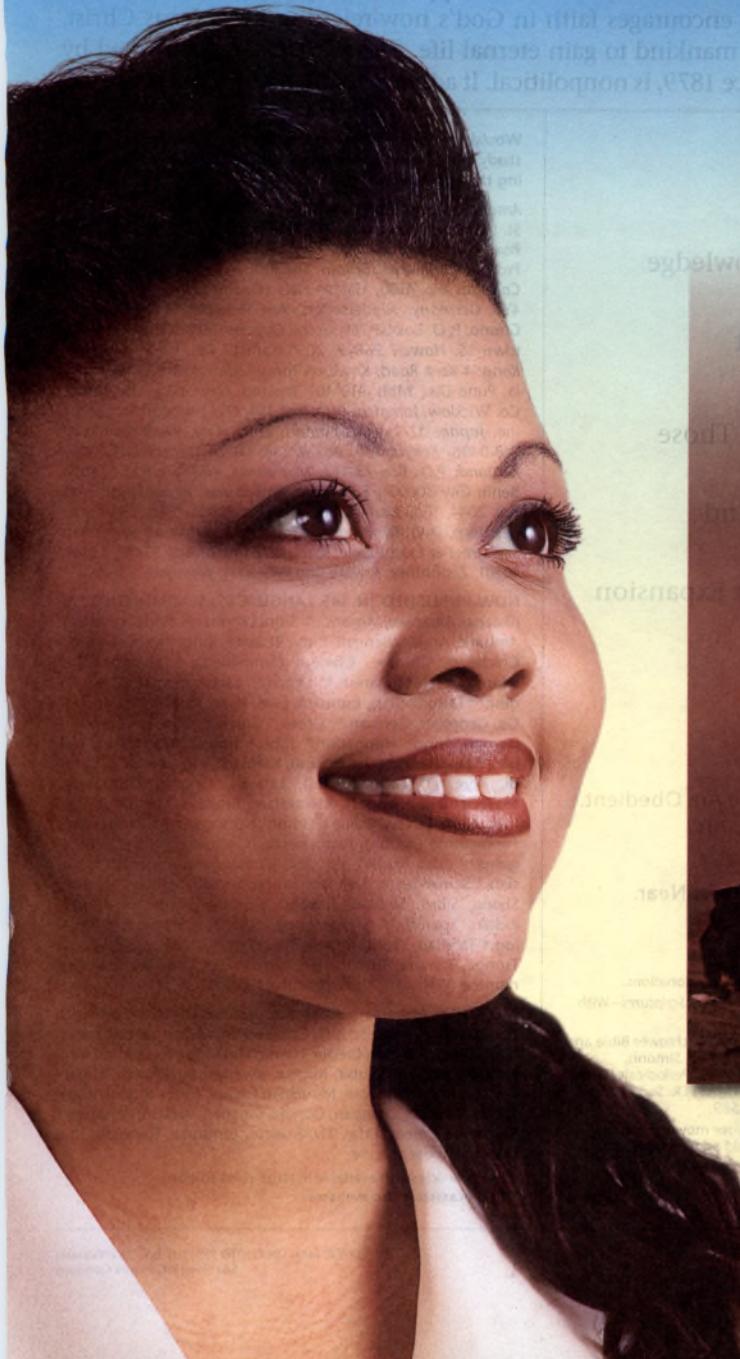


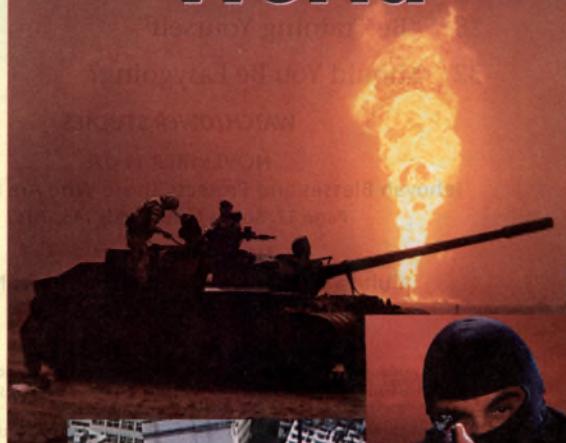
OCTOBER 1, 2002

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



## *Comfort* in a **Troubled World**





# 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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# Comfort in Times of Crisis

THE news these days is hardly comforting. One person wrote: "Current events are so grim that we often can't decide whether or not we dare watch the six o'clock news." The world is awash with war, acts of terror, suffering, crime, and disease—evils that may soon affect us directly if they have not already.

The Bible accurately foretold this state of affairs. In describing our time, Jesus said that there would be great wars, pestilences, food shortages, and earthquakes. (Luke 21:10, 11) Similarly, the apostle Paul wrote about "critical times hard to deal with," when people would be fierce, lovers of money, and with-

out love of goodness. He called that period "the last days."—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Thus, in describing world conditions, the news bears some similarity to what the Bible foretold. But there the similarity ends. The Bible gives a perspective that the news does not. Through God's inspired Word, we can come to understand not only why there is so much evil but also what the future will be.

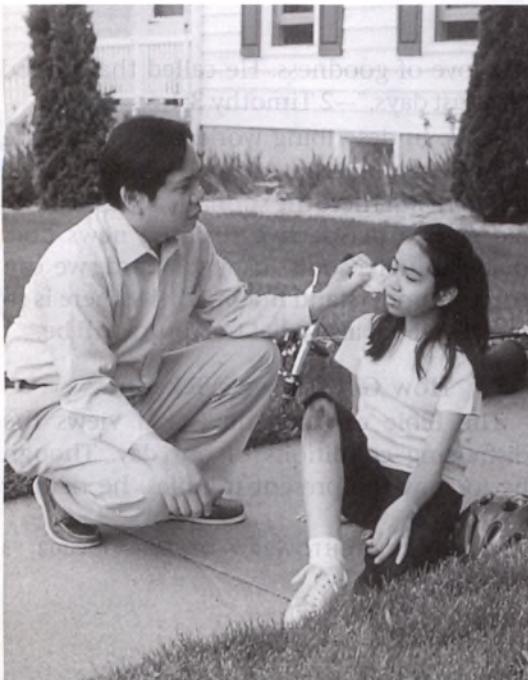
## How God Views Wickedness

The Bible explains how God views the distressing conditions of our day. Though he foresaw the present troubles, he neither

approves of them nor intends to tolerate them indefinitely. "God is love," wrote the apostle John. (1 John 4:8) Jehovah cares deeply for people and deplores all badness. Quite rightly we may turn to God for comfort, since he is good and compassionate and has the power and will to eliminate evil from the earth. The psalmist wrote: "[God's appointed heavenly King] will deliver the poor one crying for help, also the afflicted one and whoever has no helper. He will feel sorry for the lowly one and the poor one, and the souls of the poor ones he will save. From oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul, and their blood will be precious in his eyes."—Psalm 72:12-14.

Do you feel sorry for those who suffer? Probably you do. Fellow feeling is a quality that Jehovah put in us, for we were created in his image. (Genesis 1:26, 27) We can be confident, therefore, that Jehovah is not insensitive to human suffering. Jesus, who knew Jehovah more intimately than anyone else, taught that Jehovah is intensely interested in us and is full of tender compassion.—Matthew 10:29, 31.

Creation itself testifies that God cares for humanity. Jesus said that God "makes his sun



rise upon wicked people and good and makes it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous." (Matthew 5:45) To the people of the city of Lystra, the apostle Paul said: "[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.

### Where Lies the Responsibility?

It is noteworthy that Paul also said to the people of Lystra: "In the past generations [God] permitted all the nations to go on in their ways." Thus, the nations—or people themselves—are largely responsible for most of the predicaments in which they find themselves. The blame does not rest with God.—Acts 14:16.

Why does Jehovah permit bad things to happen? Will he ever do anything about it? The answer to these questions can be found only in God's Word. That is because the answer is bound up with another spirit person and with an issue that was raised by him in the invisible spirit realm.

*Humans have fellow feeling. Is God any less sensitive to human suffering?*



# *Comfort* in the **Accurate Knowledge of God**

FOR some people, what the Bible says about God's love and mercy raises troubling questions. They ask: If God wants to eliminate evil, knows how to do it, and has the power to do it, why does evil continue to abound? For them the problem is to reconcile three propositions: (1) God is all-powerful; (2) God is loving and good; and (3) calamitous events continue to take place. They reason that since the last proposition is undeniably true, then at least one of the other two cannot be true. To them, either God is unable to stop evil or he is unconcerned.

Several days after the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York, a prominent religious leader in the United States said: "I have been asked . . . hundreds of times in my life why God allows tragedy and suffering. I have to confess that I really do not know the answer totally, even to my own satisfaction."

In reaction to this comment, a professor of theology wrote that he was touched by "the good theology" that this religious leader preached. He also endorsed the view of a scholar who wrote: "The incomprehensibility of suffering is part of the incomprehensibility of God." But is it really impossible to understand why God allows evil?

## **The Origin of Evil**

In contrast with what religious leaders may say, the Bible does not portray God's permission of evil as incomprehensible. A key point in understanding the question of evil is to recognize that Jehovah did not create a wick-

ed world. He created the first human couple perfect, without sin. Jehovah looked upon his creative work and found it to be "very good." (Genesis 1:26, 31) It was his purpose for Adam and Eve to extend the Paradise of Eden earth wide and to populate it with happy people under the protection of his loving sovereignty.—Isaiah 45:18.

Evil began with a spirit creature who, though originally faithful to God, developed a desire to be worshiped. (James 1:14, 15) His rebellion manifested itself on earth when he influenced the first human couple to join him in his opposition to God. Instead of submitting to God's clear instruction not to eat or touch the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve took some and ate it. (Genesis 3:1-6) In so doing, they not only disobeyed God but also showed that they desired independence from him.

## **A Moral Issue Was Raised**

This rebellion in Eden raised a moral issue, a challenge of universal importance. The human rebels called into question whether



Jehovah properly exercised his rulership over his creatures. Did the Creator have the right to require full obedience from humankind? Might people be better off if they acted independently?

Jehovah handled this challenge to his rulership in a way that demonstrated his perfect balance of love, justice, wisdom, and power. He could have used his power to crush the rebellion immediately. That might have seemed just, since he had the right to do so. But doing so would not have answered the moral questions that had been raised. On the other hand, God could have simply overlooked the sin. Such a course might seem to some today to be a loving option. Yet, this too would fail to address Satan's claim that humans would be better off ruling themselves. Furthermore, would such a course not encourage still others to deviate from Jehovah's way? The result would be endless suffering.

In his wisdom, Jehovah has allowed humans to go their own way for a time. Even though this has meant permitting evil to remain temporarily, humans have thus had the opportunity to show whether they can successfully rule themselves independent of God, living by their own standards of what is right and wrong. What has been the result? Human history has consistently been characterized by war, injustice, oppression, and suffering. The ultimate failure of the rebellion against Jehovah will settle the issues raised in Eden once and for all time.

Meanwhile, God has displayed his love by providing his Son, Jesus Christ, who gave up his human life as a ransom sacrifice. This enables obedient humans to be freed from the condemnation of sin and death that resulted from Adam's disobedience. The ransom has opened the way to everlasting life for all who exercise faith in Jesus.—John 3:16.



*Time has shown  
that mankind  
cannot successfully  
rule themselves  
independent of God*

Somalian family: UN PHOTO 159849/M. GRANT; atom bomb: USAF photo; concentration camp: U.S. National Archives photo

We have Jehovah's comforting assurance that human suffering is temporary. "Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more," wrote the psalmist. "You will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be. But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."—Psalm 37:10, 11.

### A Future of Security and Happiness

Fulfillment of Bible prophecies shows that the time for God to bring an end to sickness, sorrow, and death is at hand. Note what a wonderful glimpse of things to come was given to the apostle John in a vision. He wrote: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea is no more. . . . And God himself will be with [mankind]. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." In a statement that emphasizes the trustworthiness of these promises, John was told: "Write, because these words are faithful and true."—Revelation 21:1-5.

What about the billions of innocent people who have died since the rebellion in Eden? Jehovah promised that he will bring back to life people now sleeping in death. The apostle Paul said: "I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) These ones will have the prospect of living in a world in which "righteousness is to dwell."—2 Peter 3:13.

Just as a loving father will allow his child to undergo a painful operation if he knows it will bring lasting benefits, so Jehovah has allowed humans to experience the temporary existence of evil on earth. Yet, an eternity of blessings awaits all who seek to do God's will. Paul explained: "The creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will but through him that subjected it, on the basis of hope that the creation itself also will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God."—Romans 8:20, 21.

This truly is news—not the kind we see on television or read in the newspaper but good news. It is the best of news from "the God of all comfort," who really cares for us.—2 Corinthians 1:3.



## Medal of Recognition for a Kingdom Hall

**T**HE Ministry of Environment in Finland designated the year 2000 as the "Year of Landscaping." One of the organizers stated that the "purpose of the landscaping theme year is to remind us all of the influence that green surroundings have on our everyday lives and on our well-being."

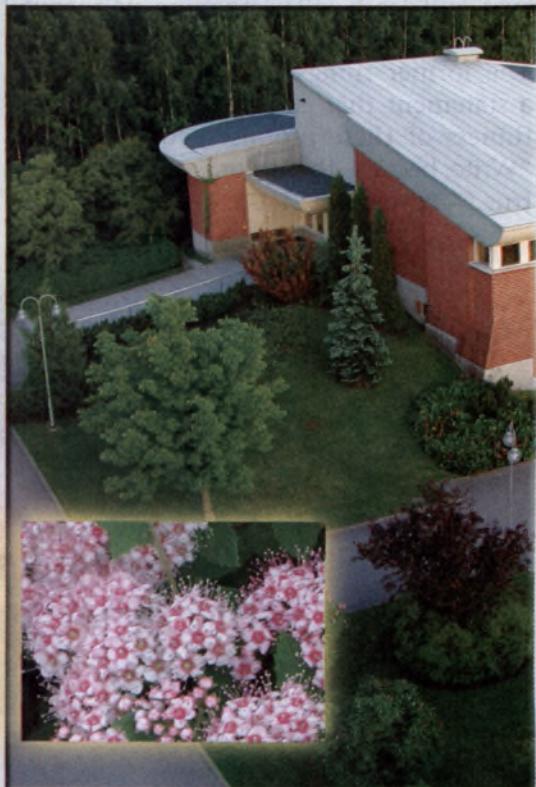
On January 12, 2001, a letter from the Finnish Association of Landscape Industries arrived at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Finland. The letter explained that the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in Tikkurila had been awarded one of the landscaping theme year medals because of the outstanding design of its surroundings and its well-groomed garden. The letter added that "the general appearance of the grounds, both in the summer and winter, is pleasant, aesthetically beautiful, and of high quality."

The medal was accorded to Jehovah's Witnesses at the Rosendahl Hotel in Tampere, Finland, at an event attended by 400 professionals and businessmen. The Finnish Association of Landscape Industries also issued a press release, which states: "In various parts of the country, the Kingdom Halls of Jehovah's Witnesses are, almost without exception, beautifully planned. The care for the environment leaves hardly any passersby indifferent. The Kingdom Hall in Tikkurila is one example of a magnificent garden



as a whole. The building and the extensive grounds work together in exuding calmness and balance."

In Finland there are 233 Kingdom Halls, many surrounded by beautiful gardens. What makes these places truly beautiful, however, is that they are centers of true worship and Bible education. For more than six million Jehovah's Witnesses around the world, a Kingdom Hall—well-appointed or modest—is a well-loved place. That is why they are eager to take good and loving care of it. The doors of the Kingdom Halls are open to all in your community!



# Youths Who Love the Truth

"HOW will a young man cleanse his path?" asked a Hebrew psalmist thousands of years ago. (Psalm 119:9) This is still a valid question today because young people are faced with many problems in the world. Promiscuous sexual activity has exposed many young people to AIDS, about half of those infected with this terrible disease being between the ages of 15 and 24. Drug abuse also causes many problems, cutting some young lives short. Debased music; violent and immoral films, TV shows, and videos; and pornography on the Internet exert a devastating influence on the young. Therefore, the question asked by the psalmist is very much on the minds of many parents and youths today.

To his own question, the same psalmist provided this answer: "By keeping on guard according to your word." Certainly, God's Word, the Bible, contains fine direction for young people, and by following it, many youths are having success in life. (Psalm 119:105) Let us examine some examples of youths who love God and who endeavor to remain spiritually strong in a pleasure-seeking and materialistic world.

## They Appreciate Parental Guidance

Jacob Emmanuel was a full-time pioneer minister for some years before serving at the Mexico branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses. He remembers with appreciation how his love for God's

service was developed: "My parents were the main influence, although some experienced spiritual brothers with whom I have developed friendships have also been very helpful. They motivated me to love the preaching work. Quietly they directed me along the right path; I never felt that they pressured me."

David, who has already spent several years in the full-time ministry, remembers how it impressed him that his parents began serving as special pioneers when he and his brother were small. When his father died, his mother continued in the special pioneer service. She took care of them in addition to preaching the good news. "They never obligated me to be a pioneer," says David, "but we enjoyed pioneering so much as a family that the companionship and environment impelled me to do the same." Regarding the importance of good direction and attention from parents, David says: "Every night, my mother read to us stories from the book *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*.\* The way that she related them to us helped us to love taking in spiritual food."

## Appreciation for the Meetings

Some youths find it difficult to appreciate Christian meetings. They attend because their parents take them. However, if they keep up their meeting attendance, in time they may come to love the meetings. Consider Alfredo, who

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses in 1958; now out of print.





began full-time service when he was 11 years old. He admits that when he was about five, he tried to avoid going to the meetings because they made him sleepy but his parents would not allow him to sleep during the meetings.

He recalls: "As I grew older, little by little I became more interested in the meetings, especially after I learned to read and write because then I began to comment in my own words."

Cintia, a 17-year-old girl who serves as a regular pioneer, tells how good association played a major role in her developing a love for God's service. She says: "A good relationship with the brothers and regular attendance at the meetings have kept me from missing my worldly friends and the activities that are popular with kids, such as going to discotheques. Listening to comments and experiences at the meetings produced in me a desire to give Jehovah all that I have, and I feel that the best thing that I have is my youth. So I decided to use it in his service."

However, she admits: "There was a time, before I was baptized, when I found it easy to miss meetings, using homework or other school activities as an excuse. I missed several meetings, and this began to affect me spiritually. I began to associate with a boy who



did not study the Bible. Thanks to Jehovah, I corrected matters in time."

### A Personal Decision

When Pablo, another youth who is serving Jehovah full-time, is asked what he considers to be the key to developing a love for the truth of God's Word, he says: "I think there are two things: regular personal study and zeal for the preaching work. I am grateful to my parents for having taught me the truth about Jehovah, and I feel that this is the best thing they could have given me. However, I need to be personally convinced of why I love Jehovah. For that, it is necessary to know 'the breadth and depth' of Bible truth. Only in this way do we come to feel a longing for Jehovah's Word, which builds 'a burning fire' within us to speak to others about it. That zeal for the preaching work will keep our appreciation for the truth alive."—Ephesians 3:18; Jeremiah 20:9.

Jacob Emmanuel, mentioned earlier, also remembers the importance of making a personal choice to serve Jehovah. He says that his parents never insisted on his getting baptized. "I believe that this has been for the best because I see the good results. For example, some youths with whom I associated a lot made the decision to get baptized together. Although that was fine, I could see that some did it out of emotionalism, and shortly thereafter, their zeal for Kingdom activities waned. In my case my parents did not pressure me to make the decision to dedicate myself to Jehovah. It was a personal decision."



## The Role of the Congregation

Some young people have learned the truth of God's Word on their own, without the help of their parents. It is certainly a challenge under such circumstances to learn to do what is right and to persist in it.

Noé recalls how much the truth benefited him. From a very young age, he was prone to anger and violence. When he began to study the Bible at the age of 14, his temperament began to improve, for which his parents, who were not interested in the Bible at that time, felt very grateful. As Noé progressed spiritually, he wanted to use his life more fully in God's service. He is now in the full-time ministry.

Similarly, Alejandro began to take an interest in Christian truth when he was very young, even though his parents were not interested in it. Expressing his appreciation for the truth, he says: "I was raised in a traditional Catholic home. But my leanings toward Communistic atheism grew, since the church did not answer the questions that had disturbed me from a very young age. Jehovah's organization helped me to obtain the knowledge of God. It literally saved my life because if I had not studied the Bible, I would probably have become involved with immorality, alcoholism, or drugs. I might even have become part of some revolutionary group, with grievous consequences."

How can a youth persist in his search for truth and cling to it without the support of his parents? Obviously, the elders and others in the congregation play a very important role. Noé recalls:

"I have never felt alone,

as Jehovah has always been very close to me. Also, I have had the support of many loving brothers and sisters who have become my spiritual fathers, mothers, and brothers." He now serves at Bethel and uses his time in God's service. Likewise, Alejandro relates: "Something that I will always be grateful for is that I had the blessing of being in a congregation with a body of elders who showed loving interest in me as a person. I am especially grateful because when I began to study the Bible, at the age of 16, the restlessness common to youth also affected me. The families in the congregation never abandoned me. There was always someone to receive me hospitably and share with me not only his home and food but also his heart." Alejandro has now been in the full-time service for over 13 years.

Some people think that religion is only for older folks. However, many young people have learned Bible truth at an early age and have come to love Jehovah and remain faithful to him. To these youths can be applied David's words recorded at Psalm 110:3: "Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day of your military force. In the splendors of holiness, from the womb of the dawn, you have your company of young men just like dewdrops."

It is a challenge for young people to learn the truth and stick to it. What a joy to see that many are staying very close to Jehovah's organization, attending the meetings regularly, and studying the Bible diligently. Doing so, they have been able to cultivate a genuine love for God's Word and his service!—Psalm 119:15, 16.



# JEHOVAH BLESSES AND PROTECTS THOSE WHO ARE OBEDIENT

*"As for the one listening to me, he will reside in security and be undisturbed from dread of calamity."—PROVERBS 1:33.*

THE fluffy, yellow hatchlings are busily pecking for food in the short grass, totally unaware of a hawk hovering high above. Suddenly, the mother hen gives a tremulous, high-pitched warning call and spreads her wings. Her chicks run to her, and in seconds they are safely concealed beneath her pinions. The hawk aborts its attack.\* The lesson? Obedience saves lives!

That lesson is especially important to Christians today, for Satan is making an all-out effort to prey on God's people. (Revelation 12:9, 12, 17) His goal is to destroy our spirituality so that we lose Jehovah's favor and the prospect of everlasting life. (1 Peter 5:8) However, if we stay close to God and respond swiftly to the direction we receive through his Word and organization, we can be assured of his protective care. "With his pinions he will block approach to you, and under his wings you will take refuge," wrote the psalmist.—Psalm 91:4.

## A Disobedient Nation Becomes Prey

When the nation of Israel was obedient to Jehovah, it regularly benefited from his watchful care. Yet, all too often the people left their Maker and turned to gods of wood and stone—"unrealities that are of no benefit

\* Though often portrayed as timid, "a mother hen will fight to the death to protect her chicks from harm," says one humane society publication.

- 1, 2. Why is obedience to God important? Illustrate.
3. What was the result of Israel's repeated disobedience?



and that do not deliver." (1 Samuel 12:21) After centuries of such rebellion, the nation as a whole had become so steeped in apostasy that it was beyond recovery. Hence, Jesus lamented: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her,—how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings! But you people did not want it. Look! Your house is abandoned to you."—Matthew 23:37, 38.

<sup>4</sup> Jehovah's abandonment of renegade Israel was made painfully evident in 70 C.E. In that year Roman armies, holding high their standards emblazoned with the image of the eagle, swooped down upon Jerusalem to inflict a terrible slaughter. The city was then crowded with Passover celebrants. Their many sacrifices failed to win them God's favor. That was a tragic reminder of Samuel's words to disobedient King Saul: "Does Jehovah have as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Jehovah?"

4. How did Jehovah's abandonment of Jerusalem become evident in 70 C.E.?

vah? Look! To obey is better than a sacrifice, to pay attention than the fat of rams.”—1 Samuel 15:22.

<sup>5</sup> Despite his insistence on obedience, Jehovah is well aware of the limitations of imperfect humans. (Psalm 130:3, 4) What he requires are sincerity of heart and obedience based on faith, love, and a wholesome fear of displeasing him. (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13; Proverbs 16:6; Isaiah 43:10; Micah 6:8; Romans 6:17) That such obedience is possible was demonstrated by a ‘great cloud of pre-Christian witnesses,’ who held to their integrity in the face of formidable trials, even death. (Hebrews 11:36, 37; 12:1) How these ones made Jehovah’s heart rejoice! (Proverbs 27:11) Others, however, started out faithful but failed to remain in a course of obedience. One of these was King Jehoash of ancient Judah.

### A King Ruined by Bad Associations

- <sup>6</sup> King Jehoash narrowly escaped assassination.
5. What kind of obedience does Jehovah require, and how do we know that such obedience is possible?
- 6, 7. What kind of king was Jehoash while Jehoiada was alive?

*Under Jehoiada’s guidance, young Jehoash was obedient to Jehovah*

tion as an infant. When Jehoash reached seven years of age, High Priest Jehoiada courageously took him out of hiding and made him king. Because God-fearing Jehoiada acted as father and adviser to Jehoash, the young ruler “kept doing what was right in Jehovah’s eyes all the days of Jehoiada the priest.”—2 Chronicles 22:10-23:1, 11; 24:1, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Jehoash’s good deeds included renovating Jehovah’s temple—an act that was “close to the heart of Jehoash.” He reminded High Priest Jehoiada of the need to collect the temple tax from Judah and Jerusalem, as “ordered by Moses,” so as to finance the repair work. Evidently, Jehoiada had succeeded in encouraging the young king to study and obey God’s Law. As a result, work on the temple and temple utensils was quickly completed.—2 Chronicles 24:4, 6, 13, 14; Deuteronomy 17:18.

<sup>8</sup> Sadly, Jehoash’s obedience to Jehovah failed to last. Why? God’s Word tells us: “After Jehoiada’s death the princes of Judah came in and proceeded to bow down to the king. At that time the king listened to them. And gradually they left the house of Jehovah the God of their forefathers and began serving the sacred poles and the idols, so that there came to be indignation against Judah and Jerusalem because of this guilt of theirs.” The unwholesome influence of Judah’s princes also led the king to turn a deaf ear to God’s prophets, one of whom was Jehoiada’s son Zechariah, who courageously reproved Jehoash and the people for their disobedience. Rather than repent, Jehoash had Zechariah stoned to death. What a heartless, disobedient man Jehoash had become—all because he succumbed to the influence of bad associations!—2 Chronicles 24:17-22; 1 Corinthians 15:33.

8. (a) What primarily contributed to Jehoash’s spiritual demise? (b) What did the king’s disobedience eventually lead him to do?



<sup>9</sup> Having abandoned Jehovah, how did Jehoash and his wicked princely associates fare? A military force of Syrians—just “a small number of men”—invaded Judah and “brought all the princes of the people to ruin.” The invaders also forced the king to give over his own possessions as well as the gold and silver of the sanctuary. Although Jehoash survived, he was left a broken and diseased man. Shortly thereafter, conspirators from among his own servants assassinated him. (2 Chronicles 24:23-25; 2 Kings 12:17, 18) How true Jehovah’s words to Israel: “If you will not listen to the voice of Jehovah your God by taking care to do all his commandments and his statutes . . . , maledictions must also come upon you and overtake you”!—Deuteronomy 28:15.

### A Secretary Saved by Obedience

<sup>10</sup> Do you sometimes feel weary because few among the people you meet in the Christian ministry show any interest in the good news? Do you occasionally feel a tinge of envy toward the well-to-do and their indulgent life-styles? If so, reflect on Baruch, Jeremiah’s secretary, and on Jehovah’s loving counsel to him.

<sup>11</sup> Baruch was in the process of writing down a prophetic message when he himself became the focus of Jehovah’s attention. Why? Because Baruch began to rue his lot in life and to desire something better than his special privilege of service to God. Observing this shift in Baruch’s attitude, Jehovah gave him clear but kind counsel, saying: “You keep seeking great things for yourself. Do not keep on seeking. For here I am bringing in a calamity upon all flesh, . . . and I will give you your soul as a spoil in all the places to which you may go.”—Jeremiah 36:4; 45:5.

9. How does the final outcome of Jehoash and the princes underscore the folly of disobedience?

10, 11. (a) Why is it helpful to reflect on Jehovah’s counsel to Baruch? (b) What counsel did Jehovah give Baruch?

<sup>12</sup> Can you sense in Jehovah’s words to Baruch His deep concern for this fine man, who had served him so faithfully and courageously alongside Jeremiah? Likewise today, Jehovah is deeply concerned about those who are tempted to pursue what they think are greener pastures in this system of things. Happily, like Baruch, many of such ones have responded to loving readjustment by responsible spiritual brothers. (Luke 15:4-7) Yes, may all of us discern that there is no future for those who seek “great things” for themselves in this system. Not only do such ones fail to find true happiness but, worse still, they will soon pass away with this world and all its selfish desires.—Matthew 6:19, 20; 1 John 2:15-17.

<sup>13</sup> The account about Baruch also teaches us a fine lesson in humility. Note that Jehovah did not counsel Baruch directly but spoke through Jeremiah, whose imperfections and idiosyncrasies Baruch probably knew quite well. (Jeremiah 45:1, 2) Yet, Baruch was not overcome by pride; he humbly discerned the real source of the counsel—Jehovah. (2 Chronicles 26:3, 4, 16; Proverbs 18:12; 19:20) So if we ‘take some false step before we are aware of it’ and receive needed counsel from God’s Word, let us imitate Baruch’s maturity, spiritual discernment, and humility.—Galatians 6:1.

<sup>14</sup> Such a humble attitude on our part also helps those giving the counsel. Says Hebrews 13:17: “Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you.” How of-

12. Why should we avoid seeking “great things” for ourselves in the present system of things?

13. What lesson in humility does the account about Baruch teach us?

14. Why is it good for us to be obedient to those who are taking the lead among us?



***Bad associates influenced Jehoash to have God's prophet killed***

ten elders pour their heart out to Jehovah, praying for the courage, wisdom, and tact necessary to fulfill this difficult aspect of their shepherding work! Let us "recognize men of that sort."—1 Corinthians 16:18.

<sup>15</sup> That Baruch readjusted his thinking is evident, for Jeremiah next gave him a most challenging assignment—to go to the temple and read aloud the very judgment message he himself wrote down at Jeremiah's mouth. Did Baruch obey? Yes, he did "all that Jeremiah the prophet had commanded him." In fact, he even read the same message out to the princes of Jerusalem, which no doubt took considerable courage. (Jeremiah 36:1-6, 8, 14, 15) When the city fell to the Babylonians some 18 years later, imagine how grateful Baruch must have been for being spared because he had heeded Jehovah's warning and stopped seeking "great things" for himself!—Jeremiah 39:1, 2, 11, 12; 43:6.

15. (a) How did Jeremiah demonstrate his confidence in Baruch? (b) How was Baruch rewarded for his humble obedience?

## Obedience During a Siege Saved Lives

<sup>16</sup> When Jerusalem's end came in 607 B.C.E., God's compassion for the obedient again came to the fore. At the height of the siege, Jehovah said to the Jews: "Here I am putting before you people the way of life and the way of death. The one sitting still in this city will die by the sword and by the famine and by the pestilence; but the one who is going out and who actually falls away to the Chaldeans who are laying siege against you will keep living, and his soul will certainly come to be his as a spoil." (Jeremiah 21:8, 9) Though Jerusalem's inhabitants were deserving of destruction, Jehovah showed compassion for those who obeyed him, even at that critical, late hour.\*

<sup>17</sup> Telling the Jews to surrender no doubt tested Jeremiah's obedience as well. For one thing, he was jealous for God's name. He did not want it to be reproached by enemies who would attribute their victory to lifeless idols. (Jeremiah 50:2, 11; Lamentations 2:16) Additionally, Jeremiah knew that in telling the people to surrender, he was putting his own life at great risk, for many would interpret his words as seditious. Yet, he did not cower, but he obediently spoke Jehovah's pronouncements. (Jeremiah 38:4, 17, 18) Like Jeremiah,

\* Jeremiah 38:19 reveals that a number of Jews 'fell away' to the Chaldeans and were spared death but not exile. Whether they surrendered in response to Jeremiah's words, we are not told. Nevertheless, their survival confirmed the prophet's words.

16. How did Jehovah show compassion for the Jews in Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege in 607 B.C.E.?

17. (a) In what two ways was Jeremiah's obedience tested when Jehovah instructed him to tell the besieged Jews to 'fall away to the Chaldeans'? (b) How can we benefit from Jeremiah's example of courageous obedience?

we too bear an unpopular message. It is the same message for which Jesus was despised. (Isaiah 53:3; Matthew 24:9) So let us not ‘tremble at men,’ but like Jeremiah, let us courageously obey Jehovah, trusting fully in him.—Proverbs 29:25.

### Obedience in the Face of Gog's Attack

<sup>18</sup> Soon, Satan's entire wicked system will be destroyed in an unprecedented “great tribulation.” (Matthew 24:21) No doubt prior to and during that time, God's people will experience major tests of their faith and obedience. For instance, the Bible tells us that Satan, in his role as “Gog of the land of Magog,” will make an all-out attack against Jehovah's servants, mobilizing hordes that are described as “a numerous military force . . . , like clouds to cover the land.” (Ezekiel 38:2, 14-16) Outnumbered and unarmed, God's people will look to the refuge of Jehovah's “pinions,” which he extends to shield the obedient.

<sup>19</sup> This situation reminds us of Israel's Exodus from Egypt. After striking Egypt with ten devastating plagues, Jehovah led his people, not on the shortest route toward the Promised Land, but down to the Red Sea, where they could easily be cornered and attacked. From a military standpoint, that seemed a disastrous move. If you had been there, would

18. What future tests of obedience will Jehovah's servants face?

19, 20. (a) Why was obedience on the part of Israel vitally important when they were at the Red Sea? (b) How can prayerful reflection on the Red Sea account benefit us today?

you have obeyed Jehovah's word through Moses and marched down to the Red Sea with full confidence, knowing that the Promised Land lay in a somewhat different direction?—Exodus 14:1-4.

<sup>20</sup> As we read on in Exodus chapter 14, we see how Jehovah delivered his people in an awesome display of power. How such accounts can strengthen our faith when we take the time to study and reflect upon them! (2 Peter 2:9) Strong faith, in turn, fortifies us to obey Jehovah, even when his requirements seem to go contrary to human reasoning. (Proverbs 3:5, 6) So ask yourself, ‘Am I striving to build up my faith through diligent Bible study, prayer, and meditation, as well as by regular association with God's people?’—Hebrews 10:24, 25; 12:1-3.

### Obedience Instills Hope

<sup>21</sup> Those who make obedience to Jehovah their way of life experience even now the fulfillment of Proverbs 1:33, which says: “As for the one listening [obediently] to me, he will reside in security and be undisturbed from dread of calamity.” How marvelously these comforting words will apply during Jehovah's coming day of vengeance! In fact, Jesus told his disciples: “As these things start to oc-

21. What blessings, present and future, will come to those who obey Jehovah?

**Would you have obeyed Jehovah and witnessed his awesome saving power?**



cur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near." (Luke 21:28) Clearly, only those obedient to God will have the confidence to heed these words.—Matthew 7:21.

### Do You Recall?

- What was the result of Israel's repeated disobedience?
- How was King Jehoash affected by his associations, both early in his life and later?
- What lessons can we learn from Baruch?
- Why do Jehovah's obedient people have no cause for fear as the present system nears its end?

<sup>22</sup> Another reason for confidence is that "the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will not do a thing unless he has revealed his confidential matter to his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7) Today, Jehovah does not inspire prophets as in the past; instead, he has commissioned a faithful slave class to provide timely spiritual food to his household. (Matthew 24:45-47) How important, therefore, that we have an obedient attitude toward that "slave"! As the following article will show, such obedience also reflects our attitude toward Jesus, the 'slave's' master. He is the One to whom 'the obedience of the peoples belongs.'—Genesis 49:10.

22. (a) What reason for confidence do Jehovah's people have? (b) What matters will be discussed in the following article?

## CULTIVATE OBEDIENCE AS THE END DRAWS NEAR

*"To [Shiloh] the obedience of the peoples will belong."*—GENESIS 49:10.

OBEDIENCE to Jehovah has often involved obedience to his representatives. These have included angels, patriarchs, judges, priests, prophets, and kings. The throne of the kings of Israel was even called Jehovah's throne. (1 Chronicles 29:23) Sadly, though, many of Israel's rulers disobeyed God, bringing woe upon themselves and their subjects. But Jehovah did not leave his loyal ones without hope; he comforted them with a promise to install an incorruptible King, whom the righteous would delight in

obeying. (Isaiah 9:6, 7) The dying patriarch Jacob prophesied about this future ruler, saying: "The scepter will not turn aside from Judah, neither the commander's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him the obedience of the peoples will belong."—Genesis 49:10.

<sup>2</sup> "Shiloh" is a Hebrew term meaning "He Whose It Is," or "He to Whom It Belongs." Yes, Shiloh would inherit nothing less than the right to rulership, as symbolized by the scepter, and the power to command, as represented by the commander's staff. Moreover,

1. (a) In the past, what has obedience to Jehovah often involved? (b) What prophecy concerning obedience did Jacob make?

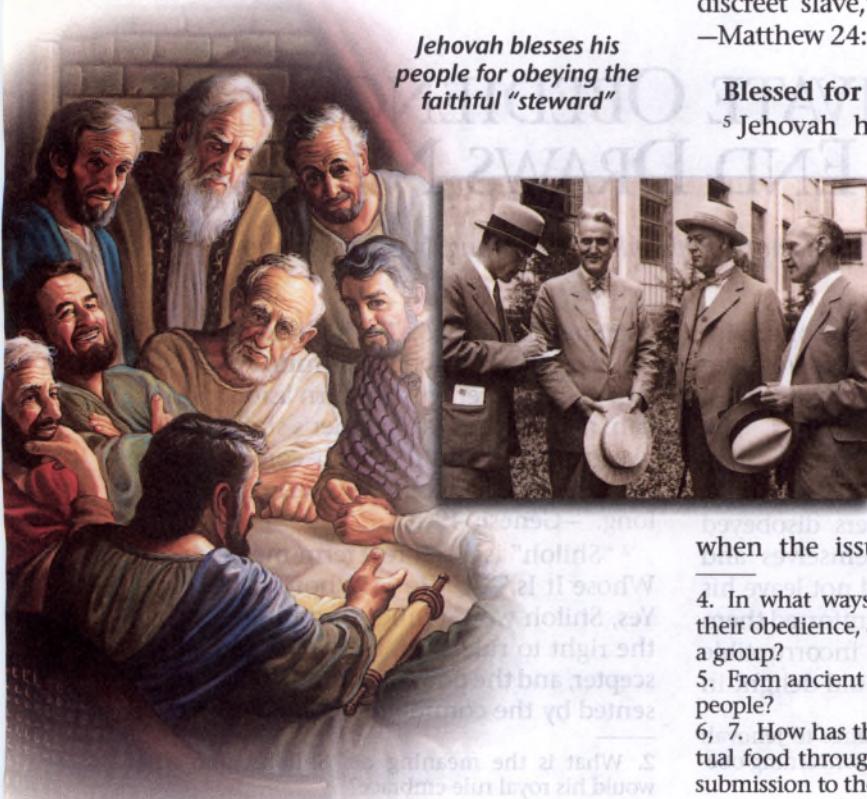
2. What is the meaning of "Shiloh," and what would his royal rule embrace?

his royal rule would embrace, not just the descendants of Jacob, but all “peoples.” This is in line with Jehovah’s promise to Abraham: “Your seed will take possession of the gate of his enemies. And by means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves.” (Genesis 22:17, 18) Jehovah confirmed the identity of this “seed” in 29 C.E. when he anointed Jesus of Nazareth with holy spirit.—Luke 3:21-23, 34; Galatians 3:16.

### Jesus’ First Kingdom

<sup>3</sup> When Jesus ascended to heaven, he did not immediately take up the scepter of rulership over the peoples of the world. (Psalm 110:1) However, he did receive a “kingdom”

3. What rulership did Jesus receive when he ascended to heaven?



with subjects that obeyed him. The apostle Paul identified that kingdom when he wrote: “[God] delivered us [spirit-anointed Christians] from the authority of the darkness and transferred us into *the kingdom of the Son of his love.*” (Colossians 1:13) This deliverance began at Pentecost 33 C.E. when holy spirit was poured out on Jesus’ faithful followers.—Acts 2:1-4; 1 Peter 2:9.

<sup>4</sup> As “ambassadors substituting for Christ,” the spirit-anointed disciples obediently started to gather others who would become “fellow citizens” in that spiritual kingdom. (2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 2:19; Acts 1:8) Additionally, these had to remain “fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought” in order to enjoy the approval of their King Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:10) As a group, they constituted a “faithful and discreet slave,” or a faithful steward class.—Matthew 24:45; Luke 12:42.

### Blessed for Obeying God’s “Steward”

<sup>5</sup> Jehovah has always provided teachers for his people. For example, after the Jews returned from Babylon, Ezra and a number of other qualified men did not just read God’s Law to the people, they “expounded” that law, ‘putting meaning into it and giving understanding’ of God’s Word.—Nehemiah 8:8.

<sup>6</sup> In the first century, when the issue of circumcision arose in

4. In what ways did Jesus’ early disciples display their obedience, and how did Jesus identify them as a group?
5. From ancient times, how has Jehovah taught his people?
- 6, 7. How has the slave class provided timely spiritual food through its Governing Body, and why is submission to the slave class fitting?

49 C.E., the governing body of that early slave class prayerfully considered the matter and came to a Scriptural conclusion. When they announced their decision by letter, the congregations obeyed the direction given and enjoyed God's rich blessing. (Acts 15:6-15, 22-29; 16:4, 5) Likewise in modern times, the faithful slave through its Governing Body has clarified such important issues as Christian neutrality, the sanctity of blood, and the use of drugs and tobacco. (Isaiah 2:4; Acts 21:25; 2 Corinthians 7:1) Jehovah blessed his people for their obedience to his Word and the faithful slave.

<sup>7</sup> By submitting to the slave class, God's people also show their subjection to the Master, Jesus Christ. Such subjection has taken on additional significance in modern times because of Jesus' enlarged authority, as foretold in Jacob's deathbed prophecy.

### Shiloh Becomes Earth's Rightful Ruler

<sup>8</sup> Jacob's prophecy foretold that Shiloh would command "the obedience of the peoples." Clearly, Christ's rulership would extend beyond spiritual Israel. What would it embrace? Revelation 11:15 answers: "*The kingdom of the world* did become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and ever." The Bible reveals that Jesus received that authority at the end of the prophetic "seven times"—"the appointed times of the nations"—in 1914.\* (Daniel 4:16, 17; Luke 21:24) In that year, Christ's invisible "presence" as Messianic King began, as did his time to "go subduing in the midst of [his] enemies."—Matthew 24:3; Psalm 110:2.

\* For an explanation of the "seven times," see chapter 10 of the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

8. How and when was Christ's authority expanded?



*The influence of Satan makes obedience to God a challenge*



<sup>9</sup> Jesus' first act after receiving kingly power was to hurl the very personification of disobedience—Satan—along with his demons "down to the earth." Since then, these wicked spirits have fomented unprecedented woe for mankind, besides fostering an environment that makes obedience to Jehovah a challenge. (Revelation 12:7-12; 2 Timothy 3:1-5) In fact, the main target of Satan's spiritual warfare consists of Jehovah's anointed ones, "who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus," and their "other sheep" companions.—Revelation 12:17; John 10:16.

<sup>10</sup> Satan is doomed to failure, however, because this is "the Lord's day," and nothing can prevent Jesus from 'completing his conquest.' (Revelation 1:10; 6:2) He will, for

9. What did Jesus do when he received his Kingdom, and what indirect effect did this have on mankind, especially on his disciples?

10. The fulfillment of what Bible prophecies guarantees the failure of Satan's warfare against true Christians?

example, ensure the final sealing of the 144,000 spiritual Israelites. He will also protect "a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." (Revelation 7:1-4, 9, 14-16) Unlike their anointed companions, however, these ones will become Jesus' obedient earthly subjects. (Daniel 7:13, 14) Their very appearance on the world scene already provides tangible evidence that Shiloh truly is Ruler over "the kingdom of the world."—Revelation 11:15.

### Now Is the Time to "Obey the Good News"

<sup>11</sup> All who want everlasting life must learn obedience, for the Bible clearly states that "those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus" will not survive God's day of vengeance. (2 Thessalonians 1:8) However, the present wicked environment and its spirit of rebellion against Bible laws and principles make obedience to the good news a challenge.

<sup>12</sup> The Bible describes this God-defying spirit as "the spirit of the world." (1 Corinthians 2:12) Explaining its effect on people, the apostle Paul wrote to the first-century Christians in Ephesus, saying: "You at one time walked according to the system of things of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience. Yes, among them we all at one time conducted ourselves in harmony with the desires of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and the thoughts, and we were naturally children of wrath even as the rest."—Ephesians 2:2, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Happily, the Ephesian Christians did not

11, 12. (a) Who only will survive the end of the present system of things? (b) What personality traits develop in those who imbibe "the spirit of the world"? 13. How can Christians effectively resist the spirit of the world, and with what beneficial results?

remain slaves of that spirit of disobedience. Rather, they became obedient children of God by submitting to his spirit and reaping its abundant and wholesome fruitage. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Likewise today, God's spirit—the most powerful force in the universe—is helping millions to become obedient to Jehovah, with the result that they can have "the full assurance of the hope down to the end."—Hebrews 6:11; Zechariah 4:6.

<sup>14</sup> Keep in mind, too, that we have the powerful backing of Shiloh, who along with his Father will let no enemy—demon or human—test our obedience beyond what we can bear. (1 Corinthians 10:13) In fact, to aid us in our spiritual warfare, Jesus described a number of specific problems that we would face during these last days. He did so by way of seven letters, which he gave in a vision to the apostle John. (Revelation 1:10, 11) To be sure, they contained vital counsel for Christians back then, but their main application is to "the Lord's day," since 1914. How fitting, therefore, that we give attention to these messages!\*

### Avoid Apathy, Immorality, Materialism

<sup>15</sup> Jesus' first letter was to the congregation in Ephesus. After commanding the congregation for its endurance, Jesus stated: "Nevertheless, I hold this against you, that you have left the love you had at first." (Revelation 2:1-4) Today, some once-zealous Christians have likewise lost the fervent love they formerly had for God. Such a loss can

\* For a detailed discussion of all seven letters, please see the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, beginning on page 33.

14. How did Jesus alert all Christians living in the last days to specific things that would test their obedience?

15. Why must we guard against the problem that affected the congregation at Ephesus, and how can we do so? (2 Peter 1:5-8)



**A strong relationship with Jehovah helps us to be obedient to him**

weaken one's relationship with God and must be urgently addressed. How can such love be reinvigorated? By regular Bible study, meeting attendance, prayer, and meditation. (1 John 5:3) True, this takes "earnest effort," but it is surely worth it. (2 Peter 1:5-8) If honest self-examination reveals that your love has cooled off, then correct the situation promptly, in obedience to Jesus' exhortation: "Remember from what you have fallen, and repent and do the former deeds."—Revelation 2:5.

<sup>16</sup> The Christians in Pergamum and Thyatira were commended for their integrity, endurance, and zeal. (Revelation 2:12, 13, 18, 19) Yet, they were influenced by certain ones manifesting the wicked spirit of Balaam and Jezebel, who by means of sexual immorality and Baal worship acted as corrupting influences in ancient Israel. (Numbers 31:16; 1 Kings 16:30, 31; Revelation 2:14, 16, 20-23) But what about our time—"the Lord's day"? Are the same evil influences evident? Yes, for immorality is by far the leading cause for disfellowshipping among God's people. How important, therefore, that we avoid associa-

16. What spiritually dangerous influences existed in the congregations at Pergamum and Thyatira, and why are Jesus' words to them appropriate today?



tion with all individuals—inside and outside the congregation—who are a morally corrupting influence! (1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 15:33) Those who want to be Shiloh's obedient subjects will also eschew questionable entertainment as well as printed and Internet pornography.—Amos 5:15; Matthew 5:28, 29.

<sup>17</sup> With the exception of a few individuals, the congregation in Sardis received no commendation at all. It had "the name," or the appearance, of being alive, but spiritual apathy had taken such a hold that to Jesus it was "dead." Obedience to the good news was all but perfunctory. What an indictment! (Revelation 3:1-3) The congregation in Laodicea was in a similar state. It boasted material wealth, saying, "I am rich," yet to Christ it was "miserable and pitiable and poor and blind and naked."—Revelation 3:14-17.

<sup>18</sup> Today, some once-faithful Christians have also fallen into the same pattern of

17. How did the view and attitude of those in Sardis and Laodicea compare with Jesus' view of their spiritual condition?

18. How can one avoid becoming spiritually luke-warm in God's eyes?

disobedience. Perhaps they have allowed the spirit of the world to sap the sense of urgency from their lives, thus developing a spiritually lukewarm attitude toward Bible study, prayer, Christian meetings, and the ministry. (2 Peter 3:3, 4, 11, 12) How important that such ones obey Christ by investing in spiritual riches—yes, “buy from [Christ] gold refined by fire”! (Revelation 3:18) Such genuine wealth includes being ‘rich in fine works, liberal, ready to share.’ By investing in these truly precious assets, we ‘safely treasure up for ourselves a fine foundation for the future, in order to get a firm hold on the real life.’

—1 Timothy 6:17-19.

### Commended for Their Obedience

<sup>19</sup> The congregations in Smyrna and Philadelphia stand out as examples in obedience, for Jesus’ letters to them contained no reproof. To those in Smyrna, he said: “I know your tribulation and poverty—but you are rich.” (Revelation 2:9) What a contrast to those in Laodicea, who boasted of worldly wealth but who were actually impoverished! Of course, the Devil was not pleased to see

19. What commendations and exhortations did Jesus give to the Christians in Smyrna and Philadelphia?

### Do You Recall?

- What role was Jesus to play as foretold in Jacob’s deathbed prophecy?
- How do we acknowledge Jesus as Shiloh, and what spirit must we avoid?
- What relevant counsel for our day is contained in the letters to the seven congregations of Revelation?
- In what ways can we imitate those in the congregations in ancient Smyrna and Philadelphia?

anyone showing faithfulness and obedience to Christ. Hence, Jesus warned: “Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer. Look! The Devil will keep on throwing some of you into prison that you may be fully put to the test, and that you may have tribulation ten days. Prove yourself faithful even to death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10) Similarly, Jesus commanded those in Philadelphia, saying: “You kept my word [or, obeyed me] and did not prove false to my name. I am coming quickly. Keep on holding fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”—Revelation 3:8, 11.

<sup>20</sup> In “the Lord’s day,” beginning in 1914, a faithful remnant and their other sheep companions, now numbering millions, have also kept Jesus’ word by sharing zealously in the ministry and by holding fast to their integrity. Like their first-century brothers, some have suffered for their obedience to Christ, even being thrown into prisons and concentration camps. Others have kept Jesus’ word by maintaining a ‘simple eye,’ despite being surrounded by affluence and greed. (Matthew 6:22, 23) Yes, in every environment and in every circumstance, true Christians, through their obedience, continue to make Jehovah’s heart rejoice.—Proverbs 27:11.

<sup>21</sup> As we approach the great tribulation, “the faithful and discreet slave” remains resolved not to compromise its obedience to the Master, Christ. This includes preparing timely spiritual food for God’s household. So let us continue to appreciate Jehovah’s wonderful theocratic organization and what it provides. In this way, we demonstrate our submission to Shiloh, who will reward all his obedient subjects with everlasting life.—Matthew 24:45-47; 25:40; John 5:22-24.

20. How have millions today kept Jesus’ word, and despite what circumstances?

21. (a) What spiritual obligation will the slave class continue to fulfill? (b) How can we show that we truly want to obey Shiloh?



## A PRIVILEGED SHARE IN POSTWAR EXPANSION

AS TOLD BY

**FILIP S. HOFFMANN**

World War II had just ended in May 1945. That December, Nathan H. Knorr, who had oversight of the worldwide preaching activities of Jehovah's Witnesses, visited Denmark with his 25-year-old secretary, Milton G. Henschel.

A large hall was rented for that eagerly anticipated visit. For us young ones, Brother Henschel's talk was especially exciting, since he was our age and had chosen as his theme: "Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

—Ecclesiastes 12:1, *American Standard Version*.

DURING that visit, we learned that exciting things were taking place to advance the worldwide preaching work and that we could be involved in them. (Matthew 24:14) For example, a new school to train young men and women for missionary work had been opened in the United States. Brother Knorr stressed that if we were invited, we would get "only a one-way ticket" and that we would not know where we would end up. Even so, some of us applied.

Before I describe my post-World War II experiences, let me go back to my birth in 1919. There were a number of events prior to and during the war that greatly influenced my life.

### Bible Truth From a Black Sheep

When Mother was pregnant with me—her first child—she prayed that if I was a boy, I might become a missionary. Her brother was a Bible Student, as Jehovah's Witnesses were



*Unloading a literature shipment at the  
Germany branch under construction in 1949*

then called, but her family members considered him a black sheep. Our home was near Copenhagen, and when the Bible Students had annual conventions there, Mother would invite Uncle Thomas, who lived some distance away, to stay with us. By 1930 his amazing Bible knowledge and logical reasoning had convinced Mother to become a Bible Student.

Mother loved the Bible. Following the command at Deuteronomy 6:7, she taught my sister and me 'when she was sitting in her house, walking on the road, lying down, or getting up.' In time, I began to share in house-to-house preaching. I loved discussing such subjects as the immortal soul and hellfire, which the churches were teaching. I could effectively show from the Bible that such teachings were in error.—Psalm 146:3, 4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Ezekiel 18:4.

### **Our Family Became United**

Following the convention in Copenhagen in 1937, there was a need for temporary help at the literature depot of the Denmark

branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses. I had just finished my studies at a commercial college and was free of obligations, so I offered to help out at the depot. When the service at the depot was finished, I was asked to assist at the branch office. Soon afterward, I left home and moved into the branch in Copenhagen, although I was yet unbaptized. Daily association with mature Christians helped me progress spiritually. The following year, on January 1, 1938, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah God by water baptism.

In September 1939, World War II began. Then, on April 9, 1940, German troops occupied Denmark. Since Danes were allowed considerable personal freedom, we were able to continue our preaching activities.

Something wonderful then happened. Father became an active, loyal Witness, completing our family happiness. Therefore, when I, along with four other Danes, was invited to attend the eighth class of Gilead School, my whole family supported me. The five-month school course, which began in September 1946, was held at the beautiful

campus just outside South Lansing in upstate New York.

### Gilead and Post-Gilead Training

Gilead provided opportunities to make wonderful new friends. One evening while strolling around the campus with Harold King from England, we talked about where we might be sent when our training was finished. "I don't believe I have seen the white cliffs of Dover for the last time," Harold said. He was right, but it took 17 years before he saw those cliffs again, and four and a half of those years were spent in solitary confinement in a Chinese prison!\*

After our graduation, I was sent to Texas, U.S.A., to serve as a traveling overseer, visiting congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses to help them spiritually. I was received with open arms. For the brothers in Texas, it was interesting to have a young European fellow who had just been through Gilead School. But after only seven months in Texas, I was called to the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. There Brother Knorr assigned me to the office, with instructions to learn the work flow in all departments. Then, when I returned to Denmark, I was to apply what I had learned, making sure that everything was done the same way as it was in Brooklyn. The idea was to unify operations in the branches worldwide for more efficiency. Later, Brother Knorr transferred me to Germany.

### Applying Instructions to Branches

When I arrived in Wiesbaden, Germany, in July 1949, many German cities were still in ruins. Those taking the lead in the preaching work were men who

\* See *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1963, pages 437-42.

had been persecuted from the time Hitler took power in 1933. Some had been in prisons and concentration camps for eight to ten years or more! I worked with such servants of Jehovah for three and a half years. Their unique example reminds me of a comment by the German historian Gabriele Yonan, who wrote: "Without the example of this steadfast Christian group under the National Socialist dictatorship, we would—after Auschwitz and the Holocaust—have to doubt whether it was possible at all to fulfill the Christian teachings of Jesus."

My job in the branch was the same as it had been in Denmark: to introduce a new, uniform way of handling organizational matters. As soon as the German brothers understood that the adjustments were in no way a criticism of their work—but that the time had come for closer cooperation between the various branches and headquarters—they were enthused and filled with a fine spirit of cooperation.

In 1952 a letter arrived from Brother Knorr's office, directing me to move to the branch in Bern, Switzerland. I was assigned to serve as branch overseer there, beginning January 1, 1953.

*My work companions included Witnesses like these returnees from concentration camps*



### New Joys in Switzerland

Not long after arriving in Switzerland, I met Esther during a convention, and soon we got engaged. In August 1954, Brother Knorr directed me to come to Brooklyn, where the nature of a new, exciting work was revealed to me. Since the number and size of the branch offices around the world had increased so much, a new arrangement was being introduced. The world was divided into zones, with each to be served by a zone overseer. I was given two of these zones to serve: Europe and the Mediterranean area.

Soon after my brief visit to Brooklyn, I returned to Switzerland and prepared for the zone work. Esther and I were married, and she joined me in serving at the branch office in Switzerland. My first trip took me to missionary homes and branches in Italy, Greece, Cyprus, countries of the Middle East and along the coast of North Africa, and Spain and Portugal—13 countries in total. After a stay back in Bern, my travel continued to all

other European countries west of the Iron Curtain. During our first year of marriage, I was away from home for six months, serving our Christian brothers.

### Changes of Circumstances

In 1957, Esther learned that she was expecting a baby, and since a branch is not set up for parents with children, we decided to move to Denmark, where Father welcomed us to stay with him. Esther cared for both our daughter, Rakel, and my father, while I helped out with work in the newly built branch office. I served as an instructor for the Kingdom Ministry School for congregation overseers and also continued to serve as a zone overseer.

The zone work meant extended periods of travel, which unfortunately resulted in long absences from our daughter. That had its consequences. I once spent some time in Paris, where we established a small printery. Esther and Rakel came by train to see me and arrived at the Gare du Nord. Léopold Jontès from the branch and I went there to meet them. Rakel stood on a step of the railroad car, looked at Léopold, then at me, and back at Léopold again, and then threw her arms around Léopold!

*With Esther today  
and on our wedding day at  
Bern Bethel, October 1955*



Another dramatic change occurred when, at 45 years of age, I left the full-time ministry to earn a wage to support my family. With my experience as a minister of Jehovah's Witnesses, I was able to obtain employment as an export manager. After I had worked for the same company for about nine years and Rakel had finished school, we decided to respond to the encouragement to move to where the need for Kingdom preachers was greater.

Surveying the opportunities in Norway, I asked at an agency about the possibility of a job. The answer was not encouraging. There was very little hope for a 55-year-old man. Still, I contacted the branch office in Oslo and then rented a house near the town of Drøbak, trusting that an employment opportunity would present itself. One did, and a time of very enjoyable Kingdom service in Norway followed.

The best times were when most in our congregation took trips north to work unassigned territory. We rented cottages at a camping site, and every day we made calls at scattered farms in the glorious mountains. It was sheer pleasure to tell these friendly people about God's Kingdom. A lot of literature was placed, but return visits had to wait till the following year. Yet, the people did not forget us! Esther and Rakel still remember the time when we returned and were embraced as long-lost family members. After three years in Norway, we returned to Denmark.

#### **The Joys of Family Life**

Rakel soon became engaged to Niels Højer, a zealous full-time pioneer minister. After they married, Niels and Rakel continued as pioneers until their children came along. Niels has been both a good husband and a fine father, taking a real interest in his family. Early one morning he took his son on his bicycle down to the beach to watch the sunrise. A neighbor asked the boy what they had

done there. He answered: "We prayed to Jehovah."

A few years later, Esther and I witnessed the baptism of our two oldest grandchildren, Benjamin and Nadja. Among the observers was Niels, who suddenly stood face-to-face with me. He looked at me and said, "Real men don't cry." Yet, the next moment we were both crying in each other's arms. What a joy to have a son-in-law with whom you can both laugh and cry!

#### **Still Adjusting to Circumstances**

Another blessing came when Esther and I were asked to return to serve at the Denmark branch office. By then, however, preparations were under way to build a much larger branch facility in Holbæk. I had the privilege of sharing in overseeing the construction work, all of which was done by unpaid volunteer workers. In spite of a severe winter, by the end of 1982, the project was essentially completed, and we were all delighted to move into the enlarged, improved facilities! I was soon involved in office work, which gave me much satisfaction, while Esther was operating the telephone switchboard. However, in time she had to have hip-replacement surgery, and a year and a half later, she underwent a gallbladder operation. Despite kind consideration shown to us by the branch personnel, we decided that it would be better for all concerned if we left the branch. We moved to the congregation to which our daughter and family belonged.

Today Esther's health is not good. Yet, I can truly say that through all the years of our service together, with so many changes in circumstances, she has been a marvelous support and companion. In spite of declining health, both of us still have a modest share in the preaching work. When I reflect on my life, gratefully I recall the words of the psalmist: "O God, you have taught me from my youth on."—Psalm 71:17.

# "Be Training Yourself"

CITIUS, altius, fortius—faster, higher, stronger! These were the ideals to which athletes in ancient Greece and Rome aspired. For centuries, in Olympia, Delphi, and Nemea and on the Isthmus of Corinth, grand athletic events were held with the “blessing” of the gods and under the gaze of thousands of spectators. The privilege of competing in these games was the result of many years of hard work. Victory would heap glory on the winners and on their home city.

It is not surprising that in such a cultural context, the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures compared the spiritual race of Christians to athletic events. To convey powerful points of teaching, the apostles Peter and Paul both skillfully employed illustrations based on the games. In our day, the same intense Christian race continues. The first-century Christians had to deal with the Jewish system of things; we today have to ‘contend’ with a worldwide system on the brink of destruction. (2 Timothy 2:5; 3:1-5) Some may find that their individual “race of faith” is unrelenting and exhausting. (1 Timothy 6:12, *The New English Bible*) An examination of some of the athletic comparisons in the Bible will prove most beneficial.

## A Superb Trainer

An athlete’s success depends to a large extent on the trainer. Regarding the ancient games, *Archaeologia Graeca* says: “The contenders were obliged to swear they had spent ten whole months in preparatory exercises.” Christians too need rigorous training. Paul advised Timothy, a Christian elder: “Be training yourself with godly devotion as your aim.” (1 Timothy 4:7) Who is the train-

er of a Christian “athlete”? None other than Jehovah God himself! The apostle Peter wrote: “The God of all undeserved kindness . . . will himself finish your training, he will make you firm, he will make you strong.” —1 Peter 5:10.

The expression ‘will finish your training’ comes from a Greek verb that according to the *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, basically means “to make an object [or person] fit for its purpose, prepare it and adapt it to its usage.” Likewise, Liddell and Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon* comments that this verb can be defined as “prepare, train, or furnish thoroughly.” In what ways does Jehovah ‘prepare, train, or furnish us thoroughly’ for the demanding Christian race? To understand the comparison, let us consider some of the methods trainers employed.

The book *The Olympic Games in Ancient Greece* says: “Those concerned with training the youth employed two basic methods, the first of which was aimed at encouraging the pupil to make the greatest possible physical effort so as to achieve the best results, and the second at improving his technique and style.”

Similarly, Jehovah encourages and strengthens us to reach our highest potential and to improve our skills in his service. Our God invigorates us through the Bible, his earthly organization, and mature fellow Christians. Sometimes he trains us through discipline. (Hebrews 12:6) At other times he may permit various trials and hardships to come upon us so that we can develop endurance. (James 1:2-4) And he provides the needed strength. Says the prophet Isaiah: “Those who are hoping in Jehovah will re-



A black and white photograph of a Greek amphora. The vessel has a wide, flared base with vertical stripes. A decorative band with a repeating geometric pattern (likely a palmette or meander motif) runs horizontally across the middle. It features two large, curved handles on either side. The neck is long and slender, topped with a lid that has a small, rounded top and a flared base matching the body.

A black and white illustration of three male figures running, shown in profile. The figures are depicted in a dynamic, forward-leaning pose, suggesting movement. They are drawn with simple, bold lines against a light background. The style is reminiscent of ancient Greek pottery, specifically a kylix or amphora. The figures are arranged in a slightly staggered formation, with each figure's front foot aligned with the back foot of the figure in front. The background is plain, and the overall composition is centered and balanced.

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gain power. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not tire out."—Isaiah 40:31.

Above all, God abundantly grants us his holy spirit, which strengthens us to continue rendering him acceptable service. (Luke 11: 13) In many cases God's servants have endured long, hard trials of faith. Those who have done so are ordinary men and women like any one of us. But their complete reliance on God has enabled them to endure. Indeed, 'the power beyond what is normal is God's and not that out of themselves.'—2 Corinthians 4:7.

## A Sympathetic Trainer

One of the jobs of an ancient trainer was "to judge the type and number of exercises that were needed for the individual athlete and the particular sport," notes one scholar. As God trains us, he takes into account our individual circumstances, abilities, makeup, and limitations. Quite often during our training by Jehovah, we implore him, as did Job: "Remember, please, that out of clay you have made me." (Job 10:9) How does our sympathetic trainer respond? David wrote of Jehovah: "He himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust."—Psalm 103:14.

You may have a serious health problem that limits what you can do in the ministry, or you may be struggling with low self-respect. Perhaps you are striving to break a bad habit, or you may feel that you are unable to face up to peer pressure in the neighborhood, at the workplace, or at school. Whatever your circumstances may be, never forget that Jehovah understands your problems better than anyone else—including you! As a concerned trainer, he is always there to help you if you draw close to him.—James 4:8.

The ancient trainers "could distinguish exhaustion or weakness that derived not from the exercises but from other, psychological causes, bad humour, depression and so on. . . . The jurisdiction of the [trainers] was so wide that they even followed the private lives of the athletes and intervened where they thought it necessary."

Do you sometimes feel exhausted or weak because of the unrelenting pressures and temptations of this world? As your trainer, Jehovah is keenly interested in you. (1 Peter 5:7) He is quick to discern in you any sign of spiritual weakness or fatigue. Although Jehovah respects our free will and personal choice, out of concern for our eternal welfare, he provides ample help and correction when needed. (Isaiah 30:21) How? Through the Bible and Bible-based publications, the spiritual elders in the congregation, and our loving brotherhood.

### "Self-Control in All Things"

Of course, more was needed to succeed than merely a good trainer. Much depended on the athlete himself and on his commitment to the rigorous training. The regimen was severe, since the training included strict abstinence and dieting. Horace, a poet of the first century B.C.E., said that contestants "abstained from women and wine" to "reach the longed-for goal." And according to Bible scholar F. C. Cook, participants in

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the games had to undergo "self-restraint [and] spare diet . . . for ten months."

Paul used this analogy when he wrote to Christians in Corinth, a city very familiar with the nearby Isthmian Games: "Every man taking part in a contest exercises self-control in all things." (1 Corinthians 9:25) True Christians avoid the materialistic, immoral, and unclean life-styles of the world. (Ephesians 5:3-5; 1 John 2:15-17) Ungodly and unscriptural traits must also be stripped off and replaced by Christlike qualities.—Colossians 3:9, 10, 12.

How can this be done? For one thing, note Paul's answer by means of a forceful illustration: "I pummel my body and lead it as a slave, that, after I have preached to others, I myself should not become disapproved somehow."—1 Corinthians 9:27.

How forceful a point Paul made here! He was not recommending physical mortification. Rather, he admitted that he himself had internal conflicts. At times, he did the things he wished not to do and did not do the things he desired to do. But he fought never to allow his weaknesses to get the upper hand. He 'pummeled his body,' vigorously subduing fleshly desires and traits.—Romans 7:21-25.

All Christians need to do the same. Paul told of the changes made by some in Corinth who had formerly indulged in fornication, idolatry, homosexuality, thievery, and so forth. What enabled them to change? The power of God's Word and holy spirit coupled with their determination to conform to it. "But you have been washed clean," said Paul, "but you have been sanctified, but you have been declared righteous in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) Peter wrote similarly of those who had left off such bad habits. As Christians, they had all made real changes.—1 Peter 4:3, 4.

*Following a sacrifice, the athletes swore that they had trained for ten months*



### Well-Aimed Efforts

Paul illustrated his single-mindedness and sharp focus in pursuing spiritual goals, saying: "The way I am directing my blows is so as not to be striking the air." (1 Corinthians 9:26) How would a contestant di-

### 'Grease Him With Oil'

Part of the athletic training in ancient Greece was done by the anointer. His job was to anoint with oil the bodies of the men who were about to exercise. The trainers "noticed that a skilled massage of the muscles before training had beneficial effects, and also that a careful, light massage assisted the process of winding down and recovery by an athlete who had completed a long training session," observes *The Olympic Games in Ancient Greece*.

As the applying of literal oil to one's body can be soothing, therapeutic, and healing, the application of God's Word to a tired Christian "athlete" can correct, comfort, and heal him. Thus, under guidance from Jehovah, the older men of the congregation are admonished to pray over such a man, figuratively "greasing him with oil in the name of Jehovah," an essential measure in effecting spiritual recovery.—James 5:13-15; Psalm 141:5.

rect his blows or thrusts? The book *The Life of the Greeks and Romans* answers: "Not only rude strength was required, but also firmness of eye in finding out an antagonist's weak points. No less useful were certain dexterous thrusts learned at the wrestling-schools, and quickness in outwitting an antagonist."

Our imperfect flesh is one of our antagonists. Have we identified our personal "weak points"? Are we willing to see ourselves as others see us—especially as Satan might see us? That requires honest self-analysis and self-appraisal and the will to make changes. Self-deception occurs very easily. (James 1:22) How easy it is to justify an unwise course of action! (1 Samuel 15:13-15, 20, 21) That is tantamount to "striking the air."

In these last days, those who would please Jehovah and gain life cannot afford to hesitate in making the choice between right and wrong, between God's congregation and the corrupt world. They must avoid wavering, being 'indecisive, unsteady in all their ways.' (James 1:8) They should not waste their efforts on fruitless pursuits. When a person follows this straightforward, single-minded course, he will be happy and his 'advancement will be manifest to all persons.'—1 Timothy 4:15.

Yes, the Christian race continues. Jehovah—our Grand Trainer—lovingly provides the instruction and assistance necessary for our endurance and ultimate victory. (Isaiah 48:17) Like athletes of old, we need to cultivate self-discipline, self-control, and single-mindedness in our fight for the faith. Our well-aimed efforts will be richly rewarded.—Hebrews 11:6.

# Should You Be Easygoing?

MOST people would probably feel that it is a compliment to be thought of as an easygoing person, one with a relaxed, placid, tolerant nature. However, there is another side to easygoingness. The Bible says: "The easygoingness of the stupid is what will destroy them." (Proverbs 1:32) What does that mean?

Other Bible versions render the original Hebrew word with such expressions as "careless ease" (*American Standard Version*), "smugness" (*The New American Bible*), and "complacency." (*The New English Bible*) In this sense, easygoingness is linked to laziness and carelessness and thus to stupidity or foolishness.

In the first century, Christians in the congregation in Laodicea were blithely unaware of or complacent about their spiritual deficiencies. They smugly boasted that they "[did] not need anything at all." Jesus Christ corrected them, calling for a revival of their Christian zeal.—Revelation 3:14-19.

Easygoing complacency was also characteristic of the people in Noah's day. They were preoccupied with the mundane things of life, "eating and drinking, men marrying and women being given in marriage . . . , and they took no note until the flood came and swept them all away."

Jesus then added: "So the presence of the Son of man will be."  
—Matthew 24:37-39.

Fulfilled Bible prophecies indicate that we are living during "the presence of the Son of man," Jesus Christ. May we never become complacent, careless, smug—easygoing in the wrong sense.  
—Luke 21:29-36.

