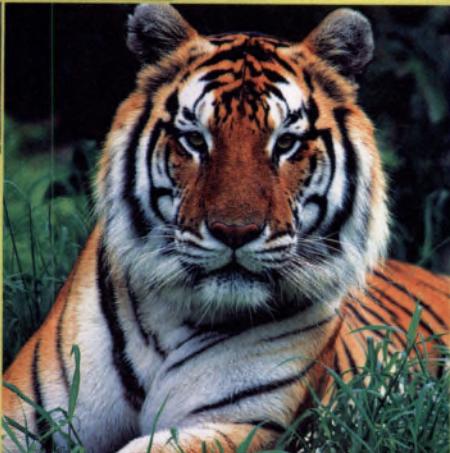


THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

MAY 1, 2008



WHAT DOES
CREATION
REVEAL ABOUT
GOD?

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

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SEEING IS BELIEVING

"An agnostic is a man who thinks that it is impossible to know the truth in the matters such as God and a future life with which the Christian religion and other religions are concerned. Or, if not for ever impossible, at any rate impossible at present."—PHILOSOPHER BERTRAND RUSSELL, 1953.

THE man who coined the term "agnostic" was a zoologist by the name of Thomas Huxley. Born in 1825, Huxley was a contemporary of Charles Darwin and a champion of the teaching of evolution. In 1863, Huxley wrote that he could see no evidence that there was a God who "loves us and cares for us as Christianity asserts."

Many today would agree with the sentiments of those influential men, stating that they will believe only in what they can see. To have faith in someone or something for which there is no evidence is pure gullibility, they may say.

Does the Bible require that we blindly believe in God? Quite the contrary. The Bible shows that it is naive—even foolish—to put faith in claims that are not backed by evidence. "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word," states the Bible, "but the shrewd one considers his steps."—Proverbs 14:15.

What, then, about belief in God? Is there really any evidence that God exists, let alone loves us and cares for us?

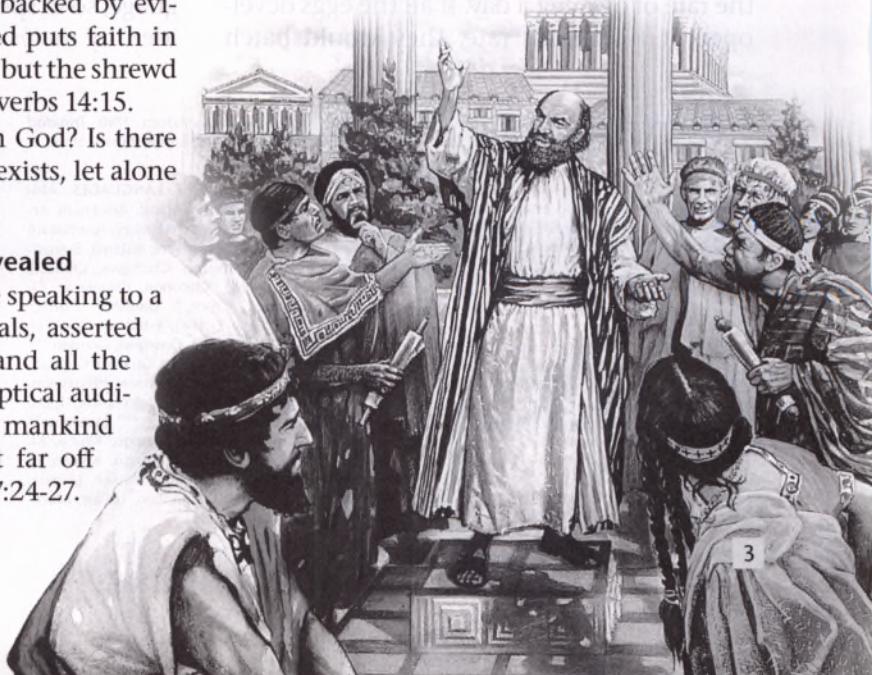
God's Qualities Revealed

The Bible writer Paul, while speaking to a group of Athenian intellectuals, asserted that God "made the world and all the things in it." Paul told his skeptical audience that God is interested in mankind and that, in fact, "he is not far off from each one of us."—Acts 17:24-27.

Why was Paul convinced that God exists and is interested in His human creation? Paul revealed one reason when writing to fellow Christians in the city of Rome. He said of God: "His invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made."—Romans 1:20.

The following pages present three attributes of God that can clearly be seen from the things he has created. As you examine these examples, ask yourself, 'How does learning about these attributes of God affect me?'

The Bible does not require that we blindly believe in God



GOD'S WISDOM

EVIDENT IN NATURE

"He is the One teaching us more than the beasts of the earth, and he makes us wiser than even the flying creatures of the heavens."—JOB 35:11.

BIRDS possess amazing abilities. They perform aerial maneuvers that are the envy of aircraft designers. Some species navigate thousands of miles of featureless ocean and arrive unerringly at their destination.

Another outstanding talent of birds—one that further reveals the wisdom of their Maker—is the ability to communicate by means of calls and songs. Consider some examples.

Bird Talk

Some species of birds start to communicate even before they are hatched. A female quail, for instance, lays up to eight eggs, at the rate of one egg a day. If all the eggs developed at a uniform rate, they would hatch



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over an eight-day period. The mother would then face the difficult task of keeping track of active, week-old chicks while still incubating an unhatched egg. Instead, a clutch of eight quail chicks will all break out of their shells within a six-hour period. How is that possible? A

key reason, researchers have suggested, is that quail embryos communicate with one another from inside the eggs and somehow orchestrate the almost simultaneous hatch.

When birds mature, it is usually the male of the species that sings. He does so particularly during mating season to mark his territory or to attract a mate. Each of the thousands of species of birds has its own language, so to speak, and this helps the females identify mates of their own species.

THE WATCHTOWER[®] ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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* Audiocassettes also available.

+ CD also available.

± MP3 CD-ROM also available.

Birds sing mainly in the early morning and at sunset, and for good reason. There is less wind and background noise at those times. Researchers have discovered that the songs of birds carry up to 20 times better in the morning and in the evening than they do in the middle of the day.

While males are most often the singers, both males and females utter a variety of calls, or short bursts of sound, that have distinct meanings. Chaffinches, for instance, have a vocabulary of nine different calls. They utter one type of call to warn of a threat from the air—such as a patrolling bird of prey—but emit a different call to warn of a threat approaching from the ground.

A Superior Gift

The instinctive wisdom of birds is certainly impressive. But when it comes to communication skills, humans are much more impressive. God has made humans “wiser than

The ability to communicate is a gift from God

even the flying creatures of the heavens,” says Job 35:11. Unique to humans is the ability to convey abstract, complex thoughts and ideas through sounds produced by the vocal cords or by gestures.

Unlike any other creatures, human babies seem to be programmed to learn complex languages. The online journal *American Scientist* says: “Toddlers manage to acquire language even when their parents don’t talk to them directly; deaf children will go so far as to invent their own sign languages if they are not exposed to sign at home.”

The ability to communicate our thoughts and emotions through speech or signs is truly a wonderful gift from God. Yet, an even greater gift given to humans is the ability to communicate with God through prayer. In

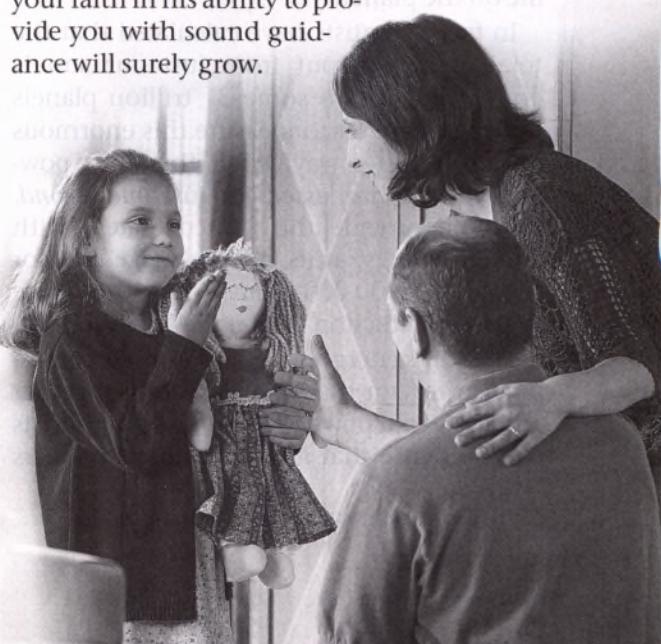
fact, Jehovah God invites us to talk to him. “Do not be anxious over anything,” states God’s Word, the Bible, “but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God.”—Philippians 4:6.

When we face difficult decisions, Jehovah wants us to draw on the vast store of wisdom he has had recorded in the Bible. He will also help us to know how to apply the advice we find there. “If any one of you is lacking in wisdom,” says the Bible writer James, “let him keep on asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching; and it will be given him.”—James 1:5.

How Are You Affected?

How are you affected when you listen to the beautiful singing of a bird or to a child learning to utter his first words? Do you perceive God’s wisdom in the things he has made?

After meditating on the way he was made, the psalmist David was moved to say to God: “I shall laud you because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, as my soul is very well aware.” (Psalm 139:14) As you appreciatively examine the wisdom of God evident in creation, your faith in his ability to provide you with sound guidance will surely grow.



GOD'S POWER REVEALED IN THE STARS

"Raise your eyes high up and see. Who has created these things? It is the One who is bringing forth the army of them even by number, all of whom he calls even by name. Due to the abundance of dynamic energy, he also being vigorous in power, not one of them is missing."—ISAIAH 40:26.

OUR sun is only an average-size star. Even so, its mass is 330,000 times greater than the mass of the earth. The majority of nearby stars are smaller than the sun. Other stars, though, such as the one named V382 Cygni, have a mass at least 27 times greater than our sun.

How much energy does our sun radiate? Imagine how fierce a fire would have to be if you were ten miles from it and could still feel the heat. The sun is, on average, about 93 million miles from the earth. Yet, on a sunny day, its heat can blister the skin! Remarkably, only about one billionth of the sun's energy strikes the earth. Still, this fraction of the sun's power is enough to sustain life on the planet.

In fact, scientists have calculated that the total energy output from just our sun is enough to sustain some 31 trillion planets like the earth. Or to measure this enormous output another way: If all the sun's power could be harnessed for just *one second*, it would provide the United States "with enough energy, at its current usage rate, for the next 9,000,000 years," says the Space Weather Prediction Center (SWPC) Web site.

The sun's energy emanates from its core—a nuclear reactor that smashes atoms together and spews out power. The sun is so big and its core so dense that it takes millions of years

for the energy produced within the core to well up to the surface. "If the Sun were to stop producing energy today," says the SWPC Web site, "it would take 50,000,000 years for significant effects to be felt at Earth!"

Now consider this fact: When you raise your eyes on a clear night, you are seeing thousands of stars, each disgorging vast amounts of energy, similar to our sun. And scientists calculate that there are billions upon billions of stars in the universe!

Where did all these stars come from? Most researchers now believe that for reasons they still do not fathom, the universe suddenly burst into existence some 14 billion years ago. The Bible simply states: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) Without a doubt, the One who created the colossal energy machines we call stars can be described as "vigorous in power."—Isaiah 40:26.

How God Uses His Power

Jehovah God uses his power to sustain those who do his will. For example, the apostle Paul expended himself in teaching others about God. Paul was not superhuman, but he was able to accomplish much good despite severe opposition. How? He acknowledged that he received "power beyond what is normal" from God.—2 Corinthians 4:7-9.



Clockwise from top left: Whirlpool galaxy,
Pleiades star cluster, Orion Nebula,
Andromeda galaxy

The sun in mass is 330,000
times greater than the
mass of the earth



Jehovah God has also used his power to destroy those who flagrantly violate his moral standards. Jesus Christ pointed to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and to the Flood of Noah's day as examples of Jehovah's selective use

With God's backing, you can gain the strength to do what is right

of destructive power. Jesus prophesied that soon Jehovah will again use his power to destroy those who ignore His standards.—Matthew 24:3, 37-39; Luke 17:26-30.

How Are You Affected?

After meditating on the power of God that is evident in the stars, you may feel like King David, who said: "When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have prepared, what is mortal man that you keep him in mind, and the son of earthling man that you take care of him?"—Psalm 8:3, 4.

Yes, it is humbling to realize how insignificant we seem to be when compared with the vastness of the universe. Yet, we need not feel overwhelmed by God's power. Jehovah inspired the prophet Isaiah to write these reassuring words: "He [God] is giving to the tired one power; and to the one without dynamic energy he makes full might abound. Boys will both tire out and grow weary, and young men themselves will without fail stumble, but those who are hoping in Jehovah will regain power. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not tire out."—Isaiah 40:29-31.

If you desire to do God's will, you can be sure that he will give you his holy spirit to help sustain you. But you must ask for it. (Luke 11:13) With God's backing, you can endure any trial and gain the strength to do what is right.—Philippians 4:13.

GOD'S LOVE

MANIFEST IN A MOTHER'S LOVE

"Can a wife forget her sucking so that she should not pity the son of her belly? Even these women can forget, yet I myself shall not forget you."—ISAIAH 49:15.



A NEWBORN baby nestles in his mother's arms as she nurses him. The scene is one of tenderness and love. "When I first held my baby in my arms," says a mother named Pam, "I felt an overwhelming sense of love and responsibility for this new life."

It seems an obvious fact, but research has confirmed that a mother's love profoundly influences her baby's development. A document published by the World Health Organization Programme on Mental Health states: "Studies have shown that infants who are abandoned and separated from their mothers become unhappy and depressed, sometimes to the point of panic." This same document cites a study indicating that children who receive love and attention from an early age are likely to have a substantially higher IQ than children who are neglected.

Regarding the importance of a mother's love, Alan Schore, a professor of psychiatry at UCLA School of Medicine in the United States, says: "The child's first relationship, the one with the mother, acts as a template, as it permanently molds the individual's capacities to enter into all later emotional relationships."

God's love for us is more enduring than that of a mother for her child

Sadly, depression, illness, or other pressures may cause a mother to neglect her child or even to "forget her suckling." (Isaiah 49:15) But such is the exception, not the rule. In fact, mothers seem to be programmed to love their children. Researchers have discovered that during birth, mothers have elevated levels of a hormone called oxytocin, which stimulates contractions and later plays a role in lactation. This same hormone, produced by both men and women, is also believed to play a role in the urge to act in a loving, altruistic manner.

What Is the Origin of Love?

Those who promote belief in evolution teach that unselfish love, such as that between a mother and her child, arose by chance and was preserved by natural selection because it benefited the species. For example, the online journal *Mothering Magazine* asserts: "The first portion of our brain that evolved on top of its reptilian heritage is the limbic system, the seat of emotion. It is this portion of the brain that permits mothers and their babies to bond."

Granted, research has revealed that the limbic system plays a contributing role in our emotions. However, does it sound reasonable to you that a mother's love for her child is the product of the accidental outgrowth of a reptilian brain?

Consider the alternative. The Bible says that humans were created in God's image, that is, with the ability to reflect God's qualities. (Genesis 1:27) God's dominant quality is love. "He that does not love has not come to know God," wrote the apostle John. Why? "Because God is love." (1 John 4:8) Please note that this Bible verse does not say that God *has* love. Rather, it states that God *is* love. He is the Source of love.

The Bible describes love this way: "Love is long-suffering and kind. Love is not jealous,

it does not brag, does not get puffed up, does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked. It does not keep account of the injury. It does not rejoice over unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8) Does it seem reasonable to believe that this most noble of qualities arose by blind chance?

How Are You Affected?

As you read the description of love in the preceding paragraph, did your heart yearn to have someone show you that type of love? It is only natural that you should feel such a longing. Why? Because "we are the progeny of God." (Acts 17:29) We were *designed* to receive and to express such love. And we can be sure that God has deep love for us. (John 3:16; 1 Peter 5:6, 7) The scripture quoted at the start of this article declares that God's love for us is even more powerful, more enduring, than that of a mother for her child!

You may wonder, though: 'If God is wise, powerful, and loving, why does he not end suffering? Why does he allow children to die, oppression to continue, and the earth to be damaged by mismanagement and greed?' These are good questions that deserve reasonable answers.

Despite what agnostics may say, it is possible to discover satisfying answers to those questions. Millions of people in hundreds of countries have found such answers by studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. The publishers of this journal invite you to do the same. As your knowledge of God grows through a study of both his Word and his creation, you will perceive that he is not distant and unknowable. Rather, you will likely become convinced that God is "not far off from each one of us."—Acts 17:27.

Solving Problems

He says: "Where are our daughters?"

She says: "They are at the shopping mall buying some new clothes."

He says: [Annoyed and with a raised voice]
"What do you mean 'buying new clothes'?
They bought new outfits just last month!"

She says: [Defensively, feeling hurt and accused] "But there was a sale. Anyhow, they asked me first, and I said they could go."

He says: [Losing his temper and shouting]
"You know I hate it when our girls spend money without consulting me! How could you make such a rash decision without talking to me?"



WHAT problems do you think the couple quoted above need to resolve? The husband obviously has trouble controlling his anger. Besides that, though, the couple appear to disagree about how much freedom their children should have. And there seems to be a breakdown in communication.

No marriage is perfect. All couples will encounter problems of some kind. Whether the issues are large or small, it is imperative that a husband and wife learn to resolve them. Why?

Over time, unresolved problems may become barricades that block communication. "There are contentions that are like the bar of a dwelling tower," observed wise King Solomon. (Proverbs 18:19) How can you open the door to more effective communication when dealing with problems?

If communication is the lifeblood of a marriage, then love and respect are the heart and lungs of the relationship. (Ephesians 5:33) When it comes to solving problems, love will motivate a couple to overlook past failures—and the resulting emotional injuries—and focus on the issue at hand. (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5; 1 Peter 4:8) Couples who show respect allow each other to talk freely and endeavor to hear what is meant, not just what is said.

Four Steps to Solving Problems

Consider the four steps listed below, and note how Bible principles can help you to solve problems in a loving and respectful manner.

1. Set a time to discuss the issue. "For everything there is an appointed time, . . . a

time to keep quiet and a time to speak." (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7) As demonstrated in the alteration quoted earlier, some problems may evoke strong emotions. If that happens, have the self-control to call a temporary halt—to "keep quiet"—before tempers flare. You can save your relationship from much damage if you heed the Bible's advice: "Starting a quarrel is like a leak in a dam, so stop it before a fight breaks out."—Proverbs 17:14, *New Century Version*.

However, there is also "a time to speak." Problems, like weeds, flourish when neglected. So do not ignore the issue, hoping it will just go away. If you call a halt to a discussion, show respect for your mate by picking a time in the near future when you will talk about the problem. Such a promise can help both of you apply the spirit of the Bible's counsel: "Let the sun not set with you in a provoked state." (Ephesians 4:26) Of course, you then need to follow through on your promise.

TRY THIS: Pick a regular time each week when you can discuss family problems. If you notice that you are more prone to argue at a certain time of day—for example, when you first arrive home from work or before you have eaten—agree not to discuss problems at those times. Rather, choose a time when you are both likely to be less stressed.

2. Express your opinion honestly and respectfully. "Speak truth each one of you with his neighbor." (Ephesians 4:25) If you are married, your closest neighbor is your spouse. So be honest and specific about your feelings when talking to your mate. Margaret,* who has been married for 26 years, says: "When I was newly married, I expected that my husband would just know how I felt when a problem arose. I learned that such an

* Some names have been changed.

expectation was unrealistic. Now I try to express my thoughts and feelings clearly."

Remember, your goal when discussing a problem is, not to win a battle or conquer an enemy, but simply to let your mate know your thoughts. To do so effectively, state *what* you think the problem is, then say *when* it arises, and then explain *how* it makes you feel. For example, if you are annoyed by your mate's untidiness, you can respectfully say, 'When you come home from work and leave your clothes on the floor [the *when* and *what* of the problem], I feel that my efforts to care for the home are not appreciated [explains exactly *how* you feel].' Then tactfully suggest what you think would be a solution to the problem.

TRY THIS: To help you have your thoughts clearly in mind before talking to your mate, write down what you understand the problem to be and how you would like to resolve it.

3. Listen to and acknowledge your mate's feelings. The disciple James wrote that Christians should be "swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath." (James 1:19) Few things cause more unhappiness in a marriage than the impression that your partner does not understand how you feel about a problem. So be determined not to give your mate such an impression!—Matthew 7:12.

Wolfgang, who has been married for 35 years, says, "When we discuss problems, I get kind of tense inside, especially when I feel that my wife doesn't understand my way of thinking." Dianna, now married for 20 years, admits, "I often complain to my husband that he doesn't really listen to me when we discuss problems." How can you overcome this barrier?

Do not presume that you know what your partner is thinking or feeling. "By

presumptuousness one only causes a struggle, but with those consulting together there is wisdom," states God's Word. (Proverbs 13: 10) Allow your spouse the dignity of expressing his or her opinion without interruption. Then, to ensure that you understood what was said, rephrase what you heard and repeat it to your mate, doing so without sarcasm or aggression. Permit your mate to correct you if you misunderstood something that was said. Do not do all the talking. Take turns in this style of conversation until you both agree that you understand each other's thoughts and feelings on the matter.

True, it requires humility and patience to listen attentively to your spouse and to acknowledge his or her opinion. But if you take the lead in showing your mate such honor, your mate will be more inclined to honor you.—Matthew 7:2; Romans 12:10.

TRY THIS: When repeating your mate's comments, do not just parrot his or her exact words. In an empathetic manner, try to describe what you understand your mate is both saying and feeling.—1 Peter 3:8.

4. Agree on a solution. "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their hard work. For if one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up." (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10) Few problems in a marriage can be solved unless both partners work together and support each other.

True, Jehovah appointed the husband as head of the family. (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23) But headship does not mean dictatorship. A wise husband will not make arbitrary decisions. David, married for 20 years, says, "I try to find a point of agreement with my wife and look for a decision we both can support." Tanya, now married for seven years, says: "It isn't about who is right and who is wrong. Sometimes there are just dif-

ferent opinions on how to solve a problem. I have found that the key to success is to be flexible and reasonable."

TRY THIS: Create a spirit of teamwork by having both of you write down as many different possible solutions to the problem as you can think of. When you have run out of ideas, review your list and implement the solution that you both agree on. Then pick a time in the near future when you will check whether the decision has been acted on and how successful it has been.

Pull Together, Not Apart

Jesus likened marriage to a yoke. (Matthew 19:6) In his day, a yoke was a beam of wood that tied two animals together so that they could perform work. If the animals did not cooperate, they would accomplish little good and the yoke would chafe their necks. If they worked together, they could pull heavy loads or plow a field.

Likewise, a husband and wife who fail to work as a team may chafe under the yoke of marriage. On the other hand, if they learn to pull together, they can solve almost any problem and accomplish much good. A happily married man named Kalala sums up the matter this way, "For 25 years, my wife and I have solved our problems by speaking frankly, by putting ourselves in the place of the other person, by praying for Jehovah's help, and by applying Bible principles." Can you do the same?

ASK YOURSELF . . .

- What problem do I most want to discuss with my spouse?
- How can I make sure that I understand my mate's true feelings on this subject?
- If I always insist on doing things my way, what problems might I create?

DISASTER STRIKES

THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

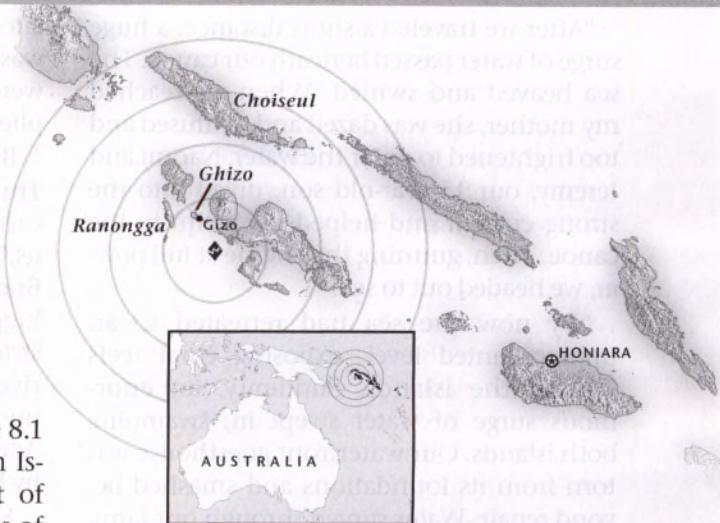
On Monday, April 2, 2007, a magnitude 8.1 earthquake rocked parts of the Solomon Islands, a tropical archipelago northeast of Australia. Within minutes, towering walls of water, some reportedly 30 feet high, smashed into islands in the Western Province, killing 52 people and leaving 6,000 homeless.

Among the hardest hit was Gizo, a coastal town of about 7,000 inhabitants on Ghizo Island, just 28 miles from the quake epicenter. A small congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Gizo was looking forward to observing the annual Memorial of Jesus' death that evening. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) The day began normally with a beautiful sunrise and calm seas. Then, at 7:39 a.m. local time, the quake struck.

Earthquake!

Ron Parkinson, a congregation elder, and his wife, Dorothy, were preparing breakfast when the quake hit. "Our old house swayed like a coconut palm but stayed upright," says Ron. "The noise was incredible. Cupboards, furniture, crockery, an upright piano, and other movable objects crashed to the floor. With great effort, we made our way outside. Dorothy slashed her bare feet on broken glass."

Missionaries Tony and Christine Shaw, who live nearby, also rushed outside. "The earth shook so violently that I fell to the



ground and couldn't get up," says Christine. "Out to sea, houses were floating in the water. A huge wave had torn them from their foundations. People in canoes paddled desperately among the wreckage as they were looking for survivors. Then another huge earthquake occurred—and then another. The aftershocks continued for five days. It was terrifying!"

Then Came the Tsunami

Patson Baea was on his island home of Sepo Hite, about four miles from Gizo, when the earthquake hit. How did Patson and his family fare during this disaster?

Patson recalls the ordeal: "I ran along the shore toward my wife, Naomi, and our four children. They had been thrown to the ground but were safe. The children were shaking, and some were crying. Naomi and I quickly reassured them.

"I noticed that the sea was moving abnormally. A tsunami was clearly on its way. Our tiny island would likely be swamped. My mother, Evalyn, who lived on a small island close by, was also in danger. I quickly ordered our family into our motorized canoe and set off to rescue her."

"After we traveled a short distance, a huge surge of water passed beneath our canoe. The sea heaved and swirled. When we reached my mother, she was dazed and confused and too frightened to enter the water. Naomi and Jeremy, our 15-year-old son, dived into the strong current and helped her swim to the canoe. Then, gunning the engine at full power, we headed out to sea.

"By now the sea had retreated to an unprecedented level, exposing coral reefs around the islands. Suddenly, an enormous surge of water swept in, swamping both islands. Our waterfront guesthouse was torn from its foundations and smashed beyond repair. Water surged through our family home, ruining many of our possessions. When the sea subsided, we salvaged Bibles and songbooks from our damaged house and made our way to Gizo."

Death and destruction lay along the coastline. The western side of Ghizo Island bore the brunt of the damage. At least 13 villages there were wiped out by a wall of water reportedly 15 feet high!

That night, 22 persons gathered at the Gizo Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses to observe the Memorial of Jesus' death. Happily, none of this number had been seriously injured by the disaster. "There was no electricity, and our kerosene lamps were broken," says Ron, quoted earlier. "So Brother Shaw gave the talk by flashlight. In the dark, we sang songs of thanks to Jehovah, with strong voices and multipart harmony."

Relief Efforts

When news of the disaster reached Honiara, the national capital, the local branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses moved swiftly to provide emergency relief. Telephone calls quickly confirmed the safety of most of the Witnesses in the affected areas. Reliable individuals were dispatched to locate a very iso-

lated Witness living on Choiseul Island. She was eventually found safe and sound. Funds were also sent to Gizo to buy emergency supplies.

Branch representatives arrived in Gizo on Thursday on the first available flight. "We carried several boxes of relief supplies with us," says Craig Tucker, a member of the Branch Committee. "Other passengers had luggage left behind because of weight restrictions, but to our relief, all our boxes arrived safely. They were among the first shipments of aid to arrive in the disaster area. Additional equipment arrived two days later by boat."

Meanwhile, Tony Shaw and Patson Baea, along with other Witnesses from Gizo, traveled two hours by canoe to assist isolated Witnesses living on the island of Ranongga. The force of the earthquake had lifted this island, which is 20 miles long and 5 miles wide, over 6 feet higher out of the sea! The sudden displacement of water around the island evidently produced the tsunami that struck surrounding islands.

"The members of the congregation were overjoyed to see us," says Tony. "They were safe and sound and living outdoors because of the fear of aftershocks. Ours was the first boat to bring relief supplies. Before leaving, we joined in a heartfelt prayer of thanks to Jehovah."

Patson says: "Several days later, we returned to Ranongga to bring additional supplies and to search for a Witness family who lived at a remote end of the island. We finally found Matthew Itu and his family camping deep in the bush. They wept for joy, knowing that we had not forgotten them! The earthquake had destroyed their home along with most of the buildings in their village. However, their main concern was to replace their family Bibles, which were lost in the disaster."

Praise From Onlookers

Such Christian love did not go unnoticed by others. "One journalist who was critical of the general relief effort was surprised and impressed to learn that Jehovah's Witnesses had supplied their members with food, tarpaulins, and other essential items within days of the quake," says Craig Tucker. "Villagers on Ranongga commented favorably on our rapid relief effort and lamented the lack of support from their own church," adds Patson. One woman exclaimed, "Your organization was so quick to respond!"

The Witnesses also reached out to assist their neighbors. "While visiting the makeshift hospital in Gizo, we saw a married cou-

ple whom we had recently met," relates Christine Shaw. "Both were injured and badly traumatized. The woman's grandchild had been torn from her by the tsunami and had drowned. We quickly returned home to bring them needed food and clothing. They were most grateful."

Indeed, victims of natural disasters need more than just material relief. They especially need the comfort that only God's Word, the Bible, can provide. "Some religious ministers were saying that God was punishing the people for their sins," says Ron. "But we showed them from the Bible that God is never the source of wickedness. Many thanked us for sharing this spiritual comfort with them."—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; James 1:13.*

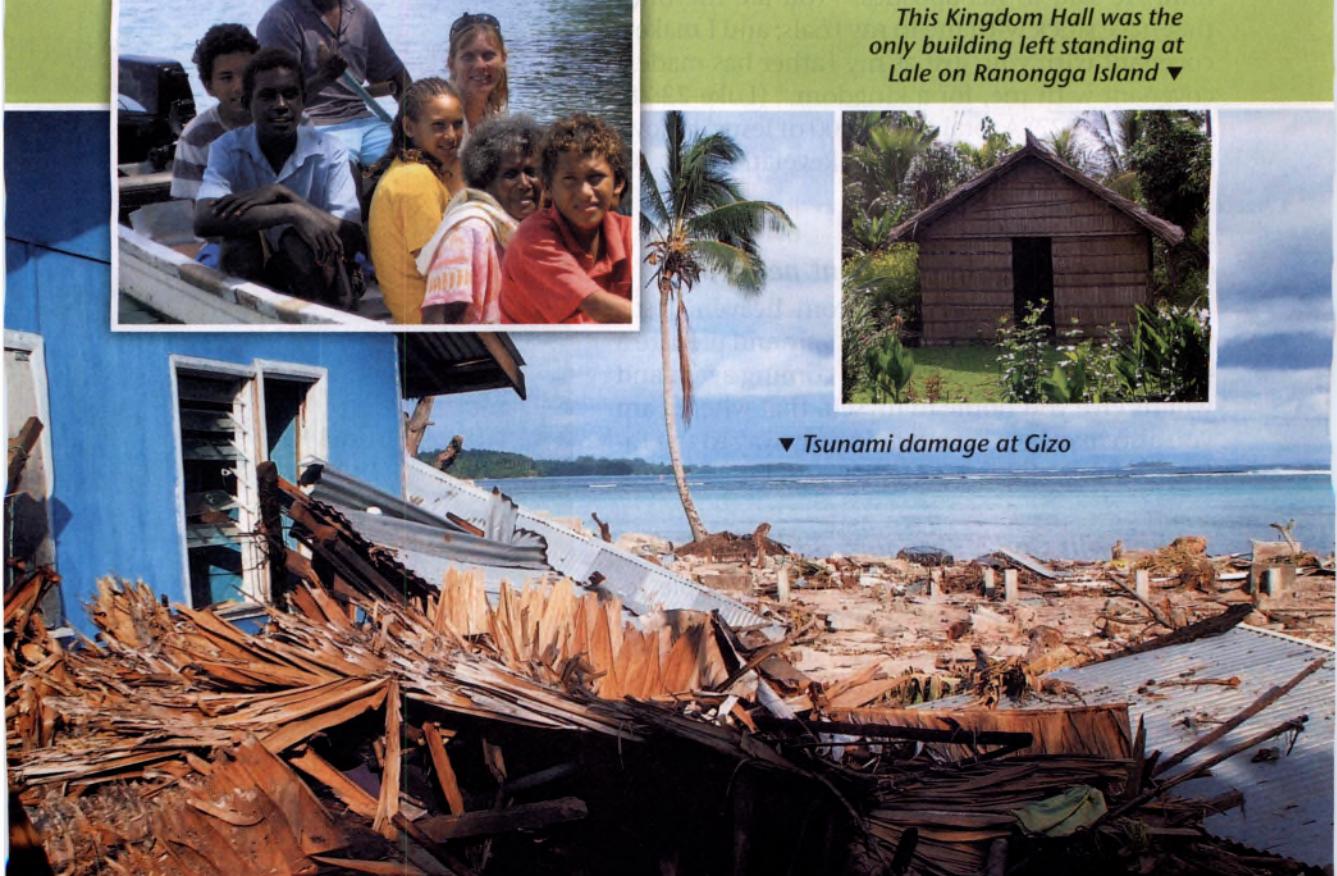
Baea family in their motorized canoe



This Kingdom Hall was the only building left standing at Lale on Ranongga Island ▼



▼ Tsunami damage at Gizo



* See the article "'Why?'—Answering the Hardest of Questions," in the November 2006 issue of *Awake!* pages 3–9. Hundreds of copies of this issue were distributed in Gizo after the disaster.

About God's Kingdom

What is God's Kingdom?

God's Kingdom is a government that will rule the whole earth. Jesus said: "You must pray, then, this way: . . . 'Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.'"—Matthew 6:9, 10; Daniel 2:44.

Who will be the rulers of God's Kingdom?

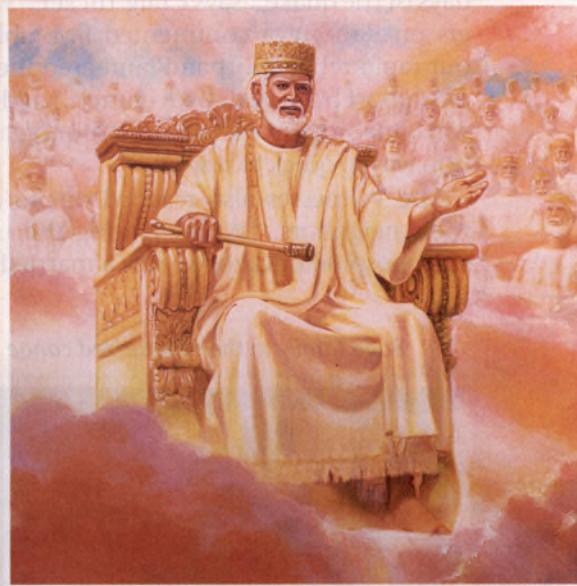
Jesus was born to be the Ruler of God's Kingdom. An angel told Jesus' mother: "Jehovah God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule as king." (Luke 1:30-33) Additionally, Jesus chose some of his followers to rule with him. He said to his apostles: "You are the ones that have stuck with me in my trials; and I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom." (Luke 22:28, 29; Daniel 7:27) A total of 144,000 of Jesus' followers will rule along with him.—Revelation 5:9, 10; 14:1.

Where will the government be located?

God's Kingdom will rule from heaven. Jesus said to his disciples: "If I go my way and prepare a place for you [in heaven], I am coming again and will receive you home to myself, that where I am you also may be. . . . I am going my way to the Father."—John 14:2, 3, 12; Daniel 7:13, 14.

What will God's Kingdom do about evil?

Jesus will cleanse the earth of wicked people. Jesus said: "When the Son of man [Jesus] arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the na-



tions will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another . . . And these [wicked ones] will depart into everlasting cutting-off, but the righteous ones into everlasting life.”—Matthew 25:31-34, 46.

Who will live on earth as subjects of the Kingdom?

Jesus said: “Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:29; 72:8) The earth will be filled with people who are even now learning to love one another. Jesus said to his followers: “I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one

another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves.”—John 13:34, 35.

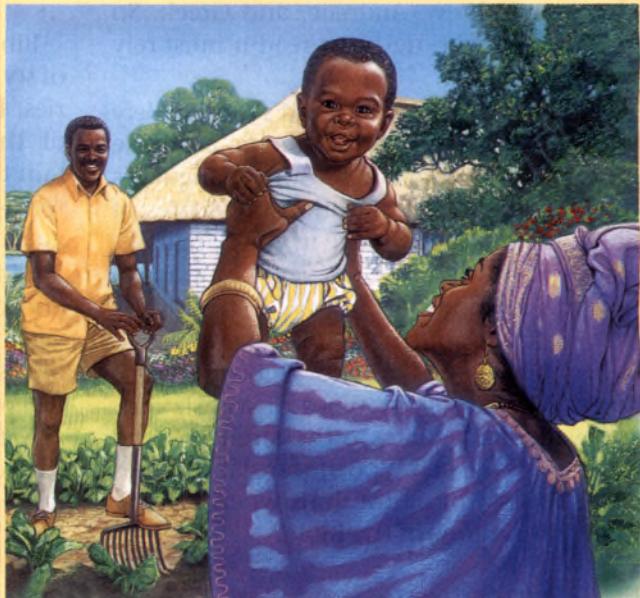
What will God’s Kingdom do for mankind on earth?

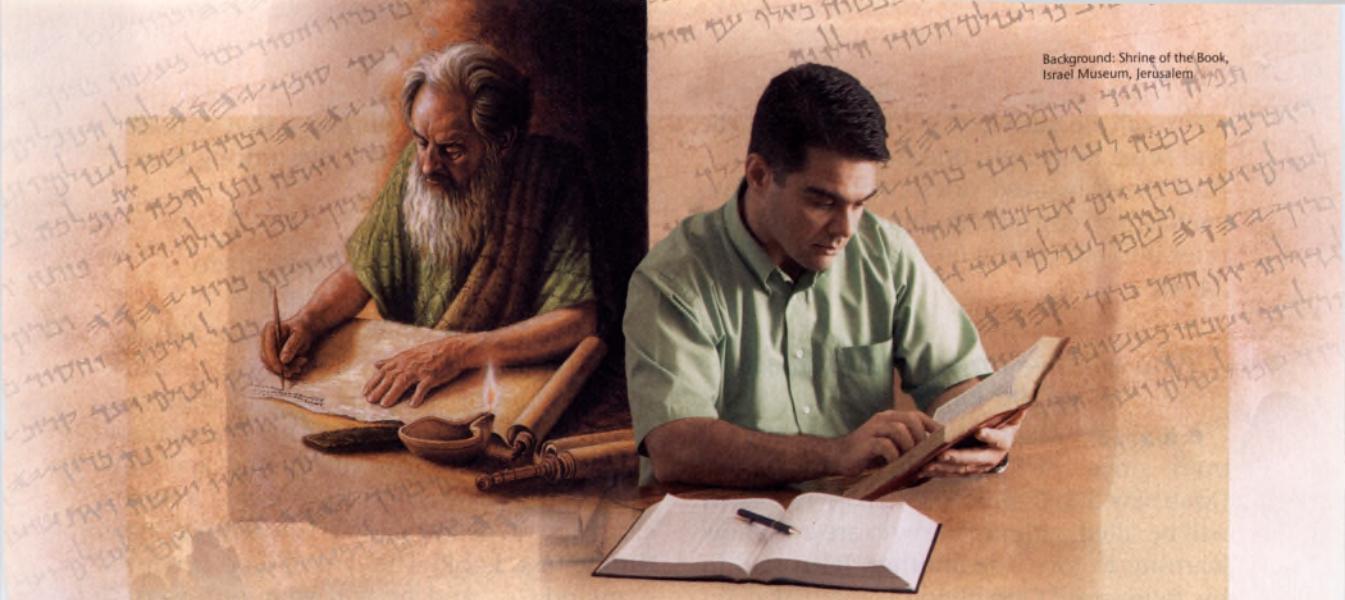
Jesus will cure mankind of disease. While on earth, Jesus spoke to the crowds “about the kingdom of God, and he healed those needing a cure.” (Luke 9:11) After seeing the resurrected Jesus in a vision, the apostle John said: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . I heard a loud voice from the throne say: ‘Look! The tent of God is with mankind . . . And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more.’”—Revelation 21:1-4.

God’s Kingdom will restore Paradise to the earth. An evildoer who was executed with Jesus said: “Jesus, remember me when you get into your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him: “Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise.”—Luke 23:42, 43; Isaiah 11:4-9.

For more information, see chapter 8 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?**

* Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.





HOW CAN YOU CHOOSE A GOOD **BIBLE TRANSLATION?**

THE Bible was originally written in ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. So most people who desire to read it must rely on a translation.

Today, the Bible is the world's most widely translated book—parts of it being available in over 2,400 languages. Some languages have not just one translation but scores of them. If you have a choice in your language, you surely want to use the very best translation you can find.

To make an informed choice, you need to know the answers to the following questions: What different types of translations are available? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each type of translation? And why should you be cautious when reading some translations of the Bible?

From One Extreme to the Other

Bible translations cover a broad spectrum of styles, but they fall into three basic categories. Interlinear translations are at one end of the spectrum. These translations contain the original-language text along with a word-for-word rendering into the target language.

Paraphrase translations fall at the other end of the spectrum. Translators of these versions freely restate the message of the Bible as they understand it in a way that they feel will appeal to their audience.

A third category embraces translations that endeavor to strike a balance between these two extremes. These versions of the Bible strive to convey the meaning and flavor

of the original-language expressions while also making the text easy to read.

Are Word-for-Word Translations Best?

A strictly word-for-word translation is often not the best possible way to capture the meaning of each Bible verse. Why not? There are a number of reasons. Here are two:

1. No two languages are exactly alike in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. Professor of Hebrew S. R. Driver says that languages "differ not only in grammar and roots, but also . . . in the manner in which ideas are built up into a sentence." People who speak different languages think differently. "Consequently," continues Professor Driver, "the forms taken by the sentence in different languages are not the same."

Since no language exactly mirrors the vocabulary and grammar of Biblical Hebrew and Greek, a word-for-word translation of the Bible would be unclear or might even convey the wrong meaning. Consider the following examples.

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul used an expression that is literally translated "in the (dice) cube of the men." (Ephesians 4:14, *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*)* This expression refers to the practice of cheating others when using dice. In most languages, however, a literal rendering of this allusion makes little sense. Translating this expression as "the trickery of men" is a clearer way to convey the meaning.

When writing to the Romans, Paul used a Greek expression that literally means "to the spirit boiling." (Romans 12:11, *Kingdom Interlinear*) Does this wording make sense in your language? The expression actually means to be "aglow with the spirit."

During one of his most famous speeches, Jesus used an expression that is often translated: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (Matthew 5:3) But a literal rendering of this expression is obscure in many languages. In

* An interlinear translation enables the reader to see a literal rendering of each word along with the original-language text.

accurate knowledge of the Son of God, into	male person perfect, into measure	of stature	of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to the measure of stature that belongs to the fullness of the Christ;	having
ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον	τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ	ἡλικίας	τῆς χριστοῦ,	τῷ πάσῃ
14 ἵνα μηκέτι ὡμεν	καὶ περιφερόμενοι	νήπιοι,	14 in order that we should no longer be babes, tossed about as	τοῖς πάροις
κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι	παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας ἐν τῇ	babes,	by waves and carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching	2
being tossed about by waves and being borne around	κυβίξ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν πανουργίᾳ	καὶ πλάνης,	by means of the trickery of men, by means of cunning in contriving error.	Χριστοῦ κύβῳ
	πρὸς τὴν μεθοδίαν τῆς πλάνης,	15 ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ αὔξησομεν	15 But speaking the truth, let us by love grow up in all things into	ἐν πάσῃ
	τὰν πάντα.	ὅς εστιν ἡ		αὐτοῦ

► A SECTION OF "THE KINGDOM INTERLINEAR TRANSLATION OF THE GREEK SCRIPTURES,"
EPHESIANS 4:14

The left column shows a word-for-word translation. The right column shows a translation of the meaning

► A SECTION OF
WALTON'S "BIBLIA
POLYGLOTTA,"
COMPLETED 1657
JOB 38:1-15

*Hebrew Bible
text (with Latin
Interlinear
Translation)*

*Corresponding
text of Aramaic
Targum*

C. A. P. XXXVIII.	לֹא
1 Ibs Qgls. dicit & r. tandem de Job. i. p. 16. Dominus expeditit &c.	רַבָּע אֶלְוָה רָאָה דָּוִת;
2 עַתָּה גָּדוֹלָה אֲנָזִירְתְּךָ אָמֵר;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
3 מִשְׁפָּט אָמֵן;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
4 וְרֵב נָשְׁתָן בְּעִירְתְּךָ;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
5 תְּרֵי אָמֵן;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
6 אֲמֵן;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
7 בְּעִירְתְּךָ;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
8 בְּעִירְתְּךָ;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
9 בְּעִירְתְּךָ;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
10 בְּעִירְתְּךָ;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
11 בְּעִירְתְּךָ;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
12 בְּעִירְתְּךָ;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
13 בְּעִירְתְּךָ;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
14 בְּעִירְתְּךָ;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;
15 בְּעִירְתְּךָ;	שְׁנִי לְאָרָה דָּוִת;

נְשָׂאָרָה דָּרְכְּךָ וְרוֹבְּנָתָךָ : אַזְרָחָא יָאִיב :	לֹא
דָּוִת : כְּרוּעָה עַל בָּשָׂרָינוּ בְּמִשְׁרָיָה תְּדִבְּרִים בְּכֻנָּה :	לֹא
סְפָּקָדָה אֱלֹהִים : אֲוֹתָה֙ סְנִירִים לְהָלָנוּ רְמִימִים :	לֹא
וְנִשְׁרָאָבָשָׂה וְהַשְׁׁחָדָה שְׁבָרָה שְׁבָרָה :	לֹא
לְהַלְלָה : טְבַעַדָּה אֲדֹת קְרָבָן וְהַלְלָה :	לֹא
דָּרְתָּה כַּרְבָּלָה שְׁבָרָה :	לֹא
פְּשָׁעָם אֲמָת וְלֹא כָּרְבָּלָה :	לֹא

AN ANCIENT PARAPHRASE

Paraphrases, or free translations, of the Bible are not new. In ancient times, the Jewish people compiled what are now called the Aramaic Targums, or loose paraphrases of the Scriptures. Though they are not accurate translations, they reveal how the Jewish people understood some texts and help translators to determine the meaning of some difficult passages. For example, at Job 38:7, "sons of God" is explained to mean "bands of the angels." At Genesis 10:9, the Targums indicate that the Hebrew preposition used in describing Nimrod carries the hostile meaning "against" or "in opposition to" rather than simply meaning "before" in a neutral sense. These paraphrases accompanied the Bible text but were never intended as a substitute for the Bible itself.

some cases, a strictly literal translation even implies that "the poor in spirit" are mentally unbalanced or lacking in vitality and determination. However, Jesus was here teaching people that their happiness depended, not on satisfying their physical needs, but on recognizing their need for God's guidance. (Luke 6:20) So such renderings as "those conscious of their spiritual need" or "those who know their need for God" convey more accurately the meaning of this expression.

—Matthew 5:3; *The New Testament in Modern English*.

2. The meaning of a word or an expression may change depending on the context in which it is used. For instance, the Hebrew expression that normally refers to the human hand may have a wide variety of meanings. Depending on the context, this word may, for example, be rendered "control," "openhandedness," or "power." (2 Samuel 8:3; 1 Kings 10:13; Proverbs 18:21)

In fact, this particular word is translated in over 40 different ways in the English edition of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

Because the context can affect the way a word is translated, the *New World Translation* uses nearly 16,000 English expressions to translate some 5,500 Biblical Greek terms, and it uses over 27,000 English expressions to translate about 8,500 Hebrew terms.* Why this variety in the way words are translated? The translation committee judged that to render the best sense of these words according to the context was more important than to produce a strictly literal translation. Even so, the *New World Translation* is as consistent as possible in rendering Hebrew and Greek words into the target language.

Clearly, Bible translation involves more than simply rendering an original-language word the same way each time it occurs. Translators must use good judgment in order to select words that present the ideas of the original-language text accurately and understandably. In addition, they need to assemble the words and sentences in their translation in a way that conforms to the rules of grammar of the target language.

What About Free Translations?

Translators who produce what are frequently referred to as paraphrase Bibles, or free translations, take liberties with the text as presented in the original languages. How so? They either insert their opinion of what the original text could mean or omit some of the information contained in the original text. Paraphrase translations may be appealing because they are easy to read. However, their very freeness at times obscures or changes the meaning of the original text.

* It is noteworthy that some English Bible translations use a greater variety of equivalents than the *New World Translation* and thus are less consistent.

Consider the way that one paraphrase Bible translates Jesus' famous model prayer: "Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are." (Matthew 6:9, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*) A more accurate translation of Jesus' words renders this passage: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified." Note, too, the way that John 17:26 is rendered in some Bibles. According to one free translation, on the night of his arrest, Jesus said to his Father in prayer: "I made you known to them." (*Today's English Version*) However, a more faithful rendering of Jesus' prayer reads: "I have made your name known to them." Can you see how some translators actually hide the fact that God has a name that should be used and honored?

Why the Need for Caution?

Some free translations obscure the moral standards conveyed in the original text. For example, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* says at 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10: "Don't you realize that this is not the way to live? Unjust people who don't care about God will not be joining in his kingdom. Those who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex, use and abuse the earth and everything in it, don't qualify as citizens in God's kingdom."

Compare that version with the more accurate rendering found in the *New World*

Paraphrase translations
may be appealing because
they are easy to read.
However, their very free-
ness at times obscures or
changes the meaning of
the original text

Translation: "What! Do you not know that unrighteous persons will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men, nor thieves, nor greedy persons, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit God's kingdom."

The *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* has been printed in whole or in part in more than 60 languages, with a total printing of more than 145,000,000 copies!

Notice that the details outlined by the apostle Paul on exactly what kind of conduct we should avoid are not even mentioned in the free translation.

Doctrinal bias can also color a translator's work. For example, *Today's English Version*, commonly called the *Good News Bible*, has Jesus saying to his followers: "Go in through the narrow gate, because the gate to hell is wide and the road that leads to it is easy, and there are many who travel it." (Matthew 7:13) The translators inserted the term "hell" even though Matthew's account clearly says "destruction." Why did they do so? Likely, it is because they want to promote the idea that the wicked will be eternally tormented, not destroyed.*

Finding the Best Translation

The Bible was written using the common, everyday languages of average people, such

* The Bible teaches that at death we return to dust, that the soul dies, and that we no longer have thoughts or feelings. (Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; Ezekiel 18:4) Nowhere does it teach that the souls of the wicked suffer eternal torment in a fiery hell.

as farmers, shepherds, and fishermen. (Nehemiah 8:8, 12; Acts 4:13) Therefore, a good translation of the Bible makes the message it contains accessible to sincere people, regardless of their background. A desirable translation will also do the following:

- Accurately convey the original message that was inspired by God.—2 Timothy 3:16.
- Translate the meaning of words literally when the wording and structure of the original text allows for such a rendering in the target language.
- Communicate the correct sense of a word or a phrase when a literal rendering of the original-language expression would distort or obscure the meaning.
- Use natural, easy-to-understand language that encourages reading.

Is such a translation available? Millions of readers of this journal favor using the *New World Translation*. Why? Because they agree with the approach taken by its translation committee, as stated in the foreword to the first English edition: "We offer no paraphrase of the Scriptures. Our endeavor all through has been to give as literal a translation as possible, where modern English idiom allows and where a literal rendition does not for any clumsiness hide the thought."

The *New World Translation* has been printed in whole or in part in more than 60 languages, with a total printing of more than 145,000,000 copies! If it is available in your language, why not ask Jehovah's Witnesses for a copy and see for yourself the benefits of this accurate translation?

Sincere Bible students want to grasp and act upon the message that God inspired. If you are such a person, you need an accurate Bible translation. Really, you deserve nothing less.

Jesus Performs Miraculous Healings

Instructions: Do this exercise in quiet surroundings. As you read the scriptures, imagine that you are part of the events. Visualize the scene. Hear the voices. Let the accounts come to life.



ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ MATTHEW 15:21–28.

What emotion did you imagine that the mother was feeling? _____

What tone did you “hear” in Jesus’ voice in the following verses? _____

24 _____ 26 _____ 28 _____

DIG DEEPER.

How many times did Jesus indicate—by word or by action—that he was not going to cure the woman’s daughter? _____

At first, why was Jesus *not* going to cure her? _____

Why did Jesus then perform the cure? _____

APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT...

Jesus’ reasonableness. _____

How you can imitate this quality in your dealings with others. _____

ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ MARK 8:22–25.

What sights and sounds did you imagine could be seen and heard inside and outside the village? _____

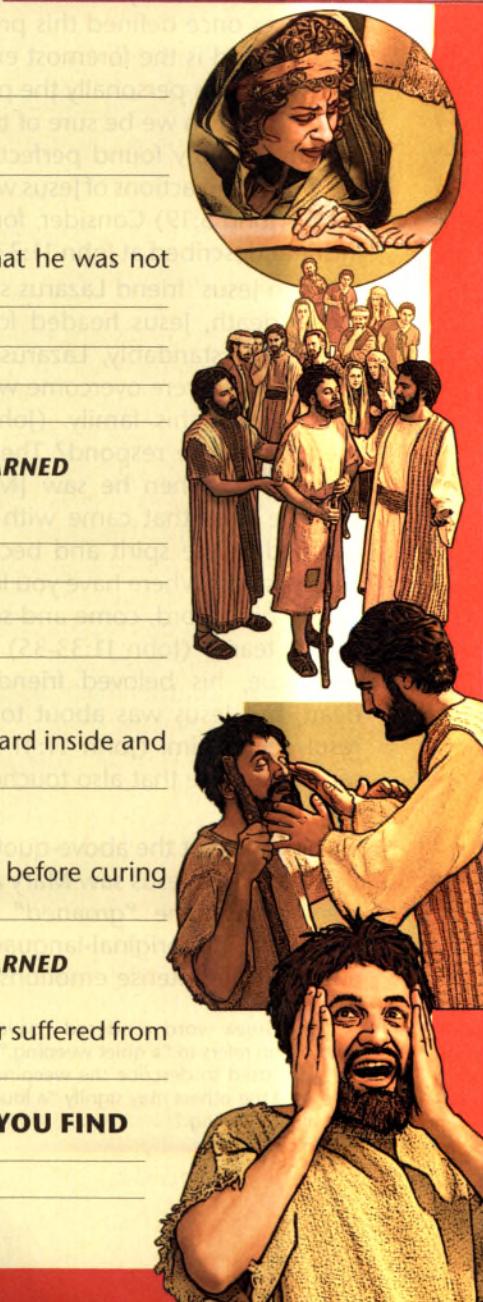
DIG DEEPER.

Why, do you think, did Jesus take the man outside the village before curing him? _____

APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT...

Jesus’ feeling for the disabled—even though he himself had never suffered from a disability. _____

WHAT ASPECTS OF THESE TWO BIBLE ACCOUNTS DID YOU FIND MOST MEANINGFUL, AND WHY?



He Understands Our Pain

John 11:33-35

EMPATHY is your pain in my heart." That is how an elderly missionary of Jehovah's Witnesses once defined this precious quality. Jehovah God is the foremost example of empathy. He feels personally the pain his people suffer. How can we be sure of that? Jehovah's tender empathy found perfect expression in the words and actions of Jesus when he was on earth. (John 5:19) Consider, for example, the incident described at John 11:33-35.

When Jesus' friend Lazarus suffered an untimely death, Jesus headed for Lazarus' village. Understandably, Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, were overcome with grief. Jesus dearly loved this family. (John 11:5) How, then, would he respond? The account says: "Jesus, . . . when he saw [Mary] weeping and the Jews that came with her weeping, groaned in the spirit and became troubled; and he said: 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him: 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus gave way to tears." (John 11:33-35) Why did Jesus cry? True, his beloved friend Lazarus was dead, but Jesus was about to undo that by resurrecting him. (John 11:41-44) Was there something else that also touched Jesus' emotions?

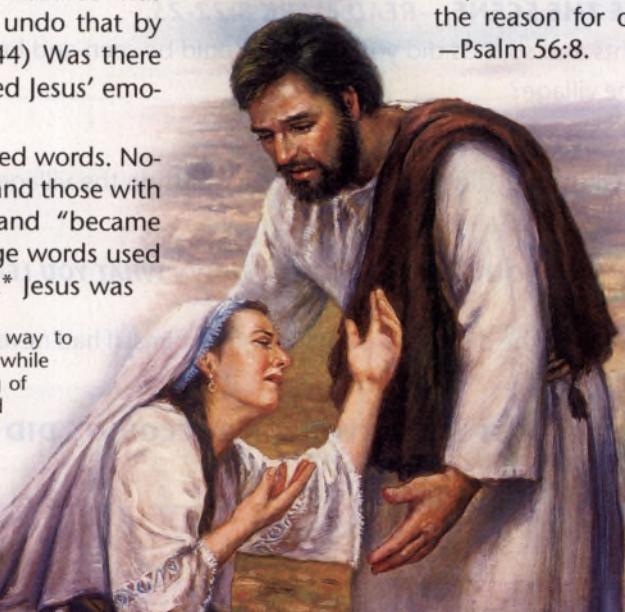
Look again at the above-quoted words. Notice that when Jesus saw Mary and those with her weeping, he "groaned" and "became troubled." The original-language words used here indicate intense emotions.* Jesus was

deeply moved by what he saw. The surge of strong emotions within him was evident as his eyes brimmed with tears. Clearly, Jesus' heart was touched by the pain of others. Have you ever been moved to tears because someone you care about was weeping?—Romans 12:15.

Jesus' empathy gives us valuable insight into the qualities and ways of his Father, Jehovah. Recall that Jesus so perfectly reflected his Father's qualities that he could say: "He that has seen me has seen the Father also." (John 14:9) So when we read that "Jesus gave way to tears," we can be sure that Jehovah personally feels the pain of his worshippers. Indeed, other Bible writers confirm this fact. (Isaiah 63:9; Zechariah 2:8) What a tender God Jehovah is!

Empathy attracts. When we are discouraged or depressed, we are drawn to a fellow human who can comprehend our circumstances and share our pain. How much more we are drawn to Jehovah, a compassionate God who feels

our pain and understands
the reason for our tears!
—Psalm 56:8.



* The Greek word rendered "gave way to tears" often refers to "a quiet weeping," while the word used to describe the weeping of Mary and the others may signify "a loud weeping, a wailing."



"When I first learned
that Mother's condition
was terminal, I just
couldn't believe it.
I was in a state of shock,
unable to accept that
my dear mom was going
to die."—Grace, Canada.

WHEN a loved one is diagnosed with a terminal illness, both family and friends are deeply distressed and may not know how to react. Some may wonder if they should tell the patient the whole truth about his or her condition. Others doubt that they will be able to cope with seeing the one they love suffer and perhaps lose dignity because of the effects of the disease. Many worry that they will not know what to say or do during the patient's final hours.

What do you need to know about the way you might react to such bad news? And how can you be "a true companion" and provide comfort and support during this distressing time?—Proverbs 17:17.

Comforting the Terminally Ill

A Natural Reaction

It is only natural to be distressed when a loved one is struck by serious illness. Even doctors, despite regularly dealing with death, often feel troubled—even powerless—when faced with the physical and emotional needs of the terminally ill.

You too may have trouble controlling your emotions when you see a loved one suffering. Hosa, who lives in Brazil and whose sister was terminally ill, says, "It's a very difficult experience to see someone you dearly love suffer constant pain." On seeing his sister stricken with leprosy, the faithful man Moses cried out: "O God, please! Heal her, please!"—Numbers 12:12, 13.



Focus on the individual's life and history and not just on the patient's present condition

We feel distressed by the plight of our sick loved one because we are made in the image of our compassionate God, Jehovah. (Genesis 1:27; Isaiah 63:9) How does Jehovah feel about human suffering? Consider Jesus' reaction. He perfectly reflected his Father's personality. (John 14:9) When Jesus saw people afflicted by illness, he was "moved with pity" for them. (Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 1:40, 41) As discussed in the preceding article in this magazine, when his friend Lazarus died and Jesus saw the effect death had on family and friends, he became deeply troubled and "gave way to tears." (John 11:32-35) Indeed, the Bible describes death as an enemy and promises that soon both sickness and death will be no more.—1 Corinthians 15:26; Revelation 21:3, 4.

Understandably, you may feel an urge to blame someone—anyone—for the bitter news that a loved one is terminally ill. How-

ever, Dr. Marta Ortiz, who prepared a thesis on the subject of caring for the terminally ill, offers this advice: "Avoid blaming others—the medical team, nurses, or yourself—for the patient's condition. This will only make relationships more tense and take away attention from what should be the principal concern: the needs of the terminally ill patient." What practical steps can you take to help your loved one cope with his or her illness and the prospect of death?

See the Person, Not the Illness

A first step is to look beyond any debilitating or disfiguring effects of the illness and see the person. How can you do so? Sarah, a nurse, says: "I take the time to look at pictures of the patient when he was still full of vigor. I listen carefully as he tells me about his memories. This helps me to remember the individual's life and history and not

just to focus on the patient's present condition."

Anne-Catherine, also a nurse, explains how she sees beyond the physical symptoms of the patient. "I look the person in the eyes," she says, "and I concentrate on what I can do to improve the condition of the patient." The book *The Needs of the Dying—A Guide for Bringing Hope, Comfort, and Love to Life's Final Chapter* says: "It is common to feel terribly uncomfortable at the sight of a loved one disfigured by illness or accident. The best thing to do under those circumstances is to look into the eyes of the loved one and see those changeless brown or green or blue eyes."

Granted, such an approach requires self-control and determination. Georges, a Christian overseer who regularly visits the terminally ill, puts it this way, "Our love for our companion must be stronger than the illness." If you focus on the person and not the illness, you benefit both yourself and your loved one. Yvonne, who has cared for children with cancer, says, "Realizing that you can help the patients to keep their dignity helps you to deal with their physical deterioration."

Be Ready to Listen

People may be reluctant to contact someone who is dying even though they love the person dearly. Why? They worry that they will not know what to say. However, Anne-Catherine, who recently nursed a terminally ill friend, points out that silence has its place. She says: "Comfort comes not only from our words but also from our attitude. Pulling up a chair and sitting down, drawing near and offering our hand, not holding back our tears when they reveal what they are feeling—all of this shows that we care."

Your loved one likely needs to vent his or her feelings—to communicate honestly and

openly. Often, though, the ill individual is conscious that loved ones are uneasy and avoids talking about serious personal matters. Well-meaning friends and family may also avoid discussing topics that are of concern to the patient, even hiding relevant health information from him. What is the result of such a conspiracy of silence? One doctor who deals with terminally ill patients explains that the effort required to hide the truth "diverts energy from the more significant process of relating to others and facing up to the illness." Therefore, if he wishes to, the sick person should be allowed to talk openly about his condition or the possibility of his death.

Focusing on the person and not the illness benefits both you and your loved one

When confronted with death, servants of God in the past did not hesitate to express their fears to Jehovah God. For example, on learning that he was going to die, 39-year-old King Hezekiah voiced his despair. (Isaiah 38: 9-12, 18-20) Similarly, terminally ill people must be allowed to express sadness at seeing their life cut short. Perhaps they feel frustrated because personal goals, such as traveling, having a family, seeing grandchildren grow up, or serving God to a fuller extent, are now beyond their reach. Maybe they are afraid that friends and family members will distance themselves because of fear of not knowing how to react. (Job 19:16-18) The fear of suffering, of losing control of bodily functions, or of dying alone may also weigh upon their minds.

Anne-Catherine says: "It is important for you to allow your companion to express himself, without interrupting or judging him or

minimizing his fears. It is the best way of knowing what he is really feeling and of understanding his wishes, fears, and expectations."

Understand Basic Needs

The plight of your companion, perhaps worsened by aggressive therapies and the aftereffects of such treatments, can disturb you so much that you might forget a basic need of the patient. It is the need to be able to make his or her own choices.

In some cultures, a family might try to protect the sick person by hiding the truth about his or her condition, even to the point of excluding the patient from decisions about medical treatment. In other cultures, a different problem may surface. For instance, Jerry, a male nurse, says, "Visitors sometimes have a tendency to speak about the sick person while standing at his bedside, as if he were no longer there." In either case, such conduct robs the patient of dignity.

Hope is another basic need. In countries where quality medical care is available, hope is often closely associated with finding an effective treatment. Michelle, who has helped her mother through three recurrences of cancer, explains: "If Mother wishes to try another treatment or consult another specialist, I help her with her research. I have come to realize that I have to be realistic in my heart but at the same time positive in my words."

What if there is no hope of finding a cure? Remember that the terminally ill patient needs to discuss death openly. Georges, the Christian overseer quoted earlier, says: "It is very important not to hide the imminence of death. This allows the individual to make practical arrangements and to prepare for his death." Such preparation can give a patient a sense of completion and ease his concern that he might be a burden to others.

Of course, it is natural to find these matters difficult to discuss. But such frank talks offer a unique opportunity to express your deepest feelings sincerely. The dying person may wish to reconcile previous differences, express regrets, or ask for forgiveness. These exchanges may lift your relationship with the one who is dying to new levels of intimacy.

Providing Comfort During the Final Days

How can you provide comfort to a person approaching the end of his life? Dr. Ortiz, quoted earlier, says: "Let the patient make his or her last requests. Listen attentively. If possible, try to do what the patient wants. If it is not possible to fulfill the patient's request, be honest."

More than ever, the dying person may feel the need to remain in contact with those who count the most in his life. Georges says, "Help the patient to make contact with them, even if the conversations are brief as a result of the patient's lack of energy." Even if only by telephone, this contact allows for an exchange of encouragement and also for praying together. Christina, a Canadian woman who lost three loved ones in succession, recalls, "The closer they came to the end of their lives, the more they depended upon the prayers of their Christian companions."

Should you be afraid to cry in front of your loved one? No. If you give way to tears, you are in fact giving your dying companion the opportunity to act as a comforter. The book *The Needs of the Dying* observes: "It is a deeply moving experience to be comforted by the dying, one that can be extremely important to them." By consoling others, the one who has been the object of much care is able to rediscover his or her identity as a caring friend, father, or mother.

Understandably, circumstances may pre-



A Way of Respecting a Patient's Dignity

In many countries, efforts are made to recognize a terminally ill patient's right to die in peace and with dignity. Written advance directives provide a helpful tool to respect these rights and allow patients to die at home or in a hospice.

An advance directive will do the following:

- Promote communication with doctors and relatives
- Relieve the family of the decision-making process
- Reduce the likelihood of unwanted, useless, aggressive, costly treatments

An effective advance directive includes at least the following information:

- The name of the person acting as your health care proxy
- The treatments that you will accept or refuse should your condition become irreversible
- If possible, the name of the doctor who is aware of your choices

vent you from being with your loved one during his or her final hours. However, if you are able to be with your friend in a hospital or at home, try to hold his or her hand right up to the end. These last moments offer an opportunity to express sentiments you may rarely have vocalized. Do not allow the absence of reaction to deprive you of saying good-bye and expressing your love and your

hope of seeing him or her again in the resurrection.—Job 14:14, 15; Acts 24:15.

If you make the best use of these last moments, you will likely avoid feelings of regret later. In fact, these moments of intense emotion could in the future become a source of comfort that you draw upon. You will have proved yourself to be a true companion “when there is distress.”—Proverbs 17:17.

Our Readers Ask

ARE NATURAL DISASTERS PUNISHMENT FROM GOD?

God does not use natural disasters to punish innocent people. He never has, and he never will. Why? Because "God is love," says the Bible at 1 John 4:8.

Love is the wellspring of God's actions. Love does not call down hurt on the innocent, for the Bible states that "love does not work evil to one's neighbor." (Romans 13:10) At Job 34:12, the Bible states: "For a fact, God himself does not act wickedly."

True, the Bible foretold disasters for our day, such as "great earthquakes." (Luke 21:11) But Jehovah is no more responsible for the destruction caused by them than a weatherman is responsible for the damage done by a typhoon that he forecasts. Well, if God is not behind the human suffering wrought by natural disasters, what is the cause?

"The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one," Satan the Devil, reveals the Bible. (1 John 5:19) He has been a manslayer from his rebellion at mankind's beginning down to our day. (John 8:44) Satan sees human life as cheap and disposable. He is governed by self-serving ambition, so it is no wonder that he has created a global system that thrives on selfishness. Today's world system condones human exploitation even to the point that many defenseless people live in harm's way, in places where natural or man-made disasters are very likely to strike. (Ephesians 2:2; 1 John 2:16) Thus, greedy humans must bear the blame for some of the calamity that victims experience. (Ecclesiastes 8:9) How so?

A surprising number of disasters are at least partially man-made. Consider, for ex-

ample, the woes that afflicted residents of the hurricane-flooded city of New Orleans, U.S.A., or the houses flattened by mud slides off the coastal mountains of Venezuela. In those instances and others, natural phenomena, such as wind and rain, turned catastrophic largely because of human environmental ignorance, shoddy engineering, flawed planning, unheeded warnings, and bureaucratic bungling.

Consider a disaster in Bible times. In Jesus' day, the sudden collapse of a tower claimed 18 lives. (Luke 13:4) This disaster may have been the result of human error, "time and unforeseen occurrence," or both—but assuredly not a result of God's judgment.—Ecclesiastes 9:11.

Have any disasters ever been caused by the hand of God? Yes, but unlike natural or man-made disasters, they were selective, they had a purpose, and they were extremely rare. The global Flood in the days of the patriarch Noah and the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah during the days of Lot are two examples. (Genesis 6:7-9, 13; 18:20-32; 19:24) Those divine judgments swept away incorrigibly wicked populations but preserved alive people who were righteous in the eyes of God.

As a matter of fact, Jehovah God has the means, the desire, and the power to end all suffering and to bring relief from the effects of natural disasters. Regarding God's appointed King, Jesus Christ, Psalm 72:12 foretold: "He will deliver the poor one crying for help, also the afflicted one and whoever has no helper."

Did You Know?

Why was the perfumed oil used by Mary so expensive?

A few days before Jesus' death, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, "came with an alabaster case of perfumed oil, genuine nard, very expensive," and poured the oil on Jesus. (Mark 14:3-5; Matthew 26:6, 7; John 12:3-5) Mark and John's accounts say that this perfume was worth 300 denarii—about a year's wages for an ordinary laborer.

What was the origin of this expensive perfume? The source of the nard, or spike-nard, mentioned in the Bible is generally considered to be a small aromatic plant (*Nardostachys jatamansi*) found in the Himalaya Mountains. Costly nard was often adulterated and even counterfeited. However, both Mark and John use the expression "genuine nard." The fact that this perfumed oil was so expensive suggests that its source may have been distant India.

Why does Mark's account describe Mary as "breaking open the alabaster case"? An alabaster case was usually fashioned with a narrow neck that could be effectively sealed to prevent the escape



ALABASTER PERFUME BOTTLE

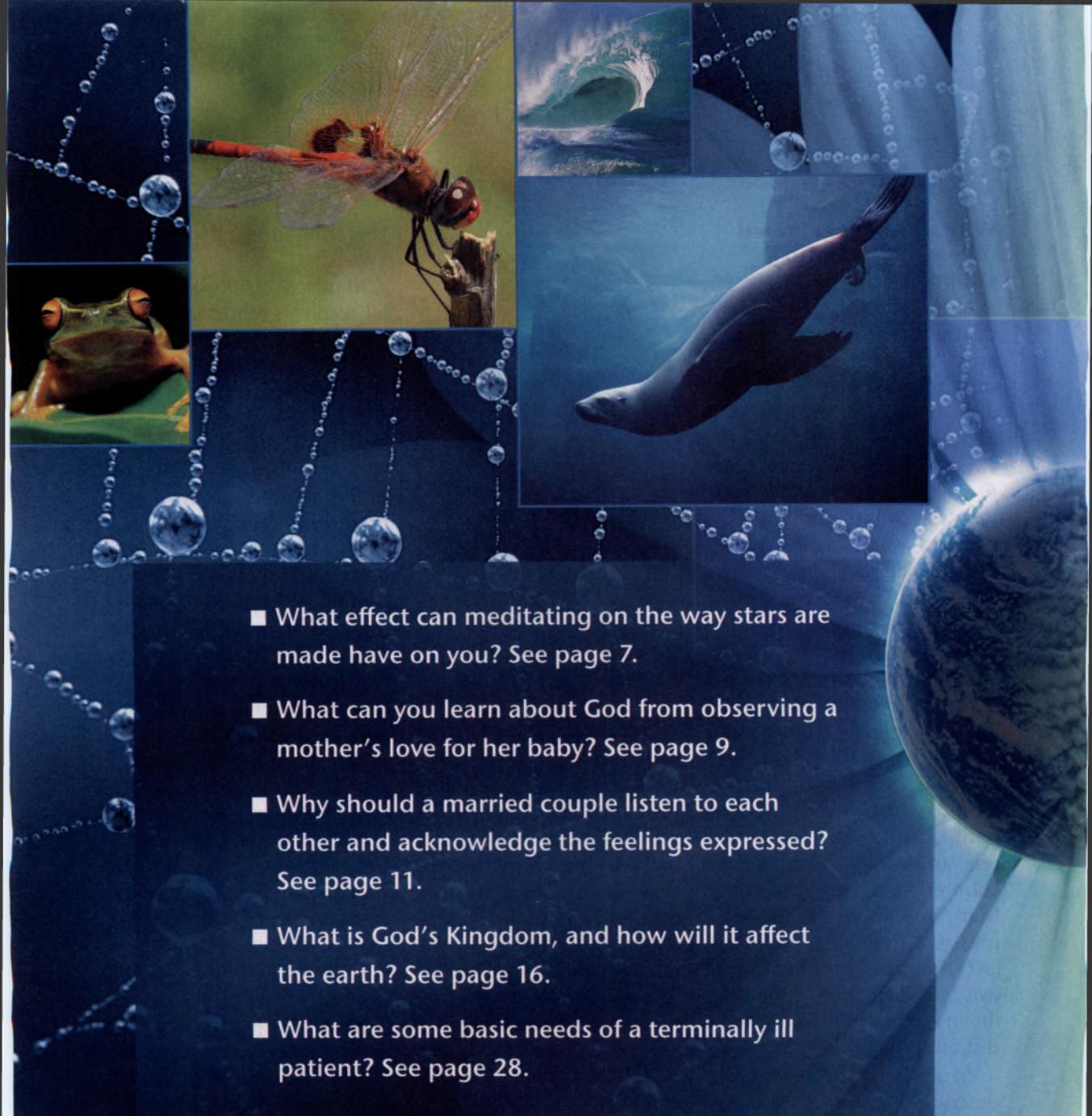
of the precious scent. Alan Millard in his book *Discoveries From the Time of Jesus* says: "It is easy to see how the excited woman would break [the neck of the case] off, not stopping to unseal the top, releasing all the perfume at once." This would explain why "the house became filled with the scent of the perfumed oil." (John 12:3) A very expensive gift, indeed, but an appropriate one. Why? This appreciative woman had recently seen Jesus resurrect her beloved brother, Lazarus.—John 11:32-45.

Jericho—one city or two?

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record a miraculous healing that took place near Jericho. (Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43) Both Matthew and Mark say it was when Jesus was "going out" of Jericho that he performed this miracle. Luke, however, says that it occurred when Jesus was "getting near" to Jericho.

In Jesus' day, was there just one city named Jericho or were there two? The book *Bible Then & Now* answers: "By New Testament times Jericho had been rebuilt about a mile (1.6 km) south of the old city. Herod the Great had established a winter palace there." This is verified by the book *Archaeology and Bible History*, which says: "Jericho of Jesus' time was a double city.... The old Jewish city was about a mile away from the Roman city."

So perhaps Jesus performed the miracle while *leaving* the Jewish city and *approaching* the Roman city or vice versa. Clearly, a knowledge of the circumstances that existed at the time of writing helps clear up what might appear to be a contradiction.



- What effect can meditating on the way stars are made have on you? See page 7.
- What can you learn about God from observing a mother's love for her baby? See page 9.
- Why should a married couple listen to each other and acknowledge the feelings expressed? See page 11.
- What is God's Kingdom, and how will it affect the earth? See page 16.
- What are some basic needs of a terminally ill patient? See page 28.