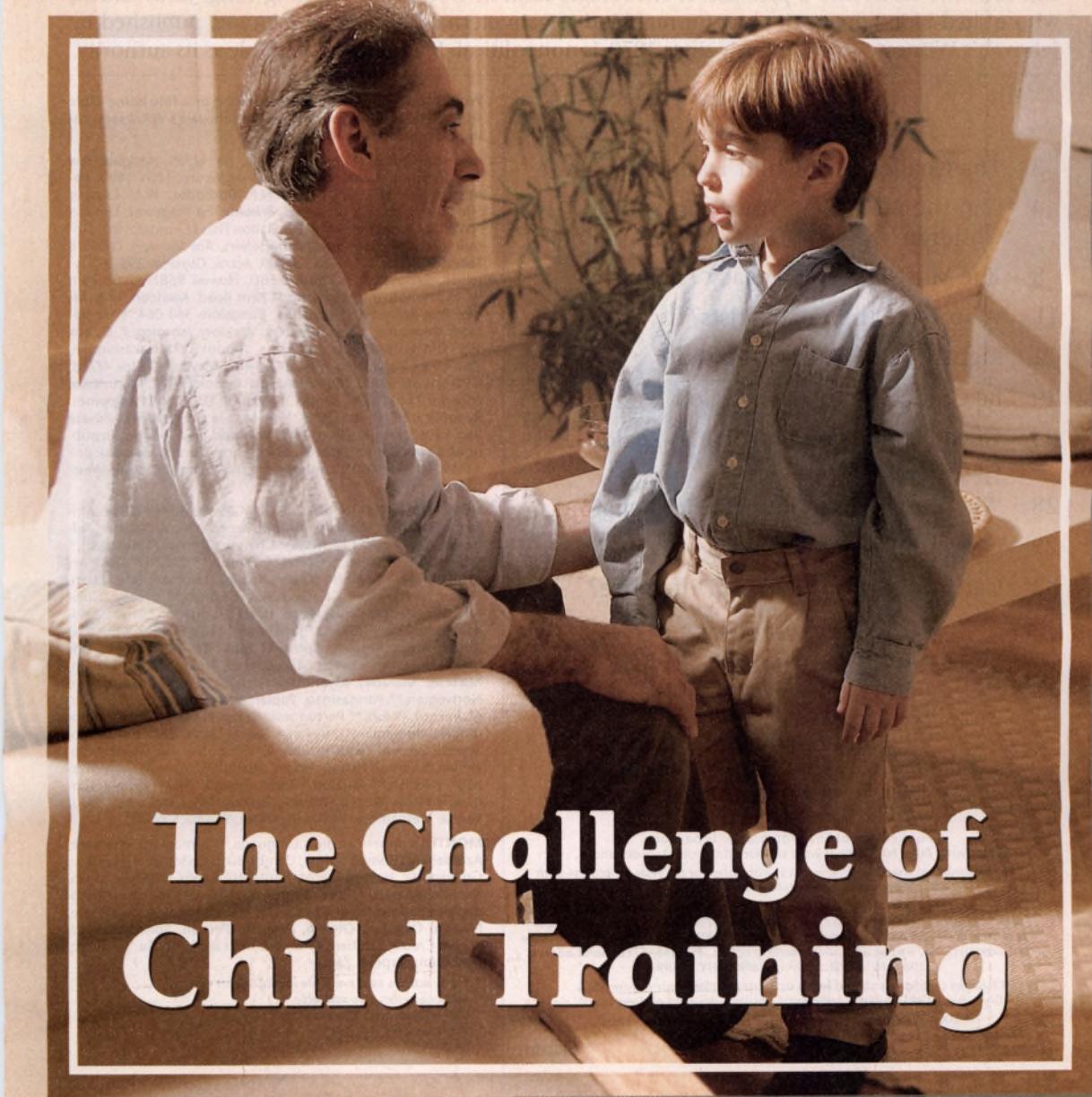


THE WATCHTOWER

JUNE 15, 2004

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



The Challenge of Child Training

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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THE CHALLENGE of Child Training **TODAY**

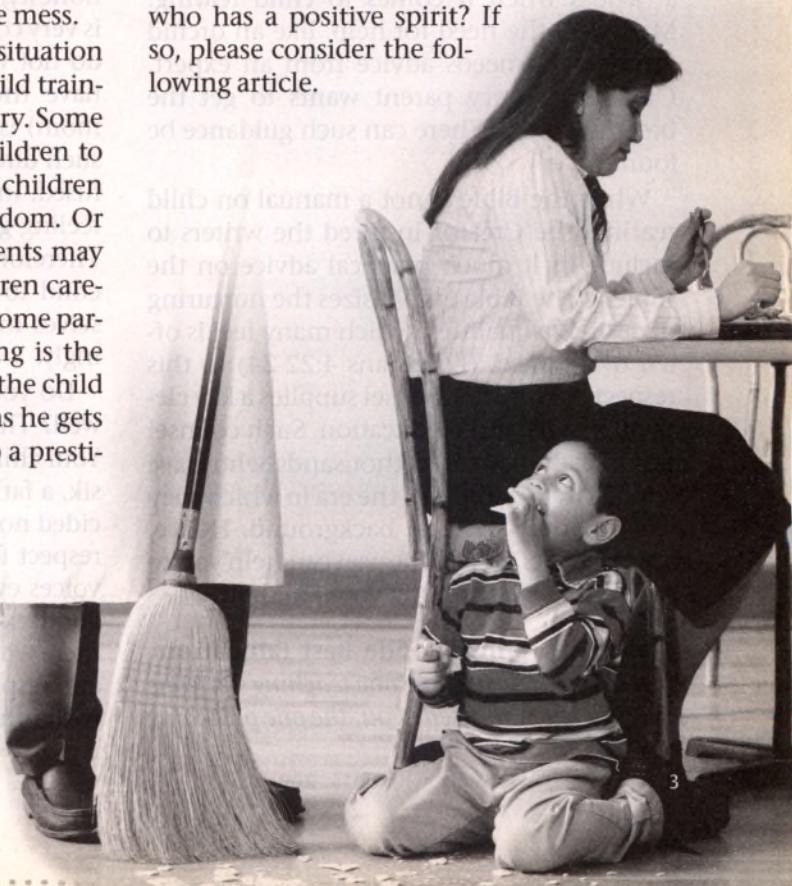
IN THE late evening, a restaurant owner prepares to close up shop and go home. Then two women and a child enter and order a meal. Being very tired, the owner is tempted to tell them that the restaurant is closed, but he decides to serve them. While the two women talk and eat, the child runs around in the restaurant, dropping cookies on the floor and crushing them underfoot. Instead of restraining him, the child's mother smiles. When the diners finally leave, the exhausted owner has to clean up the mess.

As you likely know, this real-life situation illustrates that in many families, child training is not going well. The reasons vary. Some parents permissively leave their children to their own devices, thinking that children should be raised in a spirit of freedom. Or because their lives are so busy, parents may not take the time to give their children careful attention and needed training. Some parents feel that their child's schooling is the most important thing, so they give the child almost unlimited freedom as long as he gets good grades in school and gets into a prestigious college.

Yet, some say that the values of parents and society in general need to be adjusted. They argue that children are becoming involved in crimes of every kind and school violence is escalating day by day. Hence, a principal of

a middle school in Seoul, Republic of Korea, emphasized that personality training should have priority. He said: "After you build a fine character comes the input of knowledge."

Many parents who want their child to enter college and succeed in life turn a deaf ear to cautionary voices. If you are a parent, what kind of person do you want your child to be? An adult with a sense of morality and responsibility? Someone who is considerate of others, who is adaptable, and who has a positive spirit? If so, please consider the following article.





CAN THE BIBLE HELP You Train Your Children?

THE orchid is a very attractive flower, but it is difficult to raise. To do so successfully, you need to control the temperature, the light, and the size of the flowerpot. The orchid is sensitive to soil and fertilizer and is easily damaged by disease and insects. Thus, it is very common to fail at one's first attempt at raising an orchid.

Rearing children is far more difficult and complicated, and it also requires careful attention. So it is common for parents to feel at a loss when it comes to child rearing. Many feel the need for help, like an orchid grower who needs advice from an expert. Obviously, every parent wants to get the best guidance. Where can such guidance be found?

While the Bible is not a manual on child rearing, the Creator inspired the writers to include in it much practical advice on the subject. The Bible emphasizes the nurturing of desirable qualities, which many feel is often overlooked. (Ephesians 4:22-24) In this respect, Scriptural counsel supplies a key element of a balanced education. Such counsel has already benefited thousands who have applied it, regardless of the era in which they lived or their cultural background. Hence, following Scriptural counsel can help you to be successful in training your children.

Parents' Example—The Best Education

"Do you, however, the one teaching someone else, not teach yourself? You, the one preaching

'Do not steal,' do you steal? You, the one saying 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery?"—Romans 2:21, 22.

A chairman of the Seoul Board of Education said: "Example in word and deed is the best child education." If parents do not set a good example in speech and conduct and give their child specific instruction, the child will quickly assume they are hypocritical. The parents' words will lose their effect. For instance, if parents want to teach their child honesty, they themselves must be honest. It is very common for some parents, when they do not want to receive a telephone call, to have their child say, "Sorry, my dad (or mom) is not here." The child who is given such direction will be embarrassed and confused. In time, he may begin to lie without feeling guilty if he is in a difficult situation. Therefore, if parents sincerely want their child to be an honest person, they themselves must speak honestly and act accordingly.

Do you want to train your child to speak well? Then you have to set a good example. Your child will be quick to imitate you. Sung-sik, a father of four, says: "My wife and I decided not to use crude language. We showed respect for each other and did not raise our voices even when we were upset or angry. A good example was far more effective than mere words. We are pleased that our children are respectful and polite when they talk with others." The Bible says at Galatians 6:7:

"Whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap." Parents who want their children to have high moral standards must first show that they themselves are living according to such standards.

Keep the Lines of Communication Open

"You must inculcate [God's commandments] in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up."—Deuteronomy 6:7.

The trend to work overtime is on the increase. When both husband and wife have jobs, it has a serious impact. The time that many parents spend with their children is diminishing. While at home, parents have to do housework and other chores, so they may well be tired or exhausted. Under such circumstances, how can you maintain good communication with your children? Opportunities for conversation may arise if you and your children do the household chores together. One family head even got rid of the TV, primarily to have more time for conversation with his children. He observed: "At first the children were bored, but as I played puzzle games with them and discussed interesting books, they came to accept the change."

It is important that children early on become accustomed to communicating with their parents. Otherwise, when the children are adolescents and perhaps face problems, they will not think of their parents as friends whom they can talk to. How can you help



them to open their hearts? Proverbs 20:5 says: "Counsel in the heart of a man is as deep waters, but the man of discernment is one that will draw it up." By using viewpoint questions, such as "What do you think?" parents can encourage their children to express their thoughts and feelings.

What will you do if your child makes a serious mistake? That is the time when he needs kind consideration. Control your emotions while you listen to your child. A father says this about his way of dealing with such a situation: "When the children make mistakes, I try not to overreact. I sit down and listen to what they have to say. I try to grasp the situation. When I find it difficult to control my spirit, I wait a while and calm down." If you control your emotions and listen, the correction you give will more readily be accepted.

Discipline Based on Love Is Essential

"You, fathers, do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah."—Ephesians 6:4.

To get good results, your manner of giving loving discipline is important. How is it that parents can 'irritate their children'? If the discipline does not fit the seriousness of the mistake or if it is given in a highly critical way, children will resist. Discipline should in all cases be given with love. (Proverbs 13:24) If you reason with your children, they will realize that you discipline them out of love.—Proverbs 22:15; 29:19.

On the other hand, it is good for children to feel the undesirable consequences of

wrong behavior. For instance, if the child wrongs another person, you can insist that he apologize. When he breaks family rules, you may place restrictions on certain privileges in order to emphasize the importance of keeping rules.

It is good to administer discipline at the right time. Ecclesiastes 8:11 points out: "Because sentence against a bad work has not been executed speedily, that is why the heart of the sons of men has become fully set in them to do bad." Similarly, many children will test whether they can escape without punishment after misbehaving. So once you have warned that punishment will follow a specific wrongdoing, be sure to follow through.

Wholesome Recreation Has Value

"There is... a time to laugh... and a time to skip about."—Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4.

Leisure time and wholesome, balanced recreation are necessary for the mind and body of a child to develop. When parents enjoy recreation with their children, family ties are strengthened and the children gain a sense of security. What types of recreation can members of a family enjoy together? If you take the time to think about it, you can find many pleasant things to do. There are outdoor sports, such as bicycle riding, and ball games, such as tennis, badminton, and volleyball. And imagine the joyful times that can be had when the family plays musical instruments together. Fine memories can be the result of traveling to nearby places to enjoy nature.

In such situations, parents can instill in their children a balanced view of recreation. A Christian man who has three sons said: "I share in my children's recreation if possible. For instance, when they play computer games, I ask about them. When they enthusiastically explain them, I use the opportunity to talk about the danger of un-

wholesome entertainment. I have noticed that they turn down inappropriate entertainment." Yes, children who are happy with family recreation are less inclined to resort to television programs, videos, movies, and Internet games that feature violence, immorality, and drug abuse.



Help Your Children Make Good Friends

"He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly."—Proverbs 13:20.

A Christian father who successfully brought up four children said: "The importance of their choice of friends cannot be overemphasized. One bad friend can destroy all the work you've done." To help his children make good friends, he wisely asked such questions as: Who is your closest friend? Why do you like him? What about him do you want to imitate? Another parent arranges for his children to invite close friends home. He can then observe them and give his children appropriate guidance.

It is also important to teach children that they can make friends with older people as



well as with peers. Bum-sun, a father of three sons, says: "I help my children to appreciate that friends don't have to be peers, as in the case of David and Jonathan in the Bible. Actually, I invite Christians of various age groups to enjoy association with my children. As a result, the children associate with many people who are not their peers." Association with exemplary seniors gives the children the advantage of learning many things.

You Can Succeed in Child Training

According to one survey conducted in

the United States, many parents who tried to instill such qualities as self-control, self-discipline, and honesty in their children had relatively little success. Why is that so difficult? A mother who answered the survey said: 'The sad thing is that the only way to protect our children is to lock them up in a room and never let them go out in the world.' She had in mind that the environment children now grow up in is worse than ever before. In this situation, is it really possible to bring up children successfully?

If you wanted to raise an orchid but were concerned that it might wither, you might be discouraged. If an authority on orchid cultivation came along and gave you some good ideas and confidently said, "You will succeed if you do it this way," how relieved you would be! Jehovah, the Supreme Authority on human nature, provides advice on the best method of bringing up children. He says: "Train up a boy according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it." (Proverbs 22:6) When you train children according to the Bible's counsel, you will likely have the joy of seeing your children grow up to be responsible adults, considerate of others, having a sense of morality. Then they will be loved by men but most of all by Jehovah, our heavenly Father.



The Most Valuable Legacy There Is

IN THE twilight of his life, the aged apostle John wrote: "No greater cause for thankfulness do I have than these things, that I should be hearing that my children go on walking in the truth."—3 John 4.

The faithful apostle was referring to his children in a spiritual sense. However, many parents would echo the apostle's words. They have worked hard to raise their children "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah," and now they rejoice to see their grown children "walking in the truth." (Ephesians 6:4) In fact, teaching one's children the way to eternal life is to give them the most valuable legacy there is. That is because godly devotion, which includes living life as Jehovah wants Christians to live it, "holds promise of the life now and that which is to come."—1 Timothy 4:8.

Jehovah, the perfect Father, greatly esteems godly parents who try hard to educate their children spiritually. When the children respond, they find great joy in pursuing true worship together with their parents. As such children mature, they store up pleasant memories of such experi-

ences. Some happily recall the first time that they participated in the Theocratic Ministry School.* Or perhaps they think of the time when they were first able to read a Bible text in the house-to-house ministry alongside one of their parents. How can they forget hearing their parents read from *My Book of Bible Stories* or from *Listening to the Great Teacher*?# Gabriel recalls something that he came to love: "When I was only four years old, my mother sang to me every day while she was cooking. I still remember with deep feeling a certain Kingdom song. Later on, it helped

me to see the importance of Jehovah's service." Perhaps you too remember the beautiful song that Gabriel refers to. It is number 157 in the songbook *Sing Praises to Jehovah*, and it is entitled "Worship Jehovah During Youth."

The song begins: "*Out of the mouth of babes God once brought praise; They, to hail Jesus, their voices did raise.*" Indeed, there



* This part of the Bible education program conducted in congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses is open to young and old.

The publications mentioned are published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

were children who had the privilege of associating with Jesus, and they likely delighted him with their refreshing, candid manner. Jesus even used the teachableness of young children as an example for his followers to copy. (Matthew 18:3, 4) So children have an appropriate place in the worship of Jehovah. In fact, the lyrics of the song continue: “*Yes, even babes can their God magnify.*”

Through their exemplary conduct—at home, at school, and in other places—many children have brought honor to God and to their family. What a blessing it has been for them to have “*Christian parents who love what is true.*” (Deuteronomy 6:7) Godly parents take their stand for God, who as a loving Father, teaches his creatures to walk in the path in which they should tread. And what a blessing they receive! As they, in turn, teach young ones in their family, how thrilled they are to have children who “*obey them and bring them delight!*” (Isaiah 48:17, 18) Angélica, who at present serves in the Mexico branch office of Jehovah’s Witnesses, says: “My parents always made an effort to put Bible principles into practice. That made my childhood very pleasant. I was happy.” Such Christians agree that it is worthwhile to take good care of your spiritual heritage. Perhaps you are a youth who is being brought up in a family with true Christian values. If so, that same song exhorts you: “*O Christian youths, strive to keep your way clean.*” The time will come for you to make your own decisions, so now “*learn while you’re young on Jehovah to lean./But to be popular never do toil.*”



If you mistakenly put popularity first in your life, all the training you receive could be in vain and you could ruin your prospects for the future. The desire to be popular can lead to letting your guard down. Some have ended up associating with those who, while seemingly inoffensive, even attractive, have no interest in Christian standards. That was illustrated with Tara, a leading character depicted in the video *Young People Ask—How Can I Make Real Friends?* Like Tara, any young Christian who associates with those who do not value true worship will discover that sooner or later “*bad companions good habits will spoil,*” as the song says. It takes years of effort to develop good habits, but they can quickly be spoiled.

Admittedly, the way of godly fear is not easy. Still, as the song goes on to say, “*if you*



remember your God in your youth,/And serve Jehovah in spirit and truth," you will build a solid foundation for real success. And "as you grow older more joy you will know." You will come to appreciate even more that under Jehovah's loving care, nothing can stop you from doing what is right in his eyes. That is the way to become a mature, godly adult. More than that, wisely taking advantage of a Christian upbringing gives you the opportunity to "make God's own heart with gladness to glow." What greater privilege could a human have?—Proverbs 27:11.

Therefore, youths, always remember how valuable the training from Jehovah and

your Christian parents is. May their great love for you move you to do what is pleasing in Jehovah's sight. Like Jesus Christ and faithful young Timothy, you will make your heavenly Father and your earthly parents happy. And if you ever become a parent yourself, you will probably agree with Angélica, mentioned earlier, who says: "If I ever have a child, I will try very hard to put love for Jehovah into his heart from infancy, to make that his guiding light." Certainly, the upright path that leads to eternal life is the most valuable legacy there is!

WHO WERE THE *Anabaptists?*

FIRST-TIME visitors to the city center of Münster in Westphalia, Germany, invariably stop to gaze at three iron cages that hang from a church tower. Except for a few short intervals, the cages have been there for nearly 500 years. They originally held the bodies of three men who had been publicly tortured and executed. The men were Anabaptists, and the cages are relics of their kingdom.

Who were the Anabaptists? How did the movement get started? What were its main teachings? Why were the men executed? And what connection do the three cages have with a kingdom?

Reform the Church—But How?

In the late 15th and early 16th centuries, criticism of the Roman Catholic Church and the clergy grew. Corruption and immorality permeated the church; hence, many felt that vast changes were needed. In 1517, Martin Luther publicly called for reform, and as others joined the debate, the Protestant Reformation was soon under way.

But the reformers had no uniform strategy as to what ought to be done or how far the changes ought to go. Many recognized the need for adhering to the Bible in matters of worship. Yet, the reformers could not even agree on a common interpretation of Bible teachings. Some felt that the Reformation was progressing too slowly. And it was among these reformers that the Anabaptist movement formed its roots.

"Strictly speaking, there was not one bap-

tist movement; there were several," writes Hans-Jürgen Goertz in his book *Die Täufer—Geschichte und Deutung*. For instance, in 1521 four men known as the Zwickau prophets caused a stir by preaching Anabaptist teachings in Wittenberg. And in 1525 a separate group of Anabaptists was founded in Zurich, Switzerland. Anabaptist communities also started in Moravia—now the Czech Republic—and in the Netherlands.

Baptism—For Children or for Adults?

Anabaptist communities were mostly small, and members generally behaved peaceably. The adherents made no secret of their beliefs; in fact, they preached to others. The basic tenets of the Anabaptist faith were defined in the Schleitheim Confession in 1527. Among other things, they refused to bear arms, kept separate from the world, and excommunicated wrongdoers. But what characterized their faith more than anything else, clearly distinguishing Anabaptists from other religions, was the conviction that baptism was for adults and not for children.*

Adult baptism was not simply a question of religious dogma; it was an issue of power. If baptism was delayed until adulthood—thus allowing a person to make a decision based on faith—some might not get baptized at all. And individuals not baptized would, at

* This article does not examine the arguments for or against the baptism of children. For further details on this subject, see the article "Should Babies Be Baptized?" in *The Watchtower* of March 15, 1986.

least to a degree, remain outside the control of the church. For some churches, adult baptism meant a loss of power.

Hence, Catholics and Lutherans alike wanted to discourage the practice of adult baptism. After 1529, at least in some areas, those who performed adult baptism or who were baptized as adults were liable to receive the death penalty. Journalist Thomas Seifert explains that Anabaptists were "bitterly persecuted throughout the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation." Persecution reached its climax in Münster.

Medieval Münster Seeks Change

Medieval Münster had about 10,000 inhabitants and was enclosed by an almost impregnable system of defenses, about 300 feet wide and some 3 miles in circumference. The situation inside the city, however, was far less stable than its defenses. *The Kingdom of the Anabaptists*, published by the City Museum of Münster, mentions "inner political disputes between the City's Aldermen and the Guilds." Furthermore, residents were indignant at the behavior of the clergy. Münster embraced the Reformation and in 1533 changed from a Catholic to a Lutheran city.

One of the foremost reformist preachers in Münster was Bernhard Rothmann, a rather impetuous individual. Author Friedrich

Oehninger explains that Rothmann's "views became decidedly Anabaptist; he and other colleagues refused to baptize infants." He gained popular support in Münster, though his radical views were too extreme for some. "More and more of those who loved the old order left the city, filled with a sense of unease and foreboding. Anabaptists streamed to Münster from all over, hoping to find the realization of their ideals." This concentration of Anabaptists in Münster led to a horrific episode.

New Jerusalem Under Siege

Two Dutch migrants to Münster—Jan Mathys, a baker from Haarlem, and Jan Beuckelson, known as John of Leiden—were to play a decisive role in developments there. Mathys claimed to be a prophet and announced April 1534 as the time of the second coming of Christ. The city was declared to be the New Jerusalem mentioned in the Bible, and the mood became apocalyptic. Rothmann decided that all property should be owned communally. Adult residents had to make a decision: Get baptized or get out. Mass baptisms included some who got immersed simply to avoid having to leave their home and belongings.

Other communities looked on aghast as Münster became the first city in which Anabaptists were the strongest religious and political force. According to the book *Die Täufer zu Münster*, this brought "Münster the hostility of the entire Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation." A local dignitary, Prince-Bishop Count Franz von Waldeck, gathered an army to lay siege to Münster. That army was made up of both Lutherans and Catholics. These two faiths, which had hitherto stood on opposite sides of the Reformation and would soon be at each other's throats in the Thirty Years' War, joined forces against the Anabaptists.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

God Really Cares About You

'Go and Make Disciples'

"They Sailed Away to Cyprus"

Destruction of the Anabaptist Kingdom

The strength of the besieging army did not impress those protected within the city's walls. In April 1534, when Christ's second coming was supposed to occur, Mathys rode out of the city on a white horse, expecting divine protection. Imagine the horror of Mathys' supporters as they peered over the city wall and saw besieging troops cut Mathys to pieces and raise his head on a stake.

John of Leiden became Mathys' successor and was named King Jan of the Anabaptists in Münster. He tried to counteract the imbalance between the sexes—the city had many more women than men—by encouraging the men to take as many wives as they saw fit. As to extremes within the Anabaptist kingdom in Münster, adultery and fornication were punishable by death, whereas polygamy was tolerated, even encouraged. King Jan himself took 16 wives. When one of them, Elisabeth Wandscherer, asked his permission to leave the city, she was publicly beheaded.

The siege lasted for 14 months, until June 1535 when the city finally fell. Münster suffered destruction the like of which the city did not see again until World War II. Rothmann escaped, but King Jan and two other leading Anabaptists were captured, tortured, and executed. Their bodies were placed in cages and hoisted up to hang from the steeple of St. Lambert's Church. That was "to serve as a terrifying warning to all potential troublemakers," explains Seifert. Yes, meddling in politics brought drastic consequences.

What happened to other Anabaptist communities? Persecution continued for several years throughout Europe. The majority of



King Jan was tortured, executed, and hanged from the steeple of St. Lambert's Church

Anabaptists stuck to their pacifist principles, though there was a belligerent minority. In time, the former priest Menno Simons took over leadership of the Anabaptists, and the group eventually came to be known as the Mennonites or by other names.

The Three Cages

The Anabaptists were basically religious people who tried to stick to Bible principles. But radicals in Münster led Anabaptists to abandon that course and get involved in politics. Once that happened, the movement turned into a revolutionary force. This spelled disaster for the Anabaptist movement and for the medieval city of Münster.

Visitors to the city center are still reminded of these horrific events of almost 500 years ago. How? By the three iron cages that hang from the church tower.

RIGHTLY VALUE YOUR GIFT OF LIFE

"The blood of the Christ [will] cleanse our consciences from dead works that we may render sacred service to the living God."—HEBREWS 9:14.

IF YOU were asked to put a value on your life, what would it be? We highly value life—our own and that of others. As evidence of that, we may go to a physician for care when we are sick or for regular checkups. We want to stay alive and healthy. Even most who are old or disabled do not want to die; they want to stay alive.

² Your evaluation of life affects your relationships with others. For example, God's Word directs: "Listen to your father who caused your birth, and do not despise your mother just because she has grown old." (Proverbs 23:22) To "listen" means more than just to hear words; this proverb means to hear and then to obey. (Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:12; 13:18; 15:5; Joshua 22:2; Psalm 81:13) What reason does God's Word give for listening? It is not just that your father and mother are older than you or have more experience. The reason given is that they "caused your birth." Some versions render this verse: "Listen to your father who gave you life." Understandably, if you value your life, you feel an obligation to the source of that life.

³ Of course, if you are a true Christian, you recognize Jehovah as the ultimate Source of your life. By him you "have life" itself; you can "move," act as a sentient creature; and you now "exist" and can think about or plan

for the future, including permanent life. (Acts 17:28; Psalm 36:9; Ecclesiastes 3:11) In line with Proverbs 23:22, it is right to "listen" to God obediently, desirous of grasping and acting on his view of life rather than preferring any other assessment of life.

Show Respect for Life

⁴ Early in man's history, Jehovah made clear that he did not leave it up to humans to use (or abuse) life for whatever reason. Consumed with jealous rage, Cain snuffed out an innocent life, his brother Abel's. Do you think that Cain had a right to make such a decision about life? God did not think so. He called Cain to account: "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground." (Genesis 4:10) Note that Abel's blood on the ground represented his life, which had been brutally cut short, and it cried out to God for vengeance. —Hebrews 12:24.

⁵ After the Flood, mankind started anew with just eight souls. In a declaration applying to all humans, God revealed more about his evaluation of life and blood. He said that humans could eat animal flesh, but he set this restriction: "Every moving animal that is alive may serve as food for you. As in the case of green vegetation, I do give it all to you. Only flesh with its soul—its blood—you must

1. What evidence is there that we put a high value on life?
- 2, 3. (a) Proverbs 23:22 highlights what obligation? (b) How is God involved in the obligation mentioned at Proverbs 23:22?

4. At an early point in man's history, how did respect for life become an issue?
5. (a) What prohibition did God set in Noah's day, and to whom did it apply? (b) In what sense was this prohibition an important step?

not eat." (Genesis 9:3, 4) Some Jews interpret that to mean that humans were not to eat flesh or blood of an animal that was still alive. But time would clearly show that what God was here prohibiting was the consuming of blood to sustain life. Moreover, God's decree through Noah was a major step forward in working out His elevated purpose involving blood—a purpose that would allow humans to gain everlasting life.

⁶ God continued: "Your blood of your souls shall I ask back. From the hand of every living creature shall I ask it back; and from the hand of man, from the hand of each one who is his brother, shall I ask back the soul of man. Anyone shedding man's blood, by man will his own blood be shed, for in God's image he made man." (Genesis 9:5, 6) You can see from this declaration to the whole human family that God views a man's blood as standing for his life. The Creator gives the person life, and no one should take that life, represented by blood. If, like Cain, someone does commit murder, the Creator has the right to "ask back" the murderer's life.

⁷ By his declaration, God was directing humans not to misuse blood. Have you ever wondered why? Yes, what was behind God's view on blood? Actually, the answer involves one of the most important teachings in the Bible. It is at the very core of the Christian message, though many churches choose to ignore it. What is that teaching, and how are your life, decisions, and actions involved?

Blood—How Could It Be Used?

⁸ Jehovah provided more details about life and blood when he gave Israel the Law code. In the process, he took a further step in the

6. Through Noah, how did God emphasize His view of the value of life?

7. Why should we be interested in God's declaration to Noah about blood?

8. In the Law, what limitation did Jehovah put on the use of blood?

outworking of his purpose. You probably know that the Law called for offerings to God, such as grain, oil, and wine. (Leviticus 2:1-4; 23:13; Numbers 15:1-5) There were also animal sacrifices. God said of these: "The soul of the flesh is in the blood, and I myself have put it upon the altar for you to make atonement for your souls, because it is the blood that makes atonement by the soul in it. That is why I have said to the sons of Israel: 'No soul of you must eat blood.'" Jehovah added that if someone, such as a hunter or a farmer, killed an animal for food, he had to drain the blood and cover it with dust. The earth is God's footstool, and by pouring the blood on the earth, the person acknowledged that the life was being returned to the Life-Giver.—Leviticus 17:11-13; Isaiah 66:1.

⁹ That law was not a mere religious ritual with no import for us. Did you notice why the Israelites were not to consume blood? God said: "That is why I have said to the sons of Israel: 'No soul of you must eat blood.'" What was the reason? "I myself have put [blood] upon the altar for you to make atonement for your souls." Do you see that this provides insight into why God told Noah that humans were not to eat blood? The Creator chose to view blood as having an elevated significance, reserving it for one special use that could save many lives. It was to play a vital role in covering sins (atonement). So under the Law, the only God-authorized use of blood was on the altar to make atonement for the lives of the Israelites, who were seeking Jehovah's forgiveness.

¹⁰ This concept is not remote from Christianity. Referring to this divinely arranged feature of the Law, the Christian apostle Paul

9. What was the sole use of blood outlined in the Law, and what was the purpose of this?

10. Why could animal blood not lead to full forgiveness, but what reminder did the sacrifices under the Law provide?

wrote: "Nearly all things are cleansed with blood according to the Law, and unless blood is poured out no forgiveness takes place." (Hebrews 9:22) Paul made it clear that the required sacrifices did not turn the Israelites into perfect, sinless humans. He wrote: "By these sacrifices there is a reminding of sins from year to year, for it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take sins away." (Hebrews 10:1-4) Still, such sacrifices were useful. They reminded the Israelites that they were sinful and needed something more in order to gain complete forgiveness. But if the blood that represented the lives of animals could not completely cover human sins, could any lifeblood do so?

The Life-Giver's Solution

¹¹ The Law was actually pointing to something vastly more effective in accomplishing God's will. Paul asked: "Why, then, the Law?" He answered: "It was added to make transgressions manifest, until the seed should arrive to whom the promise had been made; and it was transmitted through angels by the hand of a mediator [Moses]." (Galatians 3:19) Similarly, Paul wrote: "The Law has a shadow of the good things to come, but not the very substance of the things."—Hebrews 10:1.

¹² In summary, recall that in Noah's day



Through the Law, God made it clear that blood could serve a role in the forgiveness of sins

God decreed that humans could eat animal meat to sustain life, but they could not take in blood. In time, God stated that "the soul of the flesh is in the blood." Yes, he chose to view blood as standing for life and said: "I myself have put [blood] upon the altar for you to make atonement for your souls." There was to be, however, a wonderful further unfolding of God's purpose. The Law foreshadowed good things to come. What?

¹³ The reality centered on the death of Jesus Christ. You know that Jesus was tortured and impaled. He died like a criminal. Paul wrote: "Christ, while we were yet weak, died for ungodly men at the appointed time. . . .

God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6, 8) In dying for us, Christ provided a ransom to cover our sins. That ransom is at the core of the Christian message. (Matthew 20:28; John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Timothy 2:6) What does this have to do with blood and life, and how is your life involved?

¹⁴ Some churches emphasize Jesus' death, their adherents saying such things as "Jesus died for me." Consider how some Bible translations render Ephesians 1:7: "It is in him and through his death we have deliverance, that is, the putting away of our offences." (*The American Bible*, by Frank Scheil Ballen-

11. How do we know that sacrifices of animal blood were pointing to something?

12. Regarding blood, how can we see the unfolding of God's purpose?
13. Why was Jesus' death important?
14, 15. (a) How do some translations of Ephesians 1:7 put emphasis on Jesus' death? (b) What about Ephesians 1:7 might be overlooked?

tine, 1902) "By the death of Christ we are set free, and our sins are forgiven." (*Today's English Version*, 1966) "It is in and through Christ and the sacrifice of his life that we have been liberated, a liberation which means the forgiveness of sins." (*The New Testament*, by William Barclay, 1969) "It is through Christ's death that our sins are forgiven and we are set free." (*The Translator's New Testament*, 1973) You can see in such renderings an emphasis on Jesus' death. 'But,' some may say, 'Jesus' death is truly important. So, what is lacking in these renderings?'

¹⁵ Really, if you had to depend on such translations, you might overlook a very important point, and this could limit your understanding of the Bible's message. Such renderings obscure the fact that the original text of Ephesians 1:7 contains a Greek word that means "blood." Thus, many Bibles, such as the *New World Translation*, come closer to the original: "By means of him we have the release by ransom through *the blood* of that one, yes, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his undeserved kindness."

¹⁶ The rendering "the blood of that one" is rich in meaning and should convey much to our mind. More was needed than a death, even the death of the perfect man Jesus. He brought to fulfillment what was foreshadowed in the Law, particularly on the Day of



Through the blood of Jesus, many lives could be saved

Atonement. On that special day, designated animals were sacrificed. Then the high priest took some of their blood into the Most Holy compartment of the tabernacle or temple, there presenting it before God, as if in his presence.—Exodus 25:22; Leviticus 16:2-19.

¹⁷ Jesus fulfilled what was foreshadowed by the Atonement Day, as Paul explained. First, he mentioned that the high priest in Israel entered the Most Holy once a year with blood offered "for himself and for the sins of ignorance of the people." (*Hebrews* 9:6, 7) True to that pattern, after being raised as a spirit, Jesus went to heaven itself. As a spirit, having no flesh-and-blood body, he

could go before "the person of God for us." What did he present to God? Not something physical but something very meaningful. Paul continued: "When Christ came as a high priest . . . , he entered, no, not with the blood of goats and of young bulls, but with his own blood, once for all time into the holy place and obtained an everlasting deliverance for us. For if the blood of goats and of bulls . . . sanctifies to the extent of cleanliness of the flesh, how much more will the blood of the Christ, who through an everlasting spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works that we may render sacred service to the living God?" Yes, Jesus presented to God the value of his lifeblood.—*Hebrews* 9:11-14, 24, 28; 10:11-14; 1 Peter 3:18.

16. The rendering "the blood of that one" should convey what to our mind?

17. How did Jesus fulfill what was foreshadowed by the Atonement Day?

WHICH BLOOD SAVES LIVES?

"Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son."—Acts 20:28.

"Much more, therefore, since we have been declared righteous now by his blood, shall we be saved through him from wrath."—Romans 5:9.

"You had no hope and were without God in the world. But now in union with Christ Jesus you who were once far off have come to be near by the blood of the Christ."—Ephesians 2:12, 13.

"God saw good for all fullness to dwell in him, and through him to reconcile again to himself all other things by making peace through the blood he shed on the torture stake."—Colossians 1:19, 20.

"Therefore, brothers, . . . we have boldness for the way of entry into the holy place by the blood of Jesus."—Hebrews 10:19.

"It was not with corruptible things . . . that you were delivered from your fruitless form of conduct received by tradition from your forefathers. But it was with precious blood, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb, even Christ's."—1 Peter 1:18, 19.

"If we are walking in the light as he himself is in the light, we do have a sharing with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."—1 John 1:7.

"You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because you were slaughtered and with your blood you bought persons for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."—Revelation 5:9.

"The accuser of our brothers has been hurled down . . . And they conquered him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their witnessing."—Revelation 12:10, 11.

¹⁸ This divine truth allows us to grasp the wondrous scope of what the Bible says about blood—why God views it as he does, what our view of it should be, and why we ought to respect the restrictions God set about the use of blood. When reading the books of the Christian Greek Scriptures, you will find numerous references to the blood of Christ. (See the box.) These make plain that each Christian should put faith "in his [Jesus'] blood." (Romans 3:25) Our gaining forgiveness and having peace with God is possible only "through the blood he [Jesus] shed." (Colossians 1:20) This is certainly true of those with whom Jesus made a special covenant to reign with him in heaven. (Luke 22:

20, 28-30; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Hebrews 13:20) It is also true of the "great crowd" today, who will survive the coming "great tribulation" and enjoy life everlasting in an earthly paradise. Figuratively, they 'wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb.'—Revelation 7:9, 14.

¹⁹ Clearly, blood has a special meaning in God's eyes. It should in ours too. The Creator, who is concerned about life, has a right to restrict what humans do with blood. In his great concern even about our life, he determined to reserve blood for use in one highly important way, the only way that makes everlasting life possible. That way involved

18, 20. (a) Why has God chosen to restrict the use of blood, and how should we feel about that? (b) What should we be interested in knowing?

18. Why should the Bible's statements about blood be important to Christians today?

Jesus' precious blood. How thankful we can be that Jehovah God acted for our good by using blood—Jesus' blood—in this lifesaving way! And how grateful we should be to Jesus for his sacrificially pouring out his blood for us! Truly, we can grasp the sentiments expressed by the apostle John: "To him that loves us and that loosed us from our sins by means of his own blood—and he made us to be a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—yes, to him be the glory and the might forever. Amen."—Revelation 1:5, 6.

²⁰ Our all-wise God and Life-Giver long had in mind this lifesaving role. We might ask, then, 'What impact should this have on our

decisions and actions?' The following article will address this question.

How Would You Answer?

- What can we learn about God's view of blood from the accounts involving Abel and Noah?
- In the Law, what limitation did God put on the use of blood, and why?
- How did Jesus fulfill what was foreshadowed by the Atonement Day?
- How can the blood of Jesus save our life?

BE GUIDED BY THE LIVING GOD

"Turn . . . to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them."—ACTS 14:15.

AFTER the apostle Paul and Barnabas healed a man, Paul assured observers in Lystra: "We also are humans having the same infirmities as you do, and are declaring the good news to you, for you to turn from these vain things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them."—Acts 14:15.

² How very true that Jehovah is, not a lifeless idol, but "the living God"! (Jeremiah 10:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10) Beyond living himself, Jehovah is the Source of our life. "He himself gives to all persons life and breath and all things." (Acts 17:25) He is interested in our enjoying life, present and fu-

ture. Paul added that God "did not leave himself without witness in that he did good, giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts to the full with food and good cheer."—Acts 14:17.

³ God's interest in our life gives us reason to trust his guidance. (Psalm 147:8; Matthew 5:45) Some may react otherwise if they find a Bible directive that they do not understand or that seems restrictive. Still, trusting Jehovah's guidance has proved to be wise. To illustrate: Even if an Israelite did not understand the law against touching a dead body, he benefited by obeying it. First, his obedience would draw him closer to the living

1, 2. Why is it fitting to recognize Jehovah as "the living God"?

3. Why can we trust the guidance that God provides?

The governing body concluded that Christians must 'abstain from blood'

God; second, it would help him to avoid diseases.—Leviticus 5:2; 11:24.

⁴ It is similar with God's guidance about blood. He told Noah that humans should not consume blood. Then in the Law, God revealed that the only approved use of blood was on the altar—for forgiveness of sin. By those directives, God was laying the groundwork for the supreme use of blood—the saving of lives by means of Jesus' ransom. (Hebrews 9:14) Yes, God's guidance was with our life and well-being in mind. Discussing Genesis 9:4, 19th-century Bible scholar Adam Clarke wrote: "This command [to Noah] is still scrupulously obeyed by the oriental Christians . . . No blood was eaten *under the law*, because it pointed out the blood that *was to be shed* for the sin of the world; and *under the Gospel* it should not be eaten, because it should ever be considered as representing the blood which *has been shed* for the remission of sins."

⁵ This scholar may have been referring to the basic gospel, or good news, bound up in Jesus. That includes God's sending his Son to die for us, to pour out his blood so that we might have everlasting life. (Matthew 20:28; John 3:16; Romans 5:8, 9) The comment also covered the later command that Christ's followers abstain from blood.

⁶ You know that God gave the Israelites hundreds of regulations. Once Jesus died, his disciples were not obliged to keep all those laws. (Romans 7:4, 6; Colossians 2:13,

4, 5. (a) Before the Christian era, what guidance about blood did Jehovah give? (b) How do we know that God's guidance about blood involves Christians?

6. What directives about blood were given to Christians, and why?



14, 17; Hebrews 8:6, 13) However, in time a question arose about one key obligation—male circumcision. Would non-Jews who wanted to benefit from Christ's blood have to be circumcised, showing that they were still under the Law? In 49 C.E., the Christian governing body addressed that issue. (Acts, chapter 15) Aided by God's spirit, the apostles and older men concluded that obligatory circumcision ended with the Law. Still, certain divine requirements remained for Christians. In a letter to the congregations, the governing body wrote: "The holy spirit and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden to you, except these necessary things, to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication. If you carefully keep yourselves from these things, you will prosper."—Acts 15:28, 29.

⁷ Plainly, the governing body viewed 'abstaining from blood' to be as morally vital as abstaining from sexual immorality or idol worship. This proves that the prohibition about blood is serious. Christians who unrepentantly commit idolatry or sexual immorality cannot "inherit God's kingdom"; "their portion will be . . . the second death." (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Revelation 21:8; 22:15) Note the contrast: Disregarding God's

7. How important is it for Christians to 'abstain from blood'?

guidance concerning the sacredness of life-blood can result in everlasting death. Showing respect for Jesus' sacrifice can lead to everlasting life.

⁸ How did the early Christians understand and act on God's guidance about blood? Recall Clarke's comment: "*Under the Gospel* it should not be eaten, because it should ever be considered as representing the blood which has been shed for the remission of sins." History confirms that the early Christians treated the matter seriously. Tertullian wrote: "Consider those who with greedy thirst, at a show in the arena, take the fresh blood of wicked criminals . . . and carry it off to heal their epilepsy." Whereas pagans consumed blood, Tertullian said that Christians "do not even have the blood of animals at [their] meals . . . At the trials of Christians you offer them sausages filled with blood. You are convinced, of course, that [it] is unlawful for them." Yes, despite threats of death, Christians would not consume blood. God's guidance was that important to them.

⁹ Some may imagine that the governing body simply meant that Christians were not to eat or drink blood directly nor to eat unbled meat or food mixed with blood. Granted, that was the first import of God's command to Noah. And the apostolic decree did tell Christians to 'keep themselves from things strangled,' meat with blood left in it. (Genesis 9:3, 4; Acts 21:25) However, the early Christians knew that more was involved. Sometimes blood was taken in for medical reasons. Tertullian noted that in an effort to cure epilepsy, some pagans consumed fresh blood. And there may have been other uses of blood to treat disease or supposedly improve health. Hence, for Christians, shun-

8. What indicates that the early Christians took God's guidance about blood seriously?
9. Abstaining from blood included what besides not eating blood directly?

ning blood included not taking it in for "medical" reasons. They maintained that stand even if it put their life at risk.

Blood as Medicine

¹⁰ Using blood medically is now common. Early transfusions were of whole blood—removed from a donor, stored, and given to a patient, perhaps a battle casualty. In time, researchers learned to separate blood into primary components. By using component transfusions, physicians could spread donated blood to more patients, perhaps plasma to one injured man and red cells to another. Continued research showed that a component, such as blood plasma, could be processed to extract numerous fractions, which could be given to still more patients. Steps along this line continue, and new uses of fractions are being reported. How is the Christian to respond? He has firmly resolved never to accept a blood transfusion, but his physician urges him to accept one major component, maybe packed red cells. Or the therapy may consist of one small fraction extracted from a component. How can a servant of God decide on such questions, bearing in mind that blood is sacred and that Christ's blood is lifesaving in the greatest sense?

¹¹ Decades ago Jehovah's Witnesses made their stand clear. For example, they supplied an article to *The Journal of the American Medical Association* (November 27, 1981; reprinted in *How Can Blood Save Your Life?* pages 27-9).^{*} That article quoted from Genesis, Leviticus, and Acts. It said: "While these verses are not stated in medical terms, Witnesses view them as ruling out transfusion of

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

10. What are some ways in which blood is being used medically, giving rise to what question?
11. What medically accurate position regarding blood have Witnesses long held?

BASIC STAND ON BLOOD

UNACCEPTABLE	WHOLE BLOOD			
	Red cells	White cells	Platelets	Plasma
CHRISTIAN TO DECIDE	Fractions from red cells	Fractions from white cells	Fractions from platelets	Fractions from plasma

whole blood, packed RBCs [red blood cells], and plasma, as well as WBC [white blood cell] and platelet administration." The 2001 textbook *Emergency Care*, under "Composition of the Blood," stated: "The blood is made up of several components: plasma, red and white blood cells, and platelets." Thus, in line with medical facts, Witnesses refuse transfusions of whole blood or of any of its four primary components.

¹² The medical article continued: "Witnesses' religious understanding does not absolutely prohibit the use of [fractions] such as albumin, immune globulins, and hemophilic preparations; each Witness must decide individually if he can accept these." Since 1981, many fractions (breakdown elements derived from one of the four major components) have been isolated for use. Accordingly, *The Watchtower* of June 15, 2000, provided helpful information on the subject in the article "Questions From Readers." For the benefit of millions of current readers, the answer is reprinted on pages 29-31 of this magazine. It provides details and reasoning, yet you will see that what it says agrees with the basics presented in 1981.

12. (a) What position has been presented regarding fractions extracted from primary components of blood? (b) Where can additional information about this be found?

The Role of Your Conscience

¹³ Such information brings conscience to the fore. Why? Christians agree on the need to follow God's guidance, yet in some areas personal judgments must be made, and conscience comes into play. Conscience is the inherent ability to weigh and decide matters, often moral issues. (Romans 2:14, 15) You know, however, that consciences differ.* The Bible mentions that some have 'consciences that are weak,' implying that others' consciences are strong. (1 Corinthians 8:12) Christians differ in the extent to which they have made progress in learning what God says, in being sensitive to his thinking, and in applying such to their decisions. We can illustrate this with the Jews and the eating of meat.

¹⁴ The Bible is clear that a person obedient to God would not eat unbled meat. That was

* At one point, Paul and four other Christians went to the temple to cleanse themselves ceremonially. The Law was no longer valid, yet Paul acted on the advice of the older men in Jerusalem. (Acts 21:23-25) Still, some Christians may have felt that they would not go into the temple or go through such a procedure. Consciences differed back then, and they do today.

13, 14. (a) What is conscience, and how does it come into play regarding blood? (b) What guidance about eating meat did God provide for Israel, but what questions might have arisen?

Do not ignore your conscience if you are faced with a decision about a blood fraction

so important that even in an emergency when Israelite soldiers ate unbled meat, they were guilty of a grave wrong, or sin. (Deuteronomy 12:15, 16; 1 Samuel 14:31-35) Still, questions might have arisen. When an Israelite killed a sheep, how quickly did he have to drain its blood? Did he have to slit the animal's throat for drainage? Was it necessary to hang the sheep by its hind legs? For how long? What would he do with a large cow? Even after drainage, some blood might remain in the meat. Could he eat such meat? Who would decide?

¹⁵ Imagine a zealous Jew facing such issues. He might have thought it safest to avoid meat sold in a meat market, much as another would shun meat if there was a chance that it was once offered to an idol. Other Jews might have eaten meat only after following rituals to extract the blood.* (Matthew 23:23, 24) What do you think about such varied reactions? Furthermore, since God did not require such reactions, would it be best for Jews to send a multitude of questions to a council of rabbis to get a ruling on each one? Though that custom developed in Judaism, we can be happy that Jehovah did not direct true worshipers to pursue decisions about blood in that way. God offered basic guidance on slaughtering clean ani-

* The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* outlines "complex and minute" rules about "koshering" meat. It covers how many minutes meat must stand in water, how to drain it on a board, the texture of salt to rub on it, and then how many times to wash it in cold water.

15. How did some Jews respond regarding the eating of meat, but what did God direct?



mals and draining their blood, but he did not go beyond that.—John 8:32.

¹⁶ As noted in paragraphs 11 and 12, Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept transfusions of whole blood or of its four primary components—plasma, red cells, white cells, and platelets. What about small fractions extracted from a primary component, such as serums containing antibodies to fight a disease or to counteract snake venom? (See page 30, paragraph 4.) Some have concluded that such minute fractions are, in effect, no longer blood and hence are not covered by the command 'to abstain from blood.' (Acts 15:29; 21:25; page 31, paragraph 1) That is their responsibility. The conscience of others moves them to reject everything obtained from blood (animal or human), even a tiny fraction of just one primary component.* Still others may accept injections of a plasma protein to fight disease or to counteract snake venom, yet they may reject

* Increasingly, the main or active ingredient in some injections is a recombinant product that is not from blood. But in some cases a small amount of a blood fraction, such as albumin, may be included.—See "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of October 1, 1994.

16. Why might Christians have differing views about accepting an injection of a small fraction from a blood component?

other small fractions. Moreover, some products derived from one of the four primary components may be so similar to the function of the whole component and carry on such a life-sustaining role in the body that most Christians would find them objectionable.

¹⁷ What the Bible says about conscience is helpful when we make such decisions. The first step is to learn what God's Word says and to strive to mold your conscience by it. That will equip you to decide in line with God's guidance rather than ask someone else to make a ruling for you. (Psalm 25:4, 5) As to taking in blood fractions, some have thought, 'This is a matter of conscience, so it doesn't make any difference.' That is faulty reasoning. The fact that something is a matter of conscience does not mean that it is inconsequential. It can be very serious. One reason is that it can affect individuals whose conscience differs from ours. We see that from Paul's advice about meat that *might* have been presented to an idol and was later sold in a market. A Christian ought to

17. (a) How can our conscience be an aid when we are facing questions about blood fractions? (b) Why is making decisions on this matter so serious?

Can You Recall?

- God provided what guidance about blood to Noah, to the Israelites, and to Christians?
- Regarding blood, what do Jehovah's Witnesses absolutely refuse?
- In what sense is receiving small fractions from a primary component of blood up to one's conscience, but what does that not mean?
- In making decisions, why should we keep our relationship with God foremost in mind?

be concerned about not 'wounding consciences that are weak.' If he stumbles others, he could 'ruin his brother for whose sake Christ died' and be sinning against Christ. Hence, while issues about tiny blood fractions are for personal decision, those decisions should be taken very seriously.—1 Corinthians 8:8, 11-13; 10:25-31.

¹⁸ A related aspect underscores the seriousness of decisions concerning blood. This is the effect such decisions may have on you. If your taking a small blood fraction would trouble your Bible-trained conscience, you should not ignore it. Nor should you suppress your conscientious leaning just because someone tells you, "It's all right to take this; many have." Remember, millions of people today ignore their conscience, and that becomes deadened, allowing them to lie or do other wrong things with no remorse. Christians definitely want to avoid such a course.—2 Samuel 24:10; 1 Timothy 4:1, 2.

¹⁹ Near its conclusion, the reprinted answer on pages 29-31 says: "Does the fact that opinions and conscientious decisions may differ mean that the issue is inconsequential? No. It is serious." It is particularly so because your relationship with "the living God" is involved. That relationship is the only one that can lead to everlasting life, based on the saving power of Jesus' shed blood. Cultivate a profound regard for blood because of what God is doing by means of it—saving lives. Paul aptly wrote: "You had no hope and were without God in the world. But now in union with Christ Jesus you who were once far off have come to be near *by the blood of the Christ*."—Ephesians 2:12, 13.

18. How can a Christian avoid deadening his conscience as to decisions about blood?
19. In deciding medical issues involving blood, what should we keep uppermost in mind?

Gilead Graduates Go Forth as Zealous Harvest Workers!



THE harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, I beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:37, 38) Those words had special meaning for the graduating students of the 116th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead as they prepared to go forth to their missionary assignments.

On Saturday, March 13, 2004, a total of 6,684 people gathered at the Watchtower Educational Center in Patterson, New York, and at satellite locations for the graduation program, during which the class received parting admonition and encouragement. All of us can benefit from the advice that was imparted, as we work zealously in the spiritual harvest.

The opening remarks by Theodore Jaracz, a member of the Governing Body and a graduate of the seventh class of Gilead, highlighted Jesus' words: "Go . . . and make disciples of people of all the nations." (Matthew 28:19, 20) How appropriate that was, since the graduates are being sent to serve in 20 different countries! He reminded the students that instruction from God's Word has fully equipped them to be zealous workers in the all-important spiritual harvest.—Matthew 5:16.

How to Be Productive Harvest Workers

The first speaker on the program was Robert Wallen, who has been closely associated with Gilead School for years. Speaking on the theme "The Beauty of Compassion," he told the students: "Compassion is the language that even the deaf can hear and the blind can see." Jesus was keenly aware of the distress of others and sought to alleviate it. (Matthew 9:36) The students will find many opportunities to do likewise—in the preaching work, in the congregation, in the missionary home, and in their own marriage. The speaker urged them: "Let the beauty of compassion show itself in your life as you serve others. Only your best behavior is good enough for daily living in the missionary home. Therefore, be determined to

clothe yourselves with compassion."—Colossians 3:12.

Next, Gerrit Lösch, a member of the Governing Body and a graduate of the 41st class of Gilead, developed the subject "Publishers of Salvation." (Isaiah 52:7) For people to be physically saved when the present system of things is destroyed, they must take in accurate knowledge from God's Word, make public declaration of their faith, and get baptized. (Romans 10:10; 2 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 3:21) However, the primary reason for publishing salvation is, not to save

CLASS STATISTICS

Number of countries represented: 6

Number of countries assigned to: 20

Number of students: 46

Average age: 34.2

Average years in truth: 17.2

Average years in full-time ministry: 13.9



116th Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back, and names are listed from left to right in each row.

- (1) Ceansu, R.; Sparks, T.; Piña, C.; Turner, P.; Cheney, L. (2) Suardy, M.; Sjöqvist, Å.; Amadori, L.; Smith, N.; Jordan, A.; Boissonneault, L. (3) Matlock, J.; Ruiz, C.; Dular, L.; Vigneron, M.; Henry, K. (4) Sjöqvist, H.; Laux, J.; Ruzzo, J.; Gustafsson, K.; Boissonneault, R.; Jordan, M. (5) Henry, D.; Turner, D.; Kirwin, S.; Florit, K.; Ceansu, S. (6) Amadori, S.; Cheney, J.; Ross, R.; Nelson, J.; Ruiz, J.; Vigneron, M. (7) Florit, J.; Matlock, D.; Ross, B.; Laux, C.; Ruzzo, T.; Dular, D.; Kirwin, N. (8) Gustafsson, A.; Nelson, D.; Suardy, W.; Piña, M.; Smith, C.; Sparks, T.

humans, but to bring praise to God. Therefore, Brother Lösch admonished the prospective missionaries: "Take the Kingdom message to the extremities of the earth, and be zealous publishers of salvation, all to Jehovah's praise."—Romans 10:18.

"How Bright Are You?" was the question that Gilead instructor Lawrence Bowen raised. He referred to Jesus' words recorded at Matthew 6:22 and encouraged the graduating students to keep their eye "simple" in order to "reflect spiritual enlightenment that glorifies Jehovah and benefits fellow humans." From the outset of his ministry, Jesus set a perfect example in this regard by main-

taining his focus on the doing of God's will. Meditating upon the wonderful things his Father had taught him in heaven helped Jesus endure the tests by Satan in the wilderness. (Matthew 3:16; 4:1-11) Jesus demonstrated complete reliance on Jehovah in fulfilling what God assigned him to do. Likewise, in order to meet the challenges ahead, the missionaries must continue with good Bible study habits and fully rely on Jehovah.

Mark Noumair, a Gilead instructor and a graduate of the 77th class of Gilead, concluded this series of talks, speaking on the theme "Here We Are in Your Hand." (Joshua 9:25) He encouraged the students to imitate the at-

titude of the ancient Gibeonites. Though Gibeon was "a great city . . . and all its men were mighty ones," the Gibeonites did not demand recognition or expect to have things on their terms. (Joshua 10:2) They willingly served as "gatherers of wood and drawers of water" under the Levites in support of Jehovah's worship. (Joshua 9:27) In effect, the members of the graduating class have said to the Greater Joshua, Jesus Christ, "Here we are in your hand." Now, as they take up their foreign assignments, they need to accept whatever work the Greater Joshua gives them to do.

Experiences and Interviews

"Fully Open Up the Scriptures" was the theme of a discussion that Wallace Liverance, a graduate of the 61st class of Gilead and one of the instructors, had with a group of students. They related and enacted experiences that they had enjoyed in the field ministry during the course of the school term. It was plain that their intensive study of the Scriptures over their five months of training had reached their heart and motivated them to share with others what they had learned. (Luke 24:32) During the five-month course, one student was able to share with his own fleshly brother what he had been learning. This encouraged his brother to seek out the local congregation and begin his own study of the Bible. He has now qualified as an unbaptized publisher.

Following these experiences, Richard Ashe and John Gibbard conducted interviews with several longtime faithful servants of Jehovah, including traveling overseers who were receiving special training at the Watchtower Educational Center. They were graduates of earlier classes of Gilead School. One recalled that Brother Knorr had said this during the course of the class: "At Gilead you will do a lot of studying. But if you come out with a big head, we will have failed. We want you to come out with a big heart." The travel-

ing brothers advised the present class to be people-oriented, to deal with others as Christ did, and to accept humbly whatever assignment they are given. Applying this counsel will undoubtedly help the new missionaries to be productive in their assignments.

Go Forth as Zealous Harvest Workers!

The audience had an opportunity to hear from Stephen Lett, another member of the Governing Body. He delivered the main talk of the program, entitled "Go Forth as Zealous Harvest Workers!" (Matthew 9:38) In a literal harvest, the time for harvesting a crop is limited. There is a need for the harvesters to work hard. How much more important that is during the conclusion of this system of things! In the great spiritual harvest, lives are at stake. (Matthew 13:39) Brother Lett encouraged the graduates, not to 'loiter at their business,' but to be "aglow with the spirit" and to "slave for Jehovah" in this never-to-be-repeated harvest. (Romans 12:11) The speaker quoted Jesus' words: "Lift up your eyes and view the fields, that they are white for harvesting." (John 4:35) He then urged the graduates to show their zeal for the harvest work by putting forth genuine effort to reach people when and where they can be found and by taking advantage of all opportunities to do informal witnessing. Being alert to make things happen can facilitate the giving of an effective witness. Jehovah is a zealous God, and he expects all of us to imitate him and work hard in the spiritual harvest.—2 Kings 19:31; John 5:17.

In concluding the program, the chairman, Brother Jaracz, shared greetings from numerous branch offices and presented the students with their diplomas. One of the graduates read a letter from the class, expressing deep appreciation for the training they had received. Clearly, the graduation program of the 116th class made all in attendance more determined to go forth as zealous harvest workers.



'She Taught Us to Respect Her Religion'

ONE of Jehovah's Witnesses from the province of Rovigo, Italy, learned that she had a tumor and that her condition was serious. After several hospital stays, during which she asked to be treated without blood transfusions, she was assisted at home by nurses from the local cancer nursing service.

This 36-year-old patient's strong faith and readiness to cooperate profoundly impressed the medical personnel who treated her. Shortly before the cancer caused the patient's death, one of the nurses who assisted her wrote in a nursing magazine about the experience with the patient whom he called Angela.

"Angela is full of life and has the will to live. She is aware of her condition and her serious illness, and as any of us would be, she is searching for a solution, a remedy, or a medicine. . . . We nurses entered her life little by little. We did not encounter resistance. On the contrary, Angela's openness made everything easy. It was a pleasure to call on her, since we knew that it would be a time of genuine human contact and mutual benefit. . . . We immediately realized that her religion was going to be an obstacle to dealing with her illness." That was his opinion because he felt that Angela should be given blood transfusions, which she refused.—Acts 15:28, 29.

"As health-care professionals, we told Angela that we did not agree with her decision, but with her help, we understood what life

meant to her. We also understood the importance of her religion to both her and her family. Angela has not quit. She has not given in to the illness. She is strong. She wants to live, to fight, and to keep on living. She has expressed her determination, her belief. She has a determination that often we do not have, a faith, which in our case is not as firm.

... Angela has taught us the importance of respecting her religion, something quite distinct from our professional ethics. . . . We believe that what Angela has taught us is of great importance, for we encounter all sorts of people, all sorts of circumstances, and all sorts of religions, and we can learn from and offer something to everyone we contact."

The magazine article then drew attention to the Code of Professional Ethics for Italian Nurses, approved in 1999, which says: "The nurse acts, taking into consideration the individual's religious, ethical, and cultural values, as well as race and sex." At times, it may be difficult for doctors and nurses to respect a patient's religious convictions, and one cannot but appreciate those who are willing to do so.

The decisions Jehovah's Witnesses make concerning their health and medical care are well-thought-out. They consider seriously what the Scriptures say, and as illustrated by Angela's case, they are not fanatics. (Philippians 4:5) Around the globe, an increasing number of health-care professionals are willing to respect the conscience of their Witness patients.

Questions From Readers

Do Jehovah's Witnesses accept any minor fractions of blood?

The following answer is reprinted from the issue of June 15, 2000.

The fundamental answer is that Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept blood. We firmly believe that God's law on blood is not open to reform to fit shifting opinions. Still, new issues arise because blood can now be processed into four primary components and fractions of those components. In deciding whether to accept such, a Christian should look beyond possible medical benefits and risks. His concern should be what the Bible says and the potential effect on his relationship with Almighty God.

The key issues are quite simple. As an aid to seeing why that is so, consider some Biblical, historical, and medical background.

Jehovah God told our common ancestor Noah that blood must be treated as something special. (Genesis 9:3, 4) Later, God's laws to Israel reflected the sacredness of blood: "As for any man of the house of Israel or some alien resident . . . who eats any sort of blood, I shall certainly set my face against the soul that is eating the blood." By rejecting God's law, an Israelite could contaminate others; thus, God added: "I shall indeed cut him off from among his people." (Leviticus 17:10) Later, at a meeting in Jerusalem, the apostles and older men decreed that we must 'abstain from blood.' Doing so is as vital as abstaining from sexual immorality and idolatry.—Acts 15:28, 29.

What would "abstaining" have meant back then? Christians did not consume blood, whether fresh or coagulated; nor did they eat meat from an unbled animal. Also ruled out would be foods to which blood was added, such as blood sausage. Taking in blood in

any of those ways would violate God's law. —1 Samuel 14:32, 33.

Most people in ancient times would not have been troubled over the consuming of blood, as we can see from the writings of Tertullian (second and third centuries C.E.). Responding to false charges that Christians consumed blood, Tertullian mentioned tribes that sealed treaties by tasting blood. He also noted that "when a show is given in the arena, [some] with greedy thirst have caught the fresh blood of the guilty . . . as a cure for their epilepsy."

Those practices (even if some Romans did them for health reasons) were wrong for Christians: "We do not include even animals' blood in our natural diet," wrote Tertullian. The Romans used food containing blood as a test of the integrity of real Christians. Tertullian added: "Now, I ask you, what sort of a thing is it, that when you are confident [that Christians] will turn with horror from animals' blood, you should suppose them greedy for human blood?"

Today, few people would think that the laws of Almighty God are at issue if a physician suggested their taking blood. While Jehovah's Witnesses certainly want to keep living, we are committed to obey Jehovah's law on blood. What does this mean in the light of current medical practice?

As transfusions of whole blood became common after World War II, Jehovah's Witnesses saw that this was contrary to God's law—and we still believe that. Yet, medicine has changed over time. Today, most transfusions are not of whole blood but of one of its primary components: (1) red cells; (2) white cells; (3) platelets; (4) plasma (serum), the fluid part. Depending on the condition of

the patient, physicians might prescribe red cells, white cells, platelets, or plasma. Transfusing these major components allows a single unit of blood to be divided among more patients. Jehovah's Witnesses hold that accepting whole blood or any of those four primary components violates God's law. Significantly, keeping to this Bible-based position has protected them from many risks, including such diseases as hepatitis and AIDS that can be contracted from blood.

However, since blood can be processed beyond those primary components, questions arise about fractions derived from the primary blood components. How are such fractions used, and what should a Christian consider when deciding on them? part to blood itself

Blood is complex. Even the plasma—which is 90 percent water—carries scores of hormones, inorganic salts, enzymes, and nutrients, including minerals and sugar. Plasma also carries such proteins as albumin, clotting factors, and antibodies to fight diseases. Technicians isolate and use many plasma proteins. For example, clotting factor VIII has been given to hemophiliacs, who bleed easily. Or if someone is exposed to certain diseases, doctors might prescribe injections of gamma globulin, extracted from the blood plasma of people who already had immunity. Other plasma proteins are used medically, but the above mentioned illustrate how a primary blood component (plasma) may be processed to obtain fractions.*

Just as blood plasma can be a source of various fractions, the other primary components (red cells, white cells, platelets) can be processed to isolate smaller parts. For example, white blood cells may be a source of interferons and interleukins, used to treat some viral infections and cancers. Platelets can be

processed to extract a wound-healing factor. And other medicines are coming along that involve (at least initially) extracts from blood components. Such therapies are not transfusions of those primary components; they usually involve parts or fractions thereof. Should Christians accept these fractions in medical treatment? We cannot say. The Bible does not give details, so a Christian must make his own conscientious decision before God.

Some would refuse anything derived from blood (even fractions intended to provide temporary passive immunity). That is how they understand God's command to 'abstain from blood.' They reason that his law to Israel required that blood removed from a creature be 'poured out on the ground.' (Deuteronomy 12:22-24) Why is that relevant? Well, to prepare gamma globulin, blood-based clotting factors, and so on, requires that blood be collected and processed. Hence, some Christians reject such products, just as they reject transfusions of whole blood or of its four primary components. Their sincere, conscientious stand should be respected.

Other Christians decide differently. They too refuse transfusions of whole blood, red cells, white cells, platelets, or plasma. Yet, they might allow a physician to treat them with a fraction extracted from the primary components. Even here there may be differences. One Christian may accept a gamma globulin injection, but he may or may not agree to an injection containing something extracted from red or white cells. Overall, though, what might lead some Christians to conclude that they could accept blood fractions?

"Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of June 1, 1990, noted that plasma proteins (fractions) move from a pregnant woman's blood to the separate blood system of her fetus. Thus a mother passes immunoglobulins to her child, providing valuable immunity. Separately, as a fetus' red cells complete their normal life span, their oxygen-carrying por-

* See "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of June 15, 1978, and October 1, 1994. Pharmaceutical firms have developed recombinant products that are not taken from blood and that may be prescribed in place of some blood fractions used in the past.

tion is processed. Some of it becomes bilirubin, which crosses the placenta to the mother and is eliminated with her body wastes. Some Christians may conclude that since blood fractions can pass to another person in this natural setting, they could accept a blood fraction derived from blood plasma or cells.

Does the fact that opinions and conscientious decisions may differ mean that the issue is inconsequential? No. It is serious. Yet, there is a basic simplicity. The above material shows that Jehovah's Witnesses refuse transfusions of both whole blood and its primary blood components. The Bible directs Christians to 'abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from fornication.' (Acts 15:29)

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE DOCTOR

If you face surgery or a treatment that might involve a blood product, ask:

Do all the medical personnel involved know that, as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I direct that *no blood transfusions* (whole blood, red cells, white cells, platelets, or blood plasma) be given to me under any circumstances?

If any medicine to be prescribed may be made from blood plasma, red or white cells, or platelets, ask:

Has the medicine been made from one of the four primary blood components? If so, would you explain its makeup?

How much of this blood-derived medicine might be administered, and in what way?

If my conscience permits me to accept this fraction, what medical risks are there?

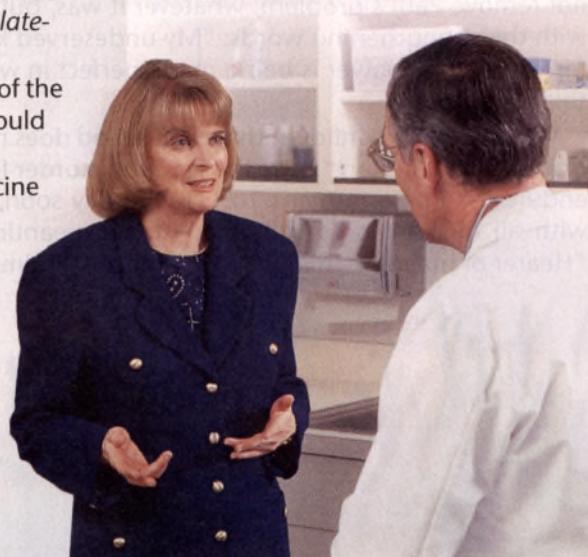
If my conscience moves me to decline this fraction, what other therapy might be used?

After I have considered this matter further, when may I inform you of my decision?

Beyond that, when it comes to fractions of any of the primary components, each Christian, after careful and prayerful meditation, must conscientiously decide for himself.

Many people would be willing to accept any therapy that seems to offer immediate benefit, even a therapy having known health risks, as is true of blood products. The sincere Christian endeavors to have a broader, more balanced view that involves more than just the physical aspects. Jehovah's Witnesses appreciate efforts to provide quality medical care, and they weigh the risk/benefit ratio of any treatment. However, when it comes to products derived from blood, they carefully weigh what God says and their personal relationship with our Life-Giver.—Psalm 36:9.

What a blessing for a Christian to have such confidence as the psalmist who wrote: "Jehovah God is a sun and a shield; favor and glory are what he gives. Jehovah himself will not hold back anything good from those walking in faultlessness. O Jehovah . . . , happy is the man that is trusting in you!"—Psalm 84:11, 12.



Can Your Prayers Make a Difference?

WHOMe of us has not faced a serious situation that we had no control over? The Bible shows that the apostle Paul knew that prayer can affect the outcome of such crises.

When Paul was unjustly imprisoned in Rome, he asked his fellow believers to pray for him, adding: "I exhort you more especially to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner." (Hebrews 13:18, 19) On another occasion, Paul expressed confidence that God would respond to prayers for his early release. (Philemon 22) Paul was soon freed and again took up his missionary work.

But can prayer really change the outcome of *your* problems? Perhaps. Remember, though, prayer is not merely a formal religious exercise. It is real communication with our loving and powerful Father in the heavens. We should feel free to be very specific in our prayers but then wait patiently to see how Jehovah responds.

God may not respond directly to every prayer, nor may he always answer in the manner or at the time that we expect. Paul, for example, prayed repeatedly about his "thorn in the flesh." God did not remove Paul's problem, whatever it was, but he comforted Paul with the strengthening words: "My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you; for my power is being made perfect in weakness."—2 Corinthians 12:7-9.

We too can be confident that even if God does not remove a particular problem, he can "make the way out in order for [us] to be able to endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13) One day soon, God will do away with all of mankind's suffering. In the meantime, turning to the "Hearer of prayer" can make a difference.—Psalm 65:2.

