

SEPTEMBER 15, 2003

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



The Bible Can Help Your Marriage

THE WATCHTOWER®

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September 15, 2003

Average Printing Each Issue: 25,203,000

Vol. 124, No. 18

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

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Publication of *The Watchtower* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

The Bible translation used is the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*, unless otherwise indicated.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589.

Changes of address should reach us 30 days before your moving date.
Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

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Semimonthly

ENGLISH

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NOW PUBLISHED IN 147 LANGUAGES. SEMIMONTHLY: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Bicol, Bislamá, Bulgarian, Cebuano,* Chichewa,* Chinese, Chinese (Simplified)*, Cibemba,* Croatian,* Czech,** Danish,** Dutch,** East Armenian, Efik,* English** (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,** French,** Ga, Georgian, German,** Greek,* Gujаратி, Gun, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hungarian,** Igbo,* Ilokano,* Indonesian, Italian,* Japanese** (also Braille), Kannada, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Korean** (also Braille), Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Lvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Myanmar, Nepali, New Guinea Pidgin, Norwegian,** Pangasinan, Papiamento (Aruba), Papiamento (Curaçao), Polish, ** Portuguese** (also Braille), Punjabi, Rarotongan, Romanian,* Russian,* Samar-Leyte, Samoan, Sango, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona,* Silozi, Sinhala, Slovak,* Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,** Sranantongo, Swahili,* Swedish,* Tagalog,* Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Tongan, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian,* Urdu, Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Xhosa, Yoruba,* Zulu*

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THE BIBLE Can Help Your Marriage

MARRIAGE—for some, the word evokes pleasant thoughts. For others, it elicits heartache. “I feel emotionally divorced,” laments one wife. “I feel neglected and lonely all the time.”

What causes two people who once vowed to love and cherish each other to become so distant? One factor is a lack of education about what marriage entails. “We enter the institution without any training whatsoever,” observes one medical journalist.

That few today possess such know-how is borne out by a study conducted by The National Marriage Project, a research initiative of Rutgers University in New Jersey, U.S.A. “Many in this study have grown up with unhappily married or divorced parents,” write the directors of the project. “They know exactly what a bad marriage is, but they are less sure of what a good marriage looks like. Some can only describe a good marriage as ‘the opposite of my parents.’”

Are Christians immune to marital problems? No. In fact, some Christians in the first century needed pointed counsel to “stop seeking a release” from their marriage. (1 Corinthians 7:27) Clearly, any marriage of two imperfect humans is going to have its prob-



lems, but we have help. Husbands and wives can improve their relationship by applying Bible principles.

True, the Bible is not a marriage manual. Since it is inspired by the One who originated the marital arrangement, however, we can expect its principles to be helpful. Through the prophet Isaiah, Jehovah God stated: “I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk. O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”—Isaiah 48: 17, 18.

Has the love that once existed between you and your mate begun to fade? Do you feel trapped in a loveless marriage? One wife of 26 years said: “The pain that is experienced with this kind of relationship can hardly be described. It is constant and all-permeating.” Rather than resign yourself to an unfulfilling marriage, why not resolve to do something about it? The following article will show husbands and wives how Bible principles can help their marriage in one specific area—that of commitment.



HOW to Strengthen Your Marriage

IMAGINE a house that has fallen into a state of disrepair. The paint is peeling, the roof is damaged, and even the lawn lies untended. Obviously, this building has weathered some severe storms over the years, and it has suffered from neglect. Should it be demolished? Not necessarily. If the foundation is strong and the structure is stable, the house can likely be restored.

Does the condition of that house remind you of your marriage? Over the years, severe storms, so to speak, may have taken a toll on your marital relationship. A degree of neglect may be involved on the part of one or both of you. You may feel as did Sandy. After 15 years of wedlock, she stated: "We had nothing in common but being married to each other. And that wasn't enough."

Even if your marriage has reached this point, do not hastily conclude that it should be terminated. Likely, your marriage can be restored. Much depends on the level of commitment that exists between you and your

mate. Commitment can help to give a marriage stability in times of trial. But what is commitment? And how can the Bible help you to strengthen it?

Commitment Involves Obligation

According to one dictionary, commitment refers to "the state of being obligated or emotionally impelled." At times, the word is applied to something impersonal, such as a business agreement. For example, a builder might feel obliged to fulfill the demands of a contract he has signed to construct a house. He may not personally know the one who commissioned the work. Still, he feels compelled to live up to his word.

Although marriage is not a cold business deal, the commitment involved includes obligation. You and your mate likely have solemnly vowed before God and man to stay together, come what may. Jesus stated: "He who created [man and woman] from the beginning made them male and female and

said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife.'" Jesus added: "What God has yoked together let no man put apart." (Matthew 19: 4-6) When problems arise, then, you and your mate should be firmly resolved to honor the commitment you made.* Says one wife: "It wasn't until we stopped considering divorce as an option that things began to improve."

There is more to marital commitment, though, than obligation. What else is involved?

Teamwork Strengthens Commitment to Marriage

Commitment to marriage does not mean that marriage mates will never disagree with each other. When a conflict occurs, there should be an earnest desire to resolve the matter not only because of an obligatory vow but because of an emotional bond. Regarding husband and wife, Jesus said: "They are no longer two, but one flesh."

What does it mean to be "one flesh" with your mate? The apostle Paul wrote that "husbands ought to be loving their wives as their own bodies." (Ephesians 5:28, 29) In part, then, being "one flesh" means that you feel as concerned with the welfare of your mate as you are with your own. Married people need to shift their thinking from "mine" to "ours," from "me" to "we." One counselor wrote: "Both partners must stop being single *at heart*, and come to be married *at heart*."

Are you and your spouse "married at heart"? It is possible to be together for many

* In extreme cases, there may be valid reason for a married couple to separate. (1 Corinthians 7:10, 11; see *The Secret of Family Happiness*, pages 160-1, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.) In addition, the Bible allows for divorce on the grounds of fornication (sexual immorality).—Matthew 19:9.

What You Can Do Now



How does your marriage fare with regard to commitment? Perhaps you see room for improvement. To strengthen your commitment, try the following:

- Make a self-examination. Ask yourself: 'Am I truly married at heart, or am I still thinking and acting as a single person?' Find out how your mate feels about you in this area.
- Read this article with your spouse. Then, in a calm manner, discuss ways that you can strengthen your commitment to your marriage.
- With your mate, engage in activities that strengthen your commitment. For example: Look at photographs of your wedding and other memorable events. Do things that you enjoyed during courtship or in the early years of your marriage. Study together Bible-based articles from *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* that pertain to marriage.

years and yet not be "one flesh" in that sense. Yes, that can happen, but the book *Giving Time a Chance* says: "Marriage means sharing a life, and the more two people share, the more there is to grow on."

Some unhappy couples stay together for the sake of their children or for financial security. Others endure because they have strong moral objections to divorce or because they fear what others will think if they break up. While it is commendable that these marriages endure, remember that your goal should be to have a loving relationship, not simply a lasting one.

In Marriage, Commitment Involves . . .



- **Obligation** "What you vow, pay. Better is it that you vow not than that you vow and do not pay."—Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5.
- **Teamwork** "Two are better than one . . . For if one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up."—Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10.
- **Self-Sacrifice** "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—Acts 20:35.
- **A Long-Term View** "Love . . . endures all things."—1 Corinthians 13:4, 7.

Unselfish Acts Promote Marital Commitment

The Bible foretold that during "the last days," people would be "lovers of themselves." (2 Timothy 3:1, 2) True to that prophecy, the emphasis today seems to be on a worshipful devotion to self. In all too many marriages, to give of oneself without guarantee of reciprocation is viewed as a sign of weakness. In a healthy marriage, however, both mates display a self-sacrificing spirit. How can you do so? Instead of dwelling on the question, 'What am I getting out of this relationship?' ask yourself, 'What am I personally doing to strengthen my marriage?' The Bible says that Christians should be "keeping an eye, not in personal interest upon just [their] own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others." (Philippians 2:4) While pondering this Bible principle, analyze your ac-

tions during the past week. How often did you perform an act of kindness solely for the benefit of your spouse? When your mate wanted to talk, did you listen—even if you did not feel particularly inclined to do so? How many activities did you engage in that interested your mate more than you?

In weighing such questions, do not worry that your good deeds will go unnoticed or unrewarded. "In most relationships," says one reference work, "positive behavior is reciprocated, so do your best to encourage your partner to behave positively by behaving more positively yourself." Self-sacrificing acts strengthen your marriage because they show that you value it and want to preserve it.

A Long-Term View Is Essential

Jehovah God values loyalty. Indeed, the Bible states: "With someone loyal to you [Jehovah] will act in loyalty." (2 Samuel 22:26) Remaining loyal to God entails remaining loyal to the marriage arrangement that he instituted.—Genesis 2:24.

If you and your mate are loyal to each other, you enjoy a sense of permanence about your union. When you think about the months, years, and decades ahead, you see yourselves together in the picture. The thought of not being married to each other is utterly foreign, and this outlook brings security to your relationship. One wife says: "Even when I'm maddest at [my husband] and I'm most upset about what is happening to us, I'm not worrying about our marriage coming to an end. I'm worried about how we are ever going to get back to where we were. I don't have a doubt in the world that we're going to get back—I just can't see how right then."

A long-term view is an essential part of commitment to one's mate, yet it is sadly

*When your mate wants to talk,
do you listen?*



lacking in many marriages. During heated exchanges, one spouse may blurt out, "I'm leaving you!" or, "I'm going to find someone who really appreciates me!" Granted, most often such words are not meant literally. Still, the Bible notes that the tongue can be "full of death-dealing poison." (James 3:8) Threats and ultimatums send out the message: 'I do not view our marriage as permanent. I can leave it at any time.' Implying such a thing can be destructive to a marriage.

When you have a long-term view, you expect to be with your mate through thick and thin. This has an added benefit. It will make it far easier for you and your mate to accept weaknesses and mistakes and to continue putting up with each other and forgiving each other freely. (Colossians 3:13) "In a good marriage," says one handbook, "there's room for both of you to fail, and for the marriage to hold together in spite of it."

On your wedding day, you made a commitment, not to the institution of marriage,

but to a living person—your mate. This fact should have a profound effect on the way you now think and act as a married person. Do you not agree that you should remain with your mate not only because you strongly believe in the sanctity of marriage but also because you love the person you married?

BEFORE AND AFTER

How the Bible Changed This Man

MUSIC was Rolf-Michael's life. Drugs were his obsession. As a youth in Germany, he consumed large quantities of alcohol and freely used LSD, cocaine, hashish, and other mind-altering substances.

While trying to smuggle drugs into an African country, Rolf-Michael was arrested and spent 13 months in prison. That prison term gave him time to think about the real purpose of life.

Rolf-Michael and his wife, Ursula, desperately looked for meaning in life and searched for the truth. Despite negative experiences with so-called Christian churches, they had a strong desire to get to know God. But they had questions and received no satisfying answers from various religious groups. Furthermore, these religions provided no powerful motive to make them change their lives.

Rolf-Michael and Ursula eventually came in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses. After starting to study the Bible, Rolf-Michael was deeply moved by the admonition: "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you." (James 4:8) He was determined to 'put away the old personality which conformed to his former course of conduct and put on the new personality, created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty.'—Ephesians 4:22-24.

How could Rolf-Michael put on the new personality? He was shown from the Bible that "through accurate knowledge" an individual's

personality can be "made new according to the image of the One who created it," that is, Jehovah God.—Colossians 3:9-11.

As he took in accurate knowledge, Rolf-Michael sought to bring his life into harmony with the principles of God's Word. (John 17:3) It was difficult to break free from drugs, but Rolf-Michael saw the value of approaching Jehovah in prayer and experiencing his help. (1 John 5:14, 15) Further help resulted from close association with those who were already Jehovah's Witnesses, working hard to do God's will.

Knowledge that the world is passing away and that those doing God's will are to remain forever also helped Rolf-Michael. It enabled him to choose, not the short-term love of the world, but the eternal blessing of a close relationship with the loving God, Jehovah. (1 John 2:15-17) Rolf-Michael was deeply touched by the words of Proverbs 27:11: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me." He apprecia-



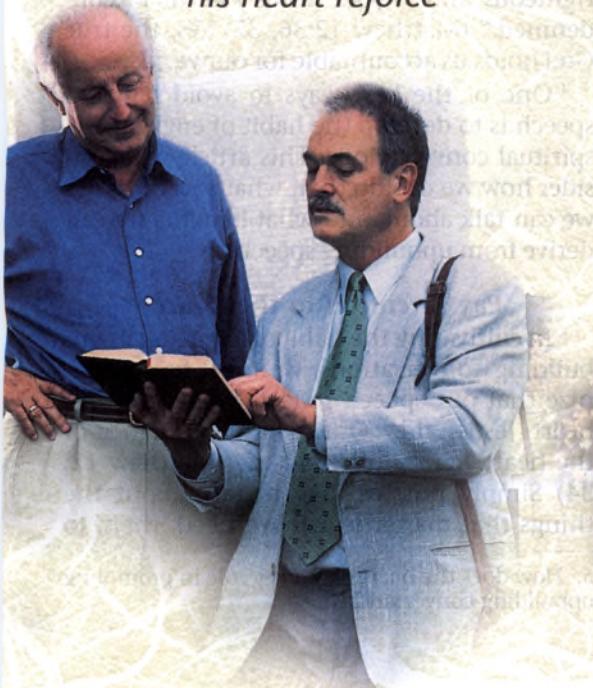
tively observes: "This verse shows the depth of Jehovah's love, since he gives humans the chance to make his heart rejoice."

Like Rolf-Michael, his wife, and their three children, hundreds of thousands have benefited by following Bible principles. Such individuals can be found in congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses around the world. Regrettably, in some countries the Witnesses are falsely accused of being a dangerous sect that breaks up families, Rolf-Michael's experience proves otherwise.—Hebrews 4:12.

Rolf-Michael says that Matthew 6:33, which exhorts us to give priority to spiritual pursuits, is his family's "compass," pointing them in the right direction. He and his family are deeply grateful to Jehovah for the happy family life they enjoy as Christians. They share the sentiments of the psalmist who sang: "What shall I repay to Jehovah for all his benefits to me?"

—Psalm 116:12.

► *God gives humans
the chance to make
his heart rejoice*



◀ **Bible Principles at Work ▶**

Among the Bible principles that have motivated many to abandon deadly addictions are the following:

"O you lovers of Jehovah, hate what is bad." (Psalm 97:10) After being convinced of the badness of death-dealing practices and developing genuine hatred for them, a person finds it easier to do what pleases God.

"He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly." (Proverbs 13:20) To say no to drugs and other addictive substances, a person needs to choose his associates carefully. Cultivating the friendship of Christians who will support his resolve is truly beneficial.

"Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6, 7) Such peace of heart and mind is unmatched by anything else. And prayerful reliance on God helps one to deal with life's problems without resorting to addictive drugs.



SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS BUILD UP

"Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth, but whatever saying is good for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to the hearers."—EPHESIANS 4:29.

HUMAN speech is a secret; it is a divine gift, a miracle." So wrote lexicographer Ludwig Koehler. Perhaps we take this precious gift of God for granted. (James 1:17) But consider how great a treasure is lost when a stroke robs a loved one of the ability to utter intelligible speech. "We had a wonderful bond of communication," explains Joan, whose husband recently suffered a stroke. "How I miss our conversations!"

² Conversations can cement friendships, heal misunderstandings, uplift the downhearted, strengthen faith, and enrich lives—but never automatically. Wise King Solomon observed: "There exists the one speaking thoughtlessly as with the stabs of a sword, but the tongue of the wise ones is a healing." (Proverbs 12:18) As Jehovah's servants, we want our conversations to heal and build up rather than hurt and tear down. We also desire to use our tongue to praise Jehovah, both in our public ministry and in our private conversations. The psalmist sang: "In God we will offer praise all day long, and to time indefinite your name we shall laud."—Psalm 44:8.

³ "The tongue," warns the disciple James, "not one of mankind can get it tamed." He re-



minds us: "We all stumble many times. If anyone does not stumble in word, this one is a perfect man, able to bridle also his whole body." (James 3:2, 8) None of us are perfect. Despite our best intentions, therefore, our speech does not always build others up or furnish praise to our Creator. So, then, we must learn to pay attention to what we say. Moreover, Jesus said: "Every unprofitable saying that men speak, they will render an account concerning it on Judgment Day; for by your words you will be declared righteous, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:36, 37) Yes, the true God holds us accountable for our words.

⁴ One of the best ways to avoid harmful speech is to develop the habit of engaging in spiritual conversations. This article will consider how we can do that, what sort of topics we can talk about, and what benefits we can derive from upbuilding speech.

Pay Attention to the Heart

⁵ In cultivating the habit of engaging in upbuilding conversations, we must first recognize that our speech reflects what is in our heart. Jesus said: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34) Simply put, we like to talk about the things that matter to us. We need, then, to

1, 2. (a) How valuable is human speech? (b) How do Jehovah's servants desire to use their tongue?
3, 4. (a) What problem do all of us face with regard to our speech? (b) Why does our speech matter?

5. How does the heart play a key role in promoting upbuilding conversations?

ask ourselves: 'What do my conversations reveal about my heart condition? When I am with my family or fellow believers, does my conversation center on spiritual matters or does it invariably gravitate to sports, clothes, movies, food, my latest purchases, or some trivialities?' Perhaps unwittingly, our lives and our thoughts have come to revolve around secondary matters. Adjusting our priorities will improve our conversations as well as our lives.—Philippians 1:10.

⁶ Purposeful meditation is another way to improve the quality of what we say. If we consciously make an effort to think about spiritual matters, we will find that spiritual conversation comes naturally. King David saw this connection. He sang: "Let the sayings of my mouth and the meditation of my heart become pleasurable before you, O Jehovah." (Psalm 19:14) And the psalmist Asaph said: "I shall certainly meditate on all your [God's] activity, and with your dealings I will concern myself." (Psalm 77:12) A heart and mind deeply concerned about the truths of God's Word will naturally overflow with praiseworthy speech. Jeremiah could not hold back from speaking about the things that Jehovah had taught him. (Jeremiah 20:9) So it can be with us if we regularly ponder on spiritual matters.—1 Timothy 4:15.

⁷ Having a good spiritual routine provides us with plenty of topics for upbuilding conversations. (Philippians 3:16) Assemblies, conventions, congregation meetings, current publications, and the daily scripture text and printed comments all furnish us with spiritual gems we can share. (Matthew 13:52) And how spiritually stimulating can be the experiences from our Christian ministry!

6. What part does meditation play in our conversations?

7, 8. What topics are good for upbuilding conversations?

⁸ King Solomon was fascinated by the great variety of trees, animals, birds, and fish he observed in Israel. (1 Kings 4:33) He delighted in conversing about God's creative works. We can do the same. Jehovah's servants enjoy talking about a variety of subjects, but spiritual topics always flavor the conversations of spiritually inclined people.—1 Corinthians 2:13.

"Continue Considering These Things"

⁹ Whatever the topics, our conversations will build others up if they adhere to the apostle Paul's admonition to the congregation in Philippi. He wrote: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things." (Philippians 4:8) The matters Paul mentions are so vital that he says "*continue considering* these things." We should fill our minds and hearts with them. So let us see how giving attention to each of the eight things cited by Paul can help us with our conversations.

¹⁰ That which is *true* involves more than information that is correct and not false. It refers to something that is upright and trustworthy, such as the truth of God's Word. Hence, when we talk to others about Bible truths that impressed us, discourses or talks that uplifted us, or Scriptural counsel that helped us, we are considering things that are true. On the other hand, we reject "the falsely called 'knowledge,'" which gives only an appearance of truthfulness. (1 Timothy 6:20) And we avoid passing on gossip or relating dubious experiences that cannot be verified.

9. What admonition did Paul give to the Philippians?

10. How can our conversations involve things that are true?

*Upbuilding conversations
center on . . .*

"whatever things are true"

entertaining

*"whatever praiseworthy
thing there is"*

"whatever things are of serious concern"

¹¹ Things of *serious concern* are subjects that are dignified and consequential, not trivial or petty. They include concerns about our Christian ministry, the critical times in which we live, and the need for us to maintain fine conduct. When we discuss such serious matters, we reinforce our determination to keep awake spiritually, maintain our integrity, and continue preaching the good news. Indeed, interesting experiences in our minis-



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"whatever things are well spoken of"

try and current events that remind us that we are living in the last days provide a variety of material for stimulating conversations.—Acts 14:27; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

¹² The word *righteous* means being right in God's eyes—meeting his standards. *Chaste* conveys the idea of purity in thought and conduct. Slander, obscene jokes, or sexual innuendos have no place in our conversations. (Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:8) In the work-

11. What things of serious concern can be included in our conversations?

12. In view of Paul's counsel to consider things that are righteous and chaste, what should be avoided?

place or at school, Christians wisely withdraw when conversations take on this tone.

¹³ When Paul recommends considering *lovable* things, he refers to matters that are pleasing and agreeable or that inspire love, as opposed to those that arouse hatred, bitterness, or contention. Things *well spoken of* refer to information that is reputable or of good report. Such good reports would include the life stories of faithful brothers and sisters, which appear regularly in the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines. Why not share with others your impressions once you have read these faith-strengthening articles? And how encouraging it is to hear of the spiritual accomplishments of others! Such conversations will build love and unity in the congregation.

¹⁴ Paul speaks of "whatever virtue there is." *Virtue* refers to goodness or moral excellence. We must be careful that our lips are guided by Scriptural principles and that they do not deviate from what is righteous, chaste, and virtuous. *Praiseworthy* means "commendable." If you hear a good talk or notice a faithful example in the congregation, speak about it—both to the person involved and to others. The apostle Paul frequently praised the fine qualities of his fellow worshipers. (Romans 16:12; Philippians 2:19-22; Philemon 4-7) And, of course, the handiwork of our Creator is truly praiseworthy. There we find a wealth of subjects for upbuilding conversations.—Proverbs 6:6-8; 20:12; 26:2.

13. Give examples of conversations that revolve around things that are lovable and well spoken of.

14. (a) What does manifesting virtue require of us? (b) How can our speech include praiseworthy things?

Mealtimes provide excellent opportunities to engage in spiritual conversations

Engage in Upbuilding Conversations

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 6:6, 7 states: "These words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart; and you must inculcate them in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up." Clearly, this command requires that parents have meaningful, spiritual conversations with their children.

¹⁶ We can imagine the long conversations that Jesus must have had with his heavenly Father when they considered his earthly assignment. "The Father himself who sent me has given me a commandment as to what to tell and what to speak," Jesus told his disciples. (John 12:49; Deuteronomy 18:18) The patriarch Abraham must have spent many hours talking to his son Isaac about how Jehovah had blessed them and their forefathers. Such conversations surely helped both Jesus and Isaac to submit humbly to God's will.—Genesis 22:7-9; Matthew 26:39.

¹⁷ Our children too need upbuilding conversations. Parents must find time in their busy schedule to talk with their children. If

15. What Scriptural command obligates parents to have meaningful conversations with their children?

16, 17. What can Christian parents learn from the examples of Jehovah and Abraham?



possible, why not arrange to eat together as a family at least once a day? During and after such mealtimes, there will be opportunities for upbuilding discussions that can prove invaluable for the spiritual health of the family.

¹⁸ Alejandro, a pioneer in his early 20's, remembers the doubts he harbored as a 14-year-old. He relates: "Because of the influence of schoolmates and teachers, I wasn't sure about the existence of God and the authenticity of the Bible. My parents spent many hours patiently reasoning with me. These conversations helped me not only to overcome my doubts during this difficult period but also to make good decisions in my life." And what about now? Alejandro continues: "I still live at home. But our busy schedules make it difficult for my father and me to talk privately. So the two of us eat together once a week at his workplace. I really value these conversations."

¹⁹ Do we not also treasure opportunities to enjoy rewarding spiritual conversations with our fellow believers? These opportunities present themselves at meetings, in the field ministry, and at social gatherings and while

18. Relate an experience that shows the benefits of good communication between parents and children.

19. Why do all of us need spiritual conversations?

How Would You Answer?

- What do our conversations reveal about us?
- What upbuilding things can we talk about?
- What important role do conversations play in the family circle and in the Christian congregation?
- What benefits do upbuilding conversations bring?

traveling. Paul looked forward to talking with the Christians in Rome. "I am longing to see you," he wrote them, "that there may be an interchange of encouragement among you, by each one through the other's faith, both yours and mine." (Romans 1:11, 12) "Spiritual conversations with fellow Christians fill a vital need," observes Johannes, a Christian elder. "They warm the heart and ease the daily load. I often ask elderly ones to tell me about their lives and about what has enabled them to stay faithful. Over the years, I have spoken to many, and each one has imparted some wisdom or enlightenment that has enriched my life."

²⁰ What if someone seems unresponsive when you bring up a spiritual subject? Do not give up. Perhaps you can find a more opportune time later. "As apples of gold in silver carvings is a word spoken at the right time for it," Solomon noted. (Proverbs 25:11) Show understanding to those who are shy. "Counsel in the heart of a man is as deep waters, but the man of discernment is one that will draw it up."^{*} (Proverbs 20:5) Above all, never let the attitudes of others hold you back from talking about the things that touch your heart.

Spiritual Conversations Are Rewarding

²¹ "Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth," counseled Paul, "but whatever saying is good for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to the hearers." (Ephesians 4:29; Romans 10:10) It may take effort to steer conversations

* Some wells in Israel were very deep. In Gibeon, archaeologists have discovered a reservoir some 80 feet deep. It has steps, which enabled people to descend to the bottom in order to draw up water.

20. What can we do if we encounter someone who is shy?

21, 22. What benefits do we derive from participating in spiritual conversations?

in the right direction, but the rewards are many. Spiritual conversations enable us to share our faith with others and to build up our brotherhood.

²² Let us, then, use the gift of speech to uplift others and praise God. Such conversations will be a source of satisfaction to us and of encouragement to others. Above all, they will make Jehovah's heart glad because he pays attention to our conversations and he rejoices when we use our tongue in the right way. (Psalm 139:4; Proverbs 27:11) When our

conversations are spiritual, we can be sure that Jehovah will not forget us. Referring to those serving Jehovah in our day, the Bible states: "At that time those in fear of Jehovah spoke with one another, each one with his companion, and Jehovah kept paying attention and listening. And a book of remembrance began to be written up before him for those in fear of Jehovah and for those thinking upon his name." (Malachi 3:16; 4:5) How vital that our conversations be spiritually up-building!

WHY SHOULD WE PRAY INCESSANTLY?

"Pray incessantly. In connection with everything give thanks."

—1 THESSALONIANS 5:17, 18.

THE prophet Daniel had the custom of praying to God three times a day. He would kneel at the window of his roof chamber, which faced the city of Jerusalem, and offer up his petitions. (1 Kings 8:46-49; Daniel 6:10) Even when a royal decree prohibited petitions to anyone but Darius, the Median king, Daniel did not waver for one moment. Whether it endangered his life or not, this man of prayer entreated Jehovah incessantly.

² How did Jehovah view Daniel? When the angel Gabriel came to answer one of Daniel's prayers, he described the prophet as "someone very desirable" or "a man greatly beloved." (Daniel

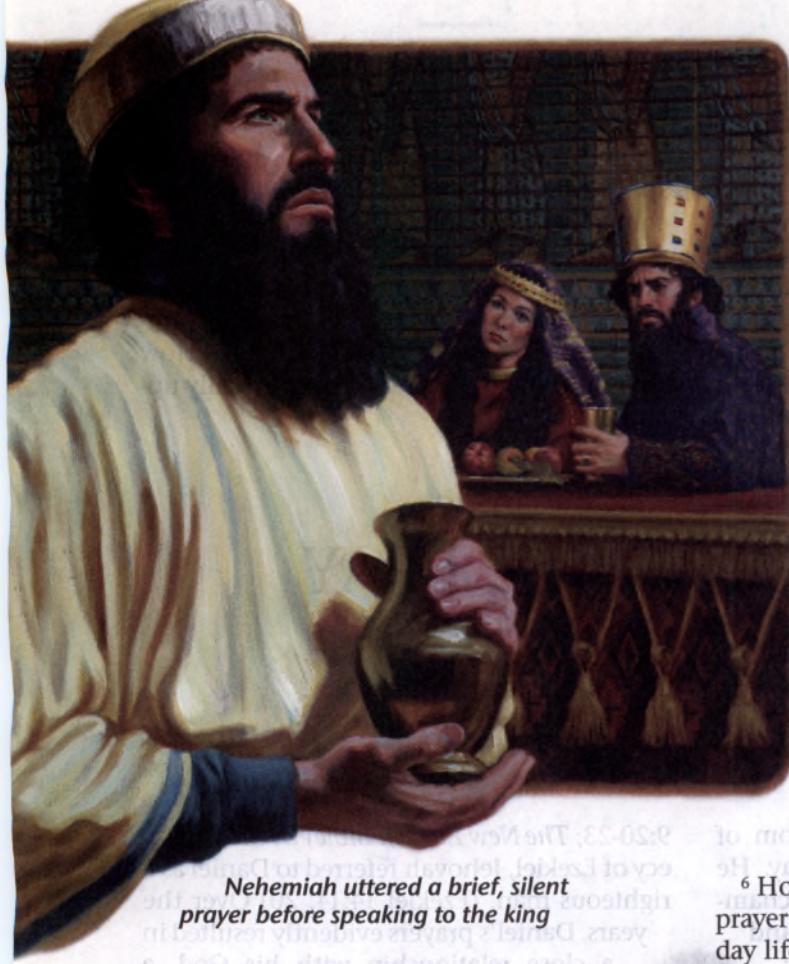
1, 2. How did Daniel show that he appreciated the privilege of prayer, and what effect did that have on his relationship with God?



9:20-23; *The New English Bible*) In the prophecy of Ezekiel, Jehovah referred to Daniel as a righteous man. (Ezekiel 14:14, 20) Over the years, Daniel's prayers evidently resulted in a close relationship with his God, a fact recognized even by Darius.—Daniel 6:16.

³ Regular prayer can also help us face severe trials. For example, consider the case of Harold King, a missionary in China who was sentenced to five years in solitary confinement. Concerning his experience, Brother King said: "I might be isolated from my fellowmen, but no one could isolate me from God. . . . So, open to the view of any who might pass my cell, I knelt in my cell three times a day and prayed aloud, keeping

3. As shown by the experience of one missionary, how can prayer help us to maintain integrity?



Nehemiah uttered a brief, silent prayer before speaking to the king

in mind Daniel, of whom the Bible speaks. . . . It seemed that on such occasions God's spirit guided my mind to the most beneficial matters and gave me a feeling of composure. What spiritual strength and comfort prayer brought to me!"

⁴ The Bible states: "Pray incessantly. In connection with everything give thanks." (1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18) In view of this counsel, let us consider the following questions: Why should we pay attention to our prayers? What reasons do we have for approaching Jehovah constantly? And what

4. What questions concerning prayer will we consider in this article?

should we do if we feel unworthy to pray to God because of our shortcomings?

Build Friendship Through Prayer

⁵ Would you like Jehovah to think of you as his friend? He spoke of the patriarch Abraham in that way. (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23) Jehovah wants us to develop that sort of relationship with him. He actually invites us to draw close to him. (James 4:8) Should not that invitation make us reflect on the unique provision of prayer? How difficult it is to obtain an appointment to speak to an important government official, let alone become his friend! Yet, the Creator of the universe encourages us to approach him freely in prayer, whenever we want or need to do so. (Psalm 37:5) Our incessant prayers help us to have a close friendship with Jehovah.

⁶ How easily, though, we can neglect prayer! Just dealing with pressures of everyday life can absorb so much of our attention that we do not make an effort to speak to God. Jesus encouraged his disciples to "pray continually," and he himself did that. (Matthew 26:41) Though he invariably found himself busy from morning to night, he set aside time to talk to his heavenly Father. Sometimes, Jesus got up "early in the morning, while it was still dark," in order to pray. (Mark 1:35) On other occasions, he retired to a lonely place at the end of the day in order to talk to Jehovah. (Matthew 14:23) Jesus always made time to pray, and so should we.—1 Peter 2:21.

5. What unique friendship does prayer help us to enjoy?

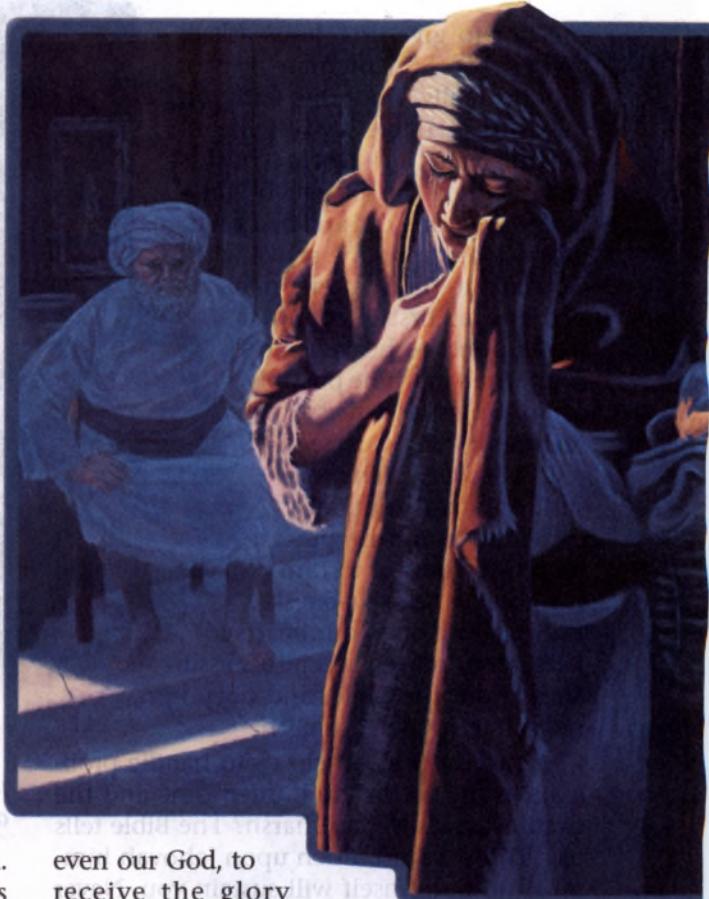
6. What does the example of Jesus teach us about the need to "pray continually"?

*Hannah "prayed
extendedly before Jehovah"*

⁷ Appropriate moments for private prayer present themselves many times each day as we face problems, encounter temptations, and make decisions. (Ephesians 6:18) When we seek God's guidance in all aspects of life, our friendship with him is certain to grow. If two friends face problems together, does not the bond of friendship between them become stronger? (Proverbs 17:17) The same is true when we lean on Jehovah and experience his help.—2 Chronicles 14:11.

⁸ How glad we can be that God puts no limit on how long or how often we may talk to him in prayer! Nehemiah quickly uttered a silent prayer before making a petition to the king of Persia. (Nehemiah 2:4, 5) Jesus also offered a brief prayer when he requested that Jehovah give him the power to resurrect Lazarus. (John 11:41, 42) Hannah, on the other hand, "prayed extendedly before Jehovah" when she poured out her heart to him. (1 Samuel 1:12, 15, 16) Our personal prayers can be brief or lengthy according to the need and the circumstances.

⁹ Many prayers in the Bible express heartfelt appreciation for Jehovah's supreme position and his wonderful works. (Exodus 15:1-19; 1 Chronicles 16:7-36; Psalm 145) In a vision, the apostle John sees the 24 elders—the complete number of anointed Christians in their heavenly position—praise Jehovah, saying: "You are worthy, Jehovah,



even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created." (Revelation 4:10, 11) We too have reason to praise the Creator regularly. How happy parents feel when their child thanks them from the heart for something they have done for him! Reflecting appreciatively on Jehovah's kindnesses and expressing our heartfelt gratitude for them is a fine way to improve the quality of our prayers.

"Pray Incessantly"—Why?

¹⁰ Regular prayer is essential to our faith. After illustrating the need "always to pray

7. What circumstances should move us to talk to our heavenly Father daily?
8. From the examples of Nehemiah, Jesus, and Hannah, what do we learn about the length of our personal prayers?
9. Why should our prayers include praise and thanks for all that Jehovah does for us?

and not to give up," Jesus asked: "When the Son of man arrives, will he really find the faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8) Meaningful, heartfelt prayer builds faith. When the patriarch Abraham was getting old and had yet to produce offspring, he spoke with God about the matter. In reply, Jehovah first asked him to look up to the heavens and count the stars, if he possibly could. Then God reassured Abraham: "So your seed will become." The result? Abraham "put faith in Jehovah; and he proceeded to count it to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:5, 6) If we open our hearts to Jehovah in prayer, accept his assurances from the Bible, and obey him, he will strengthen our faith.

¹¹ Prayer can also help us to handle problems. Is our lot in life burdensome and the circumstances we face harsh? The Bible tells us: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter." (Psalm 55:22) When faced with difficult decisions, we can imitate Jesus' example. He spent a whole night in private prayer before appointing his 12 apostles. (Luke 6:12-16) And on the night before he died, Jesus prayed so intensely that "his sweat became as drops of blood falling to the ground." (Luke 22:44) The result? "He was favorably heard for his godly fear." (Hebrews 5:7) Our fervent and incessant prayers will help us to cope with stressful situations and difficult trials.

¹² Another reason to draw closer to Jehovah by means of prayer is that he, in turn, draws closer to us. (James 4:8) When we open up our heart to Jehovah in prayer, do we not sense that he is interested in our needs and tenderly cares for us? We experience God's love in a very personal way. Jehovah has not delegated to anyone else the responsibility of listening to each and every prayer that his servants direct to him as their heavenly Father. (Psalm 66:19, 20; Luke 11:2) And he invites us to 'throw all our anxiety upon him because he cares for us.'—1 Peter 5:6, 7.

Jesus prayed all night before appointing his 12 apostles



closer to us. (James 4:8) When we open up our heart to Jehovah in prayer, do we not sense that he is interested in our needs and tenderly cares for us? We experience God's love in a very personal way. Jehovah has not delegated to anyone else the responsibility of listening to each and every prayer that his servants direct to him as their heavenly Father. (Psalm 66:19, 20; Luke 11:2) And he invites us to 'throw all our anxiety upon him because he cares for us.'—1 Peter 5:6, 7.

¹³ Prayer can infuse us with greater zeal for the public ministry and strengthen us when apathy or opposition might make us feel like quitting. (Acts 4:23-31) Prayer can also safely

¹⁴ What reasons do we have for praying incessantly?

guard us against "the machinations of the Devil." (Ephesians 6:11, 17, 18) When struggling to cope with daily trials, we can constantly ask God to fortify us. Jesus' model prayer includes the request that Jehovah "deliver us from the wicked one," Satan the Devil.—Matthew 6:13.

¹⁴ If we continue to pray for help in controlling our sinful inclinations, we will experience Jehovah's helping hand. We have this assurance: "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13) The apostle Paul himself experienced Jehovah's strengthening care in a wide variety of circumstances. "For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me," he said.—Philippians 4:13; 2 Corinthians 11:23-29.

Persevere in Prayer Despite Shortcomings

¹⁵ For our prayers to be favorably heard, we must not reject the counsel of God's Word. "Whatever we ask we receive from him," wrote the apostle John, "because we are observing his commandments and are doing the things that are pleasing in his eyes." (1 John 3:22) What might happen, though, when our conduct falls short of God's standards? Adam and Eve hid themselves after their sin in the garden of Eden. We too may feel inclined to hide "from the face of Jehovah" and stop praying. (Genesis 3:8) "I have noticed that invariably the first false step taken by those who drift away from Jehovah and his organization is that they stop praying," observes Klaus, an experienced traveling overseer. (Hebrews 2:1) This was the case with José Ángel. He says: "For nearly eight

15. What can happen when our conduct falls short of God's standards?

years, I rarely prayed to Jehovah. I felt unworthy to talk to him, although I still considered him to be my heavenly Father."

¹⁶ Some of us might feel unworthy to pray because of spiritual weakness or because we have lapsed into wrongdoing. But this is precisely when we need to take full advantage of the provision of prayer. Jonah ran away from his assignment. But 'out of his distresses, Jonah called out to Jehovah, and He proceeded to answer him. Out of the belly of Sheol, Jonah cried for help, and Jehovah heard his voice.' (Jonah 2:2) Jonah prayed, Jehovah answered his prayer, and Jonah recovered spiritually.

¹⁷ José Ángel also prayed fervently for help. He recalls: "I opened my heart and begged God for his forgiveness. And he did help me. I don't think I would have returned to the truth without the help of prayer. I now pray regularly every day, and I look forward to these times." We should always feel free to talk openly to God about our mistakes and humbly ask his forgiveness. When King David confessed his transgressions, Jehovah pardoned his sins. (Psalm 32:3-5) Jehovah wants to help us, not to condemn us. (1 John 3:19, 20) And the prayers of older men of the congregation can help us

16, 17. Give examples of how regular prayer can help us to overcome spiritual weakness.

How Would You Answer?

- What do we learn from the prophet Daniel about the value of prayer?
- How can we strengthen our friendship with Jehovah?
- Why should we pray incessantly?
- Why should feelings of unworthiness not hinder us from praying to Jehovah?

spiritually, for such petitions have "much force."—James 5:13-16.

¹⁸ What father would reject a son who humbly turns to him for help and advice after making a mistake? The parable of the prodigal son shows that regardless of how far we may have strayed, our heavenly Father rejoices when we return to him. (Luke 15:21, 22, 32) Jehovah urges all erring ones to call to him, "for he will forgive in a large way." (Isaiah 55:6, 7) Although David committed several serious sins, he called on Jehovah, saying: "Do give ear, O God, to my prayer; and do not hide yourself from my request for favor." He also said: "Evening and morning and noontime I cannot but show concern and I moan, and [Jehovah] hears my voice." (Psalm 55:1, 17) How reassuring!

¹⁹ What if our petition does not meet with an immediate response? Then we must make certain that our request is in harmony with Jehovah's will and is offered in Jesus' name. (John 16:23; 1 John 5:14) The disciple James referred to some Christians whose prayers remained unanswered because they were "asking for a wrong purpose." (James 4:3) On the other hand, we should not be quick to conclude that seemingly unanswered prayers are always evidence of God's disapproval. Jehovah may at times allow faithful worshipers to keep on praying about a matter for a while before his response becomes apparent. "Keep on asking, and it will be given you," Jesus said. (Matthew 7:7)

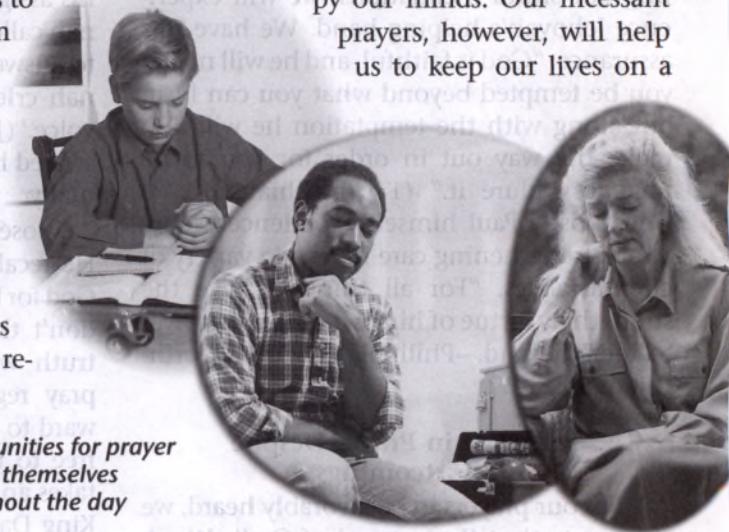
18. What confidence can God's servants have regardless of how far they may have strayed?

19. Why should we not conclude that seemingly unanswered prayers are evidence of God's disapproval?

Hence, we need to "persevere in prayer."—Romans 12:12.

Pray Regularly

²⁰ Pressures and problems are multiplying in these "last days," marked by "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1) And trials can easily preoccupy our minds. Our incessant prayers, however, will help us to keep our lives on a



Opportunities for prayer present themselves throughout the day

spiritual course despite persistent problems, temptations, and discouragement. Our daily prayers to Jehovah can provide the vital support we need.

²¹ Jehovah, the "Hearer of prayer," is never too busy to listen to us. (Psalm 65:2) Let us never be too busy to talk to him. Our friendship with God is the most precious possession we have. May we never take it for granted. "Let us, therefore, approach with freeness of speech to the throne of undeserved kindness, that we may obtain mercy and find undeserved kindness for help at the right time." —Hebrews 4:16.

20, 21. (a) Why do we need to pray incessantly in these "last days"? (b) What will we receive when we daily approach Jehovah's throne of undeserved kindness?

"THE LAW OF THE WISE ONE"

A Source of Life

O THE depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are and past tracing out his ways are!" exclaimed the apostle Paul. (Romans 11:33) And the faithful patriarch Job said: "[Jehovah God] is wise in heart." (Job 9:4) Yes, the Creator of heaven and earth is matchless in wisdom. What can be said about the law, or the written Word, of such a Creator?

The psalmist sang: "The law of Jehovah is perfect, bringing back the soul. The reminder of Jehovah is trustworthy, making the inexperienced one wise. The orders from Jehovah are upright, causing the heart to rejoice; the commandment of Jehovah is clean, making the eyes shine." (Psalm 19:7, 8) How King Solomon of ancient Israel must have appreciated the truth of those words! He stated: "The law of the wise one is a source of life, to turn one away from the snares of death." (Proverbs 13:14) In the preceding 13 verses of Proverbs chapter 13, Solomon showed how the counsel found in God's Word can help us to improve the quality of our life and avoid endangering it.

Be Teachable

"A son is wise where there is a father's discipline, but the ridiculer is one that has not heard rebuke," states Proverbs 13:1. Discipline from a father can be mild or severe. It can come in

the form of training first, and if that is rejected, eventually as punishment. A son is wise when he accepts his father's discipline.

"Whom Jehovah loves he disciplines," says the Bible, and "he scourges every one whom he receives as a son." (Hebrews 12:6) One way our heavenly Father disciplines us is through his written Word, the Bible. When we read the Bible with respect and we respond to what we learn there, his Word actually disciplines us. This is to our advantage, for everything Jehovah says is for our benefit. —Isaiah 48:17.

Discipline can also come to us as a correction from a fellow believer who is interested in our spiritual welfare. Any helpful advice that is in harmony with God's Word can be viewed, not as originating with that person, but as coming from the great Source of truth. We are wise to accept it as coming from Jehovah. When we do that and allow it to mold our thinking, to improve our understanding of the Scriptures, and to correct our ways, we are benefiting from the discipline. The same is true of the counsel we receive at Christian meetings and from Bible-based publications. Responsiveness to what we learn through such written or spoken words is a splendid form of self-discipline.

The ridiculer, on the other hand, is not responsive to discipline. "Because he thinks that he knows what is best," says one

reference work, he "is not teachable." He does not respond even to a rebuke—a stronger form of discipline. But can he ever prove the Father's discipline to be wrong? Jehovah has never been wrong, and he never will be. By rejecting discipline, the ridiculer only makes himself ridiculous. With a few well-chosen words, how beautifully Solomon shows the value of being teachable!

Guard Your Tongue!

To show the importance of being guided by God's Word in our speech, the king of Israel likens the mouth to a fruit-bearing tree. He says: "*From the fruitage of his mouth a man will eat good, but the very soul [“soulful desire,” footnote] of those dealing treacherously is violence.*" (Proverbs 13:2) Spoken words are the fruitage of the mouth. And a man reaps what he has sown with his words. "If his words are kindly intentioned and directed to the establishment of friendly relationship with his neighbours," says one scholar, "he will eat good, enjoy a happy and peaceful existence." The matter turns out differently for the treacherous one. He wants to commit violence and to harm others. Violence he schemes, and violence he receives. The snares of death are at his doorstep.

"*The one guarding his mouth is keeping his soul,*" continues Solomon. "*The one opening wide his lips—he will have ruin.*" (Prov-

ers 13:3) A ruined reputation, hurt feelings, strained relations, and even physical harm are all possible results of thoughtless, foolish speech. Lips wide open can also bring divine disapproval, for God holds everyone accountable for his words. (Matthew 12:36, 37) Indeed, keeping tight control over our mouth will save us from ruin. How, though, can we learn to guard our mouth?

One simple way to do this is not to talk too much. "In the abundance of words there does not fail to be transgression," says the Bible. (Proverbs 10:19) Another way is to think before speaking. The inspired writer declares: "There exists the one speaking thoughtlessly as with the stabs of a sword." (Proverbs 12:18) When no forethought is given to what is being said, both the speaker and his listeners can be hurt. Therefore, the Bible gives us this practical advice: "The heart of the righteous one meditates so as to answer."—Proverbs 15:28.

Be Diligent

"*The lazy one is showing himself desirous,*" Solomon states, "*but his soul has nothing. However, the very soul of the diligent ones will be made fat.*" (Proverbs 13:4) "The point [of this proverb] is that mere desire is utterly futile," states one reference work, and "industry is what counts. Lazy people are victims of the desires . . . that consume them, and they simply have nothing to show for themselves." However, the soul, or the desire, of the diligent ones is satisfied—fattened.

What can be said about those who hold back from making a dedication to Jehovah because they want to avoid responsibility? They may show themselves desirous of living in God's new world, but are they willing to do something about it? A requirement for those who "come out of the great tribulation" is that they have exercised faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice, made a dedication to Jehovah,

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake

Appreciating the Purpose of Discipline

A Story That Inspires Faith
and Courage—Jehovah's
Witnesses in Ukraine



Responding to Scriptural counsel is a splendid form of self-discipline

and symbolized their dedication by water baptism.—Revelation 7:14, 15.

Consider also what is involved in reaching out for an office of oversight in the congregation. The desire to reach out for this fine work is certainly commendable and is encouraged in the Scriptures. (1 Timothy 3:1) However, showing oneself desirous is not enough. To qualify for a position requires cultivating needed qualities and abilities. That calls for diligent personal effort.

Righteousness—A Safeguard

A righteous person cultivates godly qualities and speaks the truth. He realizes that lying is against Jehovah's law. (Proverbs 6:16-19; Colossians 3:9) In this regard, Solomon states: "A false word is what the righteous hates, but the wicked ones act shamefully and cause disgrace for themselves." (Proverbs 13:5) The righteous one does not simply avoid lies; he actually hates them. He knows that no matter how innocent they seem to be, lies are destructive to good human relationships. Moreover, the credibility of the one who resorts to lies is shattered. The wicked one acts shamefully either by lying or in some other way, and thus he causes disgrace for himself.

To show that doing what is right in God's eyes is beneficial, the wise king says: "Righteousness itself safeguards the one who is harmless in his way, but wickedness is what subverts the sinner." (Proverbs 13:6) Like a fortress, righteousness protects a person, whereas wickedness ruins him.

Do Not Pretend

Showing an understanding of human nature, the king of Israel observes: "There exists the one that is pretending to be rich and yet he has nothing at all; there is the one that is pretending to be of little means and yet he has many valuable things." (Proverbs 13:7) A person may not be what he appears to be. Some poor people may pretend to be rich—perhaps to make a showy display, to give an impression of being successful, or just to save face. A rich person may pretend to be poor, simply to hide his wealth.

Neither a false display nor a concealment is good. If our material resources are low, spending money on luxuries just to appear well-off can rob us and our families of the necessities of life. And pretending to be poor though he has riches may make a person a miser, depriving him of due dignity and the

happiness that comes from being generous. (Acts 20:35) To live honestly is to lead a better life.

Keep Desires Simple

"The ransom for a man's soul is his riches," says Solomon, "but the one of little means has not heard rebuke." (Proverbs 13:8) What lesson is conveyed in this wise saying?

There are advantages to being rich, but having riches is not an unqualified blessing. In the troublesome times that we live in, the rich often find themselves and their families in danger of being kidnapped and held for ransom. At times, a rich man can pay a ransom to buy back his life or that of a family member. But often the kidnapped one is murdered. Such a threat is always hanging over the head of the rich.

The man of little means has no such worry. While he may not have the many conveniences and material things that the rich enjoy, he is less likely to become the target of kidnappers. This is one benefit of keeping our wants simple and not expending our time and energy in the pursuit of wealth.—2 Timothy 2:4.

Rejoice in the "Light"

Solomon continues to show that doing things Jehovah's way is in our best interests. *"The very light of the righteous ones will rejoice,"* he says, *"but the lamp of the wicked ones—it will be extinguished."*—Proverbs 13:9.

The lamp is symbolic of what we depend upon to light our way in life. 'God's word is a lamp to the foot of the righteous one and a light to his roadway.' (Psalm 119:105) It contains inexhaustible knowledge and wisdom of the Creator. The more we improve our understanding of God's will and purpose, the more brilliant becomes the spiritual light that guides us. What a source of joy that is! Why should we be distracted by worldly wis-



"The heart of the righteous one meditates so as to answer"

dom or that which is "falsely called 'knowledge'?"—1 Timothy 6:20; 1 Corinthians 1:20; Colossians 2:8.

As for the wicked one, regardless of how brilliantly his lamp appears to shine and how prosperous he may seem to be, his lamp will be extinguished. He will end up in darkness, where his foot is bound to stumble. Moreover, "there will prove to be no future" for him.—Proverbs 24:20.

What should we do, though, when there is uncertainty as to what action we should take in a given situation? What if we are not sure if it is within our authority to act at all? Proverbs 13:10 warns: "By presumptuousness one only causes a struggle." Acting without knowledge or outside our authority is presumptuous and is bound to cause friction. Would it not be better to consult others who have knowl-

Keeping busy "in the work of the Lord" fills us with joy



edge and discernment? "With those consulting together there is wisdom," says the wise king.

Beware of False Expectations

Money can serve a useful purpose. Having adequate finances is better than having to live in an austere way or in poverty. (Ecclesiastes 7:11, 12) However, perceived benefits of ill-gained wealth can be deceptive. Solomon warns: "Valuable things resulting from vanity become fewer, but the one collecting by the hand is the one that makes increase." —Proverbs 13:11.

Consider, for example, the lure of gambling. A gambler may spend his hard-earned money hoping to win a large sum. But how often this is done at the expense of his family! And what happens if the gambler wins? Since the money has come easily, he may have very little appreciation for its value. Moreover, he simply may not have the skill to manage his newly gained prize. Are not his riches likely to disappear as quickly as he acquired them? On the other hand, wealth gradually accumulated—little by little by doing good work—steadily increases and can be put to good use.



"Expectation postponed is making the heart sick," Solomon states, "but the thing desired is a tree of life when it does come." (Proverbs 13:12) Unfulfilled expectations are bound to lead to disappointments that make the heart sick. This happens in everyday life. However, this is not the case with the expectations that are solidly based on God's Word. We can have complete confidence that they will be fulfilled. Even apparent delays are less likely to be disappointing.

For example, we know that God's new world is imminent. (2 Peter 3:13) With eager anticipation we joyfully await the fulfillment of God's promises. What happens as we use the waiting time to keep busy "in the work of the Lord," to encourage fellow believers, and to build an ever closer relationship with Jehovah? Rather than becoming 'sick at heart,' we are filled with joy. (1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 10:24, 25; James 4:8) When the fulfillment of a long-awaited desire comes, it is a tree of life—truly invigorating and refreshing.

God's Law—A Source of Life

Illustrating the need to obey God, Proverbs 13:13 says: "He that has despised the word, from him a debtor's pledge will be seized; but the one fearing the commandment is the one that will be rewarded." If a debtor despises a word by failing to repay a loan, he would forfeit what he put up as a pledge. In like manner, we would experience a loss if we failed to obey God's commandments. What type of loss?

"The law of the wise one is a source of life, to turn one away from the snares of death." (Proverbs 13:14) To live without the law of the all-wise God, Jehovah, is to be deprived of the guidance that can help us lead a better and longer life. What an enormous loss that would be! The course of wisdom for us, then, is to pay close attention to God's Word and allow it to influence our thoughts, speech, and action.—2 Corinthians 10:5; Colossians 1:10.

MARTIN LUTHER

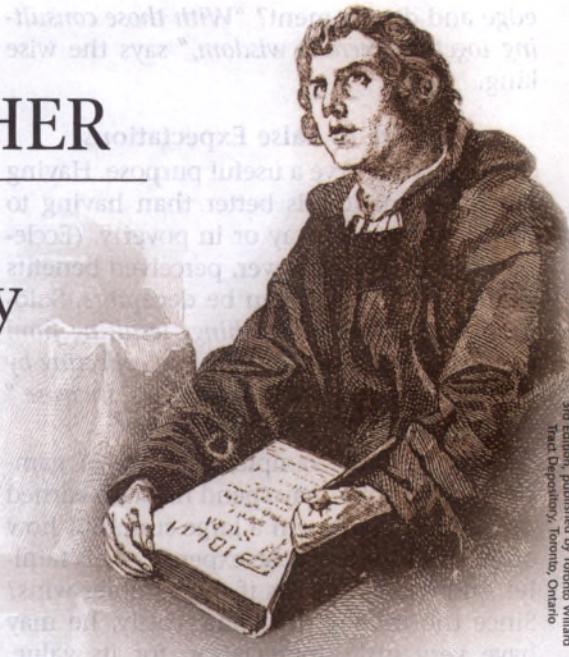
The Man and His Legacy

IT IS said that more books have been written about [Martin Luther] than anyone else in history, save his own master, Jesus Christ." So stated *Time* magazine. Luther's words and actions helped give birth to the Reformation—a religious movement described as "the most significant revolution in the history of mankind." He thus helped to change the religious landscape of Europe and to draw the curtain on medieval times on that continent. Luther also laid the basis for a standardized written German language. His translation of the Bible remains by far the most popular in the German language.

What sort of man was Martin Luther? How did he come to have such an impact on European affairs?

Luther Becomes a Scholar

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany, in November 1483. Though a copper-mine worker, his father managed to earn enough to secure a good education for Martin. In 1501, Martin became a student at the University of Erfurt. In its library, he read the Bible for the first time. "The book pleased me wonderfully," he said, "and I wanted to deem myself fortunate enough to possess such a book some day."



From the book *Martin Luther The Reformer*, 3rd Edition, published by Toronto Willard Tract Depository, Toronto, Ontario

At the age of 22, Luther entered the Augustine monastery in Erfurt. He later attended the University of Wittenberg, obtaining a doctorate in theology. Luther considered himself unworthy of God's favor and was at times driven to despair by a guilty conscience. But Bible study, prayer, and meditation helped him to gain a better understanding of how God views sinners. Luther recognized that God's favor cannot be earned. Rather, it is granted through undeserved kindness to those exercising faith.—Romans 1:16; 3:23, 24, 28.

How did Luther come to the conclusion that his new understanding was correct? Kurt Aland, professor of early church history and New Testament textual research, wrote: "He went through the entire Bible in his mind in order to determine whether this newfound knowledge could stand up to comparison with other Bible statements, and he found that he was corroborated everywhere." The doctrine of justifi-

cation, or salvation, by faith and not by works, or penance, remained a central pillar of Luther's teachings.

Indignant About Indulgences

Luther's understanding of how God views sinners brought him into conflict with the Roman Catholic Church. It was then widely believed that after death, sinners had to undergo punishment for a period of time. However, it was said that this time could be shortened by indulgences granted on the pope's authority in exchange for money. Dealers like Johann Tetzel, who acted as agent for Archbishop Albert of Mainz, carried on a



Luther opposed the sale of indulgences

booming trade selling indulgences to the common people. Many viewed indulgences as a sort of insurance against future sins.

Luther was indignant about the sale of indulgences. He knew that men cannot bargain with God. In the autumn of 1517, he wrote his famous 95 theses, accusing the church of financial, doctrinal, and religious abuse. Wanting to encourage a reform, not a rebellion, Luther sent copies of his theses to Archbishop Albert of Mainz and to several scholars. Many historians point to 1517 or thereabouts as the birth of the Reformation.

In bemoaning the wrongdoings of the church, Luther was not alone. One hundred years earlier, the Czech religious reformer Jan Hus had condemned the sale of indulgences. Even before Hus, John Wycliffe of England had pointed out that some traditions held by the church were not Scriptural. Luther's contemporaries Erasmus of Rotterdam and Tyndale of England urged reform. But thanks to Johannes Gutenberg's invention in Germany of the printing press with movable type, Luther's voice was heard louder and farther than the voices of other reformers.

Gutenberg's press in Mainz was operating in 1455. By the turn of the century, there were presses in 60 German towns and 12 other European lands. For the first time in history, the public could be quickly informed about matters of interest. Perhaps without his consent, Luther's 95 theses were printed and disseminated. The question of church reform was no longer a local issue. It became a widespread controversy, and Martin Luther suddenly became the most famous man in Germany.

"Sun and Moon" React

For centuries, Europe had been in the hands of two powerful institutions: the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church. "Emperor and pope belonged together like sun and moon," explained Hanns Lilje, a former president of the Lutheran World Federation. However, a good deal of uncertainty existed as to who was the sun and who was the moon. By the early 16th century, both institutions were past their zenith of power. A spirit of change was in the air.

Pope Leo X reacted to the 95 theses by threatening Luther with excommunication unless he recanted. Defiant, Luther publicly burned the papal bull containing the

threat and published additional works that encouraged the principalities to reform the church even without the pope's agreement. In 1521, Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther. When Luther objected that he had been condemned without a fair hearing, Emperor Charles V summoned the reformer to appear before the imperial diet, or meeting, at Worms. Luther's 15-day journey from Wittenberg to Worms in April 1521 was like a triumphal procession. Public sentiment was on his side, and people everywhere wanted to see him.

In Worms, Luther stood before the emperor, princes, and the papal nuncio. Jan Hus had faced a similar hearing in Constance in 1415 and had been burned at the stake. With the eyes of the church and the empire now fixed on him, Luther refused to recant unless his opposers proved from the Bible that he was in error. But no one could match his memory of the Scriptures. The document called the Edict of Worms gave the outcome of the hearing. It declared Luther an outlaw and proscribed his writings. Excommunicated by the pope and outlawed by the emperor, he was now in mortal danger.

Then came a turn of events that was as dramatic as it was unexpected. On his return journey to Wittenberg, Luther was the victim of a make-believe kidnapping arranged by the benevolent Frederick of Saxony. This took Luther beyond the reach of his enemies. Luther was smuggled into secluded Wartburg castle, where he grew a beard and took on a new identity—that of a knight called Junker Jörg.

September Bible in Great Demand
For the next ten months, Luther lived in Wartburg castle as a fugitive from both emperor and pope. The book *Welterbe Wartburg* explains that "the time at Wartburg was

among the most productive and creative periods of his life." One of his greatest achievements, the translation of Erasmus' text of the Greek Scriptures into German, was completed there. Published in September 1522 without identifying Luther as the translator, this



Luther refused to recant unless his opposers proved from the Bible that he was in error

work was known as the September Bible. The price was 1 1/2 guilders—the equivalent of a year's wages for a household maid. Nevertheless, the demand for the September Bible was staggering. Within 12 months, 6,000 copies were printed in 2 editions, with no fewer than 69 editions to follow during the next 12 years.

In 1525, Martin Luther married Katharina von Bora, a former nun. Katharina was good at managing household affairs and was equal to the demands of her husband's generosity. Luther's household came to include not only a wife and six children but also friends, scholars, and refugees. Late in life Luther enjoyed such prestige as a counselor that scholars who were guests in his house armed themselves with pen and paper to note down his observations. These notes were put together

in a collection entitled *Luthers Tischreden* (Luther's Table Talk). For a time, it enjoyed a circulation in the German language second only to that of the Bible.

Talented Translator and Prolific Writer

By 1534, Luther had finished his translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. He had the ability to balance style, rhythm, and vocabulary. The result was a Bible that was understandable to ordinary people. Commenting on his method of translation, Luther wrote: "We should question the mother in her home, the children on the street and the common man at the market, and then watch their mouths to see how they talk and then translate accordingly." Luther's Bible helped lay the basis for a standardized written language that came to be accepted throughout Germany.

Luther's talent as a translator was combined with skill as a writer. He is said to have written a treatise every two weeks through-

out his working life. Some of these were as contentious as their author. If his early writings were sharp in style, age did nothing to blunt the point of Luther's pen. His later essays became increasingly severe. According to the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Luther's works reveal the "excessiveness of his anger" and a "lack of humility and love," as well as a "highly developed sense of mission."

When the Peasants' War broke out and the principalities were bathed in blood, Luther was asked for his judgment on the uprising. Did the peasants have just cause for complaint against their feudal lords? Luther did not try to secure popular support by giving an answer pleasing to the majority. He believed that God's servants should obey those in power. (Romans 13:1) In a forthright judgment, Luther said that the revolt should be put down with force. "Let whoever can, stab, strike, kill," he said. Hanns Lilje remarked that this answer cost Luther "his hitherto unique popularity among the people." Furthermore, Luther's later essays on those Jews who refused to convert to Christianity, particularly *On the Jews and Their Lies*, have caused many to brand the author anti-Semitic.

Luther's Legacy

The Reformation, spurred on by men like Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, led to the formation of a new approach to religion called Protestantism. Luther's major legacy to Protestantism was his central teaching of justification by faith. Each of the German principalities aligned itself with either the Protestant or the Catholic faith. Protestantism spread and gained popular support in Scandinavia, Switzerland, England, and the Netherlands. Today it has hundreds of millions of adherents.

Both images: Mit freundlicher Genehmigung: Wartburg-Stiftung



Luther's room in Wartburg Castle, where he translated the Bible



Many who do not share all of Luther's beliefs still hold him in high esteem. The former German Democratic Republic, which embraced Eisleben, Erfurt, Wittenberg, and the Wartburg within its borders, in 1983 celebrated the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth. This Socialist State acknowledged him as an outstanding figure in German history and culture. Moreover, a Catholic theologian of the 1980's summarized Luther's impact and remarked: "No one who came after Luther could match him." Professor Aland wrote: "Each year there are at least



500 new publications on Martin Luther and the Reformation—and that in almost all major languages of the world."

Martin Luther had a sharp intellect, a prodigious memory, a mastery of words, and a prolific work ethic. He was also impatient and scornful, and he reacted ve-

hemently to what he viewed as hypocrisy. When he was on his deathbed in Eisleben in February 1546, friends asked Luther if he remained steadfast as regards the beliefs he had taught others. "Yes," he replied. Luther died, but many still cling to such beliefs.

Questions From Readers

What does having "life in himself" mean?

The Bible speaks of Jesus Christ as having "life in himself" and of his followers as having 'life in themselves.' (John 5:26; 6:53) However, these two scriptures do not have the same meaning.

"Just as the Father has life in himself," stated Jesus, "so he has granted also to the Son to have life in himself." Prior to making this remarkable statement, Jesus said: "Most truly I say to you, He that hears my word and believes him that sent me has everlasting life . . . The hour is coming, and it is now, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who have given heed will live." Here Jesus was referring to an extraordinary power bestowed upon him by the Father—the ability to give humans a fine standing before God. Moreover, Jesus is able to resurrect those sleeping in death and to impart life to them. For Jesus, having "life in himself" means that he is granted these

powers. Like the Father, the Son also has "in himself the gift of life." (John 5:24-26; footnote) What about his followers?

About a year later, Jesus addressed his listeners, saying: "Most truly I say to you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves. He that feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life, and I shall resurrect him at the last day." (John 6:53, 54) Here Jesus equates having "life in yourselves" with gaining "everlasting life." Expressions with the same grammatical construction as having "life in yourselves" are found elsewhere in the Greek Scriptures. Two examples are, "Have salt in yourselves" and "receiving in themselves the full recompense." (Mark 9:50; Romans 1:27) In these instances, the phrases do not signify power to bestow salt on others or to mete out recompense to anyone. Rather, internal completeness, or fullness, is indicated. Thus, the expression "life in your-

selves" used at John 6:53 simply means entering into the very fullness of life.

With reference to his followers as having life in themselves, Jesus mentioned his flesh and his blood. Later, when instituting the Lord's Evening Meal, Jesus again spoke about his flesh and blood and directed his followers who would be taken into the new covenant to partake of the emblems of unleavened bread and wine. Does this mean that only anointed Christians, who are in the new covenant with Jehovah God, enter into such fullness of life? No. The two occasions were a year apart. Those who heard Jesus' words recorded at John 6:53, 54 had no knowledge of an annual observance with emblems representing Christ's flesh and blood.

According to John chapter 6, Jesus first compares his flesh to manna, saying: "Your forefathers ate the manna in the wilderness and yet died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever." Jesus' flesh, along with his blood, was greater

than literal manna. How? In that his flesh was given for "the life of the world," making everlasting life possible.* Hence, the statement about having "life in yourselves" at John 6:53 applies to all those receiving everlasting life—in heaven or on earth.—John 6:48-51.

When do Christ's followers receive life in themselves, or enter into the fullness of life? For the anointed Kingdom heirs, this happens at their resurrection to heavenly life as immortal spirit creatures. (1 Corinthians 15:52, 53; 1 John 3:2) Jesus' "other sheep" experience entry into the fullness of life after the end of his Thousand Year Reign. By then, they will have been tested, found faithful, and declared righteous for everlasting life in the Paradise earth.—John 10:16; Revelation 20:5, 7-10.

* In the wilderness, both the Israelites and "a vast mixed company" needed manna to stay alive. (Exodus 12:37, 38; 16:13-18) Likewise, to live forever, all Christians, whether anointed or not, must avail themselves of the heavenly manna by exercising faith in the redeeming power of Jesus' flesh and blood laid down in sacrifice.—See *The Watchtower*, February 1, 1988, pages 30-1.



*All true Christians can have
'life in themselves'*



When Promises Are a Guarantee

HISTORY is full of broken promises. Nations have often failed to keep solemnly signed nonaggression pacts, thus leading their people into terrible wars. Napoleon once observed: "Governments keep their promises only when they are forced to do so, or when it will be to their advantage."

What about promises made by individuals? How disappointing it is when a person does not keep his word! Especially is this so if he is someone you know and trust. Of course, people may be either unable or unwilling to fulfill their promises.

What a difference there is between human and divine promises! God's promises are completely reliable and trustworthy. Any promise made by Jehovah God is a guarantee. It is sure to be fulfilled. Referring to God's unfailing word, Isaiah 55:11 states: "So my word that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it."

So, then, how should we view God's promises recorded in the Bible? We certainly can rely on them. For instance, the apostle John wrote: "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:3, 4) You can enjoy such blessings if you act in harmony with Jesus' words: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3.

