



# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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## STUDY EDITION

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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## PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

### **Study Articles 1, 2** PAGES 3-11

These two study articles help us to identify "valueless things," things that could distract us from serving Jehovah. They highlight dangers that could easily ensnare us, and they give us many reasons for looking to Jehovah for guidance in all things.

### **Study Articles 3, 4** PAGES 12-20

The first of these two study articles shows young people how the Bible can help them when they have to make life-changing decisions. The second gives them sound Scriptural guidance on such matters as what to bear in mind when thinking of getting married or starting a family.

### **Study Article 5** PAGES 21-5

The final study article contains a thought-provoking discussion of the book of Ecclesiastes. It highlights the things that really matter in life, contrasting them with the things that are promoted in this world.

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### **Jehovah's Word Is Alive—Highlights From the Book of John**

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# REPUDIATE “VALUELESS THINGS”

*“The one pursuing valueless things is in want of heart.”—PROV. 12:11.*

As Christians, we all possess valuable things of one kind or another. They might include a measure of health and strength, inborn mental abilities, or financial resources. Because we love Jehovah, we are happy to use those things in his service and thus respond to the inspired exhortation: “Honor Jehovah with your valuable things.”—Prov. 3:9.

<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the Bible also speaks of *valueless* things and warns against wasting our resources in pursuit of them. In this regard, consider the words of Proverbs 12:11: “The one cultivating his ground will himself be satisfied with bread, but the one pursuing valueless things is in want of heart.” It is not difficult to see how that proverb applies in a literal sense. If a man spends his time and energy working hard to support his family, he stands a good chance of achieving relative security. (1 Tim. 5:8) If, however, he wastes his resources pursuing valueless things, he demonstrates “want of heart,” a lack of balanced judgment and good motivation. Very likely, such a man will find himself in need.

<sup>3</sup> What, though, if we apply the principle of the proverb to our worship? Then we see that a Christian who diligently and faithfully

1. What are some of our valuable things, and what is the best way to use them?
2. What warning does the Bible give about valueless things, and how does this warning apply in a literal sense?
3. How does the Bible’s warning about valueless things apply to our worship?

serves Jehovah enjoys real security. He can be confident of God’s blessing now and has an unshakable hope for the future. (Matt. 6:33; 1 Tim. 4:10) However, a Christian who is distracted by valueless things puts his relationship with Jehovah and his prospects for everlasting life in danger. How can we avoid that? We have to discern the things in our lives that are “valueless” and cultivate a determination to reject them.—*Read Titus 2:11, 12.*

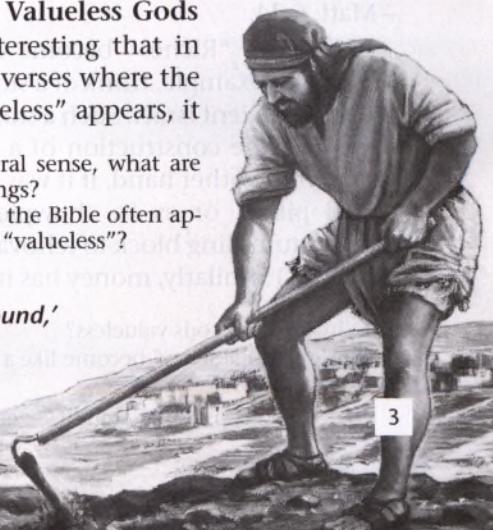
<sup>4</sup> What, then, are valueless things? In a general sense, they can be anything that distracts us from serving Jehovah whole-souled. They could, for example, include various forms of relaxation. Of course, relaxation has its place. But when we spend too much time on “fun” things at the expense of activities connected with our worship, relaxation becomes a valueless thing, adversely affecting our spiritual well-being. (Eccl. 2:24; 4:6) To avoid that, a Christian cultivates balance, carefully watching how he spends his valuable time. (*Read Colossians 4:5.*) There are, though, valueless things that are much more dangerous than relaxation. Among these are false gods.

## Repudiate Valueless Gods

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting that in most Bible verses where the word “valueless” appears, it

4. In a general sense, what are valueless things?
5. How does the Bible often apply the word “valueless”?

*The Israelites were encouraged to ‘cultivate their ground,’ not to pursue valueless things*



is applied to false gods. For example, Jehovah said to Israel: "You must not make valueless gods for yourselves, and you must not set up a carved image or a sacred pillar for yourselves, and you must not put a stone as a showpiece in your land in order to bow down toward it." (Lev. 26:1) King David wrote: "Jehovah is great and very much to be praised, and he is to be feared more than all other gods. For all the gods of the peoples are valueless gods. As for Jehovah, he made the heavens."—1 Chron. 16:25, 26.

<sup>6</sup> As David indicated, we are surrounded by evidence of Jehovah's greatness. (Ps. 139:14; 148:1-10) What a privilege it was for the Israelites to be in a covenant relationship with Jehovah! How foolish they were to turn away from him and bow down before carved images and sacred pillars! In times of crisis, their false gods proved to be truly valueless, powerless to save themselves let alone their worshippers.—Judg. 10:14, 15; Isa. 46:5-7.

<sup>7</sup> In many lands today, people still bow down to man-made images, and such gods are just as useless now as they were in the past. (1 John 5:21) However, the Bible describes things other than images as gods. Consider, for example, these words of Jesus: "No one can slave for two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stick to the one and despise the other. You cannot slave for God and for Riches."—Matt. 6:24.

<sup>8</sup> How can "Riches" become like a god? Well, as an example, think of a stone lying in a field in ancient Israel. Such a stone could be useful for the construction of a house or a wall. On the other hand, if it was set up as "a sacred pillar" or as "a showpiece," it became a stumbling block to Jehovah's people. (Lev. 26:1) Similarly, money has its place. We

6. Why are false gods valueless?

7, 8. How can "Riches" become like a god?

need it just to survive, and we can use it well in Jehovah's service. (Eccl. 7:12; Luke 16:9) But if we place the pursuit of money ahead of our Christian service, money becomes, in effect, a god to us. (*Read 1 Timothy 6:9, 10.*) In this world, where the pursuit of financial gain is so important to people, we have to make sure that we keep a balanced view in this matter.—1 Tim. 6:17-19.

<sup>9</sup> Another example of something useful that can become a valueless thing is secular education. We want our children to be well-educated so that they can make their way in life. Even more important, a well-educated Christian is better able to read the Bible with understanding, reason on problems and come to sound conclusions, and teach Bible truths in a clear and persuasive way. Getting a good education takes time, but it is time well spent.

<sup>10</sup> What, though, of higher education, received in a college or a university? This is widely viewed as vital to success. Yet, many who pursue such education end up with their minds filled with harmful propaganda. Such education wastes valuable youthful years that could best be used in Jehovah's service. (Eccl. 12:1) Perhaps it is not surprising that in lands where many have received such an education, belief in God is at an all-time low. Rather than looking to the advanced educational systems of this world for security, a Christian trusts in Jehovah.—Prov. 3:5.

### Do Not Let Fleshly Desire Become a God

<sup>11</sup> In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul points to something else that can become a god. He speaks of some who used

9, 10. (a) How does a Christian view education?  
(b) What is a danger of higher education?

11, 12. Why did Paul say of some: "Their god is their belly"?

*Never allow the desire for material things to slow you down in Jehovah's service*

to be fellow worshippers and says: "There are many, I used to mention them often but now I mention them also with weeping, who are walking as the enemies of the torture stake of the Christ, and their finish is destruction, *and their god is their belly*, . . . and they have their minds upon things on the earth." (Phil. 3:18, 19) How can a person's stomach, or belly, be a god?

<sup>12</sup> It appears that for those acquaintances of Paul, a desire to indulge in fleshly desires became more important than serving Jehovah along with Paul. Some may literally have overindulged in food or drink to the point of gluttony or drunkenness. (Prov. 23:20, 21; compare Deuteronomy 21:18-21.) Others may have chosen to make the most of the opportunities available in the first-century world and were thus distracted from serving Jehovah. May we never allow a desire for the so-called good life to cause us to slow down in our whole-souled service to Jehovah.—Col. 3:23, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Paul also mentioned false worship in another context. He wrote: "Deaden, therefore, your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and *covetousness, which is idolatry*." (Col. 3:5) Covetousness is a strong desire for something we do not possess. It can be for material things. It can even include illicit sexual desire. (Ex. 20:17) Is it not sobering to think that such desires amount to idolatry, worship of a false god? Jesus used a vivid word picture to show how

13. (a) What is covetousness, and how did Paul describe it? (b) How can we avoid covetousness?



important it is to control such wrong desires at any cost.—*Read Mark 9:47; 1 John 2:16.*

#### Beware of Words That Are Valueless

<sup>14</sup> Valueless things can include words. For example, Jehovah said to Jeremiah: "Falsehood is what the prophets are prophesying in my name. I have not sent them, nor have I commanded them or spoken to them. A false vision and divination and *a valueless thing* and the trickiness of their heart they are speaking prophetically to you people." (Jer. 14:14) Those false prophets claimed to speak in Jehovah's name, but they were promoting their own ideas, their own wisdom. Thus, their words were "*a valueless thing*." They were worthless and posed a real spiritual threat. In 607 B.C.E., many who heeded such valueless words met an untimely death at the hands of Babylonian soldiers.

<sup>15</sup> In contrast, Moses said to the Israelites: "Apply your hearts to all the words that I am speaking in warning to you today . . . For it is no valueless word for you, but it means your life, and by this word you may lengthen your days upon the soil to which you are crossing

14, 15. (a) What "*valueless thing*" stumbled many in Jeremiah's day? (b) Why were the words of Moses valuable?

the Jordan to take possession of it." (Deut. 32:46, 47) Yes, Moses' words were inspired by God. Thus, they were *valuable*, indeed vital, for the well-being of the nation. Those who heeded them enjoyed long life and prosperity. May we always repudiate valueless words and cling to valuable words of truth.

<sup>16</sup> Do we hear valueless things being uttered today? Yes. For example, some scientists say that evolutionary theory and scientific discoveries in other fields demonstrate that there is no longer any need to believe in God, that everything can be explained by natural processes. Should such proud statements concern us? Of course not! Human wisdom differs from divine wisdom. (1 Cor. 2:6, 7) However, we know that when human teachings contradict what God has revealed, it is *always* the human teachings that are wrong. (*Read Romans 3:4.*) Despite the progress of science in some fields, the Bible's assessment of human wisdom remains true: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." Compared with the infinite wisdom of God, human reasoning is futile.—1 Cor. 3:18-20.

<sup>17</sup> Another example of valueless words is found among the religious leaders of Chris-

16. How do we view statements by scientists that contradict God's Word?

17. How should the words of Christendom's leaders and of apostates be viewed?

### Can You Explain?

- In a general sense, what "valueless things" should we repudiate?
- How can we avoid letting money become like a god?
- In what way can fleshly desires become idolatry?
- How can we repudiate valueless words?



*The words of elders can be of great value*

tendom. These claim to speak in God's name, but most of their utterances are not based on the Scriptures, and what they say is basically worthless. Apostates too speak valueless words, claiming to have greater wisdom than the appointed "faithful and discreet slave." (Matt. 24:45-47) However, apostates speak their own wisdom, and their words are valueless, a stumbling block to any who might listen. (Luke 17:1, 2) How can we avoid being misled by them?

### How to Repudiate Valueless Words

<sup>18</sup> The aged apostle John gave fine counsel in this regard. (*Read 1 John 4:1.*) In harmony with John's counsel, we always encourage those we meet in the preaching work to test what they have been taught by comparing it with the Bible. That is a good rule for us too. If any statements come to our ears that are critical of the truth or that cast aspersions on the congregation, the elders, or any of our brothers, we do not accept them at face value. Rather, we ask: "Is the one spreading this story acting in harmony with what the Bible says? Do these stories or allegations further

18. In what ways can we apply the counsel found at 1 John 4:1?

Jehovah's purpose? Do they promote the peace of the congregation?" Anything we hear that tears down the brotherhood rather than builds it up is a worthless thing.—2 Cor. 13:10, 11.

<sup>19</sup> When it comes to valueless words, elders too learn an important lesson. Whenever they are called upon to give counsel, they bear in mind their limitations and do not presume to offer counsel solely from their own personal store of knowledge. They should always point to what the Bible says. A sound rule is found in the words of the apostle Paul: "Do not go beyond the things that are written." (1 Cor. 4:6) Elders do not go be-

19. How do elders make sure that their words are not valueless?

yond the things that are written in the Bible. And by extension, they do not go beyond the Bible-based counsel written in the publications of the faithful and discreet slave.

<sup>20</sup> Valueless things—be they "gods," words, or something else—are very harmful. For that reason, we always pray for Jehovah's help to recognize them for what they are, and we seek his guidance in how to repudiate them. When we do so, we in effect say with the psalmist: "Make my eyes pass on from seeing what is worthless; preserve me alive in your own way." (Ps. 119:37) In the following article, we will further discuss the value of accepting Jehovah's guidance.

20. In what ways are we helped to repudiate valueless things?

## SEEK GOD'S GUIDANCE IN ALL THINGS

*"This God is our God to time indefinite, even forever. He himself will guide us until we die." —PS. 48:14.*

WHEN we consider things that are valueless or harmful, it is easy to deceive ourselves. (Prov. 12:11) If we *really* want to do something that is not appropriate for a Christian, our heart will often come up with persuasive reasons to do it. (Jer. 17:5, 9) Hence, the psalmist demonstrated wisdom when he prayed to Jehovah: "Send out your light and your truth. May these themselves lead me." (Ps. 43:3) He trusted in Jehovah, not in his own limited wisdom, and he could have looked to no better source for guidance. Like

1, 2. Why should we follow Jehovah's guidance rather than trust in our own wisdom, and what questions arise?

the psalmist, we do well to look to God for direction.

<sup>2</sup> Why, though, should we trust Jehovah's guidance above all other? When should we seek it? What attitudes should we cultivate so as to benefit from it, and how does Jehovah guide us today? These important questions will be discussed in this article.

### Why Trust Jehovah's Guidance?

<sup>3</sup> Jehovah is our heavenly Father. (1 Cor. 8:6) He has a thorough knowledge of each one of us and can read our very hearts.

3-5. For what reasons do we have total confidence in Jehovah's guidance?



### *Do you look to Jehovah in all aspects of your life?*

(1 Sam. 16:7; Prov. 21:2) King David said to God: "You yourself have come to know my sitting down and my rising up. You have considered my thought from far off. For there is not a word on my tongue, but, look! O Jehovah, you already know it all." (Ps. 139:2, 4) Since Jehovah knows us so well, how can we doubt that he knows what is best for us? Besides, Jehovah is all-wise. He sees everything, looks deeper than any human, and knows the outcome of things from their beginning. (Isa. 46:9-11; Rom. 11:33) He is "God, wise alone."—Rom. 16:27.

<sup>4</sup> In addition, Jehovah loves us and always wants what is best for us. (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8) As a loving God, he is generous toward us. The disciple James wrote: "Every good gift and every perfect present is from above, for it comes down from the Father of the celestial lights." (Jas. 1:17) Those who let themselves be guided by God benefit greatly from his generosity.

<sup>5</sup> Finally, Jehovah is almighty. In this regard, the psalmist said: "Anyone dwelling in the secret place of the Most High will procure himself lodging under the very shadow of the Almighty One. I will say to Jehovah: 'You are my refuge and my stronghold, my God, in whom I will trust.'" (Ps. 91:1, 2) When we follow Jehovah's guidance, we are seeking

refuge with the God who cannot fail. Even if we meet opposition, Jehovah supports us. He will not let us down. (Ps. 71:4, 5; *Read Proverbs 3:19-26*) Yes, Jehovah knows what is best for us, wants what is best for us, and has the power to provide what is best for us. How foolish it would be for us to ignore his guidance! When, though, do we need that guidance?

### **When Do We Need Guidance?**

<sup>6</sup> Really, we need God's guidance throughout our lives, from youth to old age. The psalmist said: "This God is our God to time indefinite, even forever. He himself will guide us until we die." (Ps. 48:14) Like the psalmist, wise Christians never cease to look to God for guidance.

<sup>7</sup> There are, of course, times when we feel an especially urgent need for help. Sometimes we find ourselves in "sore straits," perhaps facing persecution, a severe illness, or sudden unemployment. (Ps. 69:16, 17) At such times, it is comforting to turn to Jehovah, confident that he will strengthen us to endure and guide us to make good decisions. (*Read Psalm 102:17*) However, we also need his help on other occasions. For example, when we set out to speak with our neighbors

<sup>6, 7</sup>. When do we need Jehovah's guidance?

about the good news of the Kingdom, we need Jehovah's guidance if our witnessing is to be effective. And whenever we have a decision to make—be it about recreation, dress and grooming, association, employment, education, or anything else—we act wisely only if we follow Jehovah's guidelines. In truth, there is no end to the situations in which we need guidance.

### The Dangers of Not Seeking God's Guidance

<sup>8</sup> Remember, though, that we have to be willing to follow Jehovah's guidance. God will not force us to do so if we do not want to. The first human to choose *not* to follow Jehovah's guidance was Eve, and her example shows how serious such a bad decision can be. Think, too, of the implications. Eve ate of the forbidden fruit because she wanted "to be like God, knowing good and bad." (Gen. 3:5) In doing so, she put herself in God's place, making her own decisions as to good and evil rather than following Jehovah's guidelines. Thus, she turned her back on Jehovah's sovereignty. She wanted to be her own master. Her husband, Adam, pursued the same rebellious course.—Rom. 5:12.

<sup>9</sup> Today, if we do not follow Jehovah's guidance, we are likewise failing to acknowledge his sovereignty. Think, for example, of a person who develops the habit of watching pornography. If he is associated with the Christian congregation, he knows Jehovah's



Eve turned her back  
on Jehovah's sovereignty

8. What were the implications of Eve's eating the forbidden fruit?

9. If we reject Jehovah's guidance, what are we in effect doing, and why is that most unwise?

guidelines on this matter. Unclean things should not even be mentioned, let alone be gazed at with lascivious enjoyment. (Eph. 5:3) By rejecting Jehovah's guidelines, such a man is denying Jehovah's sovereignty, rejecting His headship. (1 Cor. 11:3) That is most unwise, since, as Jeremiah said, "it does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step."—Jer. 10:23.

<sup>10</sup> Some might question Jeremiah's words, feeling that since Jehovah gave us free will, he can hardly criticize us for using it. Still, do not forget that free will is a responsibility as well as a gift. We are answerable for the things we choose to say and do. (Rom. 14:10)

Jesus said: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." He also said: "Out of the heart come wicked reasonings, murders, adulteries, fornications, thieveries, false testimonies, blasphemies." (Matt. 12:34; 15:19) Hence, our words and deeds reveal our heart condition. They show what we *really* are. That is why a wise Christian seeks Jehovah's guidance in everything. In that way, Jehovah finds him 'upright in his heart' and will "do good" to him.—Ps. 125:4.

<sup>11</sup> Remember the history of Israel. When that nation made good choices, obeying Jehovah's commands, Jehovah protected them. (Josh. 24:15, 21, 31) Frequently, though, they misused their free will. In Jeremiah's day, Jehovah said of them: "They did not listen, neither did they incline their ear, but they went walking in the counsels in the stubbornness of their bad heart, so that they

10. Why should we show a responsible attitude in the way we use our free will?

11. What do we learn from the history of Israel?

became backward in direction and not forward." (Jer. 7:24-26) How sad! May we never, because of stubbornness or self-indulgence, reject Jehovah's guidance and walk in our own counsels and thus become "backward in direction and not forward"!

### What Does It Take to Follow God's Counsel?

<sup>12</sup> Our love for Jehovah makes us want to follow his guidance. (1 John 5:3) However, Paul pointed to something else that we need when he said: "We are walking by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor. 5:6, 7) Why is faith important? Well, Jehovah leads us in "the tracks of righteousness," but those tracks do not lead to wealth or privilege in this world. (Ps. 23:3) For that reason, our eye of faith needs to be fixed on the incomparable spiritual rewards that come from serving Jehovah. (*Read 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18.*) And faith helps us to be content with modest material provisions.—1 Tim. 6:8.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus indicated that true worship involves self-sacrifice, which also takes faith. (Luke 9:23, 24) Some faithful worshippers have made great sacrifices, enduring poverty, oppression, prejudice, even severe persecution. (2 Cor. 11:23-27; Rev. 3:8-10) Only strong faith enabled them to do so with joy. (Jas. 1:2, 3) Strong faith makes us absolutely confident that following Jehovah's guidance is *always* best. It is *always* for our ultimate good. We have no doubt whatsoever that the reward for those who loyally endure is far greater than any temporary suffering.—Heb. 11:6.

<sup>14</sup> Consider, too, the role of humility in following Jehovah's guidance. The example of Hagar, Sarah's maid servant, demonstrates this. When Sarah continued childless, she

12, 13. (a) What quality makes us want to follow Jehovah's guidance? (b) Why is faith essential?  
14. Why did Hagar have to display humility?



What quality did Hagar need if she was to follow the angel's direction?

gave Hagar to Abraham, and Hagar became pregnant with Abraham's child. Then, Hagar became arrogant toward her barren mistress. As a result, Sarah "began to humiliate her," and Hagar ran away. An angel of Jehovah met Hagar and told her: "Return to your mistress and humble yourself under her hand." (Gen. 16:2, 6, 8, 9) Perhaps Hagar would have preferred some other guidance. To act according to the angel's direction, she would have to abandon her arrogant attitude. Nevertheless, Hagar humbly did as the angel said, and her son, Ishmael, was born in the security of his father's encampment.

<sup>15</sup> Following Jehovah's guidance might mean that we too have to humble ourselves. Some might have to accept the viewpoint that a form of recreation they enjoy is displeasing to Jehovah. A Christian might have offended someone and needs to apologize. Or he might have made a mistake and needs to admit it. What if someone commits a serious sin? He needs to humble himself and

15. Describe some situations in which following Jehovah's guidance might demand humility from us today.

confess the sin to the elders. An individual might even be disfellowshipped. To be accepted back into the congregation, he must humbly repent and turn around. In these and similar situations, the words of Proverbs 29:23 are comforting: "The very haughtiness of earthling man will humble him, but he that is humble in spirit will take hold of glory."

### How Does Jehovah Guide Us?

<sup>16</sup> The foremost source of divine guidance is the Bible, God's inspired Word. (*Read 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.*) To make the most of that Word, we are wise not to wait for a challenging situation to arise before seeking helpful words in the Scriptures. Rather, we will make Bible reading a daily habit. (Ps. 1:1-3) In that way, the inspired words become familiar. God's thoughts become our thoughts, and we are ready to face even unexpected problems.

<sup>17</sup> In addition, it is important to meditate on what we read in the Scriptures and pray in connection with it. When we ponder on Bible verses, we consider how they might apply in specific situations. (1 Tim. 4:15) When we face serious problems, we pray to Jehovah, asking for help to find the guidance we need. Jehovah's spirit will help us to recall helpful Scriptural principles that we have read in the Bible itself or in Bible-based publications.  
—*Read Psalm 25:4, 5.*

<sup>18</sup> Our Christian brotherhood is another valuable resource in seeking Jehovah's guidance. Central to that brotherhood is "the faithful and discreet slave" with its representative Governing Body, which issues a constant supply of spiritual food in the form of printed material and programs for meetings

16, 17. How can we make the most of the Bible as a source of divine guidance?

18. In what ways does Jehovah use the Christian brotherhood to guide us?

and assemblies. (Matt. 24:45-47; compare Acts 15:6, 22-31.) In addition, within the Christian brotherhood are mature individuals, especially the elders, who are qualified to give personal help and Scriptural counsel. (Isa. 32:1) Young ones in Christian households have an additional valuable resource. Their believing parents are a God-ordained authority to whom they are always encouraged to look for guidance.—Eph. 6:1-3.

<sup>19</sup> Yes, in a number of ways, Jehovah offers guidance, and we do well to take full advantage of it. Speaking of a time when Israel proved faithful, King David said: "In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you kept providing them with escape. To you they cried out, and they got away safe; in you they trusted, and they did not come to shame." (Ps. 22:3-5) If we trustingly follow Jehovah's guidance, we too will "not come to shame." We will not be disappointed in our hope. If we 'roll upon Jehovah our way,' instead of relying on our own wisdom, the results will be rich blessings even now. (Ps. 37:5) And if we loyally persevere in that course, those blessings will be eternal. King David wrote: "Jehovah is a lover of justice, and he will not leave his loyal ones. To time indefinite they will certainly be guarded . . . The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Ps. 37:28, 29.

19. What blessings do we enjoy because of continually seeking Jehovah's guidance?

### Can You Explain?

- Why do we trust Jehovah's guidance?
- What is implied if we reject Jehovah's guidance?
- What are some situations in which a Christian needs humility?
- How does Jehovah guide us today?

# YOUNG PEOPLE, REMEMBER YOUR GRAND CREATOR NOW

*"Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood."*

—ECCL. 12:1.

JEOHOVAH views Christian youths as precious and as refreshing as dewdrops. Indeed, he foretold that on the day of his Son's "military force," young men and women would "offer themselves willingly" in Christ's service. (Ps. 110:3) That prophecy was to be fulfilled at a time when people in general were godless, obsessed with self and money, and disobedient. Yet, Jehovah knew that young people who worshipped him would be different. What confidence he has in you young brothers and sisters!

<sup>2</sup> Imagine the joy that God must feel when he sees young ones remembering him as their Grand Creator. (Eccl. 12:1) Naturally, remembering Jehovah involves more than merely calling him to mind. It means taking action—doing what pleases him, letting his laws and principles guide us in daily life. It also means trusting in Jehovah, knowing that he has our very best interests at heart. (Ps. 37:3; Isa. 48:17, 18) Is that how you feel about your Grand Creator?

## "Trust in Jehovah With All Your Heart"

<sup>3</sup> The finest example of one who trusted in God was, of course, Jesus Christ. He lived by the words of Proverbs 3:5, 6: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make

1. How does Jehovah express his confidence in his young worshippers?
2. Remembering Jehovah involves what?
3. 4. How did Jesus demonstrate trust in Jehovah, and why is it important to trust in Jehovah today?

your paths straight." Shortly after his baptism, Jesus was approached by Satan, who tried to tempt him to accept worldly power and glory. (Luke 4:3-13) Jesus was not misled. He knew that true "riches and glory and life" are "the result of humility and the fear of Jehovah."—Prov. 22:4.

<sup>4</sup> Today's world is ruled by greed and selfishness. In such an environment, we are wise to follow Jesus' example. Keep in mind, too, that Satan will do anything to lure Jehovah's servants off the cramped road leading to life. He wants to see everyone travel on the broad road that leads off to destruction. Do not be deceived by him! Instead, be resolved to remember your Grand Creator. Trust in him completely, and get a firm hold on "the real life," which is both sure and near.—1 Tim. 6:19.

## Young Ones, Be Wise!

<sup>5</sup> Young people who remember their Grand Creator are wise beyond their years. (Read Psalm 119:99, 100.) Because they adopt God's viewpoint, they are fully aware of how dim this world's prospects really are. Even in your relatively short lifetime, you young ones have no doubt seen fear and anxiety increase. If you are still in school, you have likely heard about pollution, global warming, deforestation, and similar problems. People are deeply concerned about these trends, but only Jehovah's Witnesses fully understand that they are part of the

5. How do you feel about the future of this world?

sign that points to the end of Satan's world.  
—Rev. 11:18.

<sup>6</sup> Sadly, some young servants of God have let their guard down and have allowed themselves to lose sight of how short a time this world has. (2 Pet. 3:3, 4) Others have been lured into gross sin through bad associates and pornography. (Prov. 13:20) How sad it would be to lose God's favor now that we are so close to the end! Instead, learn from what happened to the Israelites in 1473 B.C.E. when they were camped on the Plains of Moab, at the very threshold of the Promised Land. What took place there?

### They Fell Near the Finish Line

<sup>7</sup> Back then, Satan clearly wanted to prevent the Israelites from gaining their promised inheritance. After failing to have them cursed by the prophet Balaam, Satan used a more subtle strategy; he tried to disqualify them from being blessed by Jehovah. The seductive women of Moab were used to entice them, and this time the Devil had a measure of success. The people started to have immoral relations with the daughters of Moab and to bow down to the Baal of Peor! Although their precious inheritance, the Promised Land, was very close, some 24,-

6. How have some young ones been deceived?
- 7, 8. (a) What strategy did Satan use on the Plains of Moab? (b) What strategy is Satan using today?

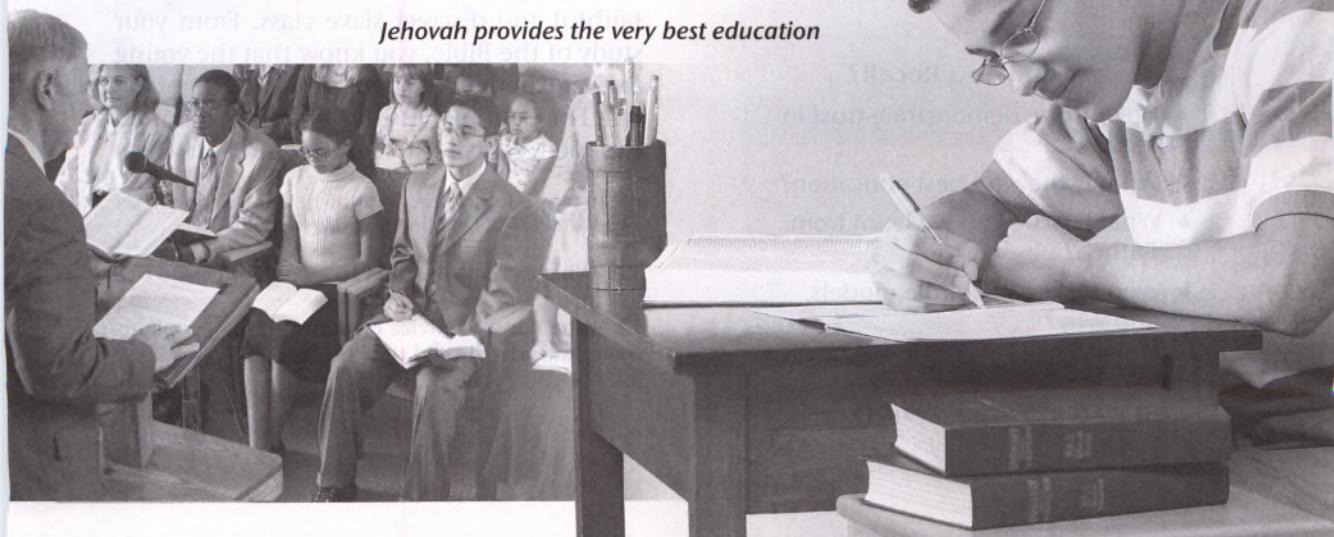
000 Israelites lost their lives. What a tragedy that was!—Num. 25:1-3, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Today, we are rapidly nearing a much better promised land—the new system of things. True to form, Satan is again using sexual immorality to corrupt God's people. Moral standards in the world have fallen so low that fornication is considered normal and homosexuality is viewed simply as a matter of personal choice. Said one Christian sister, "It is only at home and at the Kingdom Hall that my children learn that homosexuality and sex outside of marriage are bad in God's eyes."

<sup>9</sup> Young people who remember their Grand Creator know that sexual intimacy is a sacred gift that has to do with life and procreation. Hence, they recognize that sexual relations should be enjoyed in the way that God directed—within the marriage arrangement. (Heb. 13:4) However, during "the bloom of youth"—the period when sexual feelings become strong and can distort one's judgment—it can be a struggle to remain chaste.

9. What might occur during "the bloom of youth," and how can young ones deal with this?

### *Jehovah provides the very best education*



(1 Cor. 7:36) What can you do when improper thoughts enter your mind? Pray earnestly to Jehovah for help to focus on wholesome things. Jehovah always listens to those who sincerely turn to him. (*Read Luke 11:9-13.*) Upbuilding conversation can also help to refocus the mind.

### Choose Your Goals Wisely!

<sup>10</sup> One reason that many young people in the world are unrestrained and live for fleshly pleasures is that they have no “vision”—no divine guidance or sure hope for the future. (Prov. 29:18) They are like the godless Israelites of Isaiah’s day who lived for “exultation and rejoicing, . . . the eating of flesh and the drinking of wine.” (Isa. 22:13) Instead of envying such people, why not reflect on the precious hope that Jehovah has set before his loyal ones? If you are a young servant of God, do you eagerly look forward to the new world? Do you make every effort to “live with soundness of mind . . . while [you] wait for the happy hope” that Jehovah has placed before you? (Titus 2:12, 13) Your answer will influence the goals and priorities that you set for yourself.

<sup>11</sup> The world wants young people to focus their energies on secular goals. Naturally,

10. What negative state of mind do we want to avoid, and what questions can we ask ourselves?
11. Why should young Christians who are still in school work hard?

### Can You Recall?

- How do we demonstrate trust in God?
- What is the very best education?
- What lessons can we learn from Baruch?
- Who serve as fine role models, and why?

those of you who are still in school should work hard to get a good basic education. After all, your aim is not simply to find suitable employment but also to be an asset to the congregation and a productive Kingdom proclaimer. To that end, you need to be able to communicate well, to think logically, and to reason calmly and respectfully with others. Still, young ones who study the Bible and strive to apply its principles in their lives get the best education available and lay a fine foundation for a successful and everlasting future.—*Read Psalm 1:1-3.\**

<sup>12</sup> In Israel, the education of children by their parents was a high priority. That education covered virtually every facet of life, especially spiritual matters. (Deut. 6:6, 7) Hence, young Israelites who listened to their parents and other God-fearing older ones gained not only knowledge but also wisdom, insight, understanding, and thinking ability—rare traits that divine education can provide. (Prov. 1:2-4; 2:1-5, 11-15) Christian families today should pay similar attention to education.

### Listen to Those Who Love You

<sup>13</sup> Young ones receive advice from all kinds of people—including school guidance counselors, who usually think purely in terms of success in the secular world. Please weigh all such advice prayerfully in the light of God’s Word and the spiritual food provided by the faithful and discreet slave class. From your study of the Bible, you know that the young and inexperienced are a prime target of Satan. For example, in the garden of Eden, inexperienced Eve listened to Satan, a stranger

\* In regard to higher education and employment, see *The Watchtower*, October 1, 2005, pages 26-31.

12. What example would Christian families do well to imitate?
13. What kind of advice do some young people receive, and why should they be cautious?



*Baruch listened to Jehovah and survived Jerusalem's destruction. What can you learn from this example?*

who had shown not a hint of love for her. How different the outcome would have been had she listened to Jehovah, the one who had proved his love for her in many ways! —Gen. 3:1-6.

<sup>14</sup> Your Grand Creator loves you too, and he does so in a way that is absolutely pure. He wants you to be happy forever, not just now! Hence, with the tenderness of a caring parent, he says to you and to all who worship him: "This is the way. Walk in it." (Isa. 30:21) If you have believing parents who truly love Jehovah, you have an additional blessing. Respectfully listen to their counsel when setting priorities and goals. (Prov. 1:8, 9) After all, they want you to gain life, something far more valuable than wealth or prestige in this world.—Matt. 16:26.

<sup>15</sup> Those who remember their Grand Creator keep their life simple, confident that Jehovah will "by no means" leave them "nor

14. Why should we listen both to Jehovah and to believing parents?

15, 16. (a) What confidence can we have in Jehovah? (b) What important lesson do we learn from the experience of Baruch?

by any means" forsake them. (*Read Hebrews 13:5.*) Because this wholesome attitude runs contrary to the thinking of the world, we must be careful not to let the world's spirit influence us. (Eph. 2:2) In this regard, consider the example of Jeremiah's secretary, Baruch, who lived during Jerusalem's difficult last days leading up to the city's destruction in 607 B.C.E.

<sup>16</sup> It may be that Baruch wanted to make a better life for himself materially. Jehovah noted this and kindly warned Baruch not to keep seeking "great things" for himself. Baruch proved to be humble and wise, for he listened to Jehovah and survived the destruction of Jerusalem. (Jer. 45:2-5) On the other hand, Baruch's contemporaries who did acquire "great things" materially, putting Jehovah in the background, soon lost all at the hands of the Chaldeans (Babylonians). Many also lost their lives. (2 Chron. 36:15-18) Baruch's experience helps us to see that a good relationship with God is much more important than wealth and prominence in this world.

### Look to the Best Examples

<sup>17</sup> To help us along the path to life, God's Word provides us with many fine role models. Jesus, for example, was the most gifted human who ever lived, yet he focused on that which would help people forever—"the good news of the kingdom." (Luke 4:43) In order to give Jehovah his best, the apostle Paul abandoned a promising career and used his time and energy to preach the good news. Timothy, "a genuine child in the

17. Why are Jesus, Paul, and Timothy fine role models for Jehovah's servants today?

faith," imitated Paul's fine example. (1 Tim. 1:2) Did Jesus, Paul, and Timothy regret their course in life? By no means! In fact, Paul said that he regarded what the world has to offer as "a lot of refuse" compared with the privilege of serving God.—Phil. 3:8-11.

<sup>18</sup> Many Christian youths today imitate the faith of Jesus, Paul, and Timothy. For example, one young brother who used to have a well-paying job wrote: "Because I live by Bible principles, I soon received promotions. Despite the financial benefits, I felt that I was striving after wind. When I approached the company's executive committee and expressed my desire to pursue the full-time ministry, they hastily offered me generous financial options, hoping I would stay. But my mind was made up. Many people could

18. What big changes did one young brother make, and why does he have no regrets?

not understand why I left a lucrative career to pursue the full-time service. My answer is that I truly want to live up to my dedication to God. Because my life is now centered on spiritual things, I have a measure of happiness and contentment that no amount of money or prestige could give me."

<sup>19</sup> Worldwide, thousands of young people have made similar wise choices. So, young ones, when pondering your future, keep Jehovah's day close in mind. (2 Pet. 3:11, 12) Do not become envious of those who are making the most of this world. Rather, listen to those who truly love you. Storing up "treasures in heaven" is the most secure investment you can make and the only one with everlasting benefits. (Matt. 6:19, 20; *read 1 John 2:15-17*) Yes, remember your Grand Creator. As you do, Jehovah will bless you.

19. What wise choice are young ones encouraged to make?

## MARRIAGE AND PARENTHOOD IN THIS TIME OF THE END

*"The time left is reduced."—1 COR. 7:29.*

God's Word foretold that "the time of the end" would be marked by wars, earthquakes, famines, and pestilences. (Dan. 8:17, 19; Luke 21:10, 11) The Bible also warned that this decisive period in human history would be a period of great social changes. Upheavals in family life would be among the things "hard to deal with" in these critical "last days." (2 Tim. 3:1-4) Why

1. (a) What current changes are among the things "hard to deal with"? (b) Why are changing family values of concern to us?

are such changes of concern to us? Because they are so extensive and so powerful that they could influence how Christians today view marriage and parenthood. In what way?

<sup>2</sup> Nowadays, divorce has become easy and widespread, and the divorce rate in many countries is climbing. However, we should keep clearly in mind that Jehovah God has a completely different view of marriage and di-

2. How does the world in general view marriage and divorce?

orce than the one generally accepted in the world around us. What, then, is Jehovah's view?

<sup>3</sup> Jehovah God expects those who are married to remain faithful to their marriage vow. When he united the first man and woman in marriage, Jehovah stated that "a man . . . must stick to his wife and they must become one flesh." Jesus Christ later repeated that statement and added: "Therefore, what God has yoked together let no man put apart." Jesus further stated: "Whoever divorces his wife, except on the ground of fornication, and marries another commits adultery." (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:3-6, 9) Hence, Jehovah and Jesus view marriage as a lifelong bond that ends only when one partner dies. (1 Cor. 7:39) Since marriage is a sacred arrangement, divorce is not to be taken lightly. In fact, God's Word states that Jehovah hates a divorce that has no Scriptural basis.\*—Read *Malachi 2:13-16; 3:6.*

### Responsible Marriage

<sup>4</sup> The ungodly world in which we live is obsessed with sex. Every day, waves of sensual images are directed at us. We cannot ignore the effect they can have on us, especially on our dear young ones in the congregation. How should young Christians react to this unwholesome influence, which can arouse sexual desire even against their will? Some have tried to deal with it by marrying at a very early age.

\* See *Live With Jehovah's Day in Mind* under the sub-heading "He Has Hated a Divorcing," on page 125.

3. How do Jehovah and Jesus Christ view marriage?
4. Why do some young Christians regret that they rushed into marriage?



*Why is it wise for young Christians to wait to marry?*

In that way, they hope to avoid getting involved in sexual immorality. Before long, though, a number have regretted that decision. Why? Once the novelty of being married has worn off, they have realized that they and their partner have little in common when it comes to everyday matters. Understandably, such couples are then faced with a serious challenge.

<sup>5</sup> Being married to someone—even a fellow Christian—who turns out to be very different from what you expected can definitely be difficult. (1 Cor. 7:28) Still, no matter how challenging the situation is, true Christians know that an unscriptural divorce is not an acceptable solution to problems associated with an unhappy union. Hence, those who keep on working hard to preserve their marriage because they want to remain faithful to their wedding vow deserve respect and loving help from the Christian congregation.\*

<sup>6</sup> Are you young and still unmarried? If so, how should you regard the prospect of marriage? You can avoid much heartache if you wait until you are physically, mentally, and spiritually ready for marriage before you start a romantic relationship with a Christian of the opposite sex. Of course, the Scriptures do not stipulate an age for marriage.<sup>#</sup>

\* Those dealing with marital problems will be strengthened by reviewing such articles on marriage as found in *The Watchtower* of September 15, 2003, and *Awake!* of January 8, 2001.

<sup>#</sup> See chapter 30, "Am I Ready for Marriage?" in *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work.*

5. What will help couples to remain faithful to their wedding vow? (See also footnote.)
6. How should young Christians view the prospect of marriage?

However, the Bible does show that you do well to wait until you are past that time in life when sexual feelings are very strong. (1 Cor. 7:36) Why? Because strong sexual impulses can distort good judgment and cause you to make unwise decisions that may result in heartache later. Remember, Jehovah's wise counsel on marriage in the Bible is for your benefit and happiness.

—Read *Isaiah 48:17, 18*.

### Responsible Parenthood

<sup>7</sup> Some couples who marry young find themselves expecting a child when they themselves are barely out of adolescence. They have not really had time to get to know each other properly before the arrival of the baby, who requires attention 24 hours a day. When the newborn quite naturally becomes the primary object of the mother's attention, the young husband may feel jealous. Furthermore, sleepless nights can create tension and stress that put a strain on the couple's relationship. They suddenly realize that they have lost much of their freedom. Now they cannot go places and do things as freely as they did before. How should they view their changed situation?

<sup>8</sup> Just as marriage should be undertaken in a responsible manner, parenthood should be viewed as a God-given responsibility and privilege. Whatever adjustments the arrival of a baby may cause in the lives of a Christian couple, they should do their utmost to deal with these in a responsible way. Since Jeho-



*A husband can do much to help his wife to have a meaningful share in spiritual activities*

vah gave humans the ability to have children, parents need to view the newborn baby as "an inheritance from Jehovah." (Ps. 127:3) A Christian mother and father will strive to assume their duties as "parents in union with the Lord."—Eph. 6:1.

<sup>9</sup> Raising a child involves years of self-sacrifice. It is a big investment in time and energy. A Christian husband needs to understand that for several years after a baby is born, his wife is likely to be distracted during meetings and she may have fewer opportunities for personal Bible study and meditation. This could have a debilitating effect on her spiritual health. Responsible parenthood requires that the husband does all he reasonably can to help to look after the child. He could try to compensate for what his wife may miss at the meetings by later discussing some of the program points with her at home. He may also share in caring for the

7. What do some young couples experience, and why can this strain the marriage?  
8. As what should parenthood be viewed, and why?

9. (a) What does raising a child involve? (b) What can the husband do to help his wife remain spiritually strong?

baby to give his wife an opportunity to have a meaningful share in Kingdom preaching.  
—*Read Philippians 2:3, 4.*

<sup>10</sup> Responsible parenthood involves much more than providing the child with food, clothing, shelter, and health care. Particularly in this perilous time of the end, young ones need to learn from a tender age the moral principles by which to live. Children should be brought up “in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah.” (Eph. 6:4) This “mental-regulating” involves implanting Jehovah’s thoughts in the mind of a child from its tender infancy on through the critical years of adolescence.—2 Tim. 3:14, 15.

<sup>11</sup> When Jesus told his followers that they should “make disciples of people of all the

10, 11. (a) How are children brought up in the “mental-regulating of Jehovah”? (b) Why do many Christian parents deserve commendation?

*Why do some Christian couples decide not to have children?*



nations,” he most certainly meant that parents should help their children to become disciples. (Matt. 28:19, 20) That is a challenge because of the pressures that this world puts on young people. Therefore, parents who succeed in rearing their children to become dedicated Christians truly deserve the warm commendation of all in the congregation. They have “conquered” the world’s influence by their faith and their faithfulness as responsible parents.—1 John 5:4.

### **Single or Childless for a Noble Purpose**

<sup>12</sup> Since “the time left is reduced” and “the scene of this world is changing,” God’s Word urges us to consider the advantages of singleness. (1 Cor. 7:29-31) Hence, some Christians choose to remain single for life or they decide to remain single for some years before marrying. Commendably, they do not take advantage of the freedom that singleness brings to pursue selfish interests. Many remain single in order to serve Jehovah “without distraction.” (*Read 1 Corinthians 7:32-35.*) Some single Christians serve as pioneers or Bethelites. A number seek to extend their usefulness to Jehovah’s organization by qualifying to attend the Ministerial Training School. In fact, those who served as full-time ministers for some time while single and then later decided to marry often feel that their marriage is still benefiting from the valuable lessons they learned during those early years.

<sup>13</sup> In some parts of the world, yet another change in family life has occurred—numerous couples have decided to remain childless. Some do so for economic reasons; others do it because they want to be free to pursue a lucrative career.

12. Why do some Christians decide to remain single for a time?

13. Why do some Christian couples decide to refrain from having children?

Among Christians, there are also couples who refrain from having children. However, they often do so to be freer to serve Jehovah. This does not mean that such couples do not enjoy a normal married life. They do. Still, they are willing to place Kingdom interests above some of the privileges that go with marriage. (1 Cor. 7:3-5) Some of those couples serve Jehovah and their brothers in the circuit and district work or at Bethel. Others serve as pioneers or as missionaries. Jehovah will not forget their work and the love they show for his name.—Heb. 6:10.

### **'Tribulation in the Flesh'**

<sup>14</sup> The apostle Paul told married Christians that they would have "tribulation in their flesh." (1 Cor. 7:28) This may involve health problems for the couple, their children, or their aging parents. It may also involve difficulties and heartaches connected with the rearing of their children. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, the Bible foretold that "the last days" would bring "critical times hard to deal with." Among the things hard to deal with would be children who are "disobedient to parents."—2 Tim. 3:1-3.

<sup>15</sup> Rearing children is a serious challenge for Christian parents. We are not shielded from the adverse effects of the current "criti-

14, 15. What "tribulation in their flesh" could Christian parents experience?

### **By Way of Review**

- Why should young Christians not rush into marriage?
- What does raising a child involve?
- Why do many Christians remain single or if married, childless?
- What "tribulation" may Christian parents experience?

cal times." Hence, Christian parents have to wage an ongoing fight against the pernicious influence that "the system of things of this world" can have on their children. (Eph. 2:2, 3) And the battle is not always won! In case a son or a daughter of a Christian family stops serving Jehovah, it is, indeed, "tribulation" for parents who have tried to raise him or her in God's truth.—Prov. 17:25.

### **"There Will Be Great Tribulation"**

<sup>16</sup> Any "tribulation" encountered within the context of marriage and childbearing will, however, be surpassed by another tribulation of far greater magnitude. In his prophecy about his presence and the conclusion of the system of things, Jesus stated: "There will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again." (Matt. 24:3, 21) Jesus later revealed that a great crowd would survive this "great tribulation." However, Satan's system will go down fighting in an all-out final assault against Jehovah's peaceful Witnesses. Doubtless, it will be a difficult time for all of us—adults and children alike.

<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, we should not be unduly fearful about the future. Parents who are faithful to Jehovah can hope to be protected along with their young children. (*Read Isaiah 26:20, 21; Zeph. 2:2, 3; 1 Cor. 7:14*) For now, though, may awareness of the critical days in which we live influence how we think about marriage and parenthood in this time of the end. (2 Pet. 3:10-13) In that way, our life—whether we are single or married, with or without children—will bring honor and praise to Jehovah and to the Christian congregation.

16. What "tribulation" did Jesus prophesy?

17. (a) Why can we face the future with confidence? (b) What should influence our view of marriage and parenthood?

# WHAT MAKES LIFE WORTHWHILE?

*"Fear the true God and keep his commandments."*

—ECCL. 12:13.

**I**MAGINE a man who seems to have everything. He is a renowned statesman, one of the richest men on earth, and the greatest intellectual of his generation. Despite all his accomplishments, however, in effect he still asks himself, ‘What makes life worthwhile?’

<sup>2</sup> Such a man really existed—some three thousand years ago. His name was Solomon, and in the book of Ecclesiastes, we find his description of his search for satisfaction. (Eccl. 1:13) There is much we can learn from Solomon’s experience. Indeed, the wisdom found in the book of Ecclesiastes can help us to establish goals that will give true meaning to our lives.

## “Striving After Wind”

<sup>3</sup> Solomon explains that God created an abundance of beautiful things on the earth—an inexhaustible and amazing source of interest and wonderment that we never cease to enjoy. However, we can hardly even begin to explore God’s creation because our lives are too short. (Eccl. 3:11; 8:17) As the Bible says, our days are few and they pass quickly. (Job 14:1, 2; Eccl. 6:12) This sobering fact should move us to use our lives wisely. That is

1. How can we benefit from considering the book of Ecclesiastes?
2. What sobering fact about human life must all of us face?



no easy task, since Satan’s world may well point us in the wrong direction.

<sup>4</sup> To highlight the danger of wasting our lives, Solomon uses the word “vanity” some 30 times in Ecclesiastes. The Hebrew word translated “vanity” refers to something empty, futile, meaningless, of no substance, or of no lasting value. (Eccl. 1:2, 3) Sometimes Solomon uses the word “vanity” as a parallel of “striving after wind.” (Eccl. 1:14; 2:11) Obviously, any attempt to catch the wind is futile. Anyone trying to do so ends up grasping at nothing. Pursuing unwise goals will prove to be just as frustrating. Life in this present system is too short to waste on endeavors that leave us empty-handed. Hence, to help us avoid making that mistake, let us look at some examples that Solomon gives of common pursuits in life. First, we will consider the pursuit of pleasure and possessions. After that, we will discuss the value of work.

## Will the Pursuit of Pleasure Make Us Happy?

<sup>5</sup> Like many people today, Solomon tried to find satisfaction by pursuing a life of pleasure. He reports: “I did not hold back my heart from any sort of rejoicing.” (Eccl. 2:10)

4. (a) What does the word “vanity” imply?  
(b) What pursuits in life will we consider?
5. Where did Solomon search for satisfaction?

Where did he search for pleasure? According to Ecclesiastes chapter 2, he 'cheered his flesh with wine'—at the same time maintaining self-control—and pursued such activities as landscaping, designing palaces, listening to music, and enjoying good food.

<sup>6</sup> Does the Bible condemn having a good time with friends? Not at all. Solomon notes, for instance, that enjoying a meal in a relaxed atmosphere after a hard day's work is a gift of God. (*Read Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:12, 13.*) Moreover, Jehovah himself invites young ones to 'rejoice and let their heart do them good' in a responsible way. (Eccl. 11:9) We need relaxation and wholesome entertainment. (Compare Mark 6:31.) However, recreation should not become the primary purpose of our life. Rather, relaxation should be like the dessert at the end of a meal, not the main course. You will agree that no matter how much you enjoy sweet desserts, you would soon tire of them if you ate nothing else, and they would not provide much sustenance. Similarly, Solomon discovered that a life centered on pleasure was "a striving after wind."—Eccl. 2:10, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, not all kinds of recreation are wholesome. Many are downright harmful—both spiritually and morally. How many millions have plunged their lives into despair just because they 'wanted to have a good time,' abusing drugs, overindulging in alcohol, or gambling? Jehovah kindly warns us that if we allow our heart or our eyes to lead us toward what is harmful, we must expect to suffer the consequences.—Gal. 6:7.

<sup>8</sup> Moreover, an unbalanced pursuit of pleasure will hinder us from paying proper attention to weightier matters. Remember, life

6. (a) Why is it not wrong to enjoy some of the good things in life? (b) In the matter of recreation, what balance is needed?

7. Why should we choose our recreation carefully?

8. Why is it wise to reflect on our life course?

passes by quickly, and there is no guarantee that our short life will always be marked by good health and freedom from problems. That is why, as Solomon further noted, we may derive greater benefit from attending a funeral—especially that of a loyal Christian brother or sister—than from going to a "house of rejoicing." (*Read Ecclesiastes 7:2, 4.*) Why is that so? As we listen to the funeral discourse and reflect on the life course of the faithful servant of Jehovah who has died, we might be moved to examine our own life course. As a result, we may conclude that we need to adjust our goals in order to use the remainder of our lives wisely.—Eccl. 12:1.

### Will Material Possessions Give Us Satisfaction?

<sup>9</sup> Solomon was one of the richest men on earth when he wrote Ecclesiastes. (2 Chron. 9:22) He had the means to acquire anything he wanted. "Anything that my eyes asked for I did not keep away from them," he wrote. (Eccl. 2:10) Nevertheless, he discovered that possessions do not in themselves bring satisfaction. "A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver, neither any lover of wealth with income," he concluded.—Eccl. 5:10.

<sup>10</sup> Despite the fleeting value of possessions, wealth can still exert a powerful attraction. In a recent survey in the United States, 75 percent of all first-year university students described their principal goal in life as being "financially very well off." Even if they reached their goal, would they be truly happy? Not necessarily. Researchers have noted that an emphasis on materialism is, in fact, a hindrance to happiness and satisfaction. A long time ago, Solomon had already reached that same conclusion. He wrote: "I accumu-

9. What did Solomon discover regarding the possessing of wealth?

10. What leads to true satisfaction and true riches?

lated also silver and gold for myself, and property peculiar to kings . . . And, look! everything was vanity and a striving after wind.”\* (Eccl. 2:8, 11) In contrast, if we use our life to serve Jehovah wholeheartedly and thus receive his blessing, we will obtain true riches.—*Read Proverbs 10:22.*

### What Kind of Work Brings Genuine Satisfaction?

<sup>11</sup> Jesus said: “My Father has kept working until now, and I keep working.” (John 5:17) There is no doubt that Jehovah and Jesus derive satisfaction from work. The Bible indicates Jehovah’s satisfaction with his creative work when it says: “God saw everything he had made and, look! it was very good.” (Gen. 1:31) The angels “began shouting in applause” when they saw all that God had done. (Job 38:4-7) Solomon likewise appreciated the value of meaningful work.—Eccl. 3:13.

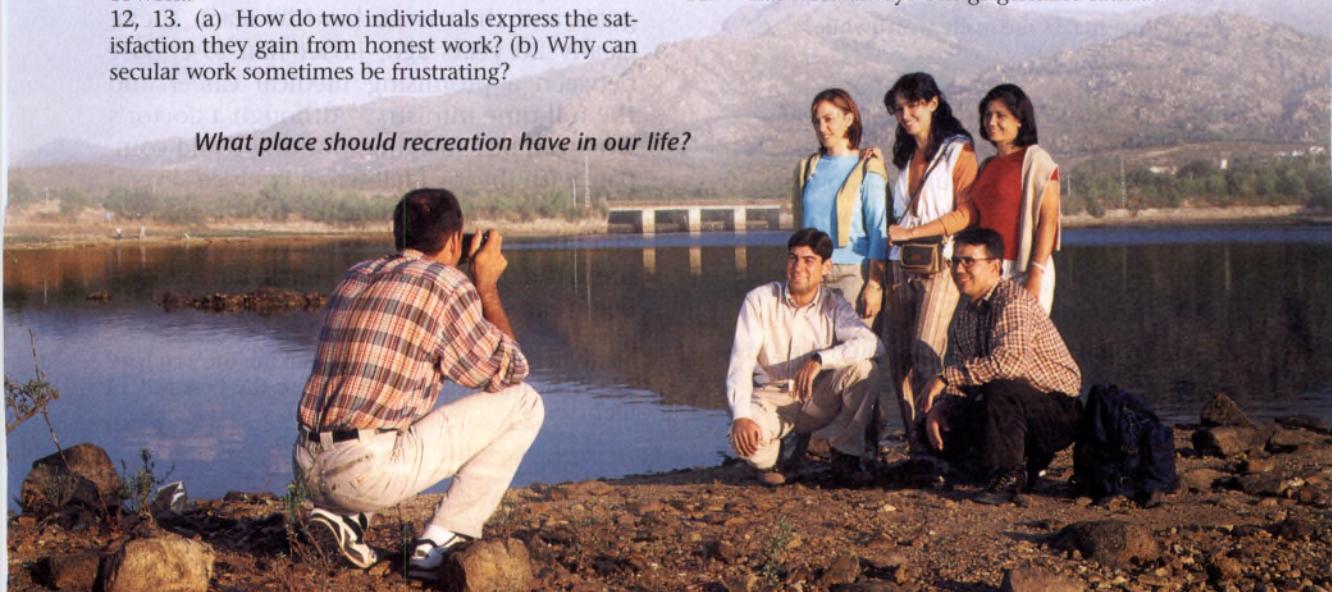
<sup>12</sup> Many humans understand the value of honest work. For instance, José, a successful artist, says, “When you are able to paint on the canvas the picture you have in mind, you feel as if you had conquered a high moun-

\* Solomon had a basic yearly revenue of 666 talents (over 50,000 pounds) of gold.—2 Chron. 9:13.

11. What do the Scriptures indicate about the value of work?

12, 13. (a) How do two individuals express the satisfaction they gain from honest work? (b) Why can secular work sometimes be frustrating?

*What place should recreation have in our life?*



tain.” Miguel,\* a businessman, notes: “Work gives satisfaction because it enables you to provide for your family. It can also give you a sense of achievement.”

<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, many jobs are monotonous and offer few opportunities to be creative. Sometimes the workplace itself is a source of frustration and even the scene of injustice. As Solomon points out, the lazy one—perhaps because he uses his connections with people in power—may reap the reward of the diligent worker. (Eccl. 2:21) Other factors may also lead to disappointment. What starts out as a so-called wonderful business opportunity may end up in failure because of an economic downturn or unforeseen occurrences. (*Read Ecclesiastes 9:11.*) Many times, the person who struggles hard to succeed ends up bitter and frustrated, realizing that he has kept “working hard for the wind.”—Eccl. 5:16.

<sup>14</sup> Is there any kind of work that never disappoints? José, the artist mentioned earlier, observes: “Over the years, paintings may get lost or destroyed. That is not the case with the spiritual things we produce. By obeying Jehovah in preaching the good news, I have helped to build something permanent—fine

\* Name has been changed.

14. What work always brings genuine satisfaction?



***What makes the preaching work deeply satisfying?***

God-fearing Christians. That is priceless." (1 Cor. 3:9-11) Miguel likewise says that preaching the Kingdom message brings him far more satisfaction than his secular work. "Nothing can replace the joy you feel when you share a Scriptural truth with someone and you sense that it has touched that person's heart," he says.

**"Send Out Your Bread"**

<sup>15</sup> In conclusion, what really makes life worthwhile? We feel true satisfaction if we use our brief time in this system of things to do good and to please Jehovah. We can build up a close relationship with God, we can

15. What makes life really worthwhile?

**How Would You Answer?**

- What should move us to think seriously about our goals in life?
- How should we view the pursuit of pleasure and possessions?
- What kind of work will bring lasting satisfaction?
- What valuable thing should we strive to possess?

pass on spiritual values to our children, we can help others to know Jehovah, and we can forge lasting friendships with our brothers and sisters. (Gal. 6:10) All these endeavors have permanent value and bring blessings to those who achieve them. Solomon used a very interesting comparison to describe the value of doing good. He said: "Send out your bread upon the surface of the waters, for in the course of many days you will find it again." (Eccl. 11:1) Jesus urged his disciples: "Practice giving, and people will give to you." (Luke 6:38) Furthermore, Jehovah himself promises to reward those who do good toward others.—Prov. 19:17; read Hebrews 6:10.

<sup>16</sup> The Bible urges us to make wise decisions while we are still young regarding how we will use our life. In that way, we will be able to avoid frustration in later years. (Eccl. 12:1) How sad it would be if we were to waste the best years of our life chasing the attractions of the world, only to find that they are no more substantial than the wind!

<sup>17</sup> Like any loving father, Jehovah wants you to enjoy life, to do good, and to avoid unnecessary heartache. (Eccl. 11:9, 10) What will help you to do that? Establish spiritual goals and then work hard to reach them. Nearly 20 years ago, Javier had to choose between a promising medical career and the full-time ministry. "Although a doctor's work can be satisfying, nothing could compare with the joy I felt when I helped several people to come to know the truth," he says. "Full-time service has enabled me to enjoy life to the full. My only regret is that I did not begin earlier."

16. When is the ideal time to plan our life's course?  
17. What will help you to choose the best way of life?

<sup>18</sup> What, then, is the most valuable thing we should strive to possess? The book of Ecclesiastes says: "A name is better than good oil, and the day of death than the day of one's being born." (Eccl. 7:1) Nothing illustrates this better than the life of Jesus. He surely made an outstanding name with Jehovah. When Jesus died faithful, he vindicated his Father's sovereignty and provided the ransom sacrifice, which opened the way for our salvation. (Matt. 20:28) During his brief time on earth, Jesus provided the perfect example—one that we strive to imitate—of a truly worthwhile life.—1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Pet. 2:21.

18. Why did Jesus' life on earth prove so worthwhile?

<sup>19</sup> We too can establish a good name with God. Having a good reputation in Jehovah's eyes is for us far more valuable than having riches. (*Read Matthew 6:19-21.*) Every day, we can find ways to do things that are good in Jehovah's eyes and that will enrich our lives. For example, we can share the good news with others, strengthen our marriage and our family, and deepen our spirituality by personal study and meeting attendance. (Eccl. 11:6; Heb. 13:16) So, then, do you want to enjoy a truly worthwhile life? If so, keep on following Solomon's counsel: "Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man."—Eccl. 12:13.

19. What wise counsel did Solomon give?



## Isolated BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

THE apostle Paul admonished fellow Christians: "Let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Gal. 6:10) Today, we still follow that inspired direction and look for ways to do good to our fellow believers. Among those who need and deserve loving attention from the Christian congregation are our dear elderly brothers and sisters who live in nursing homes.

True, in some lands, it is customary for families to look after elderly parents at home. However, in other lands, many elderly ones often depend on the care that a nursing home can provide. What about elderly Christians who reside in nursing homes? What

challenges do they face? How can they manage if they have no support from family members? How can the Christian congregation help them? And in what ways do we benefit when we visit them regularly?

### Challenges Faced in Nursing Homes

When elderly Christians move into a nursing home, they may find themselves in the territory of a congregation with which they are not familiar. As a result, the local Witnesses may not think about visiting them frequently. Moreover, in the nursing home, they will likely be surrounded by people who have different beliefs. That may leave our elderly fellow Witnesses in a difficult situation.



*Our heartfelt prayers may help an elderly fellow Witness to regain his inner peace*

For instance, in some areas, nursing homes arrange for religious services to be held in the facility. One caregiver observed: "Some elderly Witnesses who are unable to communicate clearly have been taken in wheelchairs to church services without being consulted about their wishes." Further, the staff of nursing homes often use birthdays, Christmas, or Easter to vary the routine of the residents. Some Witnesses in nursing

homes have also been offered food that their conscience would not allow them to eat. (Acts 15:29) If we visit our elderly brothers and sisters regularly, we will be able to help them deal with such challenges.

### **Support From the Congregation**

The early Christians were alert to their responsibility toward the elderly when these had no family to support them. (1 Tim. 5:9) Similarly, overseers today are alert to make sure that the elderly living in nursing homes in their area are not neglected.\* Robert, an elder, points out: "It would be good if Christian overseers personally visited the elderly to see their living conditions and to pray with them. The congregation can do much to care for their needs." If we set aside time to visit the elderly, we show that we understand how important it is in Je-

\* As soon as a congregation secretary knows that a brother or a sister in the congregation has moved to a nursing home in another area, it would be helpful and loving immediately to notify the elders of the congregation in that area.

*Our tender expressions of affection will strengthen our elderly fellow believers*



hovah's eyes to care for those who are in need.—Jas. 1:27.

When necessary, the elders willingly coordinate practical assistance for their brothers and sisters in local nursing homes. Robert observes what one need might be, "We should encourage elderly brothers and sisters to attend Christian meetings if they are able to do so." However, for those who can no longer travel to the Kingdom Hall, the elders could make other arrangements. Jacqueline, who is in her mid-80's and suffers from osteoarthritis, listens to the meetings by telephone. She says: "It does me a lot of good to hear the meetings while they are actually taking place. I would not miss them for anything in the world!"

If an elderly Christian is unable to listen to the meetings by telephone, elders could arrange for the meetings to be recorded. The person delivering the recordings to the brother or sister in the nursing home can use the opportunity to have an encouraging chat with that one. "Sharing news regarding members of the local congregation with the elderly brothers and sisters makes them feel that they are still part of our spiritual family," says one overseer.

### Maintain Communication

Understandably, many elderly ones find moving into a nursing home a stressful and disorienting experience. As a result, some tend to withdraw into themselves. However, if we visit our elderly brothers and sisters right after their relocation and express our continuing support for them, we will greatly help them to regain their inner peace and a measure of joy.—Prov. 17:22.

If elderly brothers or sisters suffer from loss of lucidity or loss of hearing or have other problems that hinder communication, some might conclude that visiting them is useless. However, our efforts to keep on visiting

them, no matter how difficult it is to communicate with them, demonstrate that we continue to 'take the lead in showing honor' to our fellow believers. (Rom. 12:10) If the short-term memory of an elderly brother is beginning to fail, we could encourage him to recount earlier experiences—even from childhood—or to tell us how he became acquainted with Bible truth. What can we do if he struggles to find the right words? Listen patiently, and if appropriate, mention two or three words that he seems to be groping for, or sum up his thoughts and encourage him to continue. If he is confused or has a speech impediment and is difficult to understand, we could try to grasp what he means by paying close attention to the tone of his voice.

If verbal communication is no longer possible, other means could be used. Laurence, a pioneer, regularly visits Madeleine, an 80-year-old Christian sister who is no longer able to speak. Laurence explains how she communicates: "I hold Madeleine's hand as we pray together. In turn, she lightly squeezes my hand and blinks her eyes to show appreciation for these tender moments." Holding the hand of our elderly friends or giving them a heartfelt embrace can indeed be very reassuring to them.

### Your Presence Matters

Your regular visits to the elderly may influence the quality of care they receive. Danièle, who has been visiting fellow Witnesses in nursing homes for some 20 years, observes, "When the staff of a nursing home notice that a person has regular visits, he or she gets better care." Robert, quoted above, states: "Nursing staff are more likely to listen to someone who visits a resident regularly. They may not show the same respect to an occasional visitor." Since nurses often deal with demanding families, they appreciate

expressions of thanks from visitors. Moreover, if we develop a good relationship with the nursing staff, they may be more inclined to respect the values and beliefs of an elderly Witness patient under their care.

We can also cultivate a good relationship with the staff by offering to help with simple tasks. In some areas, a chronic shortage of qualified personnel reduces the quality of care the elderly receive. Rébecca, a nurse, recommends: "Mealtimes are hectic. So these may be good moments to visit a friend and help him eat." We should not hesitate to ask the staff for suggestions on how we can assist.

When we make regular visits to the same nursing facility, we will be able to see what our elderly brother or sister needs, and with the permission of the personnel, we can take the initiative to meet those needs. For instance, we may be able to brighten a resident's room with pictures of loved ones or drawings made by children. With the resident's well-being in mind, we could bring a warm dressing gown or a few personal-care products. If the residence has a garden, could we take our friend outside for some fresh air? Laurence, quoted earlier, says: "Madeleine looks forward to my weekly visits. When I bring children along, she immediately smiles and her eyes light up!" Similar initiatives can make a big difference for those living in a nursing home.—Prov. 3:27.

#### Mutual Benefits

Regularly visiting an elderly person may put "the genuineness of [our] love" to the test. (2 Cor. 8:8) In what way? It may be painful for us to see a friend progressively weaken. Laurence admits: "At first, Madeleine's weakened condition affected me so much

that I cried after each visit. But I learned that fervent prayer can help us overcome our fears and become more encouraging." For years, Robert has been visiting a Christian brother named Larry who suffers from Parkinson's disease. Robert says: "Larry is so affected by his illness that I can no longer understand a word he says. But when we pray together, I can still feel his faith."

When we visit elderly fellow believers, we not only help them but also benefit ourselves. Their determination to stay close to Jehovah while living among people with different beliefs teaches us to have faith and show courage. Their eagerness to receive spiritual food despite hearing and visual

impairments highlights that "man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth." (Matt. 4:4) By enjoying simple things, such as a child's smile or a shared meal, elderly ones remind us to be content with what we have. Their love for spiritual values can help us to set our own priorities.

Truly, the entire congregation benefits from the support we give to elderly ones. Why is that so? Since those who are physically weaker depend more on brotherly affection, they give the congregation opportunities to grow in showing compassion. Therefore, all of us should view care for the elderly, even over extended periods, as part of our ministering to one another. (1 Pet. 4:10, 11) If elders take the lead in this activity, they will help other congregation members to see that this aspect of our Christian activity should never be neglected. (Ezek. 34:15, 16) By our willing and loving support, we reassure our elderly fellow Christians that they are not forgotten!

**"When the staff of  
a nursing home notice  
that a person has regular  
visits, he or she gets  
better care"**



## Do You Remember?

Have you appreciated reading the recent issues of *The Watchtower*?

Well, see if you can answer the following questions:

- **When did the astrologers visit Jesus?**

A Bible edition comments: "The Magi did not visit Jesus at the manger on the night of his birth as did the shepherds. They came some months later." By then Jesus was a "young child" and was living in a house. (Matt. 2:7-11) If Jesus had been given gold and valuable gifts on the night he was born, would Mary have offered only two birds at the temple 40 days later?—1/1, page 31.

- **What can many do to enrich their lives?**

One might ask, 'Can I adjust my circumstances and simplify my lifestyle?' Amy did so. She was well-off but was not happy. She realized that pursuing a career in this world had almost led her astray from the faith. Hence, she decided to put Kingdom interests first and was able to pioneer for a while. Amy says, "I now have a feeling of fulfillment that I never experienced" when pursuing secular goals.—1/15, page 19.

- **What might help some mothers to find fulfillment?**

Many mothers work outside the home. Some do this so as to fill basic family needs, and others, to gain financial independence or to pay for luxuries. Still others, because they enjoy their job. Christian mothers play a vital role at home—especially during a child's infancy. Some have chosen to limit or end their secular work to give more attention to the family, bringing great fulfillment.—2/1, pages 28-31.

- **To what "generation" did Jesus refer in his words recorded at Matthew 24:34?**

Jesus often used the word "generation" negatively when speaking to or about wicked people. But he did not do so in this case when speaking to his disciples, who were

soon to be anointed with holy spirit. They would be the ones best able to draw the conclusions mentioned at Matthew 24:32, 33. So it seems that Jesus was referring to his anointed followers, both in the first century and in the modern application of his words.—2/15, pages 23-4.

- **How was the Law a tutor, as mentioned at Galatians 3:24?**

Often an ancient tutor was a trusted slave who ensured a child's safety and saw to it that the father's wishes were respected. In a similar way, the Law protected the Jews from corrupting influences, such as intermarriage with pagans. But as with a child's tutor, the Law was temporary, serving until Christ arrived.—3/1, pages 18-21.

- **In line with James 3:17, what qualities should we display?**

Being chaste, we need to reject evil things immediately. (Gen. 39:7-9) We should also be peaceable, avoiding aggressiveness or actions that would disrupt peace. So each of us does well to ask himself: 'Am I known as a peacemaker or a peacebreaker? Do I frequently have disagreements with others? Am I easily offended, or do I often offend others? Or am I ready to forgive and not quick to insist that my personal standards be followed?'—3/15, pages 24-5.

- **Why did Jesus heal a blind man gradually? (Mark 8:22-26)**

The Bible does not give a precise explanation. It is, however, possible that in this instance, by healing the blind man gradually, Jesus allowed him time to adapt to the new sensation of being able to see. This would have been a reflection of Jesus' loving concern for the blind man.—4/1, page 30.

# Jehovah's Word Is Alive

## Highlights From the Book of John

**J**OHN—"the disciple whom Jesus used to love"—is the last person to write an inspired account of Christ's life and ministry. (John 21:20) Written about 98 C.E., the Gospel of John repeats very little of what is stated in the other three Gospels.

The apostle John wrote his Gospel with a definite objective in mind. Concerning the things that he recorded, he says: "These have been written down that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that, because of believing, you may have life by means of his name." (John 20:31) Its message is indeed of great value to us.—Heb. 4:12.

### "SEE, THE LAMB OF GOD"

(John 1:1–11:54)

Upon beholding Jesus, John the Baptizer confidently announces: "See, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) As Jesus travels through Samaria, Galilee, Judea, and the land east of the Jordan—preaching, teaching, and performing powerful works—many people come to him and put faith in him.—John 10:41, 42.

One of the most outstanding miracles that Jesus performs is the resurrection of Lazarus. Many put faith in Jesus when they see a man who has been dead for four days come to life. The chief priests and the Pharisees, however, take counsel to kill Jesus. Hence, Jesus departs and goes to "the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim."—John 11:53, 54.

### *Scriptural Questions Answered:*

**1:35, 40—Who besides Andrew was the disciple standing with John the Baptizer?**

The narrator always refers to John the Baptizer as "John" and never identifies himself by name in his Gospel. Therefore, the unnamed disciple is evidently the Gospel writer John.

**2:20—Which temple "was built in forty-six years"?** The Jews were referring to the rebuilding of Zerubbabel's temple by King Herod of Judea. According to the historian Josephus, that work began in the 18th year of Herod's reign, or in 18/17 B.C.E. The temple sanctuary and other main structures were constructed in eight years. However, the work on the temple complex continued down to and beyond the Passover of 30 C.E., when the Jews said that it took 46 years to build it.

**5:14—Is sickness the result of committing sin?** Not necessarily. The man whom Jesus cured had been sick for 38 years because of inherited imperfection. (John 5:1-9) What Jesus meant was that now that the man had been shown mercy, he must follow the way of salvation and willfully sin no more lest something worse than sickness should befall him. The man could become guilty of committing an unforgivable sin, deserving of death with no resurrection.—Matt. 12:31, 32; Luke 12:10; Heb. 10:26, 27.

**5:24, 25—Who are those 'passing over from death to life'?** Jesus is speaking about those who were once spiritually dead but who upon hearing his words put faith in him and discontinue walking in their sinful course. They 'pass over from death to life' in that the condemnation of death is lifted from them, and they are given the hope of everlasting life because of their faith in God.—1 Pet. 4:3-6.

**5:26; 6:53—What does it mean to have 'life in oneself'?** For Jesus Christ, this means receiving from God two specific capabilities—the ability to give humans a fine standing with Jehovah and the power to impart life by resurrecting the dead. For Jesus' followers, 'having life in themselves' means entering into the very fullness of life. Anointed Christians enter into it when they are resurrected to heavenly life. Faithful ones with an earthly hope will experience the fullness of life only after they pass the final test that will occur right after the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ.—1 Cor. 15:52, 53; Rev. 20:5, 7-10.

**6:64—Did Jesus know from the time of selecting Judas Iscariot that Judas would betray him?** Apparently he did not. On one occasion in the year 32 C.E., however, Jesus told his apostles: "One of you is a slanderer." Possibly, at that point Jesus noticed in Judas Iscariot a "beginning," or start, of a wrong course.—John 6:66-71.

#### Lessons for Us:

**2:4.** Jesus was indicating to Mary that as the baptized anointed Son of God, he must take direction from his heavenly Father. Although Jesus was just beginning his ministry, he was fully aware of the hour, or the time, for his assigned work, including his sacrificial death. Not even a close family member such as Mary could be allowed to interfere with his doing the divine will. We should serve Jehovah God with similar determination.

**3:1-9.** The example of Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, teaches us two lessons. First, Nicodemus showed humility, insight, and awareness of his own spiritual need, recognizing a lowly carpenter's son as a teacher sent by God. Humility is needed by

true Christians today. Second, Nicodemus held back from becoming a disciple while Jesus was on earth. Perhaps this was due to fear of man, attachment to his position in the Sanhedrin, or love for his riches. From this we can learn a valuable lesson: We must not allow such leanings to hold us back from 'picking up our torture stake and continually following Jesus.'—Luke 9:23.

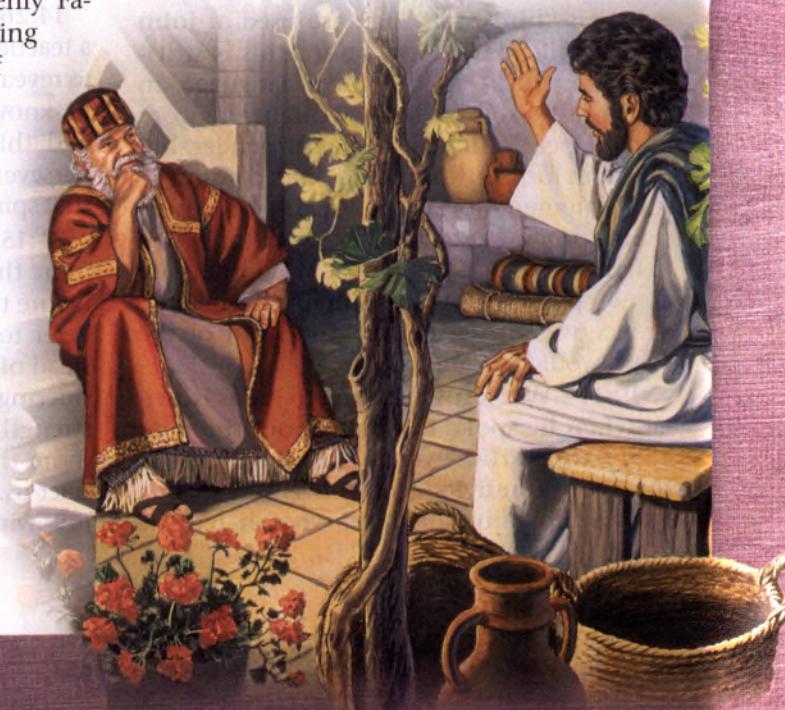
**4:23, 24.** For our worship to be acceptable to God, it must conform to the truth revealed in the pages of the Bible and it must be guided by the holy spirit.

**6:27.** To work for "the food that remains for life everlasting" is to put forth effort to satisfy our spiritual need. Happy we are when we do this.—Matt. 5:3.

**6:44.** Jehovah personally cares for us. He draws us to his Son by reaching us individually through the preaching work and by helping us to grasp and apply spiritual truths by means of His holy spirit.

**11:33-36.** Showing our emotions is not a sign of weakness.

*What can we learn from the example of Nicodemus?*



## 'CONTINUE FOLLOWING HIM' (John 11:55–21:25)

As the Passover of 33 C.E. nears, Jesus returns to Bethany. On Nisan 9, he comes to Jerusalem, riding upon the colt of an ass. On Nisan 10, Jesus comes to the temple again. In answer to his prayer for his Father's name to be glorified, a voice out of heaven says: "I both glorified it and will glorify it again."—John 12:28.

As the Passover meal is in progress, Jesus gives his followers parting counsel and prays in their behalf. Following his arrest, trial, and impalement, Jesus is resurrected.

### *Scriptural Questions Answered:*

**14:2**—How would Jesus "prepare a place" in heaven for his faithful followers? This would involve Jesus' validating the new covenant by appearing before God and presenting to Him the value of his blood. The preparation would also include Christ's receiving kingly power, after which the heavenly resurrection of his anointed followers would begin.—1 Thess. 4:14–17; Heb. 9:12, 24–28; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 11:15.

**14:16, 17; 16:7, 8, 13, 14**—When referring to the helper, or the spirit of the truth, why is the pronoun "it" used at John 14:16, 17, whereas "him" and "he" are used at John 16:7, 8, 13, 14? The reason for this is strictly grammatical. In the Greek language, in which John's Gospel was written, the word for "helper" is in the masculine gender, but the term for "spirit" is neuter. In recording Jesus' statement, John therefore used the masculine pronoun, such as "he" or "him," when referring to what the helper would do. The neuter pronoun "it" was employed when reference was made to what the spirit of the truth would accomplish.

**19:11**—Was Jesus referring to Judas Iscariot when he spoke to Pilate about the man that handed Him over? Rather than Judas or any specific individual, it seems likely that Jesus had in mind all those who shared the

guilt for the sin of killing him. This included Judas, "the chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin," and even "the crowds" that were persuaded to ask for the release of Barabbas.—Matt. 26:59–65; 27:1, 2, 20–22.

**20:17**—Why did Jesus tell Mary Magdalene to stop clinging to him? Mary evidently clung to Jesus because she thought that he was about to ascend to heaven and she would never see him again. To assure her that he was not yet leaving, Jesus told her to stop clinging to him but instead to go and give his disciples the news of his resurrection.

### Lessons for Us:

**12:36**. To become "sons of light," or light bearers, we need to gain accurate knowledge of God's Word, the Bible. Then we must use that knowledge to draw others out of spiritual darkness into God's light.

**14:6**. There is no way we can have God's approval except through Jesus Christ. Only by exercising faith in Jesus and following his example can we draw close to Jehovah.—1 Pet. 2:21.

**14:15, 21, 23, 24; 15:10**. Obedience to the divine will helps us to remain in God's love and in the love of his Son.—1 John 5:3.

**14:26; 16:13**. Jehovah's holy spirit serves as a teacher and remembrancer. It also operates to reveal truths. Hence, it can help us to grow in knowledge, wisdom, insight, judgment, and thinking ability. We should therefore persevere in prayer, specifically asking for that spirit.—Luke 11:5–13.

**21:15, 19**. Peter was asked if he loved Jesus more than "these," that is, the fish that were before them. Jesus thus stressed the need for Peter to choose to follow him full-time instead of pursuing a fishing career. After considering the Gospel accounts, may we be strengthened in our resolve to love Jesus more than any other things that might attract us. Yes, let us wholeheartedly continue following him.