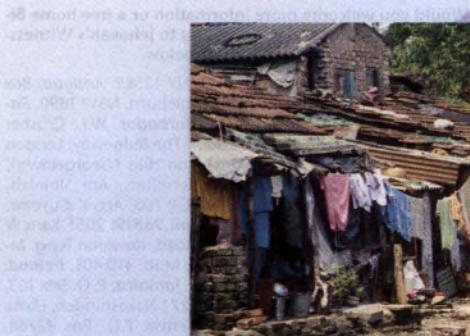


THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

OCTOBER 15, 2001



Can We
Create a
Better
World?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

October 15, 2001

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

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Can You Make the World a Better Place?

"Politics cannot begin to put the connecting tissue back in society. It is ill-equipped to reconstruct traditional moral beliefs. The best policies cannot recover courtship or marriage, make fathers responsible for their children, restore shock or shame where it once existed . . . The vast majority of moral problems that trouble us cannot be eradicated by law."

ARE you inclined to agree with those words of a former U.S. government aide? If so, what is the solution to the many problems today that stem from greed, lack of natural affection in families, loose morals, ignorance, and other corrosive factors eating away at the fabric of society? Some people feel that there is no solution, so they just get on with their lives as best they can. Others hope that one day a charismatic and brilliant leader, perhaps even a religious leader, will come along and point them in the right direction.

In fact, two thousand years ago, people wanted to make Jesus Christ their king because they perceived that he had been sent by God and would make a most able ruler. Nevertheless, when Jesus discerned their intentions, he quickly left the scene. (John 6:14, 15) "My kingdom is no part of this world," he later explained to a Roman governor. (John 18:36) Nowadays, however, few take the stand that Jesus took—even religious leaders who profess to be his followers. Some of these have tried to make this world a better place, either by attempting to influence secular rulers or

by holding political office themselves. We can see this by looking at the 1960's and '70's.

Religious Efforts to Improve the World

In the late 1960's, certain theologians in Latin-American countries took up the fight for the poor and downtrodden. To this end, they developed liberation theology, in which Christ was interpreted no longer as a savior in just the Biblical sense but in a political and economic way as well. In the United States, a number of church leaders who became deeply concerned about the erosion of moral values formed an organization called the Moral Majority. Its objective was to get into political office people who would legislate wholesome family values. Similarly, in many Muslim lands, groups have tried to curb corruption and excesses by promoting closer adherence to the Koran.

Do you believe that the world is a better place because of such efforts? The facts show that, overall, moral values continue to decline and the gap between rich and poor continues to widen, including in those countries where liberation theology was prominent.

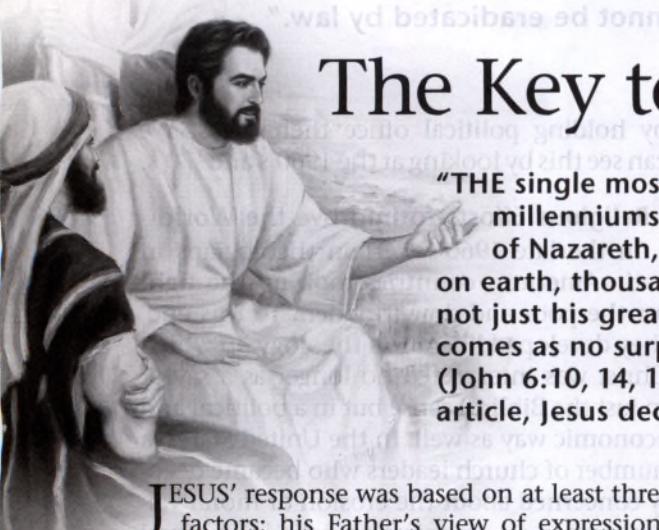
Because the Moral Majority failed in its key objectives in the United States, its founder, Jerry Falwell, folded the organization in 1989. Other organizations have taken its place. Nevertheless, Paul Weyrich, coiner of the term "moral majority," wrote in the magazine *Christianity Today*: "Even when we win in politics, our victories fail to translate into the kind of policies we believe are important." He also wrote: "The culture is becoming an ever-wider sewer. We are caught up in a cultural collapse of historic proportions, a collapse so great that it simply overwhelms politics."

Columnist and author Cal Thomas revealed what he viewed as a fundamental flaw

in trying to elevate society through politics: "Real change comes heart by heart, not election by election, because our primary problems are not economic and political but moral and spiritual."

But how do you resolve moral and spiritual problems in a world where there are no absolutes, where people decide for themselves what is right and wrong? If influential and well-intentioned people—religious or not—are unable to make this world a truly better place, who can? As we shall see in the next article, there is an answer. In fact, it lies at the very heart of why Jesus said that his Kingdom was not of this world.

The Key to a Happy World



"THE single most powerful figure—not merely in these two millennia but in all human history—has been Jesus of Nazareth," said *Time* magazine. When Jesus was on earth, thousands of honesthearted people recognized, not just his greatness, but his concern for others. Hence, it comes as no surprise that they wanted to make him king. (John 6:10, 14, 15) Yet, as mentioned in the preceding article, Jesus declined to get involved in politics.

JESUS' response was based on at least three factors: his Father's view of expressions of human self-determination, which include human rule; Jesus' awareness that there are powerful, hidden forces working against even the best human efforts at rulership; and God's purpose to establish a heavenly government to rule over the entire earth. As we examine these three points more closely, we will see why mankind's efforts to make the world a better place have failed. We will also see how success will be achieved.

Can Humans Govern Themselves?

When God created humans, he gave them

authority over the animal kingdom. (Genesis 1:26) But humankind was under God's sovereignty. The first man and woman were to confirm their submission to God by obediently abstaining from the fruit of one particular tree, "the tree of the knowledge of good and bad." (Genesis 2:17) Sadly, Adam and Eve abused their free moral agency and disobeyed God. Taking the forbidden fruit was not simply an act of theft. It constituted rebellion against God's sovereignty. A footnote to Genesis 2:17 in *The New Jerusalem Bible* states that Adam and Eve laid claim "to complete moral independence by which man refuses to recog-

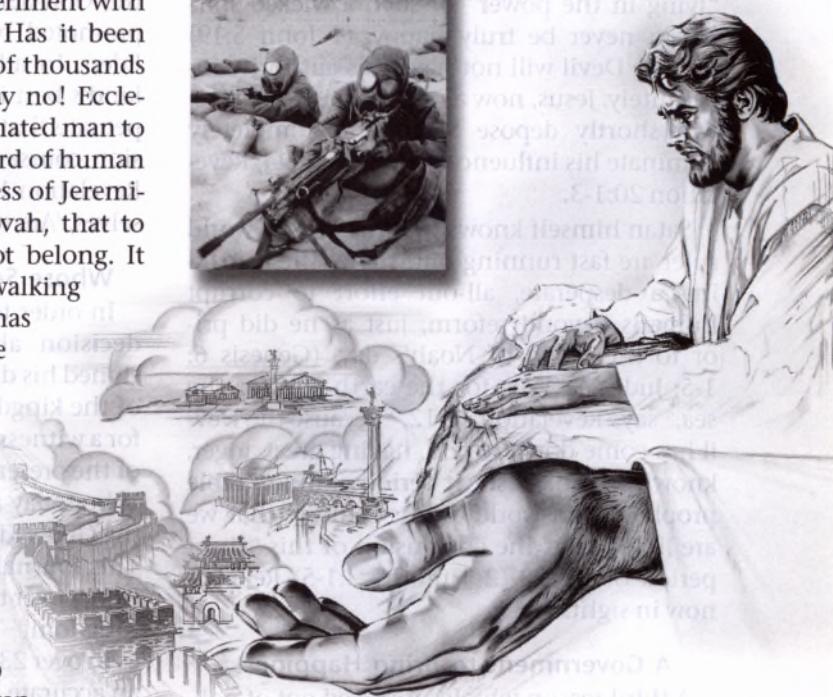
nise his status as a created being . . . The first sin was an attack on God's sovereignty."

Because of the serious moral issues involved, God allowed Adam and Eve and their descendants to choose their own way of life, and they established their own standards of right and wrong. (Psalm 147:19, 20; Romans 2:14) In essence, the human experiment with self-determination then began. Has it been successful? With the advantage of thousands of years of hindsight, we can say no! Ecclesiastes 8:9 states: "Man has dominated man to his injury." This lamentable record of human self-rule confirms the truthfulness of Jeremiah 10:23: "I well know, O Jehovah, that to earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step." History has proved that humans do not have the capacity to rule successfully without their Creator.

Jesus fully concurred. Independence from God was anathema to him. "I do nothing of my own initiative," he said. "I always do the things pleasing to [God]." (John 4:34; 8:28, 29) Hence, with no divine authorization to receive kingship from humans, Jesus did not even consider accepting it. This does not mean, however, that he was reluctant to help his fellowman. On the contrary, he did all in his power to assist people to find the greatest happiness then and in the future. He even gave his life for mankind. (Matthew 5:3-11; 7:24-27; John 3:16) But Jesus knew that "for everything there is an appointed time," including God's time to assert his sovereignty over mankind. (Ecclesiastes 3:1; Matthew 24:14, 21, 22, 36-39) Recall, though, that in Eden our original parents submitted to the will of a wicked spirit creature who spoke through a visible serpent. This brings us to a second reason why Jesus kept out of politics.



History proves that humans cannot rule successfully without God



Because he rules the present "system of things," Satan could offer Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world"

The World's Secret Ruler

Satan, the Bible tells us, offered Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" in exchange for one act of worship. (Matthew 4:8-10) Essentially, Jesus was offered world rulership—but on the Devil's terms. Jesus did not fall prey to this temptation. Was it really a temptation, though? Could Satan actually make such a grandiose offer? Yes, for Jesus himself called the Devil "the ruler of the world," and the apostle Paul described him as

"the god of this system of things."—John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:12.

Of course, Jesus knew that the Devil does not have mankind's best interests at heart. He described Satan as "a murderer" and as "the father of lies and of all that is false." (John 8:44, *The Amplified Bible*) Obviously, a world "lying in the power" of such a wicked spirit can never be truly happy. (1 John 5:19) But the Devil will not have this authority indefinitely. Jesus, now a mighty spirit creature, will shortly depose Satan and completely eliminate his influence.—Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:1-3.

Satan himself knows that his days as world ruler are fast running out. Hence, he is making a desperate, all-out effort to corrupt humans beyond reform, just as he did prior to the Flood of Noah's day. (Genesis 6:1-5; Jude 6) "Woe for the earth and for the sea," says Revelation 12:12, "because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." Bible prophecy and world events indicate that we are living near the conclusion of this "short period of time." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Relief is now in sight.

A Government to Bring Happiness

A third reason why Jesus stayed out of politics is that he knew that at a future set time, God would establish a heavenly government to rule over the earth. The Bible calls this government God's Kingdom, and it was the main theme of Jesus' teaching. (Luke 4:43; Revelation 11:15) Jesus taught his disciples to pray for that Kingdom to come, for only under its rule will 'God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' (Matthew 6:9, 10) You may wonder, 'If this Kingdom is going to rule over the entire earth, what will happen to man-made governments?' The answer is found at Daniel 2:44: "In the days of those kings [ruling at the end of the present system] the God of heaven will set up

a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. *It will crush and put an end to all these [man-made] kingdoms*, and it itself will stand to times indefinite." Why will God's Kingdom have to "crush" earthly rulerships? Because these insist on perpetuating the God-defying spirit of self-determination promoted by Satan back in the garden of Eden. In addition to working against mankind's best interests, those who strive to perpetuate that spirit put themselves on a collision course with the Creator. (Psalm 2:6-12; Revelation 16:14, 16) Hence, we must ask ourselves, 'Are we for or against rule by God?'

Whose Sovereignty Will You Choose?

In order to help people make an informed decision about rulership, Jesus commissioned his disciples to preach the "good news of the kingdom . . . in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations" before the end of the present system comes. (Matthew 24:14) Who today are known worldwide for preaching God's Kingdom? Jehovah's Witnesses are. This journal, in fact, has long carried on its front cover the words "Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom." Today, some six million Witnesses in over 230 lands are helping people to gain an accurate knowledge of that Kingdom.*

Blessings for Kingdom Subjects

Jesus always did things God's way. Hence, instead of choosing an independent course and trying to prop up or improve the ex-

* In advocating God's Kingdom, Jehovah's Witnesses do not mix in politics or foment rebellion against secular governments, even in lands where the Witnesses are banned or persecuted. (Titus 3:1) Instead, they try to make a positive, spiritual, nonpolitical contribution in the way that Jesus and his first-century disciples did. The Witnesses strive to help righteously disposed people in their various communities to adopt wholesome Biblical values, such as familial love, honesty, moral cleanliness, and a good work ethic. Primarily, they endeavor to teach them how to follow Bible principles and to look to God's Kingdom as mankind's real hope.



Jesus taught that under God's Kingdom arrangement, the world will be a wonderful place

isting system of things by political means, he worked hard to advance the interests of God's Kingdom, the only solution to the world's ills. For his loyalty he was rewarded with a glorious throne in heaven as the very King of that Kingdom. What a wonderful prize for his submission to God!—Daniel 7:13, 14.

Millions today who imitate Jesus in putting God's Kingdom first and in submitting to God's will also enjoy a wonderful gift—the privilege of being earthly subjects of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 6:33) Under its loving rule, they will be raised to human perfection, with the prospect of everlasting life. (Revela-

tion 21:3, 4) Says 1 John 2:17: "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever." With Satan and his followers swept away and the earth transformed into a global paradise free of divisive nationalism, corrupt commercial systems, and false religion, what an exquisite joy it will be to remain here forever!—Psalm 37:29; 72:16.

Yes, God's Kingdom is the real key to a truly happy world, and the message announcing it is rightly described as *good news*. If you have not already done so, the next time one of Jehovah's Witnesses calls at your home, why not welcome this good news being brought to you?

Life-Giving *Waters Flow* IN THE **ANDES**

The Andes Mountains run down the middle of Peru, splitting the country into an arid coastal region on the west and a luxuriant and steaming jungle on the east. On this mountainous spine live over a third of Peru's 27 million people. They are either on the high plateaus and steep mountainsides of the Andes or in the seemingly bottomless gorges and fertile valleys of that sierra.



THE rugged range of the Andes resists easy penetration from the outside. As a result, the millions living there are rather isolated, mostly unaffected by events and developments outside their territory.

Small villages have sprung up along streams to access the water needed for crops and herds of llamas, alpacas, vicuñas, and sheep. However, there is another type of vital water that flows in the Andes—refreshing spiritual waters that come from Jehovah, “the source of living water.” (Jeremiah 2:13) God uses his Witnesses to help people in settlements perched high up in the Andes to gain accurate knowledge about him and his purposes.—Isaiah 12:3; John 17:3.

Since it is God’s will that “all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth,” these ministers spare no effort to visit hard-to-reach communities with the life-giving message from the Bible. (1 Timothy 2:4) This Bible-based message is enlightening and lofty. It has freed honesthearted local people from superstitions, customs, and ideas that made them fear the dead, the wicked spirits, and the forces of nature. More important, this message gives them the glorious hope of endless life on a paradise earth.

Making the Effort

The Kingdom preachers visiting these remote regions have to make many adjustments. To reach the hearts of the people, Bible teachers need to have some knowledge of Quechua or Aymara, the two local languages.

Getting to the villages in the Andes is not easy. Not many railroads serve those areas. Transportation is precarious and is subject to bad weather and odd topography. How do the Witnesses, then, reach the people to bring them the Kingdom message?

Courageous preachers of the good news have taken up the challenge and have re-

sponded in the spirit of the prophet Isaiah: “Here I am! Send me.” (Isaiah 6:8) They have used three mobile homes to travel to the north, central, and southern areas. Equipped with dozens of cartons of Bibles and Bible literature, the zealous pioneers, or full-time ministers, have sown seeds of Bible truth among the friendly, hospitable, and honesthearted people living there.

The curves of the mountain roads are especially dangerous. To negotiate some of these, vehicles have to use a switchback. During such a maneuver, a missionary sitting in the back seat of a bus looked out of the window and noticed that one of the rear wheels was right on the edge of a precipice of more than 600 feet! He closed his eyes until the bus pulled ahead.

Some roads are in bad shape and are very narrow. Negotiating such rugged terrain, one of the mobile homes was going down a narrow road when it met a truck coming up. The mobile home had to be backed uphill to a place where the two could just barely get by each other.

Nevertheless, the results of such persistent efforts have been outstanding. Would you like to learn more about those efforts?

“Watering” Lake Titicaca

Lying in a basin of the Andes Mountains 12,500 feet above sea level, Lake Titicaca is the highest inland, navigable body of water in the world. Snowcapped mountain peaks, some of them more than 21,000 feet high, give birth to most of the 25 rivers that feed Titicaca. Because of the high altitude, the climate is cold, and those not native to the area have to contend with altitude sickness.

Some time ago, a group of pioneers who speak Quechua and Aymara made a trip to



Amantani and Taquile islands on Lake Titicaca. They took along a slide presentation entitled "A Closer Look at the Churches," a frank examination of the falsehoods of Christendom. This was well received. One man welcomed the brothers and offered a spacious room in his home where they could stay and teach the Bible.

The first meeting on Amantani drew 100 people; the meeting on Taquile was attended by 140. The presentation was in Quechua. One couple who had previously lived on the mainland said: "It was time for you Jehovah's Witnesses to remember us. We have been praying for you to come."

Besides these two bigger islands, some of the estimated 40 "floating" islands on Lake Titicaca have also been reached with the good news. Floating islands? Yes, these are made of totoras, reeds that grow in some shallower areas of the lake. Totoras rise through the water and extend above the surface. To make an island, the locals bend the reeds, still rooted to the lake bottom, and interweave them to make a platform. The platform is then packed with mud and reinforced with additional cut reeds. People live in reed huts built on top.

Jehovah's Witnesses obtained a boat for preaching to people on the islands of Lake Titicaca. The boat is capable of carrying 16 people. After docking at the floating islands, the Witnesses walk on the reed platform from dwelling to dwelling. They say that they usually feel a slight movement of the surface underfoot. This is not the place for those prone to motion sickness!

As for the Aymara-speaking population, they inhabit the numerous communities and villages along the shores and on the peninsulas that jut into the lake. These are more accessible by boat than by land. In all, it



Witnessing on the "floating" islands of Lake Titicaca

is estimated that close to 400,000 people live in the region that such boats serve with the Kingdom message. The boats will be busy for quite some time to come.

Quenching Spiritual Thirst

Flavio lived in the village of Santa Lucía, near Juliaca, in the Andes. In his Evangelical Church, he had been taught the doctrine of hellfire. For years he lived in fear of such an eternal fiery punishment. He often wondered how a God of love could indefinitely torture humans in fire. When Tito, a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses, visited that village, he called on Flavio.

One of the first questions Flavio posed was, "Does your religion teach that people are tormented in hellfire?" Tito replied that such an idea is repugnant to the Creator and brings reproach on the name of Jehovah, the God of love. Using Flavio's own version of the Bible, Tito showed him that the dead are not conscious at all and that they await an earthly resurrection under God's Kingdom. (Ecclesiastes 9:5; John 5:28, 29) This was an eye-opener for Flavio. He immediately accepted a Bible study and soon became a baptized Christian.

An Appreciative Village

Imagine how thrilling it is to bring the Scriptures to villagers who have never before seen a copy of the Bible or to preach in villages where the people have never heard of Jehovah's Witnesses or of the good news they preach! That was the experience of three pioneer sisters—Rosa, Alicia, and Cecilia—who preached in the villages of Izcuchaca and Conayca, located at an altitude of more than 12,000 feet in central Peru.

On arrival at the first village, they had nowhere to stay. They talked to the local police

commander, explaining the reason for their visit. The result? He let them stay overnight in the police station. The next day, the pioneers were able to find more permanent quarters that became their center of operations.

Soon came the time for the annual Memorial of Christ's death. The pioneers had visited all the houses in the village of Izcuchaca, had placed many Bibles, and had started a number of Bible studies. Before the Memorial, they sent out invitations to this event, explaining the purpose of the celebration and the meaning of the emblems used during the commemoration. A group of brothers had been invited to help with the occasion, and one of them gave the talk. What a joy it was to see 50 people from that small village present at this special event! For the first time, they were able to understand what the Lord's Evening Meal really means. Also, how precious it was to them to have the Word of God in their hands!

Release From Heavy Burdens

Bringing the refreshing water of Bible truth to captives of false religion is always a joy. Pisac was a stronghold of the ancient Inca Empire. Most of the people living there today have been taught the unscriptural teaching of hellfire. Their priests tell them that they can get to heaven only through the priests' intercessions.

Understandably, such people are thirsty for the refreshing waters of Bible truth. While preaching from door to door, Santiago, a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses, had the opportunity to explain to a man that righteous ones are destined to live on a paradise earth. (Psalm 37:11) Santiago showed from the Bible that the dead will be resurrected and that mankind will be instructed in the perfect ways of Jehovah with everlasting life in view. (Isaiah 11:9) Until then, that man had been a devout Catholic, had dabbled in spiritism, and was given to overdrinking. Now he had a Bible-based hope and a goal in life—to live

in Paradise. He burned all his spiritistic paraphernalia and gave up carousing. He gathered his family and accepted a Bible study. In time, all in that family dedicated themselves to Jehovah God and were baptized.

Hospitality Welcomed

The mountain folk are very hospitable. Though their houses are humble and the people are of little means, they offer visitors what they have. Before learning the high standards of the Bible, a host might offer a visitor coca leaves to chew while they are conversing. But on becoming a Witness, he might offer a spoonful of sugar, which is of equal value in the isolated provinces.

A missionary was asked by a brother to accompany him on a return visit. After an arduous climb up a steep mountain path, they clapped their hands to announce their arrival to the householder. They were invited inside the thatched-roof house, having to duck to get through the low entrance. They carefully stepped around the center of the dirt floor, where the mother had dug a hole, stuffed in a blanket, and put her baby. Unable to get out, this baby was content to coo and gurgle happily while the grown-ups were talking. After they had had a lively discussion on the blessings of the Kingdom, the woman brought out a tall container of the local beverage. Soon the brothers were on their way down the mountainside for more calls.

A Bountiful Harvest

Now in this region, there are about a hundred isolated groups with over a thousand people studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Graduates of the Ministerial Training School in Lima are being sent out to develop those groups into congregations. Righthearted individuals who have been captives of false religion and superstitions for so long have found freedom through the good news of the Kingdom! (John 8:32) Their thirst for the waters of truth is being satisfied.

WHO WILL SEPARATE US FROM GOD'S LOVE?

"As for us, we love, because he first loved us."—1 JOHN 4:19.

HOW important is it to you to know that you are loved? From infancy to adulthood, humans thrive on love. Have you observed a baby cradled lovingly in its mother's arms? Often, no matter what is going on around it, as the little one gazes into its mother's smiling eyes, it is at ease, at peace in the arms of a mother who loves it. Or do you remember how you were during those sometimes turbulent adolescent years? (1 Thessalonians 2:7) At times, you may not have known what you wanted or even how you felt, yet how important it was to know that your father and mother loved you! Was it not helpful to know that you could approach them with any problem or question? Really, all through life, one of our greatest needs is to be loved. Such love affirms that we have value.

² The enduring love of one's parents certainly contributes to proper development and balance. Yet, having the confidence that our heavenly Father, Jehovah, loves us is far more critical to our spiritual and emotional well-being. Some readers of this magazine may not have had parents who truly cared for them. If that is true in your case, take heart. Even if parental love was missing or if it failed, God's loyal love comes to the rescue.

³ Through his prophet Isaiah, Jehovah pointed out that a mother could "forget" her nursing infant, but he would not forget his people. (Isaiah 49:15) Similarly, David confi-

dently said: "In case my own father and my own mother did leave me, even Jehovah himself would take me up." (Psalm 27:10) How reassuring! Whatever your circumstances, if you have come into a dedicated relationship with Jehovah God, you should always remember that the love he has for you far exceeds that of any human!

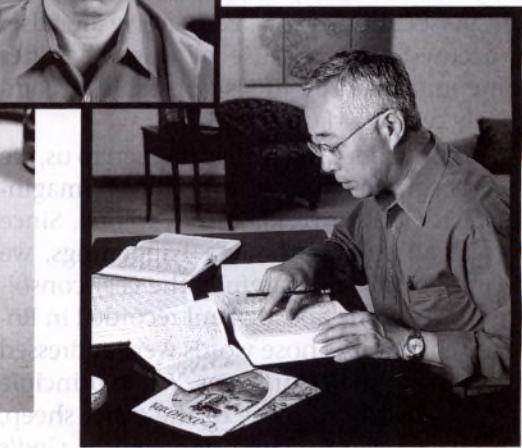
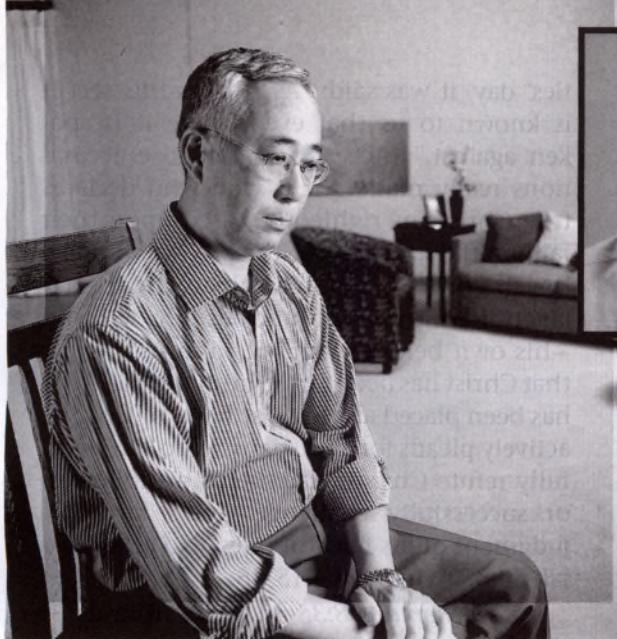
Keep Yourself in God's Love

⁴ When did you first come to know of Jehovah's love? Likely, your experience was somewhat similar to that of Christians in the first century. The 5th chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans beautifully describes how sinners, once alienated from God, became acquainted with Jehovah's love. In verse 5, we read: "The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy spirit, which was given us." In verse 8, Paul adds: "God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

⁵ In a similar manner, when the truth from God's Word was presented to you and you began to exercise faith, Jehovah's holy spirit began to operate in your heart. In this way you started to appreciate the magnitude of what Jehovah did in sending his beloved Son to die for you. Jehovah thus helped you to be aware of just how much he loves mankind. When you realized that, although you were born a sinner alienated from him, Jehovah had opened the way for humans to be declared righteous with the prospect of endless

- 1, 2. (a) Why is knowing that we are loved important to us? (b) Whose love do we need the most?
3. How has Jehovah reassured his people of his love for them?

4. How were first-century Christians reassured of God's love?
5. How did you come to appreciate the extent of God's love?



If we feel separated from God's love, we can work to correct matters

life, was not your heart touched? Did you not feel a love for Jehovah?—Romans 5:10.

¹⁶ Having been drawn by the love of your heavenly Father and having adjusted your life to be acceptable to him, you dedicated your life to God. You now enjoy peace with God. Yet, do you at times feel somewhat distant from Jehovah? That can happen to any of us. But always remember that God does not change. His love is as constant and steady as the sun, which never stops sending forth its warm rays of light to the earth. (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17) On the other hand, we can change—if even temporarily. As the earth turns, half of the planet becomes shrouded in darkness. Likewise, if we turn away from God, even to a limited degree, we may feel a chill in our relationship with him. What can we do to correct that situation?

⁷ If we sense some separation from God's love, we should ask ourselves: 'Have I tak-

6. Why may we at times feel somewhat distant from Jehovah?

7. How can self-examination help us to remain in God's love?

en God's love for granted? Have I gradually turned away somewhat from the living and loving God, showing in various ways a weakening of faith? Have I set my mind on "the things of the flesh," rather than on "the things of the spirit"? (Romans 8:5-8; Hebrews 3:12) If we have distanced ourselves from Jehovah, we can take steps to correct matters, to return to a close, warm relationship with him. James urges us: "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you." (James 4:8) Take to heart the words of Jude: "Beloved ones, by building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying with holy spirit, keep yourselves in God's love."—Jude 20, 21.

Changed Circumstances Do Not Affect God's Love

⁸ Our life in this system of things is subject to many changes. King Solomon observed that "time and unforeseen occurrence befall [us] all." (Ecclesiastes 9:11) Overnight, our life may change completely. One day we are healthy, the next day we may be seriously

8. What changes can suddenly occur in our lives?

ill. One day our secular job seems stable, the next day we are unemployed. Without warning, death can strike a loved one. Christians in a certain land may enjoy peaceful conditions for some time, and then, suddenly, violent persecution erupts. Perhaps we are falsely accused, and because of this, we suffer some injustice. Yes, life is not stable or completely certain.—James 4:13-15.

⁹ When saddening things happen to us, we could begin to feel abandoned, even imagining that God's love for us has waned. Since we are all subject to such happenings, we do well to consider carefully the very consoling words of the apostle Paul recorded in Romans chapter 8. Those words were addressed to spirit-anointed Christians. Yet, in principle they also apply to those of the other sheep, who have been declared righteous as God's friends, as was Abraham in pre-Christian times.—Romans 4:20-22; James 2:21-23.

¹⁰ Read Romans 8:31-34. Paul asks: "If God is for us, who will be against us?" True, Satan and his wicked world are against us. Enemies may falsely accuse us, even in the courts of the land. Some Christian parents have been accused of hating their children because of not allowing them to accept medical procedures that violate God's law or not letting them engage in pagan celebrations. (Acts 15:28, 29; 2 Corinthians 6:14-16) Other faithful Christians have been falsely charged with being seditious because they would not kill fellow humans in warfare or engage in politics. (John 17:16) Some opposers have spread slanderous lies in the media, even falsely accusing Jehovah's Witnesses of being a dangerous cult.

¹¹ But do not forget that in the apos-

9. Why would it be good to consider a portion of Romans chapter 8?
- 10, 11. (a) What charges do enemies sometimes make against God's people? (b) Why do such accusations not really matter to Christians?

ties' day, it was said: "As regards this sect it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against." (Acts 28:22) Do false accusations really matter? It is God who declares true Christians righteous, based upon their faith in the sacrifice of Christ. Why would Jehovah stop loving his worshipers after he has given them the most precious gift he could—his own beloved Son? (1 John 4:10) Now that Christ has been raised from the dead and has been placed at the right hand of God, he actively pleads for Christians. Who can rightfully refute Christ's defense of his followers or successfully challenge God's favorable judgment of his faithful ones? No one!—Isaiah 50:8, 9; Hebrews 4:15, 16.

¹² Read Romans 8:35-37. Aside from us, is there anyone or anything that can separate us from the love of Jehovah and his Son, Christ Jesus? Satan may use his earthly agents to cause Christians much trouble. Over the past century, many of our Christian brothers and sisters have been objects of violent persecution in many lands. In some places today, our brothers daily face economic distress. Some experience the pain of hunger or lack sufficient clothing. What is the Devil's objective in causing these hard conditions? At least in part, his purpose is to discourage true worship of Jehovah. Satan wants to make us believe that God's love has grown cold. However, is that the case?

¹³ Like Paul, who quoted Psalm 44:22, we have studied God's written Word. We understand that it is for the sake of God's name that these things happen to us, his "sheep." The sanctification of God's name and the vindication of his universal sovereignty are involved. It is because of such major issues that

- 12, 13. (a) What conditions or circumstances cannot separate us from God's love? (b) What is the Devil's objective in causing hardships for us? (c) Why do Christians come off completely victorious?

Paul understood why he was persecuted

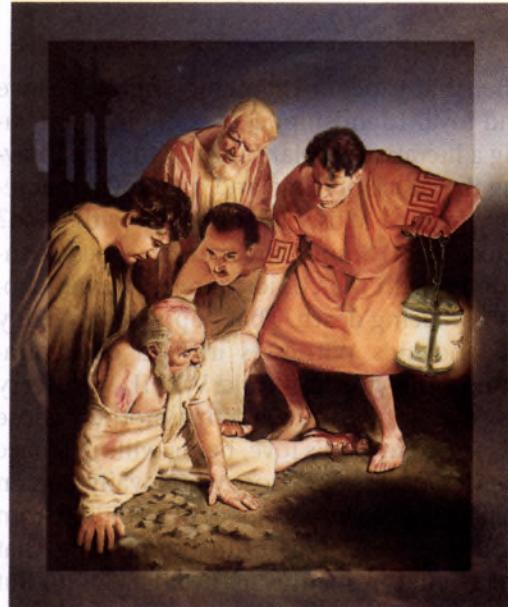
God has permitted trials, not because he no longer loves us. No matter what the distressing circumstance may be, we are assured that God's love for his people, including each one of us, has not changed. Any seeming defeat we may suffer will turn out to be a victory if we keep our integrity. We are strengthened and sustained by the assurance of God's unbreakable love.

¹⁴ Read Romans 8:38, 39. What convinced Paul that nothing could separate Christians from God's love? No doubt Paul's personal experiences while in the ministry reinforced his conviction that hardships could not affect God's love for us. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27; Philippians 4:13) Also, Paul had knowledge of Jehovah's eternal purpose and past dealings with His people. Can death itself conquer God's love for those who have served him loyally? Not at all! Such faithful ones who die will live on in God's perfect memory, and he will resurrect them in due time.—Luke 20:37, 38; 1 Corinthians 15:22-26.

¹⁵ Whatever misfortune life today may bring us—whether a debilitating accident, a terminal disease, or an economic calamity—nothing can destroy God's love for his people. Powerful angels, such as the disobedient angel who became Satan, cannot influence Jehovah to stop loving his devoted servants. (Job 2:3) Governments may ban, imprison, and mistreat God's servants and may label them "persona non grata." (1 Corinthians 4:13) Such unjustified hatred by the nations may pressure humans to turn against us, but it does not sway the Sovereign of the universe to abandon us.

¹⁶ As Christians, we need not fear that

14. Why was Paul convinced of God's love despite the hardships that Christians may suffer? ^{15, 16} Recount some things that can never make God stop loving his faithful servants.



any of what Paul called "things now here"—the events, conditions, and situations in this present system of things—nor "things to come" in the future can break God's attachment to his people. Though earthly and heavenly powers wage war against us, God's loyal love is there to sustain us. Neither "height nor depth" hinders God's love, as stressed by Paul. Yes, nothing that might tend to pull us down, nor anything tending to exercise a superior influence on us, can separate us from God's love; nor can any other creation disrupt the Creator's relationship with his faithful servants. God's love never fails; it is everlasting.—1 Corinthians 13:8.

Treasure God's Loving-Kindness Forever

¹⁷ How important is God's love to you? Do you feel as did David, who wrote: "Because your loving-kindness is better than life, my own lips will commend you. Thus I shall bless you during my lifetime; in your name I shall raise my palms"? (Psalm 63:3, 4) Truly, is there anything that life in this world has to

17. (a) Why is having God's love "better than life"? (b) How do we demonstrate that we treasure God's loving-kindness?

offer that is better than enjoying God's love and loyal friendship? For example, is pursuing a lucrative secular career better than having the peace of mind and happiness that result from a close relationship with God? (Luke 12:15) Some Christians have been confronted with the choice of renouncing Jehovah or facing death. That happened to many of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. With very few exceptions, our Christian brothers chose to remain in God's love, being willing to face death if necessary. Those who loyally remain in his love can be confident of receiving from God an everlasting future, something that the world cannot give us. (Mark 8:34-36) But even more is involved than everlasting life.

¹⁸ Though it is not possible to live forever without Jehovah, try to imagine what an extremely long life would be like without our Creator. It would be empty, without true purpose. Jehovah has given his people satisfying work to do in these last days. So we can trust that when Jehovah, the Great Purposer, provides everlasting life, it will be filled with fascinating, worthwhile things for us to learn and to do. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) Explore as we will in the millenniums ahead, we will never completely fathom "the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge."—Romans 11:33.

18. Why is everlasting life so desirable?

How Would You Respond?

- To keep our spiritual and emotional balance, we especially need whose love?
- What things could never cause Jehovah to stop loving his servants?
- Why is experiencing Jehovah's love "better than life"?



The Father Has Affection for You

¹⁹ On Nisan 14, 33 C.E., during his last evening with his 11 faithful apostles, Jesus said many things to strengthen them for what lay ahead. They had all stuck with Jesus through his trials, and they had personally felt his love for them. (Luke 22:28, 30; John 1:16; 13:1) Then Jesus reassured them: "The Father himself has affection for you." (John 16:27) How those words must have helped the disciples to realize the tender feelings that their heavenly Father had for them!

²⁰ Many now alive have served Jehovah faithfully for decades. No doubt, before the end of this wicked system of things, we will face many more trials. Never let such trials or distress make you doubt God's loyal love for you. It would be hard to overemphasize this fact: Jehovah has affection for you. (James 5:11) Let each of us continue to do our part, loyally observing God's commands. (John 15:8-10) May we use every opportunity to praise his name. We should strengthen our resolve to continue drawing close to Jehovah in prayer and studying his Word. Whatever tomorrow may bring, if we are doing our utmost to please Jehovah, we will remain at peace, fully confident of his unfailing love.—2 Peter 3:14.

19. What parting reassurance did Jesus Christ give to his disciples?

20. What are you determined to do, and in what can you have confidence?

ACQUIRE A HEART AGREEABLE TO JEHOVAH

"Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one."—PSALM 51:10.

HE WAS tall in stature and attractive in appearance. Upon seeing him, the prophet Samuel was so impressed that he concluded that this eldest son of Jesse was the one God had chosen to be king after Saul. But Jehovah declared: "Do not look at [that son's] appearance and at the height of his stature, for I have rejected him. . . . Mere man sees what appears to the eyes; but as for Jehovah, he sees what the heart is." Jehovah's choice proved to be Jesse's youngest son, David—"a man agreeable to his heart."—1 Samuel 13:14; 16:7.

² God can read the human heart, as he later made clear: "I, Jehovah, am searching the heart, examining the kidneys, even to give

1, 2. Why should we be interested in our heart?

to each one according to his ways, according to the fruitage of his dealings." (Jeremiah 17:10) Yes, "Jehovah is the examiner of hearts." (Proverbs 17:3) What, though, is the heart in a man that Jehovah examines? And what can we do to acquire a heart agreeable to him?

"The Secret Person of the Heart"

³ The word "heart" occurs about a thousand times in the Holy Scriptures. In most cases it is used in a figurative sense. For example, Jehovah told the prophet Moses: "Speak to the sons of Israel, that they may take up a contribution for me: From every man whose heart incites him you people are to take up the contribution of mine." And those making contributions "came, everyone whose heart impelled him." (Exodus 25:2; 35:21) Clearly, one aspect of the figurative heart is motivation—the inner force that urges us to action. Our figurative heart also reflects our emotions and feelings, our desires and affections. A heart can be consumed with anger or filled with fear, torn by grief or elated

3, 4. In what sense is the word "heart" primarily used in the Bible? Give examples.



David appreciatively meditated on spiritual things. Do you?

with joy. (Psalm 27:3; 39:3; John 16:22; Romans 9:2) It can be proud or humble, loving or hateful.—Proverbs 16:5; Matthew 11:29; 1 Peter 1:22.

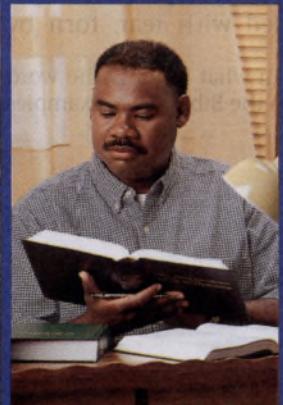
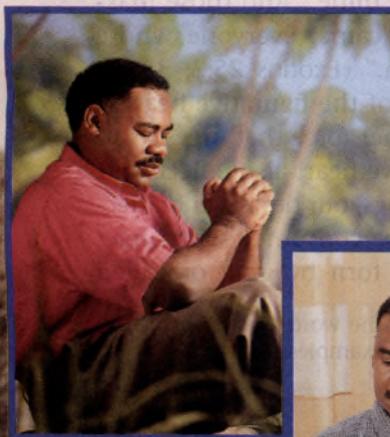
⁴ Accordingly, “heart” is often associated with motivation and emotions, whereas “mind” particularly has to do with intellect. This is how these terms are to be understood when they occur in the same context in the Scriptures. (Matthew 22:37; Philippians 4:7) But the heart and the mind are not mutually exclusive. For instance, Moses urged the Israelites: “You must call back to your heart [or, “must recall to your mind,” footnote] that Jehovah is the true God.” (Deuteronomy 4:39) To the scribes scheming against him, Jesus said: “Why are you thinking wicked things in your hearts?” (Matthew 9:4) “Understanding,” “knowledge,” and “reasoning” can also

be associated with the heart. (1 Kings 3:12; Proverbs 15:14; Mark 2:6) The figurative heart, therefore, can also involve our intellect—our thoughts or our understanding.

⁵ According to one reference work, the figurative heart stands for “the central part in general, the inside, and so for *the interior man* as manifesting himself in all his various activities, in his desires, affections, emotions, passions, purposes, his thoughts, perceptions, imaginations, his wisdom, knowledge, skill, his beliefs and his reasonings, his memory and his consciousness.” It represents what we really are on the inside, “the secret person of the heart.” (1 Peter 3:4) That is what Jehovah sees and examines. Hence, David could pray: “Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit,

5. What does the figurative heart stand for?

**Prepare your heart
before studying
God's Word**



a steadfast one." (Psalm 51:10) How may we acquire a pure heart?

"Apply Your Hearts" to God's Word

⁶ When admonishing the sons of Israel gathered on the Plains of Moab prior to entering the Promised Land, Moses said: "Apply your hearts to all the words that I am speaking in warning to you today, that you may command your sons to take care to do all the words of this law." (Deuteronomy 32:46) The Israelites were to "pay good heed." (*Knox*) Only by being thoroughly familiar with God's commands could they inculcate them in their offspring.—Deuteronomy 6:6-8.

⁷ A key requirement for acquiring a pure heart is that of gaining accurate knowledge of God's will and purposes. There is only one source of that knowledge, the inspired Word of God. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Head knowledge alone, though, is not going to help us to acquire a heart that pleases Jehovah. For knowledge to affect what we really are inside, we must 'apply our heart' to, or "take to heart," what we are learning. (Deuteronomy 32:46, *An American Translation*) How is this done? The psalmist David explains: "I have remembered days of long ago; I have meditated on all your activity; I willingly kept myself concerned with the work of your own hands." —Psalm 143:5.

⁸ We too should appreciatively meditate on Jehovah's activity. When reading the Bible or Bible-based publications, we need to ponder over such questions as: 'What does this teach me about Jehovah? What attributes of Jehovah do I see displayed here? What does this account teach me about what Jehovah likes and dislikes? What are the con-

6. What exhortation did Moses give to Israel as they were encamped on the Plains of Moab?
7. What is involved in 'applying our heart' to God's Word?
8. What questions can we ponder as we study?

sequences of following a course that Jehovah loves as compared with following one that he hates? How does this information connect with what I already know?"

⁹ Thirty-two-year-old Lisa* explains how she came to appreciate the value of purposeful study and meditation: "After my baptism in 1994, I was quite active in the truth for about two years. I attended all the Christian meetings, devoted from 30 to 40 hours per month to the field ministry, and associated with fellow Christians. Then I started to drift away. I sank so low that I even violated God's law. But I woke up and decided to clean up my life. How glad I am that Jehovah has recognized my repentance and accepted me back! I have often pondered: 'Why did I fall away?' The answer that I keep coming back to is that I neglected purposeful study and meditation. Bible truth just had not reached my heart. From now on, personal study and meditation will always be a significant part of my life." As we grow in our knowledge of Jehovah, his Son, and his Word, how vital that we make time for meaningful reflection!

¹⁰ In this busy world, finding time for study and meditation is indeed a challenge. However, Christians today stand at the threshold of a wonderful Promised Land—God's righteous new world. (2 Peter 3:13) Startling events, such as the destruction of "Babylon the Great" and the attack by "Gog of the land of Magog" upon Jehovah's people, are in the offing. (Revelation 17:1, 2, 5, 15-17; Ezekiel 38:1-4, 14-16; 39:2) What lies ahead may put our love for Jehovah to the test. It is urgent that we now buy out the opportune time and apply our heart to God's Word!—Ephesians 5:15, 16.

* Name has been changed.

9. How valuable are personal study and meditation?
10. Why is it urgent that we make time for personal study and meditation?

'Prepare Your Heart to Consult God's Word'

¹¹ The figurative heart can be likened to soil in which the seed of the truth can be planted. (Matthew 13:18-23) Literal soil is usually cultivated to ensure the healthy growth of the crop. Similarly, the heart should be prepared, or made ready, so that it is more receptive to the Word of God. Ezra the priest "prepared his heart to consult the law of Jehovah and to do it." (Ezra 7:10) How may we prepare our heart?

¹² An excellent preparation of the heart when we consult God's Word is heartfelt prayer. Christian meetings of true worshipers open and close with prayer. How appropriate that we begin each period of personal Bible study with a sincere prayer and then maintain a prayerful attitude during our study!

¹³ The figurative heart must be prepared to set aside preconceived opinions. The religious leaders of Jesus' day were unwilling to do this. (Matthew 13:15) On the other hand, Jesus' mother, Mary, drew conclusions "in her heart" based on truths that she had heard. (Luke 2:19, 51) She became a faithful disciple of Jesus. Lydia of Thyatira listened to Paul, "and Jehovah opened her heart wide to pay attention." She too became a believer. (Acts 16:14, 15) May we never rigidly hold to personal ideas or cherished doctrinal views. Rather, let us be willing to "let God be found true, though every man be found a liar." —Romans 3:4.

¹⁴ Preparing the heart to listen at Christian meetings is particularly important. Distractions may turn our attention away from what

11. How can our heart be likened to soil?
12. What will help prepare the heart for study?
13. To acquire a heart agreeable to Jehovah, what must we do?
14. How may we prepare our heart to listen at Christian meetings?

is being said. The spoken words can exert little influence on us if we are preoccupied with things that happened during the day or are concerned about what is awaiting us tomorrow. We need to be firmly resolved to listen and learn if we are to benefit from what is being said. What benefits we can receive if we are determined to understand the scriptures being expounded and the meaning that is being put into them!—Nehemiah 8:5-8, 12.

¹⁵ Just as adding the proper supplements may enhance the physical soil, so our cultivating humility, hunger for spirituality, trust, godly fear, and love for God can enrich our figurative heart. Humility softens the heart, helping us to become more teachable. Jehovah said to Judean King Josiah: "For the reason that your heart was soft so that you humbled yourself because of Jehovah at your hearing what I have spoken . . . and began weeping before me, I, even I, have heard." (2 Kings 22:19) Josiah's heart was humble and receptive. Humility enabled Jesus' "unlettered and ordinary" disciples to grasp and apply spiritual truths that escaped "wise and intellectual" men. (Acts 4:13; Luke 10:21) May we "humble ourselves before our God" as we try to acquire a heart agreeable to Jehovah.—Ezra 8:21.

¹⁶ Jesus said: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) While we are endowed with a capacity for spirituality, pressures from this wicked world or such traits as laziness may dull our consciousness of our need. (Matthew 4:4) We must develop a wholesome appetite for spiritual food. Even if we at first do not find pleasure in Bible reading and personal study, with persistence we will find that knowledge

15. How does humility help us to be more teachable?
16. Why is effort needed to cultivate a hunger for spiritual food?

will 'become pleasant to our very soul,' so that we eagerly look forward to study periods.—Proverbs 2:10, 11.

¹⁷ "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding," admonished King Solomon. (Proverbs 3:5) A heart that is trusting in Jehovah knows that whatever He asks or directs through his Word is always right. (Isaiah 48:17) Jehovah is certainly worthy of our complete trust. He is able to carry out all that he has purposed. (Isaiah 40:26, 29) Why, his very name literally means "He Causes to Become," which builds confidence in his ability to fulfill what he has promised! He is "righteous in all his ways and loyal in all his works." (Psalm 145:17) Of course, to cultivate trust in him, we need to "taste and see that Jehovah is good" by applying what we learn from the Bible in our personal life and by reflecting upon the good that this produces.—Psalm 34:8.

¹⁸ Pointing to yet another quality that makes our heart receptive to divine guidance, Solomon stated: "Fear Jehovah and turn away from bad." (Proverbs 3:7) Jehovah said concerning ancient Israel: "If only they would develop this heart of theirs to fear me and to keep all my commandments always, in order that it might go well with them and their sons to time indefinite!" (Deuteronomy 5:29) Yes, those who fear God obey him. Jehovah has the ability "to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him" and to inflict punishment upon those who disobey him. (2 Chronicles 16:9) May reverential fear of displeasing God govern all our actions, thoughts, and emotions.

17. (a) Why is Jehovah worthy of our complete trust? (b) How can we cultivate trust in God?

18. How does godly fear help us to be receptive to God's guidance?

'Love Jehovah With Your Whole Heart'

¹⁹ More than all other qualities, love truly makes our heart responsive to Jehovah's direction. A heart filled with love for God makes a person eager to learn what pleases God and what displeases him. (1 John 5:3) Jesus said: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind." (Matthew 22:37) May we deepen our love for God by making it a habit to reflect on his goodness, by regularly speaking to him as to an intimate friend, and by eagerly talking about him to others.

²⁰ By way of review: Acquiring a heart agreeable to Jehovah involves allowing God's Word to influence what we are inside, the secret person of the heart. Meaningful personal study of the Scriptures and appreciative meditation are a must. This is best done with a prepared heart—a heart free from preconceived ideas, one that is filled with qualities that make us teachable! Yes, with Jehovah's help, a good heart can be acquired. However, what measures can we take to safeguard our heart?

19. What role does love play in making our heart responsive to Jehovah's direction?

20. How may we acquire a heart agreeable to Jehovah?

How Would You Respond?

- What is the figurative heart that Jehovah examines?
- How may we 'apply our heart' to God's Word?
- How should we prepare our heart to consult God's Word?
- After considering this material, what do you feel motivated to do?

SAFEGUARD YOUR HEART

"More than all else that is to be guarded, safeguard your heart, for out of it are the sources of life."—PROVERBS 4:23.

AN OLD man on a Caribbean island emerged from his shelter after a hurricane. As he viewed the damage around him, he realized that a massive tree that had stood for decades near his front gate was gone. 'How could that be,' he wondered, 'when smaller trees in the vicinity survived?' A look at the stump of the fallen tree provided the answer. The inside of the seemingly immovable tree had rotted out, and the storm had merely exposed that unseen deterioration.

² What a tragedy it is when a true worshiper who appears to be firmly rooted in the Christian way of life succumbs to a test of faith. The Bible rightly says that "the inclination of the heart of man is bad from his youth up." (Genesis 8:21) This means that without constant vigilance, even the best of hearts can be enticed to do what is bad. Since no imperfect human heart is immune to corruption, we need to take seriously the advice: "More than all else that is to be guarded, safeguard your heart." (Proverbs 4:23) So how may we safeguard our figurative heart?

Regular Checkups—A Must

³ If you go to a physician for a physical checkup, he likely will examine your heart. Does your general health, including your heart, suggest that you are getting sufficient nutrients? How is your blood pressure? Is your heartbeat steady and strong? Do you get enough exercise? Is your heart subjected to undue stress?

- 1, 2. Why do we need to safeguard our heart?
- 3, 4. (a) What questions might be asked regarding a literal heart? (b) What will help us to examine our figurative heart?

⁴ If the literal heart needs regular checkups, what about your figurative heart? Jehovah examines it. (1 Chronicles 29:17) So should we. How? By asking such questions as: Does my heart get sufficient spiritual food through regular personal study and meeting attendance? (Psalm 1:1, 2; Hebrews 10:24, 25) Is Jehovah's message close to my heart like "a burning fire shut up in my bones," moving me to share in the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work? (Jeremiah 20:9; Matthew 28:19, 20; Romans 1:15, 16) Am I moved to exert myself vigorously, sharing in some feature of the full-time ministry when possible? (Luke 13:24) To what kind of environment am I exposing my figurative heart? Am I seeking association with others whose hearts are unified in true worship? (Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33) May we be quick to note any deficiency and take corrective measures at once.

⁵ Tests of faith often come our way. These provide us with opportunities to note the condition of our heart. To the Israelites who were on the verge of entering the Promised Land, Moses said: "Jehovah your God made you walk these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, to put you to the test so as to know what was in your heart, as to whether you would keep his commandments or not." (Deuteronomy 8:2) Are we not often surprised at feelings, desires, or reactions that surface when we face unexpected situations or temptations? The trials that Jehovah permits to take place can certainly make us aware of our flaws, giving us an opportunity to make useful corrections.

5. What useful purpose can tests of faith serve?



**What do we usually talk about
in the field service, at the
meetings, and at home?**

improvement. (James 1:2-4) May we never fail to reflect prayerfully on our response to trials!

What Do Our Words Reveal?

⁶ How can we determine what we have treasured up in our heart? Jesus said: "A good man brings forth good out of the good treasure of his heart, but a wicked man brings forth what is wicked out of his wicked treasure; for out of the heart's abundance his mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45) What we usually talk about is a good indication of what our heart is set on. Do we often talk about material things and secular achievements? Or do our conversations frequently center on spiritual things and theocratic goals? Rather than advertising the mistakes of others, are we lovingly inclined to cover them over? (Proverbs 10:11, 12) Do we tend to talk a great deal about people and the goings-on in their lives but little about principles and ideas? Could this be a signal that we are taking undue interest in other people's personal affairs?—1 Peter 4:15.

6. What can the subjects we like to discuss reveal about our heart?

⁷ Consider what happened in one large family. Jacob's ten oldest sons "were not able to speak peacefully" to their younger brother Joseph. Why? They were jealous because he was their father's favorite son. Later when Joseph was blessed with dreams from God, proving that he had Jehovah's favor, they found "further reason to hate him." (Genesis 37:4, 5, 11) Cruelly, they sold their brother into slavery. Then, in an attempt to cover up their wrongdoing, they deceived their father into thinking that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. Ten of Joseph's brothers failed to safeguard their heart on that occasion. If we are quick to be critical of others, could that be an evidence of envy or jealousy in our heart? We need to be vigilant to examine what comes out of our mouth and be quick to root out improper inclinations.

⁸ Though "it is impossible for God to lie," imperfect humans are prone to lie. (Hebrews 6:18) "Every man is a liar," lamented

7. What lesson about safeguarding our heart can we learn from the account of Joseph's ten brothers?
8. What will help us to examine our heart if we succumb to telling a lie?

the psalmist. (Psalm 116:11) Even the apostle Peter lyingly denied Jesus three times. (Matthew 26:69-75) Clearly, we must be careful to avoid lies, for Jehovah hates "a false tongue." (Proverbs 6:16-19) If we were ever to succumb to telling a lie, it would be good to analyze the cause. Was it because of fear of man? Was fear of punishment the reason? Perhaps saving face or outright selfishness was at the root of the problem? Whatever the case, how appropriate that we reflect on the matter, humbly admit our shortcoming, and beg Jehovah's forgiveness, seeking his help in overcoming the weakness! "The older men of the congregation" may be the best ones to provide that help.—James 5:14.

⁹ In response to young King Solomon's request for wisdom and knowledge, Jehovah said: "For the reason that this has proved to be close to your heart and you have not asked for wealth, riches and honor . . . , the wisdom and the knowledge are being given you; also wealth and riches and honor I shall give you." (2 Chronicles 1:11, 12) From what Solomon asked for and did not ask for, Jehovah knew what was close to Solomon's heart. What do our communications with God reveal about our heart? Do our prayers disclose our thirst for knowledge, wisdom, and discernment? (Proverbs 2:1-6; Matthew 5:3) Are Kingdom interests close to our heart? (Matthew 6:9, 10) If our prayers have become mechanical and perfunctory, this could be an indication of the need to take time to meditate on Jehovah's deeds. (Psalm 103:2) All Christians ought to be alert to discern what their prayers reveal.

What Do Our Actions Say?
¹⁰ It has been said that actions speak louder than words. Our actions certainly speak vol-

9. What can our prayers reveal about our heart?
10, 11. (a) Where do adultery and fornication originate? (b) What will help us not to 'commit adultery in the heart'?

umes about what we are on the inside. For example, in matters of morality, safeguarding the heart involves more than simply avoiding an act of fornication or adultery. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated: "Everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28) How can we avoid committing adultery even in our heart?

¹¹ The faithful patriarch Job set an example for married Christian men and women. Job undoubtedly had ordinary dealings with younger women and even kindly helped them if they needed assistance. But the thought of having a romantic interest in them was out of the question for this man of integrity. Why? Because he had made a firm resolve not to gaze lustfully at women. "A covenant I have concluded with my eyes," he said. "So how could I show myself attentive to a virgin?" (Job 31:1) May we make a similar covenant with our eyes and safeguard our heart.

¹² "The person faithful in what is least is faithful also in much," declared the Son of God, "and the person unrighteous in what is least is unrighteous also in much." (Luke 16:10) Yes, we need to examine our conduct in seemingly small matters of everyday life, even those taking place in the privacy of our home. (Psalm 101:2) While sitting in our house, watching television, or connected to the Internet, do we take care to comply with the Scriptural admonition: "Let fornication and uncleanness of every sort or greediness not even be mentioned among you, just as it befits holy people; neither shameful conduct nor foolish talking nor obscene jesting, things which are not becoming"? (Ephesians 5:3, 4) And what about the violence that may be available on television or in vid-

12. How would you apply Luke 16:10 as to safeguarding your heart?



*The eye
that is simple is
not distracted*



eo games? "Jehovah himself examines the righteous one as well as the wicked one," said the psalmist, "and anyone loving violence His soul certainly hates."—Psalm 11:5.

¹³ "The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate," warned Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 17:9) This treachery of the heart may manifest itself when we make excuses for our errors, minimize shortcomings, rationalize away serious personality flaws, or exaggerate accomplishments. A desperate heart is also capable of taking on a two-sided posture—smooth lips saying one thing, actions saying another. (Psalm 12:2; Proverbs 23:7) How vital that we be honest as we examine what comes out of the heart!

Is Our Eye Simple?

¹⁴ "The lamp of the body is the eye," said Jesus. He added: "If, then, your eye is simple, your whole body will be bright." (Matthew 6:22) The eye that is simple is focused on a sin-

13. What caution is warranted when reflecting on what comes out of our heart?

14, 15. (a) What is a "simple" eye? (b) How does keeping the eye simple help us to safeguard the heart?

gle goal, or purpose, not being distracted or sidetracked from it. Indeed, our eye should be focused on "seeking first the kingdom and [God's] righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) What can happen to our figurative heart if our eye is not kept simple?

¹⁵ Consider the matter of earning a living. Providing for the needs of our family is a Christian requirement. (1 Timothy 5:8) But what if we are tempted by a desire to have the latest, the best, and the most sought after in the way of food, clothing, shelter, and other things? Could that not really enslave the heart and the mind, making us halfhearted in our worship? (Psalm 119:113; Romans 16:18) Why should we become so absorbed in caring for physical needs that our life revolves solely around family, business, and material things? Remember the inspired advice: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare. For it will come in upon all those dwelling upon the face of all the earth."—Luke 21:34, 35.

¹⁶ The eye is an important channel of communication to the mind and the heart. What it focuses on can strongly influence our thoughts, emotions, and actions. Using illustrative language, Jesus referred to the power of visual temptation and said: "If, now, that right eye of yours is making you stumble, tear it out and throw it away from you. For it is more beneficial to you for one of your members to be lost to you than for your whole body to be pitched into Gehenna." (Matthew 5:29) The eye must be restrained from concentrating on improper sights. For example, it must not be allowed to dwell on material that is designed to excite or arouse illicit passions and desires.

¹⁷ Sight, of course, is not our only sense of communication with the outside world. Other senses, such as touching and hearing, play their part, and we need to take precautionary measures with the corresponding body members as well. The apostle Paul admonished: "Deaden, therefore, your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." —Colossians 3:5.

¹⁸ An improper desire can originate in the recesses of our mind. Dwelling upon such usually intensifies the wrong desire, influencing the heart. "Then the desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin." (James 1:14, 15) Many admit that this is the way that self-abuse often takes place. How important that we keep filling our mind with spiritual concerns! (Philippians 4:8) And if an improper thought does come to the mind, we should strive to dismiss it.

16. What advice did Jesus give concerning the eye, and why?
17. How does applying Colossians 3:5 help us to safeguard the heart?
18. What measures should we take concerning improper thoughts?

'Serve Jehovah With a Complete Heart'

¹⁹ In his old age, King David told his son: "Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a complete heart and with a delightful soul; for all hearts Jehovah is searching, and every inclination of the thoughts he is discerning." (1 Chronicles 28:9) Solomon himself prayed for "an obedient heart." (1 Kings 3:9) Yet, he faced the challenge of maintaining such a heart throughout his life.

²⁰ If we are to succeed in that regard, we need not only to acquire a heart that is agreeable to Jehovah but also to safeguard it. To accomplish this, we must keep the reminders of God's Word close to our heart—"in the midst of it." (Proverbs 4:20-22) We should also make a practice of examining our heart, prayerfully reflecting on what our words and actions reveal. Of what value is such reflection unless we earnestly seek Jehovah's help to correct any weakness that we detect? And how vital that we keep a close watch over what we take in through our senses! In doing this, we have the assurance that "the peace of God that excels all thought will guard [our] hearts and [our] mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6, 7) Yes, let us be determined to safeguard our heart more than all else that is to be guarded and to serve Jehovah with a complete heart.

19, 20. How may we succeed in serving Jehovah with a complete heart?

Do You Recall?

- Why is it important to safeguard the heart?
- How does analyzing what we say help us to safeguard our heart?
- Why should we keep our eye "simple"?

WE DO THE BEST WE CAN!

DO THE best you can." That practical advice was once given to a missionary by a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. But why give such basic advice to an experienced minister? Are not most missionaries intrepid souls who daily cope with bugs, snakes, heat, disease, and various hardships?

Actually, missionaries of Jehovah's Witnesses are ordinary men and women, Christians whose deep love for Jehovah and for their fellowman has moved them to serve in foreign lands. They are endeavoring to serve Jehovah to the best of their ability, looking to him for strength.—Ephesians 6:10.

To learn more about the missionary work, let us imagine that we are spending a day visiting a typical missionary home in West Africa.

A Day in the Missionary Work
It is almost 7:00 a.m. We have arrived at the missionary home just in time to share in the discussion of the Scripture text for the day. The ten missionaries warmly welcome us and make room for us at the breakfast table. As we get acquainted, one of the missionaries, who has been in her assignment for many years, begins relating a humorous experience that she had in the ministry. But our conversation trails off when the chairman of the discussion that day reminds the happy group that it is time to consider the daily text. The discussion will be held in French. Although we do not speak that language, it is clear from the way they are

expressing themselves that the foreign-born missionaries are doing very well in mastering the language.

Following the Scriptural discussion, there is a heartfelt prayer, and then it is time for breakfast. As we help ourselves to a generous serving of cereal, the missionary seated next to us urges us to spread banana slices on it. We explain that we are not partial to bananas, but he promises that we will make an exception once we have tasted locally grown bananas. So we add a few slices to our cereal. How right he is! These bananas are delicious—as sweet as ice cream! And we are assured that the French-style bread that is being served was baked early this morning in a little shop just across the street from the missionary home.

After breakfast, we will spend the day with a missionary couple, whom we will call Ben and Karen. We have heard about the productive territory in this West-African country, and we are eager to confirm the reports.

Each day starts with a discussion of a Bible text



When we arrive at the bus stop, we find about a dozen people waiting. Before long, our missionary companions are engaging a woman and her son in an animated conversation on a Bible subject. Not knowing French, we can only stand there and smile! Just as the woman is accepting copies of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*, the bus arrives, and then everyone tries to get on it, all at the same time! As we clamber on board, the surging crowd pushes us from behind. It is a challenge to keep our balance on our way to the rear of the bus. Once the driver starts up, we hold on for dear life. From time to time, the bus lurches to a stop, and even more people squeeze on. We smile at our fellow passengers, and they smile back. How we wish we could communicate with them!

As our bus speeds along, we peer out of the window at the flurry of activity on the street. Two women are walking side by side with heavy burdens on their heads. One of them is balancing a large tub of water. An enterprising man has spread a blanket on the sidewalk and has arranged upon it a few trinkets that he hopes to sell. Everywhere there are people who are buying or selling just about everything that can be bought or sold.

Suddenly Ben, who is standing next to me, becomes aware that something is pecking at his leg. What can it be? The bus is crowded, but there it is again. He manages to look down. In a bag at his feet is a live duck that occasionally pokes its head out of the bag and gives him a peck! Ben explains that the duck's owner is likely taking it to market to be sold.

When we reach our territory, we are pleased to learn that we will be visiting a typical African neighborhood. Approaching the

first house, Ben claps his hands vigorously to alert the householder. That is the way people "knock on the door" in this part of the world. A young man appears and explains that he is busy but asks us to return later that morning.

At the next door, we meet a woman who speaks a dialect that Ben does not understand. She calls her son and asks him to translate what Ben has to say. When Ben finishes, the woman accepts a brochure on Bible themes, and her son promises to explain it to her. At the third house, there are several young people seated in the front yard. Two of them quickly vacate their chairs so that the visitors can sit down. A lively discussion follows on the use of the cross in worship. Arrangements are made to have further conversation the following week. It is now time to revisit the busy young man we met at the first house. Somehow he has already heard about our discussion with the young people down the street. He has many Bible questions and asks to have a Bible study. After checking his calendar, Ben agrees to return at the same time the next week. On the way back to the missionary home for lunch, Ben and Karen explain that they have to plan their Bible study activity very carefully because they can easily start more Bible studies than they can conduct.

We commend them on their fluency in French. Ben explains that he and Karen have been serving as missionaries for six years, and they are beginning to feel comfortable with the French language. Learning a new language was not easy, they assure us, but perseverance has paid off.

At 12:30 p.m., all the missionaries gather around the table for lunch. We learn that each day, a different missionary is assigned to prepare the morning and



noon meals and to do the dishes afterward. Today, one of the missionaries has prepared a mouth-watering dish of fried chicken and French-fried potatoes, along with a tomato salad—her specialty!

What are Ben and Karen's plans for the afternoon? They explain that the whole country takes refuge from the sun from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., so the missionaries generally use part of that time to study or to take a siesta. We are not surprised when Karen tells us that it does not take long for new missionaries to get used to this custom!

After the siesta, we return to the field ministry. An interested man whom Ben has tried for some time to contact is still not at home, but two young men come to the door when Ben claps his hands. They tell us that the householder has mentioned Ben's visits and strongly recommended that they obtain the Bible study aid *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*. We are happy to leave them a copy of that book. Next, we catch a bus that will take us to an area where Karen will be conducting a Bible study with an interested woman.

As we ride through the crowded streets, Karen tells us that she contacted the woman one day while they both were riding in a taxi with several other passengers. Karen gave the woman a tract to read during the journey. The woman read that tract and then asked for a different one. She read that one with even greater interest. At the end of the ride, Karen made arrangements to visit the woman in her home and started a productive Bible study in the brochure *What Does God Require of Us?* Today, Karen is going to cover the fifth lesson in that brochure.

We have thoroughly enjoyed our day in field service, but we have some lingering

Scenes from Africa



Life as a missionary can be very fulfilling

questions about the missionary work. Our hosts assure us that when we return home, they will prepare a light meal for us and answer our questions.

How They Maintain the Pace

While feasting on fried eggs, French bread, and cheese, we learn more about missionary life. Monday is generally a day when missionaries rest or care for personal matters. Most missionaries spend some time that day writing to family and friends. News from home is very important to them, and missionaries enjoy sending and receiving mail.

Since missionaries live and work in close quarters, it is essential that they maintain good communication by socializing with fellow missionaries and by discussing spiritual matters. To that end, in addition to maintaining a regular schedule of personal Bible study, every Monday evening the missionaries study the Bible along with the *Watchtower* magazine. Ben points out that when missionaries from different backgrounds live together, minor differences of opinion are inevitable, but the spiritual provision of the



family study helps them maintain a peaceful, united atmosphere. He stresses that it also helps not to take oneself too seriously.

Humility is also essential. Missionaries are sent out, not to be served, but to serve. Our friends observe that one of the most difficult things to say in any language is "I am sorry," particularly when a person is apologizing for something that he said or did unintentionally. Ben reminds us of the Bible example of Abigail, who apologized for her husband's rude behavior and thus smoothed over a situation that could have led to disaster. (1 Samuel 25:23-28) The ability "to live peaceably" is an important part of being a good missionary.—2 Corinthians 13:11.

Once a month the missionaries hold a meeting to discuss matters that affect the family, as well as scheduling changes. Afterward, a special dessert is enjoyed by all. This seems to us to be a very practical—and tasty—arrangement.

Once supper is over, we take a brief tour of the missionary home. We note that, although the home is modest, the missionaries cooperate to keep it scrupulously clean. There is a refrigerator, a washing machine, and a stove. Karen tells us that in tropical countries, such as this one in West Africa, air-conditioning may also be available. Suitable accommodations, wholesome food, and sim-

ple health precautions help missionaries to remain healthy and productive.

Focus on the Positive

We have been impressed by everything that we have seen. Could it be that the missionary work is for us? How can we tell? Our hosts give us a few things to think about.

First, they tell us, Christian missionaries do not go out seeking adventure. They are searching for honesthearted people who want to learn about God's marvelous promises. Missionaries devote at least 140 hours a month to the field service, so a love of the ministry is indispensable.

'But,' we wonder, 'what about snakes, lizards, and bugs?' While these can be found in many missionary assignments, Ben tells us, missionaries get used to them. He adds that every missionary assignment has its own unique beauty, and in time, missionaries focus on the positive aspects of their assignment. Conditions that earlier would have been considered "different" soon become commonplace, and in some cases even enjoyable. One missionary who served in West Africa for many years before personal obligations forced her to return home said that it was harder for her to leave her assignment than it was to leave her own country years earlier. Her missionary assignment had become her home.

Are You Ready?

Ben and Karen have given us a lot to think about. What about you? Have you ever thought about serving as a missionary in a foreign field? If so, you may be closer to that goal than you had imagined. One of the principal things required is having a love for the full-time ministry and enjoying the work of helping people. Remember, missionaries are not superheroes but ordinary men and women. They are doing the best they can to accomplish a very important work.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Safeguard Your Conscience

'Clothe Yourselves With
Long-Suffering'

"The Blessing of Jehovah—That Is
What Makes Rich"

Questions From Readers

How were the poles for carrying the ark of the covenant positioned, since 1 Kings 8:8 indicates that they were visible from the Holy?

When Jehovah gave Moses the design for the tabernacle in the wilderness, a key feature was the ark of the covenant. This rectangular, gold-covered chest held the tablets of the Law and other items. It was kept in the innermost compartment, the Most Holy. On the cover of the Ark were two gold figures of cherubs with outstretched wings. On each side of the Ark, there were rings so that it could be carried with two poles, made of acacia wood covered with gold. Logically, the poles ran through the rings and along the length of the Ark. Thus, with the Ark in its place in the Most Holy of the tabernacle, which faced east, the poles were oriented north-south. The same was true later when the Ark was in the temple that Solomon built.—Exodus 25:10-22; 37:4-9; 40:17-21.*

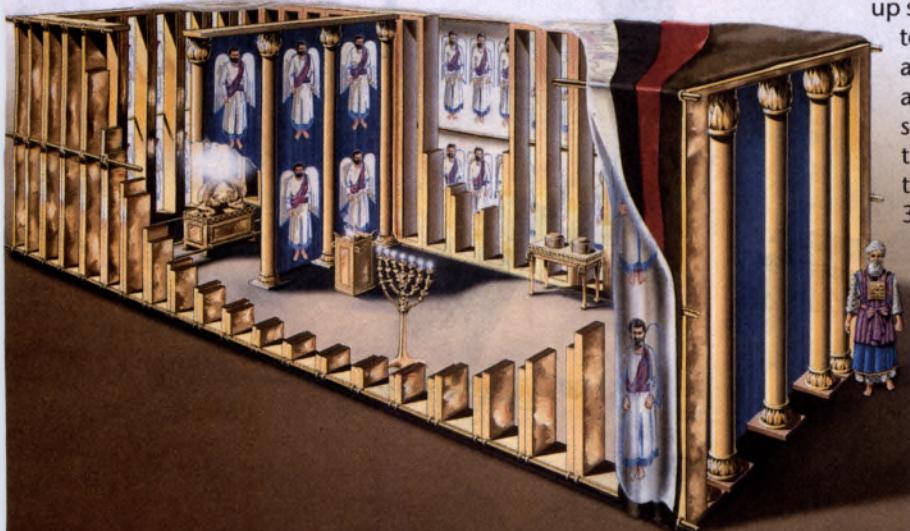
* The poles were not to be removed from the rings even when the Ark was in place in the tabernacle. Consequently, the poles could not be used for any other purpose. Also, the Ark would not have to be touched; had the poles been taken out of the rings, each portage would require handling the sacred Ark to reinsert the poles in the rings. The comment at Numbers 4:6 about ‘putting in the poles’ may refer to arranging or adjusting the poles in preparation for carrying the heavy chest to a new encampment.

A curtain separated the Most Holy from the Holy (the outer room). Priests in the Holy could not look into the Most Holy and view the Ark, over which God presented himself. (Hebrews 9:1-7) Thus, 1 Kings 8:8 might seem puzzling: “The poles proved to be long, so that the tips of the poles were visible from the Holy in front of the innermost room, but they were not visible outside.” The same point is made at 2 Chronicles 5:9. How were the poles visible to anyone in the Holy of the temple?

Some have imagined that the poles touched the curtain, producing visible bumps. But that would not be so if the poles were in a north-south orientation, with the curtain parallel to the poles. (Numbers 3:38) There is a more reasonable explanation. The poles might have been visible if there was a slight gap between the curtain and the wall of the temple or when the high priest had to enter the Most Holy. The curtain obstructed any view of the Ark itself, but the poles extending to each side might have shown through the gap. While this explanation is plausible, we cannot be dogmatic about it.

Clearly, there are many details that we may yet learn. The apostle Paul mentioned a few aspects in his letter to the Hebrews. Then he commented: “Now is not the time to speak in detail concerning these things.” (Hebrews 9:5) The coming resurrection of faithful ones should open

up stimulating opportunities to learn from such men as Moses, Aaron, Bezalel, and others who were personally acquainted with the design and function of the tabernacle.—Exodus 36:1.



"At Last I Know What's Wrong With Me!"

THAT was how a man in Tokyo felt when he read the life story in the December 1, 2000, issue of *The Watchtower*. The article was entitled "You Do Not Know What Your Life Will Be Tomorrow," and it related the experience of a former missionary who suffers from the malady known medically as manic-depressive psychosis.

The man from Tokyo said in a letter addressed to the publishers of this magazine: "The symptoms described fit me perfectly. So I went to a psychiatric hospital and learned that I have manic depression. The doctor who examined me was amazed. He said, 'People with this sickness rarely think that they are ill.' I was helped to determine the sickness before it got too serious."

Millions of people around the world benefit in a variety of ways from reading each issue of *The Watchtower* and its companion magazine, *Awake!* They find the articles informative and satisfying. The *Watchtower* magazine is now printed in 141 languages, and *Awake!* is published in 86 languages. You too will enjoy reading *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* regularly.

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