadfast, and Win
the Race for Life

Tatian—Apologist or Heretic?

congregation meetings despite fatigue and poor health, Jehovah sees it. And he rejoices! —Proverbs 27:11.

Do You Notice What Others Do?

Yes, Jehovah notices what we do. Hence, as imitators of God, we should be alert to recognize the efforts of others. (Ephesians 5:1) Why not take a closer look at the challenges your fellow Christians face in order to attend congregation meetings, to engage in the field ministry, even to go about their daily life?

Then, let your fellow worshipers of Jehovah know that you appreciate their efforts. They will be glad that you noticed, and your concern may serve to reassure them that Jehovah notices too.



Questions From Readers

If a Christian hears voices, does that necessarily mean that he is under demon attack?

No. While demons have been reported to manifest themselves in that way, many individuals who hear voices or experience other inexplicable, disturbing sensations have learned upon investigation that they have a medical problem.

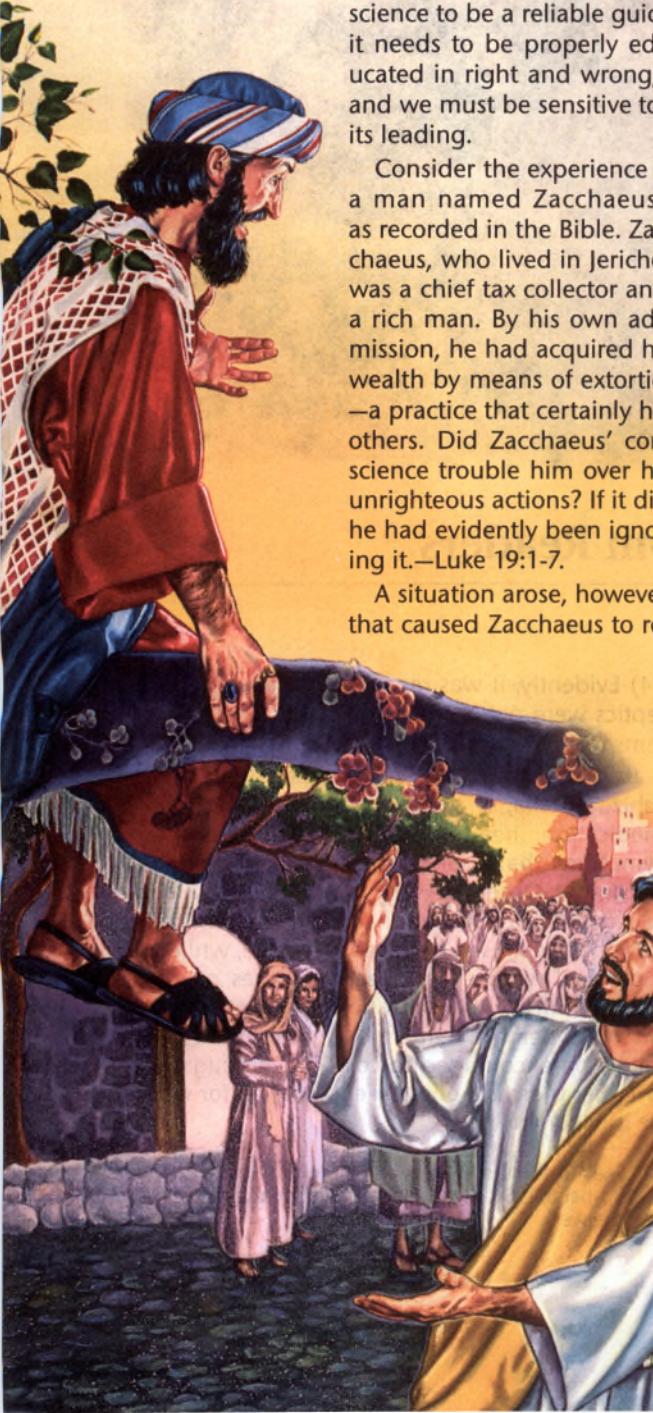
Even in the first century, it was apparently recognized that demon attacks and physical conditions sometimes produce similar effects. At Matthew 17:14-18, we read of a young boy who was healed by Jesus. Although the young boy had manifested severe epileptic symptoms, his suffering was actually caused by a demon. However, on an earlier occasion when crowds of suffering people were brought to Jesus for healing, these included some who were "demon-possessed and epileptic." (Matthew 4:

24) Evidently, it was recognized that some epileptics were not demon possessed. Their problems were physical.

It is reported that some who suffer from schizophrenia, a disease often treatable with medication, hear voices or experience other symptoms that could appear to be something uncanny.* Other physical conditions may also cause mental confusion that some could mistakenly think is caused by demons. Hence, while an individual who reports hearing voices or who has other disturbing sensations may not want to discount demon harassment, he should definitely be encouraged to consider investigating whether there is a physical explanation for what he is experiencing.

* See "Taking the Mystery out of Mental Illness," in the September 8, 1986, *Awake!*, companion magazine of *The Watchtower*.

"HOLD A GOOD CONSCIENCE"



LEAVE your conscience be your guide" is often-heard advice. But for our conscience to be a reliable guide, it needs to be properly educated in right and wrong, and we must be sensitive to its leading.

Consider the experience of a man named Zacchaeus, as recorded in the Bible. Zacchaeus, who lived in Jericho, was a chief tax collector and a rich man. By his own admission, he had acquired his wealth by means of extortion—a practice that certainly hurt others. Did Zacchaeus' conscience trouble him over his unrighteous actions? If it did, he had evidently been ignoring it.—Luke 19:1-7.

A situation arose, however, that caused Zacchaeus to re-

consider his course. Jesus came to Jericho. Short-statured Zacchaeus wanted to get a look at him, but he could not see him because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a tree for a better view. Impressed by Zacchaeus' intense interest, Jesus told him that he would visit him in his home. Zacchaeus gladly extended hospitality to his distinguished guest.

What Zacchaeus saw and heard while in association with Jesus touched his heart and moved him to change his ways. He announced: "Look! The half of my belongings, Lord, I am giving to the poor, and whatever I extorted from anyone by false accusation I am restoring fourfold."—Luke 19:8.

Zacchaeus' conscience had been enlightened, and he listened and responded to it. The good results were far-reaching. Imagine how Zacchaeus felt when Jesus told him: "This day salvation has come to this house!"—Luke 19:9.

What an encouraging example! It shows that whatever course we have previously pursued, we can change. Like Zacchaeus, we can heed Jesus' words—recorded in the Bible—and develop our sense of right and wrong. Then we can, as the apostle Peter urged, "hold a good conscience." We can listen to our trained conscience and do what is right.—1 Peter 3:16.