

The WATCHTOWER

Announcing
JEHOVAH'S
KINGDOM

APRIL 1, 1968

Semimonthly

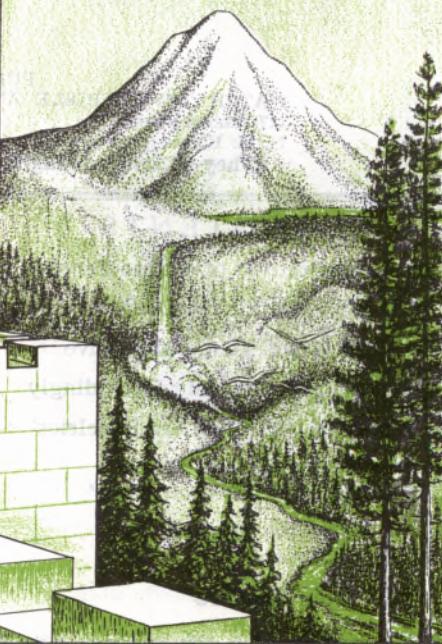
GOD'S WORD KEEPS
YOUR FAITH ALIVE

KEEP YOUR FAITH GROWING
EXCEEDINGLY

THERE IS A FUTURE FOR THE DEAD

'THE WORKS OF THE FLESH
ARE REVELRIES'

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"YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS JEHOVAH.—Isa. 43:12

THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER"

Every watchtower has its purpose. It serves as an elevated place for a wide-awake person with sharp vision. It enables him to see far ahead into the distance and tell those below for whom he is a watchman what is drawing near, whether it is a danger against which to prepare or it is something good over which to be glad with strong faith and hope.

Because of having the name "The Watchtower" this magazine justly has to render a similar useful service to the people of all nations. This is an international magazine and makes no racial distinctions, for we are all facing a common world danger; we are all hoping for a common good.

Ever since "The Watchtower" began to be published in July of 1879 it has looked ahead into the future, always striving to aid its readers to advance in knowledge and to gain a clearer picture of the glorious new order of things that is in store for righteous mankind. No, "The Watchtower" is no inspired prophet, but it follows and explains a Book of prophecy the predictions in which have proved to be unerring and unfailing till now. "The Watchtower" is therefore under safe guidance. It may be read with confidence, for its statements may be checked against that prophetic Book.

Among the many nations of today there are hundreds of differing religions. Which one does this magazine present? Not the confused religions of Christendom, but the religion of the oldest sacred Book on earth. Which Book? The Sacred Bible of the Holy Scriptures, written by inspiration in the name of the Creator of heaven and earth, the only living and true God.

The sacred, nonpolitical purpose of "The Watchtower" is accordingly to encourage and promote study of the Holy Bible and to give our many readers the needed unsectarian help to understand that Book of true religion and infallible prophecy. Thus this magazine will be helping them to prove worthy of perfect life and happiness in God's promised new order under His everlasting kingdom of righteousness.

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"They will all be taught by Jehovah."—John 6: 45; Isaiah 54: 13

CONTENTS

Come to the Festival of a Free People!	195
There Is a Future for the Dead	197
God's Word Keeps Your Faith Alive	201
Keep Your Faith Growing Exceedingly	208
"The Works of the Flesh Are Revelries"	213
Appreciating the Service of the "Faithful and Discreet Slave"	217
"Let Us Keep the Festival ... with ... Truth"	222
Questions from Readers	223

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The WATCHTOWER

Announcing
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HERE is today a group of people that are truly free. They have been set free from the fear of man, free from the bondage of superstition, ignorance and false religion, free from selfish ambition and corrupt practices, and free from bondage to the great enslaver, Satan the Devil. They are free because they have complied with the words of Jesus Christ: "If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."—John 8:31, 32.

Once each year these free people come together to celebrate or commemorate the event that made it possible for them to become a free people, namely, the death of their Lord and Master Jesus Christ. This they do in obedience to his specific command, as recorded for us by the apostle Paul: "For I received from the Lord that which I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was going to be handed over took a loaf and, after giving thanks, he broke it and said: 'This means my body which is in your behalf. Keep doing this in remembrance of me.' He did likewise respecting the cup also, after he had the evening



meal, saying: 'This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood. Keep doing this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" —1 Cor. 11:23-25.

Jesus Christ instituted this festival memorializing his death on a most fitting date. How so? In that it was on this very night, namely, the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month known as Nisan, that the Jewish passover was celebrated. This, in turn, commemorated a most notable event that had taken place 1,545 years earlier. And what was that? The deliverance of the nation of Israel, together with all their firstborn, from Egyptian bondage, whereas all the firstborn of Egypt, of both man and beast, were slain by the angel of Jehovah. They marched out that night a free people!—Ex. 12:1-39.

On Nisan 14 of 33 C.E. "Christ our passover" was about to be sacrificed for the freedom of his followers and so there was to be a new festival of liberation; yes, 'spiritual Israel' was to be set free on the basis of Christ's sacrifice. (1 Cor. 5:7, 8; Gal. 6:16) And just as that annual

Passover celebration commemorated the original passover deliverance and was held only once each year on the anniversary date, so it is but fitting that the Memorial celebration that took its place with Jehovah's people, the Lord's supper or evening meal, also be celebrated only once each year, and that on the very night that it was originally instituted.

Jesus did not invite his countrymen indiscriminately when instituting the memorial of his death. No, but only certain ones from among those who were 'really his disciples,' a select few who were members of what he termed a "little flock," and to whom he could say on that occasion: "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, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel." From other scriptures we learn that his "little flock" is limited to 144,000.—Luke 12:32; 22:28-30; Rev. 14:1, 3; 20:4-6.

How fitting that Jesus' followers should annually come together to consider all that their Leader and Master did for them and to commemorate his death! Though he had been God's foremost spirit creation, he left it all to become a mere mortal. More than that, "he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake." By this course he vindicated his Father's name, clearing it of the reproach heaped upon it by Satan the Devil, who had boasted he could turn all men away from God.—Phil. 2:8; Job, chapters 1 and 2; Prov. 27:11.

Ever since that memorable occasion the people set free by Jesus Christ have endeavored to celebrate annually this festival of liberation and they will celebrate it again this year on April 12, after sundown, that being the equivalent of the Jew-

ish Nisan 14. On that occasion those present will receive fine spiritual instruction and admonition, even as Jesus on the passover night of 33 C.E. gave his eleven apostles much fine counsel, particularly on the subject of showing unselfish love toward one another. All the readers of *The Watchtower* are invited to meet with the Christian witnesses of Jehovah as they gather in their Kingdom Halls that evening to celebrate this festival of liberation. Seats are free and no collection will be taken.—John 13:1-16:33.

At this festival of a free people the presiding minister will make clear what the requirements are of those who are entitled to partake of the bread and wine. These must be dedicated footstep followers of Jesus Christ, set free by reason of their continuing in Christ's word and being begotten of Jehovah's spirit to be spiritual sons. Further, they must have the witness of the spirit that they have been "born again," and have the sure hope of the heavenly reward and they must be living up to their dedication vow so that they will not be improperly partaking of the bread and wine and so bring judgment upon themselves. (John 3:3-8; Rom. 8:14-17) Following the discourse, there will be passed to those in attendance plates on which there is unleavened bread, the only kind that was on hand when Jesus instituted the memorial of his death, and which at the same time is a fitting symbol of his body, since leaven here pictures sin and Jesus was free from sin. Then goblets or glasses of unsweetened red wine will be passed, only such wine being able fittingly to represent Jesus' shed blood.

—1 Cor. 5:7, 8.

Last year upward of two million were in attendance at the *more than* 25,000 congregations of Jehovah's people throughout the earth for the celebration of Jesus' evening meal. Yet of all those in atten-

dance, less than 11,000 partook of these emblems. Those not partaking were, for the most part, either members or prospective members of the "great crowd" that the apostle John saw in prophetic vision. Their hope is not that of reigning with Christ in heavenly glory, but that of living forever on a paradisaic earth in which "righteousness is to dwell," and in which there will be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying nor any more pain. (Rev. 7:9; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:4) Though they themselves did not partake of the emblems, all were richly blessed by hear-

ing and observing what was said and done on that occasion. The same will be true this year.

Certainly there is no other place in all the world that you should want to be on the evening of April 12, 1968, than at a gathering of Jehovah's people where the Lord's evening meal will be celebrated in keeping with Jesus' instructions. What you hear and see on that occasion will cause you to appreciate more than ever what Jesus Christ did for you and will help you to be one of God's free people.

their beloved mother lying motionless in a New York City funeral parlor.

On such occasions, one is very concerned about the future for the dead. Is there really hope for them? Can Almighty God actually resurrect dead loved ones back to life? Will one really be able to enjoy their company, and again experience good times with them? Before her death the mother had taught her children to believe that this was possible. Now it was comforting to hear the minister offer certain evidence from the Bible that dead loved ones will enjoy a happy future. How faith-strengthening this was!

A TRUSTWORTHY PROMISE

The minister pointed to the promise made by the miracle worker Jesus Christ, who electrified the Galilean countryside by his amazing deeds in the first century of our Common Era. During a brief visit to Jerusalem in Judea to celebrate the Passover in the spring of 31 C.E., Jesus had told a Jewish audience: "For just as the Father raises the dead up and makes them alive, so the Son also makes those alive whom he wants to. Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in

IT WAS September 11, 1965; a time of extreme sorrow for a young boy and his teen-age brother and sister. But, really, the occasion was not unusual or the scene unfamiliar. Millions of persons since have gathered at funerals, and viewed dead loved ones. Perhaps you, too, are familiar with the empty feeling that comes with losing in death one whom you love. How depressed and utterly helpless you can feel! That is exactly how these three youngsters felt as they observed

which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out." What a wonderful promise!—John 5:21, 28, 29.

The idea of resurrection was not new to the assembled Jews. In fact, those belonging to the popular sect of the Pharisees publicly declared the resurrection of the dead. (Acts 23:8) These apparently believed that the Father, Jehovah God, could raise the dead and, in times past, had used his prophets Elijah and Elisha to do so. (1 Ki. 17:17-24; 2 Ki. 4:32-37) However, they did not believe that Jesus had this power. Is there sound basis, then, for us today to put faith in Jesus' promise to call forth those in their memorial tombs?

Although up until this time Jesus had apparently not resurrected anyone, shortly later he offered amazing foregleams of what he would accomplish in his Father's due time. After returning to Galilee, Jesus and his followers traveled to the little village of Nain, located in the fertile plain of Esdraelon a few miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee.

Just as they were approaching the settlement, Jesus and his party came upon a touching scene. A funeral procession was coming out of the village toward them. A widow had lost her only son. The woman's extreme grief moved Jesus with pity. But what could he do?

After instructing the woman to stop weeping, he went over to the bier, and, addressing the corpse, commanded: "Young man, I say to you, Get up!" And the dead man sat up and started to speak, and he gave him to his mother." What a remarkable thing! Here Jesus proved his power over death! News of this marvelous deed spread far and wide.—Luke 7:11-18.

Later that year, while ministering around the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus was urged by Jairus, a pre-

siding officer of the synagogue, to come to his home where his twelve-year-old daughter was extremely sick. However, before Jesus arrived the girl died. Nevertheless, after reaching the home, Jesus "took her by the hand and called, saying: 'Girl, get up!' And her breath returned, and she rose instantly, and he ordered something to be given her to eat. Well, her parents were beside themselves." —Luke 8:40-56.

Here, for the second time, Jesus proved that he has the power to make "those alive whom he wants to." Truly, there is good reason for us to believe Jesus' promise that he will call dead ones forth from the memorial tombs.

REINFORCING HIS PROMISE

However, many in the first century refused to believe, even as many persons today do not put faith in Jesus' resurrection promise. But Jesus provided even greater evidence of his God-given ability to fulfill his promise.

It was about a year later, not long before his own death outside Jerusalem. Jesus was apparently ministering across the Jordan River in Perea. While there, word reached him that back in Bethany his dear friend Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, was sick. After getting the message, he remained where he was for two days, and then told his disciples: "Let us go into Judea again." By this time Lazarus had died.

When they arrived at the outskirts of Bethany, which was a small village about two miles from Jerusalem, Lazarus "had already been dead four days in the memorial tomb." Martha came out first to meet him, and Jesus comforted her with the hope of the resurrection. She expressed faith, saying: "I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day." Then, when Mary came, she fell at his feet and said

with weeping: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Other friends, who had followed Mary, were also weeping.

Jesus was moved by the display of grief and groaned. He asked: "Where have you laid him?" When told by the weeping relatives, "Lord, come and see," Jesus, too, gave way to tears. It was something sad even to Jesus, who has superhuman powers, to think how death could rob family and friends of one loved so dearly.

When they came to the memorial tomb, which was a cave with a stone lying at the entrance, Jesus commanded: "Take the stone away." However, Martha protested: "Lord, by now he must smell, for he has been dead four days." But when Jesus spoke of seeing "the glory of God," they removed the stone. Then Jesus prayed to God, after which he cried out with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come on out!" The Bible record says: "The man that had been dead came out with his feet and hands bound with wrappings, and his countenance was bound about with a cloth. Jesus said to them: 'Loose him and let him go.'"—John 11:1-44.

Surely, Jesus can raise the dead! What a sound basis there is for confidence in his resurrection promise! How faith-strengthening these inspired Bible accounts are! The three youngsters at their mother's funeral in New York were comforted by them. They are absolutely confident that they will see her again, alive and healthy.

AWAITING RESURRECTION

There are now thousands of millions of dead awaiting the "resurrection on the last day," of which Martha spoke. But what is their present condition? Are they alive in conscious suffering, or enjoying heavenly bliss? Well, what was Lazarus' condition for the four days he was dead

and in the tomb? Others of dead mankind are in that same condition.

You will note from the Bible record that Lazarus makes no mention of experiencing conscious existence elsewhere during those four days. Now think: If he had been alive in heaven enjoying the many marvelous things about which humans are interested to know, surely he would have said something about them, is that not true? But no, Lazarus was completely silent on the matter. Then, too, if he really was enjoying the bliss of heavenly life, would it not have been a malicious thing for his friend Jesus suddenly to extricate him from there, and bring him to life on earth again!

The reason why Lazarus reported nothing about his activities during those four days is that he did not know anything. He was unconscious. No part of him had survived and was living elsewhere. He was *really* dead, as the Bible explains: "As for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all." (Eccl. 9:5) God's Word makes clear that man does not have an immortal soul that lives on after death. It says, for example, that "the soul that is sinning—it itself will die."—Ezek. 18:4; Isa. 53:12.

The three youngsters understood this. They knew that their mother was not alive somewhere, but was unconscious, sleeping in death. But how will the dead return? In what body? Where will they be brought back? When?

JESUS' PROMISE FULFILLED

Jesus himself was raised by God on the third day after his death. (Acts 2:32; 10:40) He was resurrected to heavenly life as a spirit creature. (1 Pet. 3:18) Jesus was thus the "first fruits" of those who would experience what is called "the earlier resurrection from the dead," or "the first resurrection." (1 Cor. 15:20-23;

Phil. 3:11; Rev. 20:6) This is a resurrection to spirit life to rule in heavenly glory with Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:43, 44) However, the Bible shows that only 144,000 persons will share in this "earlier resurrection" to heavenly life. (Rev. 14:1-3) What, then, about the rest of dead mankind? When and how will they be raised?

"The resurrection on the last day," of which Martha spoke, is the general resurrection of thousands of millions of humans who will be brought forth from their tombs to earthly life. (John 11:24) This resurrection will be "of both the righteous and the unrighteous." These will enjoy life during a glorious thousand-year Kingdom Day. (Acts 24:15; 17:31) This millennium will take place after the present wicked system of things is destroyed in "the war of the great day of God the Almighty," commonly called Armageddon, and the binding and abyssing of Satan the Devil. (Matt. 24:3; Rev. 16:14-16; 20:1-6) Then the dead will be brought forth in a cleansed earth, restored to paradisaic conditions by God's power.—Luke 23:43.

These resurrected ones will be given healthy bodies and minds, and have full opportunity to learn of their grand Creator and to grow to human perfection. Although they will not receive exactly the same bodies, composed of the identical elements at the time of death, nevertheless they will be the same persons. Jehovah God will produce every one of the millions of traits and characteristics of the individual, not only those inherited, but all those that are the result of countless influences playing on the individual during his lifetime. Yes, God will with unerring accuracy recreate in a body the identical personality that friends and relatives will recognize as the loved one they lost in death.

How marvelous! What a glorious time when loved ones are reunited! Happily, Jesus' promise will be fulfilled! Yes, "all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment."—John 5:28, 29.

Note from this that the resurrection of some persons will, because of their righteous conduct following their resurrection, result in their being declared worthy of life. On the other hand, because some will not obediently conform to God's laws after being raised, their resurrection will result in condemnatory judgment, and they will be everlasting cut off. A factor that will affect the course one pursues after his resurrection is his previous life pattern. Jesus indicated this when he said it would be more endurable on Judgment Day for some resurrected ones than it would be for the resurrected Galileans of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, who stubbornly rejected him during his earthly ministry.—Matt. 10:15; 11:20-24.

Today it is especially vital to conform to God's righteous principles, because note what the Bible says will happen when Jesus Christ is revealed as executioner at God's war of Armageddon: "He brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones will undergo . . . everlasting destruction."—2 Thess. 1:7-9.

Yes, mankind is facing an early execution of divine judgment! Those destroyed with this system of things will not return. So act now! Learn about God, and obey the good news concerning Jesus Christ. Then you may have the indescribable pleasure of welcoming your loved ones back from the dead.

GOD'S WORD

Keeps Your Faith Alive

HERE are thousands of reservoirs of knowledge in the earth where information covering every field of earthly activity is kept for constant use. Man has recorded and stored away millions of books in libraries in every corner of the earth.

From family to national libraries these publications have come to be called "the memory of the human race." "They are like a giant brain that remembers all that scientists, historians, poets, philosophers and others have thought and learned." (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12, page 212) The Bibliotheque Nationale Library in Paris, the largest in Europe, Russia's Lenin Library in Moscow with over 14,500,000 books, its Leningrad Library with over 11,800,000 volumes, the New York Public Library with more than 7,500,000 volumes, and the Library of Congress with 12,000,000 books and pamphlets are just a few that give you an idea of the vast storehouse of knowledge that exists on the earth. In the Library of Congress there are thirty-six acres of floor space and two hundred and fifty miles of shelves.

1, 2. (a) What have many stored away in the libraries of the world? (b) Is this reservoir of wisdom useful?

"FAITH IS NOT
A POSSESSION
OF ALL PEOPLE."

—2 THESS. 3:2.

² Like frozen thoughts, there are stored the record of man's errors, failures and accomplishments, documents, rare books, talking books and Braille for the sightless, maps, slides, films, musical records, medals, coins, plays, newspapers, art, microfilm

and millions of books in thousands of languages. Complicated computers are being used to tap this huge storehouse of human thinking and are gathering, storing and producing wanted information in seconds. Man dreams of one day having a computer in his future home learning room that will tie him in with all the libraries of the world and bring all this information right into his home. Man hopes to be able to use this deepfreeze for greater accomplishments in the future.

³ Where does all this knowledge come from? It is true that through diligent research, experiment and experience man has recorded many valuable facts. There is also a vast array of theories, speculation and unfounded conclusions based on man's likes and dislikes that fill libraries. No wonder Professor March said: "Of the making of books there is no limit, but like

3. (a) How should we view the vast storehouse of man's wisdom? (b) How is its value finally determined?

the great number of fish in the sea, it is the comparatively few that are worth the taking." The writer of the Bible book Ecclesiastes in chapter twelve, verses nine to fourteen, also eliminates a lot of man's wisdom and points to the source of true wisdom. He writes: "The congregator had become wise, he also taught the people knowledge continually, and he pondered and made a thorough search, that he might arrange many proverbs in order. The congregator sought to find the delightful words and the writing of correct words of truth. The words of the wise ones are like oxgoads, and just like nails driven in are those indulging in collections of sentences; they have been given from one shepherd. . . . take a warning: To the making of many books there is no end, and much devotion to them is wearisome to the flesh. . . . God himself will bring every sort of work into the judgment in relation to every hidden thing, as to whether it is good or bad." During the Christian apostle Paul's missionary visit to Ephesus many became believers and publicly burned such worthless books, valued at fifty thousand silver pieces. (Acts 19:19) They were "possibly worth 2,000 English pounds, or 10,000 dollars," according to a footnote on page 323 of Weymouth's *New Testament in Modern Speech*.

* But there is still another impressive place to learn. Greater than all of man's libraries combined, its size is 196,951,072 square miles. Yes, the earth makes an impressive library, with miles and miles of creative wisdom on display. The revelations of this wisdom increase man's understanding of God, the Creator, even as Romans 1:20 says: "His invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are per-

ceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship." From his observation platform, the earth, man can look out into the heavens and listen while God's creation talks. "The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling. One day after another day causes speech to bubble forth, and one night after another night shows forth knowledge. There is no speech, and there are no words; no voice on their part is being heard." (Ps. 19:1-3) The impressions made last a lifetime, with wise men giving the great Creator the credit.

⁵ And Jehovah God has added to this the most important book on earth's shelves, His Word, the Bible. This book is different from the works of men. It does not give admonition based on man's likes or dislikes. It is based on truths and facts. It is a living word. This word is powerful, exerting a force not found in publications of man's origination. The apostle Paul describes it this way: "The word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and their marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Heb. 4:12) Over 1,500 years after Bible writing started, God's Son came to earth. He studied this same word of truth and used it in his ministry. In prayer to his heavenly Father he said: "Your word is truth." (John 17:17) So is it true? Has it proved true in years gone by? Is it just partly accurate and partly vague so that it could apply at any time? Is its admonition practical in these times? Since this Word of God is the storehouse for faith-building knowledge, it has to be true. Anyone desiring to have faith must examine it and prove

4. Of what value is earth's display of creation to man's faith?

5. (a) Why is the Bible the most important book in the library? (b) What has it to do with faith?

that point to himself. To have faith one must believe that God exists, that his word is true, and put forth an effort to keep that faith alive with food and protection: "Without faith it is impossible to please him well, for he that approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him."—Heb. 11:6.

⁶ People of the nation of Israel had been with Moses for some time, traveling in a wilderness area for forty years. There were years of hearing the laws of God, of admonition, of promised deliverances, and of blessings foretold. Now, were they reliable? Listen to Joshua's report: "You well know with all your hearts and with all your souls that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed." (Josh. 23:14) So there you have it, Joshua publicly stating that Jehovah's Word was reliable; and God's own Son examined this same Word and on up to the time he visited the earth, and he said God's Word was true.

DEVELOPING FAITH

⁷ In order to develop faith one must gain knowledge. To keep that faith alive one must keep on studying. One's knowledge that keeps faith alive is not from the vast accumulation of human wisdom. Many have studied out religious doctrines and ways of life, have accepted certain ideas and even patterned their lives according to man's direction. Then after a time, maybe half a lifetime later, they find these ideas to be faulty and contrary to what has been taught in the Bible and they become discouraged. People who

6. Give Scriptural facts proving the benefits of God's Word.

7. (a) Why is faith not the possession of many people? (b) Yet how does Paul describe the brothers at Thessalonica?

come into this category number into the millions and are found in every community in the earth. The vacuum made by unfounded teaching and misrepresentation has produced anemic anti-God political systems, inert religious organizations and lifeless commercial systems. It is easy to see that, in spite of the greatest storehouse of human wisdom instantly available, man's actions toward his neighbor are not improving. Yet notice the apostle Paul's observation as he reports at 2 Thessalonians 1:3: "We are obligated to give God thanks always for you, brothers, as it is fitting, because your faith is growing exceedingly and the love of each and all of you is increasing one toward the other."

⁸ Ask yourself: Are relations between human creatures improving in your neighborhood? among your religious associates? Paul said his brothers at Thessalonica were improving in faith and in love to one another. Why? Examine their activity a little closer. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 2:13: "Indeed, that is why we also thank God incessantly, because when you received God's word, which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but, just as it truthfully is, as the word of God, which is also at work in you believers." And they were doing something else, as Paul urged at 1 Thessalonians 5:21: "Make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine." Yes, searching into God's Word. It takes more than urging to keep faith living. Christendom is constantly saying, 'We need to help our fellowman,' yet is there more doing of this? As an example, for some time a poster was displayed in New York City subway trains that read: "God's work must truly be our own—Put your faith to work—Today." (A Public Service of Transit Ad-

8. How were the Thessalonians keeping their faith alive, and why is there more to it than urging?

vertising. Religion in American Life) Millions will read it, but how many will respond? Faith has to be there first, and that comes from a study of God's reliable Word. That Word says at Romans 10:14: "However, how will they call on him in whom they have not put faith? How, in turn, will they put faith in him of whom they have not heard? How, in turn, will they hear without someone to preach?"

⁹ You may find wisdom in man's publications that impresses you, yet your rejoicing turns to discouragement when under investigation the author turns out to be shortsighted, with selfishness prompting the publication in the first place. The most sincere author is limited by his ability, the availability of material for him, and is certainly shortsighted in the face of advancing sciences. Not that we say all the wisdom man has accumulated is discouraging or fails to build you up. There is much valuable instruction to be gained, but in addition to this we need God's Word to develop faith. Many years ago Jehovah spoke to Jews this way: "Cursed is the able-bodied man who puts his trust in earthling man and actually makes flesh his arm, and whose heart turns away from Jehovah himself. And he will certainly become like a solitary tree in the desert plain and will not see when good comes; but he must reside in parched places in the wilderness, in a salt country that is not inhabited. Blessed is the able-bodied man who puts his trust in Jehovah, and whose confidence Jehovah has become. And he will certainly become like a tree planted by the waters, that sends out its roots right by the watercourse; and he will not see when heat comes, but his foliage will actually prove to be luxuriant. And in the year of drought he will

not become anxious, nor will he leave off from producing fruit."—Jer. 17:5-8.

¹⁰ Did you notice where the tree was getting its strength? A good root system, reaching into the water source. That is the way it is with keeping faith alive. You must have faith-building food. There is only one place to get that type of food and that is God's Word. This Word is especially prepared for Christians. God's Word, the Bible, was produced by His spirit; in fact, His spirit is so closely connected with it that Paul makes this statement at Ephesians 6:17: "and the sword of the spirit, that is, God's word." Oh, yes, men were its writers; it is no hidden secret that about forty men were used to write the Bible. But it was not their will being recorded or expressed; rather, "prophecy was at no time brought by man's will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21) God was responsible for the words or pictures of his purposes that they wrote down. Is it any more difficult for God to plant ideas and expressions in willing, fertile minds than to cause tiny seeds to germinate, sprout and grow into towering trees of a forest?

¹¹ Centuries ago Jehovah set into operation certain boundaries that are still working today. Animate creatures the earth over have that strong urge to reproduce. Vegetation keeps on multiplying. While there are different factors and methods used, there is a definite pattern followed to reproduce, and the product is the image of the parents. What wisdom and laws are in operation to keep this process going and, to come down after hundreds of years, to find we still have animals, birds, fish, man, vegetation, and all abundant inside their family circles!

10. (a) Who wrote the Bible? (b) How, then, can it be used as faith-building food?

11. Show how it is possible for Jehovah to use man to record his Word accurately, so that it is inspired.

In the multiplying of vegetation there are so many other things involved to make a successful product. Weather, moisture, nutrition in the soil, various plants needing soil of a certain type or chemical content. Many plants depend on pollination to produce fruit or seed. Wind, water, birds and insects provide this service. Bees trade this service for pollen or nectar, the raw material for honey. For example, the flowers with color and scent invite the bee to their treasure of nectar, for which the bee must dig, and in so doing it takes on pollen that it will rub on a neighboring flower and so cause pollination. What wisdom there is behind such a complicated arrangement! Yet all these interlocking agencies do their work so well, the whole thing is carried out without any undue strain or tension. Yes, there are hybrids, a mixing of parentage, and man has produced differences, but within the same family or species where no limits are in effect. But take the mule, a hybrid between the ass and horse; the offspring is sterile and cannot reproduce. It came up to the boundary and can go no farther. Is it any more difficult for God to have believing man write down his word and have that word protected by the same force holding these other boundaries in operation?

¹² So Jehovah provided sixty-six books of vital information that we have in our Bibles to this day. Not many years ago it was reported: "The Bible has been translated wholly or in part in 1,136 different languages, of these 215 are of the entire Bible and 273 of the complete Christian Scriptures . . . In 1958 one American Bible Society alone distributed more than 16.6 million copies of the Bible and added three new languages to the number of tongues in which it now appears, bringing the total to 1,136." (*Time*, May 25, 1959) During

the past 500 years billions of copies of the Bible have been printed, now in over 1,280 languages in whole or in part. This makes the Bible available to over 90 percent of the world's population. It has existed a long time, parts of it helping man with good counsel for over 3,480 years.

EASY TO UNDERSTAND

¹³ Another thing, the Bible is easy to understand from the viewpoint of words and phrases used. "A. S. Cook computes the vocabulary of the English Authorized Version to 6,568 words or to 9,884, if inflected forms of nouns, pronouns, or verbs are included." (*In The Nation*, September 12, 1912) Those with limited education can with effort soon gain knowledge from the Bible and, once having acquired some faith, can keep it alive and add to it little by little as they improve their studying ability. It is true there are some archaic words or expressions in older translations, but one can gain understanding by checking modern translations. The Bible uses down-to-earth ideas, illustrations and symbols. They were understood by farmers, fishermen, shepherds, rulers, tax collectors and housewives. Please read Matthew chapter thirteen; if you have difficulty with some term or description, it may be that your geographic location has something to do with it. Are figs, mustard seeds, thorns, dragnets, pearls and other items used in your locality, so that you understand them? They were used in the locality where Jesus spoke the illustrations in Matthew chapter thirteen.

¹⁴ To see how rewarding a study of the Bible can be, let us go back to 2 Thessa-

13. Explain why the Bible should be easy to understand, yet where we will have difficulty.

14. Compare 2 Thessalonians 2:6, 7 in the King James and Douay Version Bibles. What are we going to do to understand this text?

Ionians 2:6, 7. The text appears very difficult to understand, but we shall examine each word or idea and see how it all fits together. In the King James Version Bible it reads: "And now *ye* know what withholdeth that *he* might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only *he* who now letteth will let, until *he* be taken out of the way." And in the Catholic Douay Bible you read it this way: "And now *you* know what withholdeth, that *he* may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity already worketh; only that he who now holdeth, do hold, until *he* be taken out of the way." What does it mean? The words individually can be understood but the meaning is something else. Analyze it idea by idea now.

¹⁵ First the context. Paul wrote this letter to help the Thessalonians keep their faith alive. He tells them: "Faith is not a possession of all people . . . the Lord is faithful, and he will make you firm . . . we hear certain ones are walking disorderly among you, not working at all but meddling with what does not concern them." (2 Thess. 3:2, 3, 11) Paul had commended them because of their growth in faith (2 Thess. 1:3), but he was concerned that something or someone would deaden that faith; in fact, he said it was "already at work."—2 Thess. 2:7.

¹⁶ The two letters, First and Second Thessalonians, were written to the congregation of Christians at Thessalonica, Macedonia. (c. 50-51 C.E.) (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1) So the first "ye" or "you" would be those Christians there at that time and, of course, the pronoun applies with equal force to Christians now. (Rom.

15:4) What is the meaning of "What withholdeth"? Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary* says on "Withhold": "To hold back; to check; restrain. To refrain from granting, allowing, or the like; as to withhold assent." The Christian apostles received their authority from Jesus Christ to act as a restraint. (Matt. 10:1) "As long as the twelve apostles of Christ lived and oversaw the Christian congregation, they held up or slowed down the apostasy, the falling away to Babylonish religion. They acted as a restraint upon the development of a religious organization that professed to be Christian but that was really antichristian and Babylonish."—"Babylon the Great Has Fallen!" God's Kingdom Rules!, page 474.

¹⁷ The apostles had the authority to keep the congregation subject to Christ; but they, who acted as a restraint upon lawless action in the congregation, would be taken away in death and then the congregation would fall away to lawlessness and false teachings. (2 Cor. 10:2-6; 2 Thess. 2:3-12; 2 Tim. 4:3, 4; Acts 20:29, 30) Again, at Matthew 18:18, Jesus clearly shows the restraining force these mature men, operating under Jehovah's spirit, would have in the congregation. See also Ephesians 4:11-13 and Acts 20:28. Paul, one of such men, was acting as a restraint, as shown at 2 Thessalonians 3:6: "Now we are giving you orders, brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to withdraw from every brother walking disorderly and not according to the tradition you received from us."—See also 2 Thessalonians 3:10-15; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Colossians 2:8; Acts 20:31; Ephesians 4:17-6:9; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 10:2-6.

¹⁸ "He"—this is the one to be revealed. "He" is the one referred to in verse three as "that man of sin," "the son of perdition." Notice how Paul describes them at

15. Why did Paul write Second Thessalonians? 16-20. (a) To whom does the first occurrence of "ye" or "you" refer? (b) Explain the phrase "what withholdeth." (c) Who is the "he" first mentioned? (d) When and how is that one "revealed"?

Acts 20:29, 30: "I know that after my going away oppressive wolves will enter in among you and will not treat the flock with tenderness, and from among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." These apostate leaders of professed Christians were to grow in strength and influence, and as soon as the restraint was out of the way they would take over.

¹⁹ This class of professed Christians came on the scene since Pentecost of 33 C.E. and particularly after the death of the twelve faithful apostles of Jesus Christ. They are organized into the religious clergy of Christendom and form a dominant part of Babylon the Great. Since Babylon the Great is still operating, this "man of sin" or "man of lawlessness" is still here.

²⁰ "Revealed." Says Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary*: "To communicate or impart by supernatural means or agency. To divulge (something secret or hidden); to disclose. To open up to view; as, a painting reveals the painter. Implies an unveiling, as of something not clear to human vision or beyond one's knowledge." Therefore, this class of professed Christians came out into the open at the death of the apostles; "he" was revealed in his time.—2 Pet. 2:1-3.

²¹ "Mystery of iniquity doth already work." When Paul wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians about 51 C.E. this "mystery" or secret falling away from true Bible doctrines was already in operation. Men of influence in the congregation were already bowing down to Babylonish worship.

²² "He who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." In 1611, when

the King James Version Bible was written, "let" still carried the thought of restraint. Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary* gives this archaic definition: "To hinder; impede; prevent." That is the meaning we will have to keep in mind. At Acts 20:29 Paul says: "I know that after my going away oppressive wolves will enter in among you." See also 2 Peter 1:12 to 2:3. At the death of the apostles the restraining force was out of the way, the stop sign was down and the wolves came in with full power.

²³ Having in mind what your research has told you, put it together and it sums up this way: You Christians know that the faithful apostles stopped the apostate leaders of professed Christians from bringing in Babylonish worship. However, this restraint must be gone with the death of the apostles and these wolves must come out into the open and lead the congregations to Babylonish worship.

²⁴ Your faith, then, is a signpost that says you have a reservoir of truth that is available to others. If that reservoir has evaporated to a dangerous low mark, then you are the first one to suffer losses of blessings from Jehovah God, and those who come to you for faith-building knowledge will have to go away empty-hearted. The constant urging of God's Word is to build faith regularly by feeding on God's Word, "the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through the faith in connection with Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:15) Jesus himself describes faith's operation and it is so recorded at John 7:38: "He that puts faith in me, just as the Scripture has said, 'Out from his inmost part streams of living water will flow.' " Our treasure will then be wisdom from God's Word, and our faith will be *alive*.

21. Why does Paul say that "mystery of iniquity doth already work"?

22. Show the meaning of "he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way."

23. What does 2 Thessalonians 2:6, 7 mean to us now?
24. What does faith do for you and others?

KEEP YOUR FAITH GROWING EXCEEDINGLY

"We are obligated to give God thanks always for you, brothers, as it is fitting, because your faith is growing exceedingly and the love of each and all of you is increasing one toward the other."—2 Thess. 1:3.

TEN years after Paul wrote to the Thessalonians he wrote to the congregation at Colossae (c. 60-61 C.E.). It was then just ten years to the destruction of Jerusalem. It was an urgent time, certainly a time to pay attention to one's faith in God. At Colossians 4:14 Paul lists Demas as a fellow minister sending greetings to the Colossian congregation. Yet less than five years later Paul writes to Timothy and reports: "Demas has forsaken me because he loved the present system of things, and he has gone to Thessalonica." (2 Tim. 4:10) Demas was not the first one, for Paul writes: "You know this, that all the men in the district of Asia have turned away from me." (2 Tim. 1:15) Why? What caused this turning away? How was their faith being put out of action? Jesus Christ showed the future, our day, to be the time when "the love of the greater number will cool off." (Matt. 24:12) 1 Timothy 4:1 also records: "In later periods of time some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to misleading inspired utterances and teachings of demons."

When a person examines the Bible, through study or hearing, proving to him-

1. What Scriptural report shows us the need to examine our faith?

2. (a) Why do some grow cold and stop serving God?
(b) From where does faith come?

self beyond doubt that God exists and is dependable, and that his Word is true, what is it that causes that person to stop serving God? Many point to materialism as the magnet that draws men away. But one can enjoy the many comforts of life and still be a Christian. Others say pleasure-seeking weakens faith, but Christians should be happy people and they can find upbuilding pleasurable times together. Some claim that fear shakes them out of God's service. While it may be excesses of these or other kinds that appear on the surface to have stopped them, let us look a little closer. Faith is based on a solid foundation, God's Word: "So faith follows the thing heard. In turn the thing heard is through the word about Christ." (Rom. 10:17) It is like keeping healthy with nutritious, body-building food. Stop eating, and gradually strength and vigor leave. The problem is the physically weak condition that invites disease, but the cause is the lack of food. Faith is weakened through lack of food from God's Word and soon gives out and its owner becomes the victim of all kinds of enemies. Really, then, the food supply comes in for close scrutiny. Paul said Timothy was "a fine minister of Christ Jesus, one nourished with the words of the faith and of the

fine teaching which you have followed closely." (1 Tim. 4:6) Paul, in writing to the Hebrews on the need for building up faith, said some had 'become dull in their hearing.' (Heb. 5:11) So they had cut off the food supply. In chapter two, verse one, he warns: "That is why it is necessary for us to pay more than the usual attention to the things heard by us, that we may never drift away."

⁵ A big thing, then, to a Christian is a regular feeding program, doing personal research as well as study with others in congregation meetings. He gains God's approval through study. (2 Tim. 2:15) A wise man said, as recorded at Proverbs 4:7: "Wisdom is the prime thing. Acquire wisdom; and with all that you acquire, acquire understanding." Study is like traveling. You may listen with interest to someone else's report of travels but it is not the same as being there yourself, where you see and feel the experience. A description of food can in no way be compared to the tasteful eating of it yourself.

⁶ Faith may not be developed enough in many persons to produce a fine minister. Maybe the teacher of a student was in a big hurry to get through certain printed material, perhaps not providing enough Scriptural examination to dispel false ideas or actions, replacing these with well-rounded-out Scriptural truths and qualities. Was it rushing him into the ministry before the desire to preach the good news had been developed? Then there is another big hurdle, a very lonely gap to cross. When one begins to realize that he must get out of Babylon the Great (Rev. 18:4), that means leaving lifetime friends and associates. Will new friends be found among Jehovah's people soon? Will they be understanding and patient, not expect-

ing of one great strides in improving? Will they help, or will they stand off in the distance and say, 'Let's see first if he is going to make it'? The extending of the helping hand, the warm assurance of genuine interest, yes, and the patient assistance, holding to the high standards of God's Word yet not exactingly saying at every move, 'Don't do this'; or 'Don't do that.' Faith will grow in such a warm protected atmosphere; it just takes time.

BUILDING FAITH

⁵ But now the importance of hearing to build faith has to be recognized by all involved in the building work. Each servant of God will have to place the importance on spiritual food that results in regular feeding programs and not shunting it around to make room for all kinds of other matters. The family will have to think like this in order to keep a family study program going. Overseers in all parts of the educational organization will have to remember its importance and not be taking a father away from his Scriptural responsibility of a faith-feeding program for his family, even with another assignment. Such interference can be avoided if those giving out assignments of service also make room for the time element that is to be used. Assignments in God's organization are privileges of service, but when time is limited these privileges can put a strain on the family head's program of family spiritual-feeding activity. Deep respect for that essential regular spiritual meal will cause the overseer and his brother to talk the matter over first.—Prov. 15:22.

⁶ Then there is the matter of giving and receiving advice. There are so many

5. Describe the viewpoint needed in families and responsible servants in the congregation toward family study programs.

6. 7. (a) While surrounded by advice from so many, what is the safe thing to do? (b) How do mature persons avoid interfering with the growing of others' faith?

3. Illustrate the benefits of personal study.

4. (a) Describe some obstacles to growing faith.
(b) Where do Jehovah's witnesses fit into the picture?

advantages in knowing what is the right thing to do in serving Jehovah. Everyone has advice and usually it is given freely. Even the most sincere person's advice is generally based on that person's likes and dislikes. People go all the way through life making decisions and being one-sided by using their likes and dislikes as bases for decisions and giving advice. If you know what is right and do it you have contentment in serving Jehovah, having his blessing, and that is the main thing to strive for. There is no reason to get dogmatic or possessive in our attitude just because we know the truth and we are all part of the same organization. Inside the realm of moderation there is plenty of room to enjoy a wide variety of activity. (Titus 2:2; 1 Tim. 3:2, 11) No one should object. If Bible principles are not being violated, why worry about such things as styles, color of clothes, homes, food, recreation and jobs? Is there anything wrong with variety? Perchance you feel everyone should be the same. Look around the earth and its exciting colorful display and the endless variety. Isn't it interesting and refreshing? Even though others may think he could improve, there are many things that are one's own business, such as the type of work he does, the home in which he lives, training of children, and his friends. If we get disturbed over these things as well as become a source of irritation to others in constantly minding their business, then we may upset their life and interfere with their faith-building activity. Paul urges the putting of the big thing, the Kingdom, first.—Rom. 14:17-23.

⁷ One's finding out what is right and then not being afraid to carry it out or abide by the truth saves one many faith-retarding moments. During times of indecision or hesitancy, doubts creep in, footsteps are feeble and ears are open to

any kind of direction. Be wise, think the matter out with sound advice from the Bible.—Phil. 4:5.

⁸ In helping others rebuild faith it is necessary to serve food, not give directions. Those mature brothers in the congregation giving help to their brothers will really build faith if they serve spiritual food rather than post signs. It is true, the weaker ones need to get to the meetings; urgent directions will serve for one week and they may go to the meeting that week, but what about the other weeks? Spiritual food will give strength, more food later will add more strength and soon there will be a heart-activated response and a hungry "sheep" will be anxious to come to the meetings for more food. Mature ministers have prepared sermons that bring food to those met in the house-to-house ministry; then why not a prepared sermon when we are helping our brothers? True, it must be flexible, but certainly a well-thought-out point from God's Word will add to the faith already there. Neither does it have to be slanted to bear down on the weakness of the brother's faults or show him up weak in the strong light of God's Word.

⁹ Remember, when Jesus spoke to the disciples on the road between Jerusalem and Emmaus, what did he tell these men that caused them to say: "Were not our hearts burning as he was speaking to us on the road"? (Luke 24:32) The same Scripture account answers: "And commencing at Moses and all the Prophets he [Jesus] interpreted to them things pertaining to himself in all the Scriptures." (Luke 24:27) Some of these scriptures that Jesus explained could have been Deuteronomy 18:15; Numbers 21:9; Genesis 49:10; 22:18; 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Jeremiah 23:5; Ezekiel 34:23; 37:25;

8. Identify the difference and result in giving of directions and serving spiritual food.

9. What method did Jesus use to build faith?

Daniel 9:24; Malachi 3:1. Philip told Nathanael: "We have found the one of whom Moses, in the Law, and the Prophets wrote, Jesus, the son of Joseph, from Nazareth."—John 1:45.

¹⁰ The best example in building faith is Christ Jesus; so we need to do what he did, explain the way he explained, deal with people the way he dealt with them. Examine the kind of people Jesus assisted, the helpless paralytics (Matt. 9:2), the groping blind (Matt. 9:27), the frustrated dumb (Matt. 9:32), the dreaded lepers (Matt. 8:2), the terrifying demon-possessed (Matt. 8:28), despised tax collectors (Luke 5:30), and spurned women with bad reputation (Luke 7:37-50). Jesus talked to this kind of people day after day and under the close scrutiny of the bitter-minded, hateful religious leaders. (Matt. 22:15; 27:1; 26:3, 4) He came to be known by his association with such sinful people (Matt. 8:16, 17), and even fulfilled a prophecy in this respect recorded at Isaiah 53:3, 4. Jesus' course was one of constant building, but in a patient, understanding manner.

¹¹ The matter of faith came up the evening of the last Passover that Jesus spent with the apostles. He told them: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Exercise faith in God, exercise faith also in me." (John 14:1) Note now how Jesus builds faith as he explains that he was going away to heaven (1 Pet. 3:22) to prepare a place for them, his faithful apostles (1 Pet. 1:3, 4; Rev. 20:6), and he would return for them (Matt. 24:31). He points out the close union between him and his Father, Jehovah, and that they, his apostles, were enjoying that close relationship as they obeyed the commandments Jesus

gave them, and increased their love of Jehovah, Christ Jesus and their brothers. He promised further help—"the spirit of the truth," which would assist them to remain faithful. (John 14:17) Jesus made the point clear that "the things I say to you men I do not speak of my own originality; but the Father who remains in union with me is doing his works." (John 14:10; see also John 7:16; 8:28.) If Jesus followed the policy of building up man's faith by using God's Word, then we can do no better today. Jesus had much greater wisdom than we do, yet he did not branch out on his own but fed spiritual food to build up faith.

¹² Examine the sermon on the mountain given by Jesus (Matt. 5:1-7:29) and note the spiritual food that would start faith to sprouting as well as build up faith of the mature ones. A rich meal is carefully prepared in the many parabolic illustrations Jesus used at Matthew chapters thirteen, twenty-one and twenty-two. Jesus gave prophecies that would build faith of thousands as they read those recorded at Matthew 24:1-25:46. In all these cases Jesus was brief, to the point and powerful in making his point.

¹³ In the letter the apostle Paul wrote to build up the faith of the Hebrews he lists sixteen men and women by name who had one thing in common, faith. They lived at different times, faced various situations and problems, but it was their faith that brought Jehovah's blessing. Hebrews 11:1 defines this kind of faith: "Faith is the assured [proven, founded on logic and facts] expectation [anticipation, looking for] of things hoped for, the evident [clear to the vision and understanding, distinct, plain] demonstration [an outward expres-

10. Describe the kind of people Jesus worked with and what this has to do with building faith.

11. How did Jesus go about aiding his disciples to grow in faith on that Passover evening, and what lesson do we learn from Jesus' way of building?

12. Explain what you find in the sermon on the mountain, Jesus' illustrations and prophecies that would be so helpful in building faith.

13. Define the faith that those listed at Hebrews 11:1 demonstrated.

sion] of realities [being real, true to life or to fact] though not beheld [with literal eyes].” *The Watchtower* of April 1, 1962, defined faith this way: “possessing firm conviction, solid assurance, complete confidence.”

MAINTENANCE OF FAITH, WITH GROWTH

¹⁴ So one’s faith is often in the same condition as a building. Some houses deteriorate because of poor quality or unproved materials and these homes have to be repaired to remain. This may call for strengthening the foundation with reinforcing material. Usually, there is more work involved than in constructing a new house. Much time is spent in examination of the home’s weaknesses before the remedy can be worked out and repairs made.

¹⁵ Care of a home just begins when the contractor turns the keys over to the new owner. Everything is new, with all the latest materials for comfort and durability. But immediately the maintenance program begins. Weather, contracting of heat and cold, settling of the foundation and general wear soon produce cracks, chipped corners, broken panes, and multitudes of faulty installations. The same is true of one’s faith. How much time do you spend on faith maintenance? God’s Word advises: “Keep testing whether you are in the faith, keep proving what you yourselves are.”—2 Cor. 13:5.

¹⁶ Faith is linked with growth. Lack of faith is found where growth has stopped or is stunted. Jehovah says, at Hebrews 10:38: “‘My righteous one will live by reason of faith,’ and, ‘if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.’” There is an excellent guide to determine main-

14. Why is building faith like constructing a building?
15. When does faith maintenance start? Why?

16. How would a person check for weakness in faith and determine the maintenance measures?

tenance—watch for any sign of shrinking back. Are you or your family studying less, skipping your family study? Do you find your explanations of Scriptural subjects a little stingy in understanding? Is your public ministry a hurried get-it-over-with program? Has your hearing dulled, with you finding yourself complaining about poor memory? Has the truth become commonplace with you because it is so easy to obtain? We cannot take the view of the short-term house owner who reasons that he will avoid maintenance costs and pass the resulting problems on to the next unsuspecting buyer. We have the hope of everlasting life before us and we need to keep our faith alive and growing.

¹⁷ There is so much more happiness in growth. You are living if your faith is alive. Unmeasured contentment is enjoyed with your dependable program of maintaining faith. Peace of mind comes with freedom from faith breakdowns. Then think of the great encouragement you are to the new ones, the weaker ones, and those slow to make progress, as you faithfully, with a calm steady pace, keep on serving Jehovah. Through a faithful servant Jehovah sent this very encouraging information to the Thessalonians: “We always thank God when we make mention concerning all of you in our prayers, for we bear incessantly in mind your faithful work and your loving labor and your endurance due to your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ before our God and Father.” (1 Thess. 1:2, 3) We have the same one to look to for help, and, to be sure, the future will be beyond description, “as we look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus.”—Heb. 12:2.

17. (a) Are there any rewards for being faithful?
(b) How are faithful ones usually identified?

'The works of the flesh are

"GO HOME together and forget all about it!" the Munich judge told the distraught young

couple before him. "After all, was it not carnival time?" Yes, time and again that is what a Munich judge will tell couples that come to him seeking a divorce because one or the other had proved unfaithful during Fasching or carnival time, which lasts seven weeks in Munich.

Just what are these carnivals like? Regarding them we are told: 'With reckless abandon (which invariably leads to a higher birthrate in October and November), West Germans keep their annual pre-Lenten binges going till the last minute of Shrove Tuesday in the Rhineland and Southern Germany. As one might expect, some churchmen and parents were unhappy. But the party-goers had a wonderful time. In the Rhineland, Carnival Freedom is legally recognized as an excuse for almost anything except homicide and drunken driving. Particularly risky for men is Women's Carnival Night when entire sections of towns swarm with burly Nordic maidens who pummel unwary males, or take more intimate liberties. Munich, too, takes legal account of Carnival Time; particularly in view of the sometimes troublemaking tradition that husbands and wives must not attend balls together.'—*Newsweek*, March 4, 1963.

At the Munich Festival upward of three million quarts of beer are consumed, together with many thousands of quarts of wine and other alcoholic beverages, not to



say anything about the hundreds of thousands of sausages, and so forth. In the main, these festivals have a religious origin, being instituted to celebrate just before the Lenten season when Catholics are supposed to fast as regards meat and to deny themselves other luxuries. The very word "carnival" means "farewell to meat." In other cities, such as New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro, the festival is known as the Mardi Gras, which technically refers to the last day of the carnival and literally means "fat Tuesday," the last day meat is permitted to be eaten before Lent.

Not that revelry is limited to just these special occasions, for night life in many cities is often one of boisterous merriment, as one report regarding Buenos Aires states: "Bedlam as usual rocks a restaurant in La Boca, a dockside district that each evening erupts in frenzied gaiety. As in other lively night spots, waiters often put aside trays to seize musical instruments, customers leap up to dance or lead a song, and spontaneous conga lines snake between tables—on and on until early morning."—*National Geographic*, November 1967.

REVELRIES CONDEMNED BY GOD'S WORD

No doubt the great majority of those indulging in such revelry profess to be Christians, either Roman Catholics or Protestants, but is reveling for Christians? Not according to the apostle Pe-

ter, for he reminds Christians that, while during the time before they became Christians they may have indulged in revelries, now such are out of place for them: "For the time that has passed by is sufficient for you to have worked out the will of the nations when you proceeded in deeds of loose conduct, lusts, excesses with wine, revelries, drinking matches." Because Christians no longer indulge in such things their former acquaintances are puzzled and speak abusively of them, Peter goes on to say.—1 Pet. 4:3, 4.

That revelries are not for Christians the apostle Paul also makes clear, for he wrote: "As in the daytime let us walk decently, not in revelries and drunken bouts, not in illicit intercourse and loose conduct, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not be planning ahead for the desires of the flesh." In fact, it is the same apostle who tells us that revelries are among "the works of the flesh": "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, and they are fornication, uncleanness, loose conduct, idolatry, . . . drunken bouts, revelries, and things like these." And how serious are these practices? They are things that would cause a Christian to lose out on eternal life. "As to these things I am forewarning you, the same way as I did forewarn you," wrote the apostle Paul, "that those who practice such things will not inherit God's kingdom." There is no mistaking those words!—Rom. 13:13, 14; Gal. 5:19-21.

That this warning applies to the reveling described earlier is clear from the meaning of the original Greek word used, namely, *komos*, for it means "a revel, carousal, the concomitant and consequences of drunkenness."^{*} As for the meaning of the English word "revelry," we are told

that it means "noisy festivity, boisterous merrymaking." "To be festive in a riotous or noisy manner." "An occasion of excessive and boisterous festivity; a wild or unrestrained merrymaking."

WHY THE NEED TO BE ON GUARD

A revelry, therefore, would not need to be such a great affair as the pre-Lenten carnivals at Munich and elsewhere, but any social gathering might deteriorate into a revelry unless care is exercised. How so?

In that when there is a festive occasion, such as at a wedding reception, when there is lively music and perhaps the beer and wine flow freely, there is the danger of going to extremes. There may be boisterous hilarity, unbecoming to Christians; there may be the telling of obscene jokes and a tendency toward wantonness as regards the proprieties between the sexes, all of which would cause the festive occasion to deteriorate into a revelry.

Not that the Word of God is a killjoy. By no means! The Bible does not rule out joy and merriment. On the contrary, time and again it tells God's people to be glad and to rejoice, and that for a number of reasons. Thus man is told to rejoice in his Creator, the husband to rejoice in his wife, the young man in his youth, the laborer in the work of his hands and the farmer in the fruit of his toil. (Ps. 32:11; Prov. 5:15-19; Eccl. 3:22; 11:9; Deut. 26:10, 11) And repeatedly the Bible indicates that food and drink go with rejoicing: "Go, eat your food with rejoicing and drink your wine with a good heart." Yes, Jehovah God provided "wine that makes the heart of mortal man rejoice" and "bread that sustains [his] very heart."—Eccl. 9:7; Ps. 104:15.

But Christians are to be moderate and self-controlled in the enjoyment of the good things of life. That is why a Chris-

* An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words
—W. E. Vine.

tian man, to qualify as an overseer of a Christian congregation, must, among other things, be "moderate in habits." Christian women are likewise told to be "moderate in habits."—1 Tim. 3:2, 11.

Immoderate habits, unrestrained and boisterous conduct and very loud and harsh music reflect unfavorably upon a Christian. Not only that, but such conduct often leads to excesses such as drunkenness and gluttony, against which the Bible repeatedly inveighs: "Do not come to be among *heavy* drinkers of wine, among those who are *gluttonous* eaters of flesh." Such lack of restraint often leads to sexual immorality, which God's Word condemns in no uncertain terms: "For this is what God wills, the sanctifying of you, that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you should know how to get possession of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in covetous sexual appetite such as also those nations have which do not know God . . . For God called us, not with allowance for uncleanness, but in connection with sanctification."—Prov. 23:20; 1 Thess. 4:3-7.

Yes, noisy and boisterous conduct betrays one's lack of self-control. Reckless talk is often the prelude to reckless acts, so those who seek God's approval must heed the counsel: "Let nothing go forth unrestrained from your mouth, for a God of knowledge Jehovah is, and by him deeds are rightly estimated." It is a mistaken idea that beer, wine and stronger drinks are essential to a festive occasion; such is largely a matter of local custom. It is well, therefore, always to bear in mind the words of wisdom: "Wine is a ridiculer, intoxicating liquor is boisterous, and everyone going astray by it is not wise." Unless Christians are on guard they can fall into the error into which the Israelites fell in the days of Moses, while he was on the mount for forty days, con-

cerning which we read: "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to revel boisterously," and also idolatrously.—1 Sam. 2:3; Prov. 20:1; 1 Cor. 10:7 (1950 Ed.); Ex. 32:4-6.

In this regard the apostle Paul gave the Christians at Corinth good advice, which they especially needed since their city was notorious for its sensuous reveling: "Therefore, whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, do all things for God's glory. Keep from becoming causes for stumbling to Jews as well as Greeks and to the congregation of God, even as I am pleasing all people in all things, not seeking my own advantage but that of the many, in order that they might get saved." Yes, there is added reason for being on guard at festive occasions, so as not to stumble others. At such times especially 'make straight paths for your feet.'—1 Cor. 10:31-33; Heb. 12:13.

KEEPING FESTIVE OCCASIONS UNDER CONTROL

There are a number of things that must be watched if festive occasions are not to become revelries. For example, there is the Scriptural principle: "Do not be misled. Bad associations spoil useful habits." For this reason Christians will do well to avoid social occasions sponsored by unbelievers who are not interested in God's Word and its high standards as to conduct. Even when unbelievers are invited to Christian social gatherings one must exercise care. A lesson in this regard can be taken from the Israelites of old. Was it not unbelievers that caused them to transgress in the sin of Baal of Peor?—1 Cor. 15:33; Num. 25:1-9.

Another thing to watch is the kind of dancing that is indulged in. Much of modern dancing is passion-arousing, but there are wholesome folk dances that allow for much exercise and joyous exhilaration,

such as the American square dance, the Virginia reel and the polka. Such dances involve a certain amount of skill and co-operation and make for mutual, group enjoyment; being without the objectionable features of so many of the modern dances.

To keep festive occasions under control it is also necessary to give thought to the kind of music being played. Youth tends to prefer very loud music that the world associates with revelries. If Christians are in charge, therefore, they would want to see to it that good or decent music is being played, not necessarily classical or sedate, but neither sensuous or vulgar, with excessive emphasis on noise and rhythm, as is the case at so many worldly wedding receptions. Such music is calculated to arouse the baser instincts and to cause one to cast off inhibitions in much the same way as alcoholic beverages affect some people.

Another valuable aid in this regard is to have present at least several mature Christians. Especially if the majority are young folk is it advisable to have some truly mature Christians, deeply concerned with the spiritual welfare of the young people, present. The respect that they are accorded would doubtless have a wholesome effect upon all present.

Also to be considered is the value of Biblical or serious subjects for discussion. For example, there can be riddles based on Scriptural incidents, illustrations of Bible principles, imitations of Bible characters, presentations of Bible incidents, telling of interesting experiences. Such things can present a stimulating challenge to inventiveness, dramatic ability, and so

forth, and can result in a most enjoyable as well as most profitable evening, even as noted by the success of the Bible dramas presented annually at the larger conventions of Jehovah's people.

Nor to be overlooked is the practical precaution of setting a reasonable hour in advance for a party to end. It seems that the longer a party lasts, the later in the evening it gets, the more noisy it is likely to get and the greater the temptation to revel. Some remark at the beginning as to its intended length might be made; but if the hosts overlook this, at least those guests who appreciate the need of departing at a reasonable hour can excuse themselves without feeling unduly apologetic about it.

This has more than one advantage. Not only are morals likely to be protected, but also one's health, as one is less likely to overindulge in food and drink and will get more sleep. All of which is of particular value for Christian ministers, who usually have a full day of ministerial activities and worship on Sunday. As one elderly Christian minister once expressed it: "The less I 'live,' the more I can give"; meaning by 'live,' of course, indulging in mundane pleasures.

Yes, with festive occasions as with everything else that enters into the life of a Christian, restraint and self-control are needed. The Creator purposed for his earthly creatures to get much joy from many different things, including social occasions. But these do not need to become revelries; they can be wholesomely joyous occasions with no apologies or regrets. Surely that is the course of wisdom!

NEXT ISSUE! SPECIAL!

*What God's High Priest Will Do
for the People*

Appreciating The Service of The "Faithful And Discreet Slave"

AS TOLD BY MARY HANNAN

"WHY don't you come with me to the Bible study?" queried my mother one Sunday morning as she, my sister and my oldest brother got ready for the six-mile drive to town by horse and carriage. "I will if you will get me back in time for Sunday school," I replied. The time was before World War I. The place: a 75-acre farm in southern New Jersey. Our family consisted of father, mother, four boys and two girls, and mostly our religious affiliation had been with Presbyterians.

But mother had changed of late. Someone had mailed her a single copy of a magazine called "The Watch Tower" containing Bible proof that there was no such place as a burning hell for wicked people. Mother had always believed there was, but she was also a firm believer in the Bible. You can perhaps imagine how she felt when she learned the truth about hell. She talked it to everyone—neighbors, relatives and us children at home. Some of those she talked to even thought she was losing her mind.

Mother got to be an ardent student of the Bible. She bought and devoured the "Studies in the Scriptures," a series of clothbound books issued by the Watch Tower Society. She began to study regularly with a small group of Bible Students

who used to meet in a private home in a nearby town. She would often talk to us children about the things she was learning. Scripture readings, too, were featured at our meal-table. I can recall one of those readings that deeply impressed my young mind—the sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy.

Finally, to please mother, I did start to attend Bible-study meetings with her, but with my sister I would always contrive to get to Sunday school too. However, the more we learned from mother the more difficult the questions we used to put to our Sunday-school teacher. When answers to our questions were not forthcoming, we soon lost interest in Sunday school.

EMBARKED ON A CAREER

When high school days were over, I decided to make schoolteaching my career, and entered the State Normal School in the fall of 1915 for a two-year preparatory course. At the school I was faced with having to register my religious affiliation, so as to be permitted to go to a place of worship each Sunday unchaperoned. Not knowing of any Bible Students in the area, and not yet having broken all connection with the Presbyterian church, I registered as a Presbyterian.

Now, very much on my own, I began

to do some very serious thinking—especially on religion. Very few of my fellow students were willing to discuss the subject. However, I had brought with me the set of six "Studies in the Scriptures," and now began to read them thoroughly while also keeping up with Bible reading.

Meanwhile, war was raging in Europe, and everywhere war was being commanded as something noble and self-sacrificing. One Sunday morning I decided to attend the Presbyterian church near our school. I expected to gain some spiritual uplift. Instead, I heard a preacher whipping up the war spirit by a political sermon. I was thoroughly disgusted and resolved never to set foot in church again. But my love for the Bible and its fine principles continued unabated.

I shall never forget my first meeting with Bible Students at an address furnished by my mother. One Sunday morning I found the address and climbed a dark stairway to an upper room. But what a joy it was to join the little group of earnest students! Happily, too, there was a girl in my own age bracket, one who became to me a real associate.

Home for summer vacation, I found that mother, my sister and my oldest brother had all symbolized their dedication to Jehovah God by water baptism. I, too, had come to appreciate the privilege of taking this step of "consecration," as it was then known, and was baptized before vacation time was over.

Back at school that fall I learned that a four-evening showing of the Photo-Drama of Creation, a marvelous presentation of the Bible story on slides and film, was to be featured in a nearby city. But no girls were allowed to leave the school grounds in the evening without chaperon and special permission. I approached the head preceptress with my request and

showed her some of the folders advertising the Drama. As she deigned to glance at them she saw a picture of Adam and Eve in Eden. She called it obscene, and when I tried to explain what it was all about, she closed the interview, saying: "Don't try to tell me what is the right religion!"

When mother learned of this incident she wrote the school's principal, a kindly old gentleman, and he readily agreed to grant the permission. The preceptress had to be content with warning me not to talk about the Photo-Drama to the other students. But how happy I was to see that Drama! It was worth every effort to get there. Recalling this incident later, I mailed a copy of the book *The Harp of God*, soon after its release by the Watch Tower Society, to the school principal. Imagine my surprise to get an acknowledgment in which he assured me that he had "read the book with interest and profit."

SOME VIVID MEMORIES

When word came of the death of the Watch Tower Society's president, Charles T. Russell, I was one of the great crowd who attended the funeral. Among the mass of beautiful floral designs I can remember one bearing the significant text, "Be Thou Faithful Unto Death." Then there was my first boat trip to Boston to attend a convention of Bible Students. That was when some of us learned for the first time about an opposition movement that had tried to scuttle the Society and its Kingdom-preaching work from inside.

With the coming of the fall again, it was back to teaching for me. Yes, I had entered the teaching profession. But it was not to be for long. The war spirit had invaded the schools and colleges. Teachers were called upon to give 100-percent effort to promote war-thinking or resign.

To me the issue was clear-cut. I resigned. So back home again to help mother and to share in some very thrilling leaflet distributions with other Bible Students.

In those days, too, I recall how refreshing were the occasions when two or three congregations of Bible Students would get together for a special visit by a representative from the Society's headquarters in Brooklyn. We could count on a rich spiritual feast.

News about a Bible Students convention to be convened at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, reached us during the tense days of 1918. The then president of the Society, J. F. Rutherford, and his colleagues were still in prison. Could we attend this convention? My brother and I decided to go with other friends by special train. What a thrilling time we had! Brother Rutherford, though absent, was reelected president. There was a petition to circulate, appealing for release of these fine, responsible Christians from jail—a petition that ultimately had over 700,000 signatures! And there was the joy of meeting new friends and recounting experiences.

I was back at teaching again. But how eagerly I used to await my copies of the new magazine published by the Society, *The Golden Age* (now *Awake!*)! I used to drive to school by horse carriage and would try to read each new issue on the trip. Later I provided transportation for one of the other teachers, and I would let her drive while I read portions of the magazine to her.

In those days I had to miss some of the earlier conventions because of school responsibilities, but then came the good news of a big assembly at Columbus, Ohio, and in the summertime when I would be free. Needless to say, our family made the trip by car and enjoyed the whole program. Opening attendance was 7,000. But that was a vast crowd to us. How exciting,

then, to see the numbers build up day by day to the peak of 35,000 on Sunday!

WHAT CAN I DO?

As the years passed, the longing to have some share in the witnessing work grew, while at the same time I was no longer satisfied in the teaching profession. I began to realize that Jehovah God was using his people on earth, moving them to organize and serve Him. Whenever any representatives of the Society visited our district I would ask them all about the full-time preaching activity. One of those visitors reminded me of a Scripture text that says, "He that reapeth receiveth wages." I wanted to become a reaper.

—John 4:36, AV.

In 1926 the Society released a new book called "Deliverance!" It made a clear distinction between Jehovah's organization on earth and Satan's. I was more than ever convinced that there could be no middle ground. I wanted to serve with the Lord's organized and anointed servants on earth, his "faithful and discreet slave." (Matt. 24:45) The message stirred my desire to give up teaching school and join the ranks of the "pioneers" or full-time preachers. But did I know enough about the Bible? Could I manage financially? What would happen if I failed? Would I be able to get a job again?

Well, I made my decision. It was no easy one for a girl. Yet I can never put into words the freedom I now felt—the relief from worldly pressures. I felt as if a weight had been removed from my shoulders. Now, well stocked with the new *Deliverance!* book, my partner and I could get started in our first assigned territory, a mining region in Pennsylvania. My companion already had some experience, so I was able to learn much from her. Day after day we would accept orders for the Bible publications we carried, and then,

on a set day, make deliveries to those who ordered. And it was truly satisfying to be able to discuss Bible questions with some.

Winters were severe, however. We had to wrap up warmly to carry on, and even then I found that my health was being impaired. Eventually I decided to return home and see if I could get on my feet again. It took some weeks before I began to get back to par, and meantime the promise of spring was in the air. I was all set to get back with my partner. But then came a telephone call from the Society's Brooklyn headquarters: "Would you like to consider Bethel service (Bethel referring to the home where the headquarters staff live and work)?" Of course, I would love to, especially seeing that two of my brothers and a cousin were already serving there. I agreed to come to Brooklyn for an interview.

BLESSINGS AT BETHEL

"You seem rather frail," was the first remark of the Society's president, Brother Rutherford. But when I explained about my recent illness, he asked: "Are you prepared to stay and go right to work?" Of course I was, even though I had only packed an overnight bag before coming for my interview. And to work I went, the first few months doing housework in the new Bethel home and in the annex that was being used while construction work progressed.

Then one day Brother Rutherford talked to me about my work and asked if I would like to try proofreading in the factory office. Well, I've been trying ever since. Words are inadequate to express the satisfaction and joy I have experienced in the many years since then. The comment of one of the older brothers particularly helped me to appreciate the privilege of such close association with the Lord's "faithful and discreet slave." Said he:

"You have one of the greatest privileges that any woman on earth could have." I surely agree.

Then, for a time, there were four of my family serving here at Bethel, for my sister Harriet was accepted for service at the headquarters one year after I came. However, after a brief illness in 1951 she completed her earthly course. Keeping busy in the work of the Lord proved to be a real benefit to me, for sorrows and troubles got pushed into the background, and the peace of mind that comes from conscientious service quieted every anxious thought.

The joys of service here at Bethel far surpassed my expectations. And there were added blessings, such as getting to conventions. During the years, I have attended assemblies in over a dozen states, as well as enjoying two convention trips to Europe. And vacations? Yes, these have been provided too, and often made most refreshing and upbuilding by loving and generous friends.

MILESTONES ALONG THE WAY

In 1931, at Columbus, Ohio, I can well remember that I was sitting in the top row when the new name, Jehovah's witnesses, was announced from the platform. I can still hear the tremendous applause that burst forth from the great audience. In the early thirties another thing I can recall is the time I was escorted by police to the chief's office while engaged in house-to-house witnessing in Floral Park, New York. But the chief dismissed the complaint, and I was taken back to the same street, where I placed more literature as a result of the publicity.

Then there was the time when we used the phonograph largely in our door-to-door ministry, letting recordings made by Brother Rutherford do the talking and introducing of our message. And another

feature of our service back then: walking down Broadway, New York city, wearing a sandwich sign and carrying a banner with the inscription, "Religion Is a Snare and a Racket." Passersby would look at us as at something very strange, but the important thing was that attention was drawn to the vital message.

Each large convention, too, had its never-to-be-forgotten high point. At Washington, in 1935, it was the joy of seeing a "great multitude" rise to their feet on being identified as the earthly class of Jesus' followers. In 1941, at St. Louis, Missouri, we saw 15,000 youthful Witnesses stand and file by to receive their free copies of the newly released book *Children*. In New York city, in 1942, many of us listened to the first public broadcast from Cleveland by the Society's new president, N. H. Knorr. And that same year some of us spent vacation time at the Kingdom Farm near Ithaca, where we saw the well-equipped buildings that had just been constructed. We did not know at the time that this was to be the location of a special school, the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. Surely the Lord Jesus was prospering his "faithful and discreet slave"!

It was grand, too, in 1950, to see the multitudes of our spiritual brothers and sisters and interested persons who toured the Bethel and factory here during the Yankee Stadium convention. Many were the encouraging words they spoke to us as they filed through the buildings and marveled at the cleanliness and order that prevailed.

Particularly did I appreciate in those days the special privilege of sharing in the proofreading of the complete *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, an instrument that was hailed by Witness-

es throughout the world with such enthusiasm. Also, it was fascinating to watch the new building project here at Brooklyn, from and after 1958, as the new Bethel home at 107 Columbia Heights took shape. In 1960, many of us moved into the new building.

In 1961, it was a fine thing to be present at the opening of the 36th Class of Gilead School, as its ten-month course got under way in its new quarters in our new building. And since then we have attended many graduations, and seen many strong young men and women leave for faraway assignments as missionaries after completing their training here.

From time to time our physical bodies need rest and repairs so as to be able to keep going efficiently, and that is what happened to me in 1962. Due to some necessary surgery I had to be laid aside for a while, a very trying situation when one wants to be at the work one loves. But loving care and encouragement offered by fellow Witnesses cheered me up, and particularly comforting to me was the assurance of the Lord's care as expressed at Psalm 23:4.

There are many other joyous experiences that I could tell. But time and space fail. In addition to our duties here in Bethel we also use evenings and weekends to share in the preaching work from house to house. I have had the joy of seeing some with whom I started Bible studies become publishers of the Kingdom message themselves, in one case down to the third generation. What greater joy could one have? Though not getting any younger in years, I am still hoping, by Jehovah's undeserved kindness, to spend yet more time in showing my appreciation for the service of the "faithful and discreet slave."

"Let Us Keep the Festival . . . with . . . Truth"

THREE times each year the Israelites in days of old came together to celebrate their annual festivals, namely, the festival of unfermented cakes, the festival of weeks and the festival of booths or ingathering. In a similar manner Jehovah's servants of modern times come together three times annually, twice for their circuit assemblies and once for a larger assembly, for a district, national or even international assembly.*

Many of these will soon be having their annual district assemblies, and so they do well to ask themselves: Have I made my plans? Am I arranging my affairs so as to attend all four days of these spiritual festivals? Am I going, prepared to contribute to the success of the assembly by attending all the sessions, paying close attention and taking notes, by volunteering for service, by witnessing and by making financial contributions, to the extent that Jehovah has blessed me, to help defray the cost of the assemblies? Am I arranging to bring all my family, even as Joseph, Jesus' foster father, brought all his family to the festival in Jerusalem in 12 C.E.? Could I arrange to take others along with me?

It is truly faith-strengthening to read in the 1968 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* of the efforts some Christians put forth to attend these assemblies. In the Congo "many of them walked as much as two hundred miles and even more in order to be able to partake of the spiritual food presented at the assemblies." (Pages 112, 113) Two special pioneer ministers in Peru started out with a small motor launch down a jungle river. It took them eleven days, facing treacherous rapids, whirlpools and voracious insects, and the launch even sank from under them. In Lesotho, in South Africa, two Witnesses walked eighty miles through mountains and snow to get to their assembly, and one walked twenty-five miles through mountain and snow to get to hers, even though she was six months' pregnant.

However, the words of the apostle Paul, "Let us keep the festival . . . with unfermented cakes of sincerity and truth," are by no means limited to attending such assemblies. (1 Cor. 5:8) Rather, from the context, where Paul deals with an immoral man who needed to be disfellowshiped, it is apparent that keeping

the festival of unfermented cakes with sincerity and truth applies primarily to our everyday conduct. It means to lead clean lives, free from the wicked leaven of this world, including its teachings, its habits, its standards and its practices.—Matt. 16:6, 12.

And truly the world today is reeking with the leaven of wickedness as never before. Motion-picture shows, television programs and stage plays become ever more lewd and violent. Commercial interests stop at nothing to draw the public by shocking entertainment. What a danger these pose for dedicated Christians trying to keep free from leaven! One cannot associate with such people without having his useful habits spoiled!—1 Cor. 15:33.

True, none of Jehovah's servants can serve him perfectly; they all come short. But certainly they must all strive against sin and, like their Leader Jesus Christ, 'love righteousness and hate wickedness.' That is their safeguard, hating what is bad! (Heb. 1:9; Ps. 97:10) They must at all times guard against making a practice of sinning. Jehovah God is merciful and will forgive our shortcomings, but we must not grow careless and make a practice of sinning. And while he may forgive, we will still have to deal with the results that follow our coming short!

The apostle John helps us to appreciate the difference between committing a sin and making a practice of sinning: "I am writing you these things that you may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one." But, "everyone remaining in union with him does not practice sin; no one that practices sin has either seen him or come to know him." Yes, to 'keep the festival with sincerity and truth' we must keep free from willingly indulging in the "works of the flesh." It means leading a Christian life.

—1 John 2:1; 3:6; Gal. 5:19-21.

In particular when servants of Jehovah attend assemblies should their behavior be above reproach, that a good report might go forth to the honor of Jehovah's name and Word, even as has been the case time and again. Let all such exercise care so that these assemblies will be like law-abiding islands of purity and peace in a sea of immorality, lawlessness and strife.

* For details see *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1967.



- During the past year I got into some financial difficulty, and since reading your publications I have been wondering if it is proper for me to file for bankruptcy? Does the Bible say anything about this?—H. P., U.S.A.

The Bible, of course, does not discuss the modern laws pertaining to bankruptcy; it shows that persons not paying debts were thrown into prison. (Matt. 18:23-34) But from what it does say, we can get some idea as to how Christians should view this matter. So, first let us consider what "bankruptcy" is according to current laws. Then we can examine what the Bible says that relates to the subject and can determine what counsel it offers.

Many modern nations have bankruptcy laws. Though these may vary from place to place, usually they have a twofold purpose: In order to protect businessmen or creditors from someone who might run up a huge debt and then refuse to pay back as he agreed, the creditors can have him declared involuntarily bankrupt and have his assets sold or distributed as payment. On the other hand, the law works to protect an honest debtor who unwillingly gets into a position where he absolutely cannot satisfy the demands of his creditors; he is allowed to declare voluntary bankruptcy. If this happens, his assets are taken as partial payment for his creditors, but he can retain certain things, possibly his home, for example. He is then allowed to begin life afresh, without the threat of more pressure and loss at the hands of former creditors.

So these laws are intended to be protective to both parties in business or financial dealings. That some protection is needed is illustrated by the very origin of the term "bankruptcy." It comes from Italian words meaning "broken bench," referring to the practice during the Middle Ages of breaking up the benches or counters of a merchant who failed to pay his debts. Even more severe, under the Roman law of the Twelve Tables, as a last resort the creditors could cut the debtor's body into pieces, each taking a proportionate share.

What a contrast were the merciful laws Jehovah gave to Israel! When loans were made

to fellow Hebrews who had grown poor, no interest was charged. (Lev. 25:35-38) If a creditor went to collect a pledge for a debt, he could not dash into the house and seize whatever he wanted; rather, the debtor provided the pledge. The creditor could not take the man's hand mill or grindstone; those were needed to sustain life. And if his garment was taken as a pledge, it had to be returned at night so he could sleep in it and keep warm. (Deut. 24:6, 10-13; Ezek. 18:5-9) True, an Israelite who was totally insolvent might lose his inherited land temporarily and have to sell himself into slavery, but the land was returned in the Jubilee year. The one who sold himself into bondage was not to be debased by slavish service, but was to be treated as an honorable hired laborer. Then when the seventh year of his service came, or the Jubilee year, if it came first, he was released and given provisions to start a new life.—Lev. 25:39-41; Deut. 15:12-15.

This kind treatment on the part of creditors surely would have moved debtors to do all they could to respond with kindness by paying their debts. In regard to giving their word or making vows, the Jews were encouraged to think before they agreed to do something; then, once made, the vow could probably be kept. (Eccl. 5:2, 4-7; Deut. 23:21-23) If one agreed to pay off a debt at a certain rate or by a set date, he should work hard to keep his word, even if he had to deprive himself of some comforts or luxuries until he did so. God showed that it was just as important for those who owed money to pay their debts as it was for creditors to avoid being greedy. For Jehovah described the man whom he approved as one "who, though it be to his loss, changes not his pledged word; who lends not his money at usury."—Ps. 15:4, 5, *Confraternity*.

It is sad to say, but sometimes greedy Jewish creditors ignored the merciful and considerate spirit of God's law. Hardheartedly, creditors made abject slaves out of men, women and children, and in time took to throwing into prison those who could not pay their debts.—2 Ki. 4:1; Ezek. 18:12, 13; Amos 8:4-6; Matt. 5:25, 26.

Similarly today, sometimes creditors become quite unreasonable in their treatment of debtors. It may be that a Christian experienced some unforeseen occurrence that made it impossible for him to meet his commitment. (Eccl. 9:11) Possibly he could pay his debts if given more time. It would be the reasonable course for the creditors to see if they could make some allowance in dealing with one who

was insolvent because of misfortune, such as sickness or accident. In that way they would get their payment. But if they hound one mercilessly and try to render the debtor penniless by resorting to the law, then he might have to turn to the law himself. In order to protect himself, he might declare that he was bankrupt, his actual condition. They might force him to handle the matter in the only way they seem to recognize, the bankruptcy laws.

It would, though, be improper for a Christian to resort unnecessarily to bankruptcy as an easy way out of an unpleasant situation, whether caused by his own lack of foresight or by some bad turn of events. That would not be the morally honest course for Christians who say: "We trust we have an honest conscience, as we wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things." (Heb. 13:18) The Christian should treat his creditors just as he would want to be treated if someone owed him money. (Matt. 7:12) If one has a debt, he ought to try hard to pay it. Remember, God approves the one "who, though it be to his loss, changes not his pledged word."—Ps. 15:4, *Confraternity*.

In fact, some, even after being legally freed of certain debts, have conscientiously felt a moral urging to try to pay off the canceled debts. This is a good example of the kind of attitude that should prevail among Christians. It is good to be honest and upright in all our affairs, and to do what is right, even if it costs us something.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

debts if the former debtors would accept payment. In this, as in many matters, Christian conscience enters the picture. Each one can decide what he personally will do, striving always to maintain a good conscience.—1 Tim. 1:5.

All of this should emphasize the importance of thinking through a business matter thoroughly before making an agreement, and of living within one's means. An inspired proverb says: "The plans of the diligent one surely make for advantage, but everyone that is hasty surely heads for want." (Prov. 21:5) Jesus even spoke of the wisdom of the man intending to build a tower who sits down first to figure out the expense so as to be sure that he will have enough money to complete the business venture. (Luke 14:28-30) Each one must decide personally what debts, if any, he will incur. But how many material things does one need to provide the necessities of life and to find satisfaction in living? Would it be showing the "wisdom from above" to get into a dangerous financial situation out of a desire for material luxuries? (Jas. 3:17; Luke 12:15-21) How much better to believe and act in accord with Paul's words: "Having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things!"—1 Tim. 6:8.

Today true Christians celebrate those festivals in an antitypical way. They celebrate the festival of unleavened cakes, for instance, by keeping pure, by avoiding the leaven of unrighteousness and by holding to the truth of God's Word. (1 Cor. 5:8) To help others hold to the truth that means everlasting life, Jehovah's witnesses freely teach them the Bible. As a further aid to interested persons, during April they will be offering a year's subscription for this fine Bible-study aid *The Watchtower*, with three booklets, for just \$1. Take advantage of the opportunity to obtain it.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

April 28: God's Word Keeps Your Faith Alive.

Page 201. Songs to Be Used: 91, 78.

May 5: Keep Your Faith Growing Exceedingly.

Page 208. Songs to Be Used: 35, 33.

Festivals are happy occasions. To the faithful Jews of ancient Israel, the annual festivals were reminders of their blessed lot as God's people, carrying on worship in purity and truth.