

DECEMBER 1, 2014

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

A photograph of a man with dark hair, wearing a pink checkered shirt and a grey cardigan, looking upwards with a contemplative expression. The background is a dramatic sunset or sunrise over a hilly landscape, with the sun low on the horizon, casting a warm glow and creating long shadows. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and blue.

YOU CAN BE
CLOSE TO GOD

THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end 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 continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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Do You Feel Close to God?



“Having a close relationship with God makes you feel secure, complete, and stable. It feels like God is constantly looking out for your best interests.”—CHRISTOPHER, A YOUNG MAN IN GHANA.

“God sees you in all your desolation, giving you more love and attention than you could ever ask for.”
—13-YEAR-OLD HANNAH, ALASKA, U.S.A.

“It is the most precious and calming feeling to know that you have a close relationship with God!”—GINA, A JAMAICAN WOMAN IN HER 40’S.

Christopher, Hannah, and Gina are not alone. Many people from all around the world are convinced that God views them as his friends. What about you? Do you feel that you are close to God? Or would you like to be close or closer to him? Perhaps you wonder: ‘Is it really possible for a mere human to have a close relationship with Almighty God? And if so, how?’

BEING CLOSE TO GOD IS POSSIBLE

According to the Bible, it is possible to have a close personal relationship with God. The Bible states that God called the Hebrew patriarch Abraham “my friend.” (Isaiah 41:8) Note, too, the warm invitation recorded at James 4:8: “Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.” Thus, it is clear that a close relationship—a friendship—with God is possible. But since God is invisible, how can you “draw close” to him and enjoy a good relationship with him?

To answer that question, consider what takes place in the development of a human friendship. It generally starts with two people getting to know each other’s names. Then, as they regularly communicate with each other, sharing thoughts and feelings, their friendship grows. And when they endeavor to do things for each other, their bond of friendship is strengthened. Something similar can be said of developing a close relationship with God. Let us see how this is so.

Do You Know and Use God's Name?



Friendships often begin with two people learning each other's names. Do you know God's name?

Can you think of any close friend of yours whose name you do not know? Likely not. A Bulgarian woman named Irina rightly observed, "It is not possible to be close to God if you don't know his name." Happily, as mentioned in the preceding article, God wants you to draw close to him. Therefore, by means of the Bible, he has in effect introduced himself to you by saying: "I am Jehovah. That is my name."—Isaiah 42:8.

Does it really matter to Jehovah whether you know and use his name or not? Consider this: God's name, written with four Hebrew consonants known as the Tetragrammaton, appears in the original text of the Hebrew Scriptures nearly 7,000 times. That is far more often than any other name mentioned in the Bible. Surely this is evidence that Jehovah wants us to know and use his name.*

Some, though, may feel that because God is holy and almighty, it would be disrespectful to use his name. Of course, it would be wrong to

use God's name in an unworthy way, just as you would not misuse the name of your close friend. However, it is Jehovah's will that those who love him honor his name and make it known. (Psalm 69:30, 31; 96:2, 8) Recall that Jesus taught

By means of the Bible, God has
in effect introduced himself to you
by saying: "I am Jehovah.
That is my name."—Isaiah 42:8

his followers to pray: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified." We can have a part in sanctifying God's name by making it known. Doing so draws us closer to him.—Matthew 6:9.

The Bible shows that God pays special attention to "those meditating on [or possibly, "treasuring"] his name." (Malachi 3:16; footnote) Concerning such a one, Jehovah promises: "I will protect him because he knows my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in distress." (Psalm 91:14, 15) Knowing and using Jehovah's name does matter if we wish to enjoy a close relationship with him.

* Sadly, many Bible translations fail to include God's name, despite the fact that it appears so frequently in the Hebrew Scriptures, commonly called the Old Testament. Instead, they replaced the divine name with such titles as "Lord" or "God." For more information on this subject, see pages 195-197 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Do You Communicate With God?



Close friends enjoy two-way communication as often as possible

Whether in person or by phone, e-mail, video, or a letter, close friends communicate with each other as often as their circumstances allow. Thus, to be close to God, we need to communicate with him regularly. How, though, is this done?

We can speak to Jehovah by means of prayer. Prayer to God, however, is not the same as a casual conversation we might have with a peer. We have to recognize that when we pray, we are addressing our Creator, the Most High of the universe. This should move us to pray with a deep sense of respect and reverence. For our prayers to be favorably heard by God, we should also comply with certain requirements. Here are three of them.

First, prayers should be directed exclusively to Jehovah God—not to Jesus, a “saint,” or an image. (Exodus 20:4, 5) The Bible clearly says: “In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God.” (Philippians 4:6) Second, prayers must be offered in the name of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus himself explained: “No one comes to the Father except *through me*.” (John 14:6) Third, our prayers must be in harmony with God’s will. The Bible states: “No matter what we

ask *according to his will*, he hears us.”*—1 John 5:14.

Of course, a close relationship will not last if one person does all the talking. Just as friends enjoy two-way communication, we should allow God to speak to us and we should listen to him when he does. Do you know how God speaks to us?

Today, Jehovah God “speaks” to us through his written Word, the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Why do we say so? To illustrate: Suppose you received a letter from a close friend. After reading it, you might excitedly tell others, “I’ve just *heard* from my friend!” Yet, the communication was not spoken, but was in *written* form. In a similar way, by reading the Bible, you are allowing Jehovah to speak to you. Hence, Gina, quoted in the opening article, says, “I think that if I want God to view me as a friend, I must examine his ‘letter’ to us—the Bible.” She adds, “Reading the Bible *daily* has drawn me closer to God.” Do you allow Jehovah to speak to you every day by reading his Word, the Bible, daily? Your doing so will help you feel closer to God.

* For more information on how to draw close to God in prayer, see chapter 17 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Do You Do What God Asks?



We gladly do things for those we love and respect

“Whatever you would like, just say the word and I will be happy to do it.” You would probably hesitate to make such a statement to a total stranger or to a mere acquaintance. However, you would likely have no problem expressing such words to a dear friend. Close friends are naturally inclined to do for each other what is asked.

The Bible shows that Jehovah regularly does what he knows will bring pleasure to his worshippers. For example, King David, who enjoyed a close relationship with God, stated: “Many things you have done, O Jehovah my God, your wonderful works and your thoughts toward us. . . . They would be too numerous to recount!” (Psalm 40:5) More than that, Jehovah even does what is pleasing to those who do not yet know him, ‘satisfying them with food and filling their hearts with gladness.’—Acts 14:17.

Since Jehovah delights in doing what brings pleasure to others, it is only reasonable to expect that those who want to be God’s friends would do the things that make his “heart rejoice.” (Proverbs 27:11) But what specifically can

you do to please God? The Bible answers: “Do not forget to do good and to share what you have with others, for God is well-pleased with such sacrifices.” (Hebrews 13:16) Does this mean that doing good and sharing with others is all that is necessary to please Jehovah?

“Without faith it is impossible to please God well,” says the Bible. (Hebrews 11:6) Significantly, it was after “Abraham put faith in Jehovah” that “he came to be called Jehovah’s friend.” (James 2:23) Jesus Christ also emphasized the need to “exercise faith in God” if we are to enjoy God’s blessing. (John 14:1) So how can you acquire the faith that God looks for in those whom he draws close to himself? You can start by having a regular study of God’s Word, the Bible. In doing so, you will gain an “accurate knowledge of his will” and thus learn how to “please him fully.” Then, as you go on increasing in accurate knowledge of Jehovah and applying what you learn of his righteous requirements, your faith in him will grow and he will draw ever closer to you.—Colossians 1:9, 10.

There Is No Better Way of Life

What can you do to be close to God? We have considered the following steps that you can take to cultivate a close relationship with him:

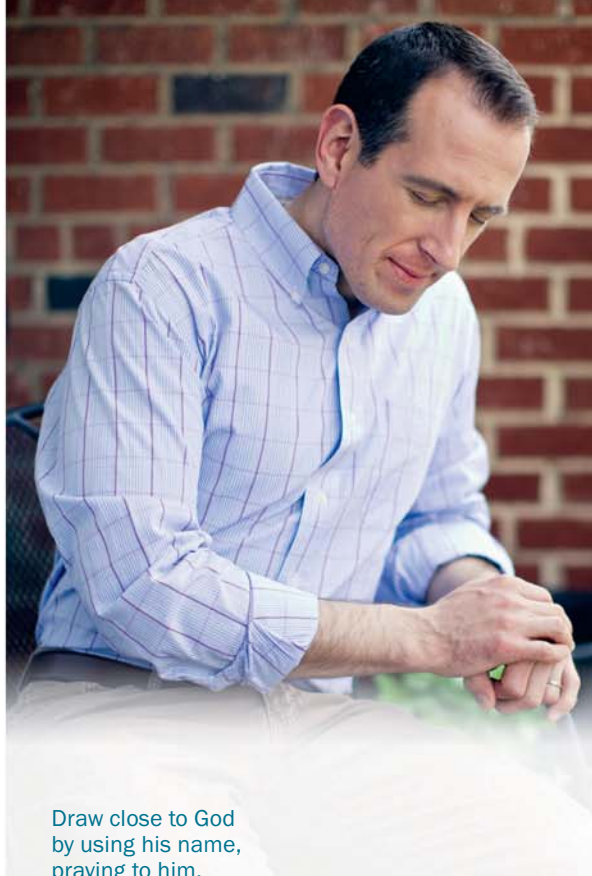
1. Know and use God's name, Jehovah.
2. Communicate regularly with him by praying and studying his Word, the Bible.
3. Persistently do what pleases Jehovah.

Based on these criteria, would you say that you are doing what is needed to be close to God? Are there areas that you feel you can improve on? Understandably, effort is needed, but consider the results.

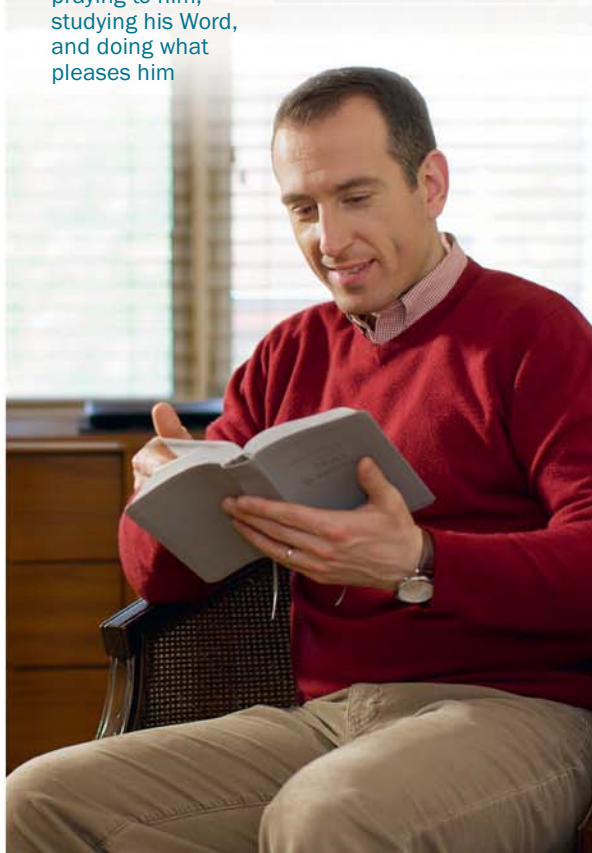
"Every effort put forth to develop a close relationship with God is worth it," says Jennifer, in the United States. "This relationship brings many blessings: more trust in God, more understanding of his personality, but most of all, more love. There is no better way of life!"

If you would like to enjoy a close relationship with God, Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to help you. They can arrange to study the Bible with you, free of charge. You are also welcome to attend their Bible meetings at the local Kingdom Hall, where you will enjoy the association of those who treasure their relationship with God.* As you do so, you too will come to feel as did the psalmist who stated: "As for me, drawing near to God is good for me."—Psalm 73:28. ■

* To request a Bible study or to locate a Kingdom Hall near you, please speak to the person who brought you this magazine or visit our Web site, www.jw.org, and look under the heading CONTACT US at the bottom of the page.



Draw close to God by using his name, praying to him, studying his Word, and doing what pleases him





Timgad

A BURIED CITY REVEALS ITS SECRETS

THE intrepid explorer could not believe his eyes. There, partly buried in the sands of the Algerian desert, stood a Roman triumphal arch! When Scotsman James Bruce made this discovery in 1765, he did not realize that he was actually standing above the ruins of the largest Roman settlement ever built in North Africa—the ancient city of Thamugadi, now called Timgad.

Over a century later, in 1881, French archaeologists began uncovering Timgad's well-preserved remains. They concluded that in spite of the barren and harsh surroundings, its inhabitants enjoyed a very comfortable and luxurious lifestyle. But what moved the Romans to build a prosperous colony in such a place? And what lessons can we learn from this ancient city and its inhabitants?

A HIDDEN POLITICAL PURPOSE

When the Romans extended their rule over North Africa in the first century B.C.E., they encountered fierce opposition from some nomadic tribes. How would the Romans establish peace with the local people? At first, soldiers from the Third Augustan Legion built many fortified camps and guard posts in the vast mountainous

region of what is today northern Algeria. Later, they built the city of Timgad, but for a very different purpose.

Officially, the Romans founded Timgad for retired veterans, but they really built the city with a view to weakening the resistance of the local tribes. Their plan was successful. The comfortable way of life in Timgad soon began to appeal to the local people who came to town to sell their products. Hoping to be accepted in Timgad, where only Roman citizens were allowed to live, many natives willingly joined the Roman Legion for a 25-year term in order to obtain Roman citizenship for themselves and their sons.

Not content with merely having Roman citizenship, some Africans eventually even achieved prominent positions in Timgad or other colonial cities. The subtle scheme of the Romans to assimilate the locals was so successful that only half a century after its founding, Timgad was inhabited mostly by North Africans.

HOW ROME SEDUCED HEARTS

How did the Romans succeed in seducing the hearts of the indigenous people so quickly? For one thing, they promoted equality among cit-

izens—a principle taught by Roman statesman Cicero. The land was divided equally among Roman veterans and citizens of African origin. The city was carefully laid out, with housing blocks 65 feet (20 m) square that were separated by narrow streets. Such an equal and orderly arrangement was no doubt most appealing to the inhabitants.

As in many Roman cities, inhabitants could meet at the forum on busy market days to hear the latest news or to play games. Natives from the nearby arid mountains could no doubt imagine themselves walking under shaded colonnades on a hot and dry day or relaxing in one of the many free public baths to the sound of trickling water. They could probably see themselves seated around refreshing water fountains, chatting with friends. All of this must have seemed like a dream to them.

The open-air theater also played a key role in seducing the hearts of the people. With a seating capacity of over 3,500, it accommodated the boisterous crowds from Timgad and neighboring towns. On stage, actors introduced the audience to Rome's taste for salacious entertainment through plays that often featured immorality or violence.

Roman religion also played its part. The floors and walls of bathhouses were richly decorated with colorful mosaics showing scenes from pagan mythology. Since bathing was an important part of daily life, the inhabitants gradually became acquainted with Roman gods and religion. The attempt to assimilate the Africans into Roman culture was so effective that funerary steles were often adorned with triads of both the local and the Roman deities.

THE BEAUTIFUL CITY SINKS INTO OBLIVION

After Emperor Trajan founded the city in 100 C.E., the Romans encouraged the production of grain, olive oil, and wine throughout North Africa. The region soon became a granary for Rome, supplying the empire with these essential commodities. Like other colonial cities,

Timgad prospered under Roman rule. In time, the population of Timgad grew, and the city expanded far beyond its fortified walls.

The city dwellers and landowners prospered from the trade with Rome, but little benefit trickled down to the local farmers. In the third century C.E., social injustice and excessive taxes gave rise to revolts among small farmers. Some of them, who had adopted the Catholic faith, joined the Donatists—a group of professed Christians who rose up against corruption within the Catholic Church.—See the box “The Donatists—Not a ‘Pure Church.’”

After centuries of religious conflicts, civil wars, and barbarian invasions, Roman civilization lost its grip on North Africa. By the sixth century C.E., Timgad was burned to the

• Timgad



Marketplace with elegant colonnades and stalls

A funerary stele topped with a triad of deities



© Neudrin/Roger-Viollet

Timgad's baptistery reflects the city's "Christian" heritage

The Donatists—Not a 'Pure Church'

On the western side of Timgad are the ruins of an impressive basilica with a baptistery, or baptism pool. This is a silent reminder that by the fourth century C.E., the city had become a stronghold of the Donatists—a "Christian" group that broke with the Roman church.

The Donatists did not approve of the interference of Roman emperors in church affairs. They saw themselves as a 'pure church,'

separated from the world. Regrettably, their actions proved otherwise. The Donatists became involved in social and political struggles and supported small farmers in their violent rebellion against landowners and Roman tax collectors, actions that brought official censure upon them. In spite of their claim, the Donatists did not turn out to be a 'pure church.'—John 15:19.

ground by local Arab tribes and eventually sank into oblivion for over 1,000 years.

"THAT'S LIVING!"

Archaeologists who unearthed Timgad's remains were amused by a Latin inscription found at the forum. It reads: "Hunting, bathing, playing, laughing—that's living!" One French historian said that this "echoes a philosophy that perhaps lacks ambition, but one that some will not fail to consider as the secret of wisdom."

Actually, the Romans had been pursuing such a way of life for some time. The first-century Christian apostle Paul mentioned people whose philosophy of life was "Let us eat and drink,

for tomorrow we are to die." Though they were religious, the Romans lived for the pleasure of the moment, with little thought of the ultimate meaning and purpose of life. Paul warned his fellow Christians to guard against such people when he said: "Do not be misled. Bad associations spoil useful habits."—1 Corinthians 15:32, 33.

Though the people of Timgad lived some 1,500 years ago, views on life have not changed very much. Many people today live with only the present in mind. To them, the Romans' view of life makes perfect sense, whatever the consequences. The Bible, however, offers a succinct and realistic assessment when it says: "The scene of this world is changing." It therefore urges us 'not to be making use of the world to the full.'—1 Corinthians 7:31.

The ruins of Timgad bear witness to the fact that the secret of a happy and meaningful life does not lie in heeding that inscription long-buried in the sands of North Africa. Rather, it lies in heeding the Bible's reminder: "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but the one who does the will of God remains forever."—1 John 2:17. ■

Latin inscription at the forum, which reads: "Hunting, bathing, playing, laughing—that's living!"



What are the facts about Christmas?

Millions of people worldwide celebrate Christmas for various reasons. Some enjoy festive times with friends and family. Others think about God or devote time to helping the poor or needy. By themselves, these are undoubtedly worthy deeds. However, they are clouded by the dark side of this holiday.

First, many celebrants believe that Christmas is a birthday celebration for Jesus. However, historians widely concur that the date of his birth is unknown. *The Christian Book of Why* notes that “the early Christians refused to set aside a date marking Jesus’ birth” because they wanted “to divorce themselves from all pagan practices.” Interestingly, the Bible gives no indication that Jesus ever celebrated his own birthday or anyone else’s. In contrast, he did command his followers to commemorate his death.—Luke 22:19.

Second, many scholars agree that most Christmas traditions have their roots in non-Christian and pagan customs. These include Santa Claus, as well as using mistletoe and the Christmas tree, exchanging gifts, burning candles and Yule logs, hanging decorative wreaths, and caroling. Regarding some of these customs, the book *The Externals of the Catholic Church* observed: “When we give or receive Christmas gifts, and hang green wreaths in our homes and churches, how many of us know that we are probably observing pagan customs?”

You, though, may wonder what is wrong with following these seemingly innocent customs. Consider this third point as an answer. God does not approve of the blending of pagan customs with pure worship. Through His prophet Amos, Jehovah God said to His wayward worshippers in ancient Israel: “I hate, I despise your festivals

. . . Spare me the din of your songs.”—Amos 5: 21, 23.

Why such strong words? Consider what the people of the northern kingdom of ancient Israel were doing. Their first king, Jeroboam, placed golden calves in the cities of Dan and Bethel and induced the people to worship these rather than to worship Jehovah God properly at the temple in Jerusalem. The king also instituted festivals and appointed priests to help the people celebrate them.—1 Kings 12:26-33.

What those Israelites did was seemingly for a good cause. After all, were they not doing all these things in the name of worshipping God and pleasing him? God’s strong words through Amos

“When we give or receive Christmas gifts, and hang green wreaths in our homes and churches, how many of us know that we are probably observing pagan customs?”

—The Externals of the Catholic Church

and other prophets indicate clearly just how God felt about such practices. Through the prophet Malachi, God said: “I am Jehovah; I do not change.” (Malachi 3:6) Does that not tell us how God feels about the many Christmas celebrations today?

After considering the above facts, millions of people have decided to abstain from celebrating Christmas. Instead, they find joy and true satisfaction in spending time with their friends and family and in helping the poor and needy whenever they wish throughout the year. ■

“The Insight of a Man Certainly Slows Down His Anger”

A college basketball coach is fired because of his uncontrolled anger.

A child throws a temper tantrum for not getting his way.

A mother gets into a shouting match with her son because of his messy room.

ALL of us have seen people get angry, and no doubt we ourselves have become irate at one time or another. While we may view anger as a negative emotion that should be suppressed, we often feel that we have a valid reason to be upset, especially when someone appears to overstep our sense of justice. An article by the American Psychological Association even suggests that “anger is a completely normal, usually healthy, human emotion.”

Such a view may seem plausible when we consider what the Christian apostle Paul wrote under divine inspiration. Acknowledging that there may be times when people become angry, he said: “Be wrathful, but do not sin; do not let the sun set while you are still angry.” (Ephesians 4:26) In view of this, should we vent our anger, or should we do what we can to control it?

SHOULD YOU GET ANGRY?

When Paul gave that counsel about anger, he apparently had in mind the words of the psalmist who wrote: “Be agitated, but do not sin.” (Psalm 4:4) What, though, was the intent of Paul’s inspired admonition? He went on to explain: “Put away from yourselves every kind of malicious bitterness, anger, wrath, screaming, and abusive speech, as well as everything injurious.” (Ephesians 4:31) Paul was in fact encour-



What can you do to control your anger?

aging Christians to avoid giving vent to anger. Interestingly, the American Psychological Association article goes on to say: “Research has found that ‘letting it rip’ with anger actually escalates anger and aggression and does nothing to help you . . . resolve the situation.”

How, then, can we “put away” anger and all its bad effects? Wise King Solomon of ancient Israel wrote: “The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger, and it is beauty on his part to overlook an offense.” (Proverbs 19:11) How does “the insight of a man” help when rage wells up within him?

HOW INSIGHT SLOWS DOWN ANGER

Insight is the ability to see into a situation. To have insight means to see beyond the surface of a matter. How does that help when we are offended or provoked?

When we see an injustice, we may well become indignant. However, if we follow our emotions and react violently, we may end up hurting ourselves or someone else. Just as an uncontrolled fire can burn down a house, the flare of anger may destroy our reputation and our relationships with others, even with God. So when we feel anger welling up inside us, it is time to take a deeper look into the situation. Seeing a more complete picture of what is happening will surely help us to control our emotions.

Solomon's father, King David, narrowly escaped incurring bloodguilt in connection with a man named Nabal, thanks to David's being helped to see into the situation. David and his men protected Nabal's sheep in the Judean wilderness. When the time came for shearing the flock, David asked Nabal for some provisions. At that, Nabal answered: "Do I have to take my bread and my water and the meat that I butchered for my shearers and give it to men who come from who knows where?" What an insult! When David heard those words, he, with some 400 men, set out to annihilate Nabal and his household.—1 Samuel 25:4-13.

Nabal's wife, Abigail, learned about the incident and went out to see David. Upon meeting David and his men, she fell at his feet and said: "Let your servant girl speak to you, and listen to the words of your servant girl." Then, she explained to David how senseless Nabal was and pointed out that David would regret taking revenge and shedding blood.—1 Samuel 25:24-31.

What insight did David gain from Abigail's words that helped to defuse the tense situation? First, he saw that Nabal was a senseless man by nature, and second, David saw that he could incur bloodguilt if he avenged himself. Like David, you may be infuriated by something. What

should you do? "Take a few moments to breathe deeply and count to 10," suggests a Mayo Clinic article on anger management. Yes, stop and think what the cause of the problem is and what the consequences of your intended action might be. Let insight slow down your anger—even dispel it.—1 Samuel 25:32-35.

In a similar way, many today have been helped to control their anger. Sebastian explained how, as a 23-year-old inmate in a Polish prison, he learned to control his temper and strong emotions through a study of the Bible. "First, I think about the problem," he said. "Then, I try to apply the Bible's counsel. I found that the Bible is the best guidebook."

Setsuo followed basically the same tactic. He said: "I used to shout at others when I was irritated by them at work. Now that I've studied the Bible, instead of shouting I ask myself: 'Who is at fault anyway? Am I not the one causing the problem?'" Thinking about such questions slowed down his anger, and he was able to contain the strong feelings that welled up in his heart.

The emotion of anger may be very strong, but counsel from God's Word is stronger still. By applying the Bible's wise counsel and praying for God's help, you too can let your insight slow down or control your anger. ■

Applying Bible counsel can help you to control strong emotions



Should I Borrow Money?

“Borrowing is like a wedding; repaying is like mourning.”

—A Swahili proverb.

THIS saying is well-known to people in East Africa, and it undoubtedly reflects the sentiment of many in lands around the world. Is that how you feel about borrowing money from a friend or other sources? Though it might seem advisable at times, is it a good idea? What are the dangers and pitfalls of borrowing?

Another Swahili saying gets to the heart of the matter. It says: “Borrowing and lending spoil a friendship.” Indeed, debts can put friendships and relationships in jeopardy. Even with the best of plans and the most sincere intentions, things do not always turn out as expected. For example, if time passes and due repayments are not made, the lender may become irritated. Resentment could build, and the relationship between the lender and the borrower—and even between their families—may become strained. Since loans are a potential source of friction, we might view them as a last resort rather than an easy solution to money problems.

Borrowing money can also endanger a person’s relationship with God. How? First of all, the Bible says that it is a wicked person who deliberately and knowingly refuses to repay his debts. (Psalm 37:21) It also makes clear that “the borrower is a slave to the lender.” (Proverbs 22:7) The borrower must realize that until the money



is paid back, he is under obligation to the lender. True is another African saying: “If you borrow a man’s legs, you will go where he directs you.” The idea is that one who is heavily in debt is no longer at liberty to do what he would like.

Repaying what one borrows, therefore, must be given high priority. Otherwise, difficulties will likely arise. Mounting debts can result in much distress, as well as sleepless nights, overwork, bickering between husband and wife, and even family breakups, not to mention possible lawsuits or imprisonment. There is wisdom in the words found at Romans 13:8: “Do not owe anything to anyone except to love one another.”

“Looking at material things from a spiritual perspective is a protection”

IS IT NECESSARY?

In view of all of this, it is best to be cautious when it comes to borrowing money. It is prudent to ask: Is there a real need to borrow? Is it a matter of saving your means of livelihood so as to care for your family? Or is there a measure of greed involved, perhaps a desire to live beyond one's means? In most cases, it would be better to make do with less than to obligate oneself by borrowing.

Of course, there may be exceptions, such as when an emergency arises and there does not seem to be any other way out. Even so, if a person decides to borrow, he should show himself to be a person of good principles. How can this be done?

First, never take advantage of someone just because he or she seems to be better-off than others. We should not feel that when a person appears to be well-off, he owes it to us to help us financially. Nor should we feel that we are free of any moral obligation to act with honest intentions toward such a person. Do not be envious of those who seem to enjoy financial security. —Proverbs 28:22.

Then, make sure to repay what you have borrowed, and do so promptly. If the lender does not stipulate a specific timetable, you should, and you should stick to it. It is recommended that you put your agreement in writing in order to avoid misunderstandings on either side. (Jeremiah 32:9, 10) If possible, return what is borrowed to the lender personally so that you can thank him yourself. Conscientiousness in returning what you borrow makes for good relations. Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount: “Just let your word ‘Yes’ mean yes, your ‘No,’ no.” (Matthew 5:37) In addition, always bear in mind the Golden

Rule: “All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must do to them.”—Matthew 7:12.

HELPFUL BIBLE GUIDELINES

The Bible offers a simple antidote to the urge to borrow money. It says: “To be sure, there is great gain in godly devotion along with contentment.” (1 Timothy 6:6) In other words, being content with what one has is the best way to escape the sad consequences of borrowing. Admittedly, however, it is not easy to be content in today's world of instant gratification. That is where “godly devotion” comes into the picture. In what way?

Take, for example, a Christian couple in Asia. In their younger years, they admired those who could afford to own a house. So they decided to buy one with their savings and money borrowed from a bank and relatives. Soon, however, they began to feel the heavy burden of high monthly payments. They took on more work, putting in long days, which left them little time for their children. “The stress, pain, and lack of sleep felt like a heavy rock on my head. It was suffocating,” said the husband.

In time, they remembered the words of 1 Timothy 6:6 and decided that the only solution was to sell the house. It took two years before they were finally relieved of their burden. What did this couple learn from their experience? “Looking at material things from a spiritual perspective is a protection,” they concluded.

The Swahili proverb mentioned at the outset is well-known to many. Yet it has not stopped people from borrowing. In light of the Bible principles considered above, would it not be the course of wisdom to think seriously about the question, Should I borrow money? ■

How can children learn to love God?

Your children can learn to love God only if they have evidence that he exists and that he loves them. To love God, they need to know him. (1 John 4:8) For example, they need to know: What was God's purpose for creating man? Why does God allow suffering? What will God do for mankind in the future?—**Read Philippians 1:9.**

To help your children to love God, you must show them that you love him yourself. When they see that, they will likely follow your example.—**Read Deuteronomy 6:5-7; Proverbs 22:6.**

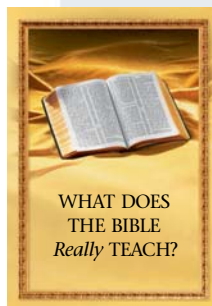
How can you reach your children's heart?

God's Word is powerful. (Hebrews 4:12) So help your children learn its basic teachings. To reach the hearts of people, Jesus asked questions, listened, and explained the Scriptures. To reach your children's heart, you can imitate Jesus' ways of teaching.—**Read Luke 24:15-19, 27, 32.**

In addition, Bible accounts of how God dealt with people can help children to know and to love God. Publications designed for this purpose are available at www.jw.org.—**Read 2 Timothy 3:16.**



Use lessons from creation to help your child to know and to love God



For more information, see chapter 14 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses. Available at www.jw.org, or send your request for a free copy to one of the addresses on page 2

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