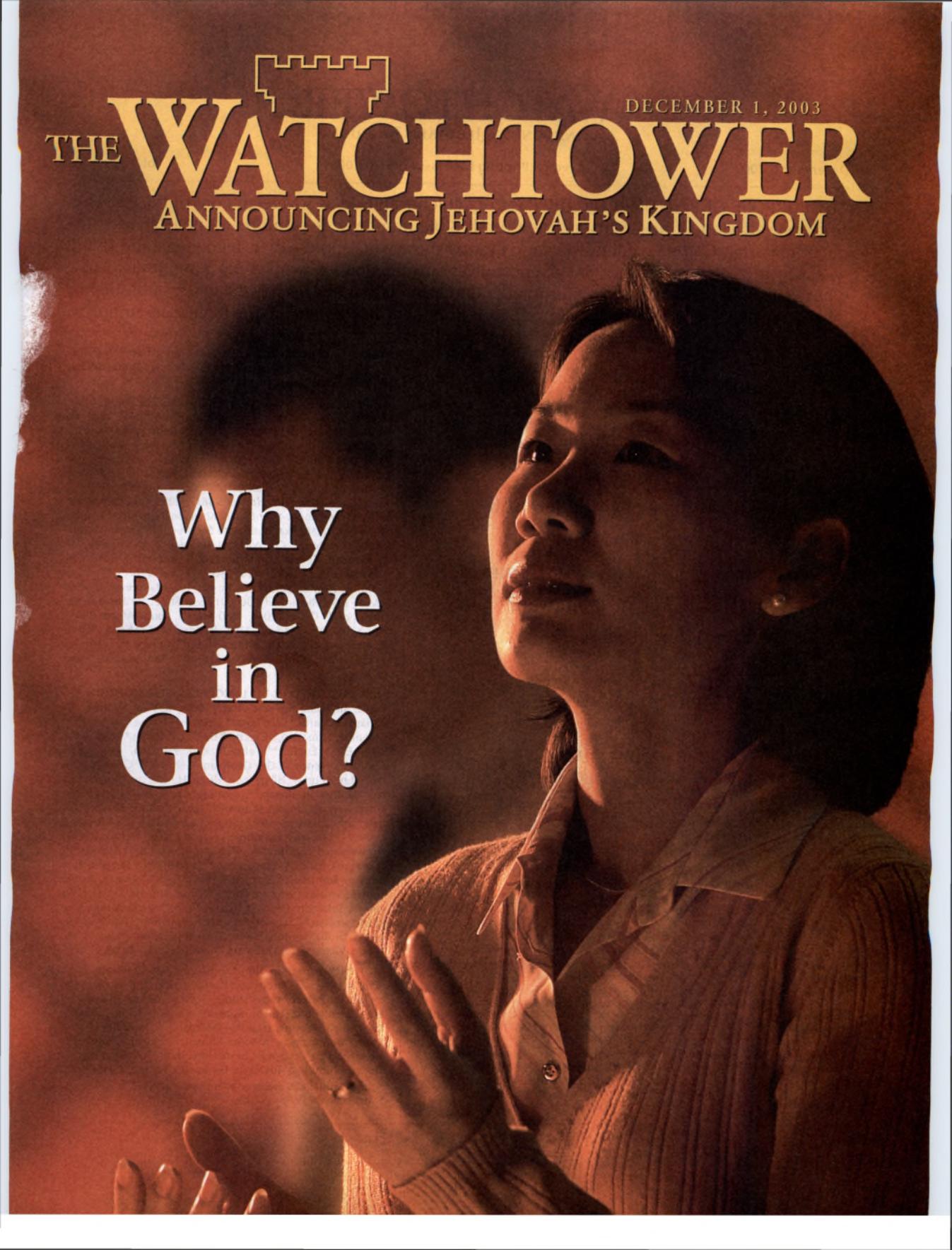


DECEMBER 1, 2003

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Why
Believe
in
God?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

December 1, 2003

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

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WHY THEY GO to Church

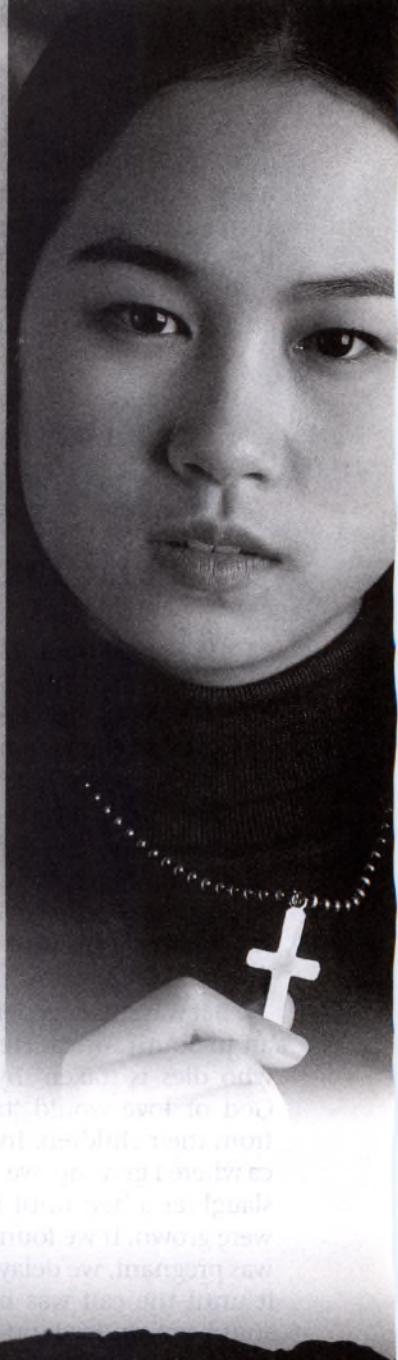
"THE Republic of Korea now has nearly four times as many Presbyterians as America." That statement in *Newsweek* magazine might have surprised many readers, since most people think of Korea as a Confucian or Buddhist society. Today, a visitor will find a good many "Christian" churches there, usually identified by red neon crosses. On Sundays, it is common to see people in twos and threes, Bibles in hand, going to church. According to a 1998 survey, nearly 30 percent of Korean people go to either a Catholic or a Protestant church, more than those who claim to be Buddhists.

In this day and age, it is unusual to see such a high percentage of people anywhere going to church regularly. Still, it is happening not only in Korea but also in other Asian countries, as well as in Africa and Latin America. Why do so many still profess belief in God when apathy and indifference to religion seem to be sweeping the earth? Why do they go to church?

A Gallup survey revealed that more than half of Korea's churchgoers are searching for peace of mind; about a third hope for eternal life after death; and 1 in 10 look for health, riches, and success.

Many people in China flock to the churches in hopes of finding something to fill the spiritual void that has resulted as capitalistic aspirations gradually displace Communist ideology. Every year, millions of copies of the Bible are printed and distributed in China, and people seem to be reading it the way they did Mao's little red book.

Some Catholics in Brazil, especially those of the younger generation, are not content with the promise of happiness in the life to come—they want fulfillment now. The news magazine *Tudo* observes: "If it was liberation theology that moved



heart and mind in the '70's, it is the theology of prosperity today." A survey in Britain asked church attenders there to name one thing they liked about their church. Fellowship invariably came first.

All of this shows that while a considerable number of people still believe in God,

most are more concerned about what they can get now than about what is to come—or even about God himself. What do you think is the right reason for believing in God? What does the Bible have to say on the matter? You will find the answer in the next article.

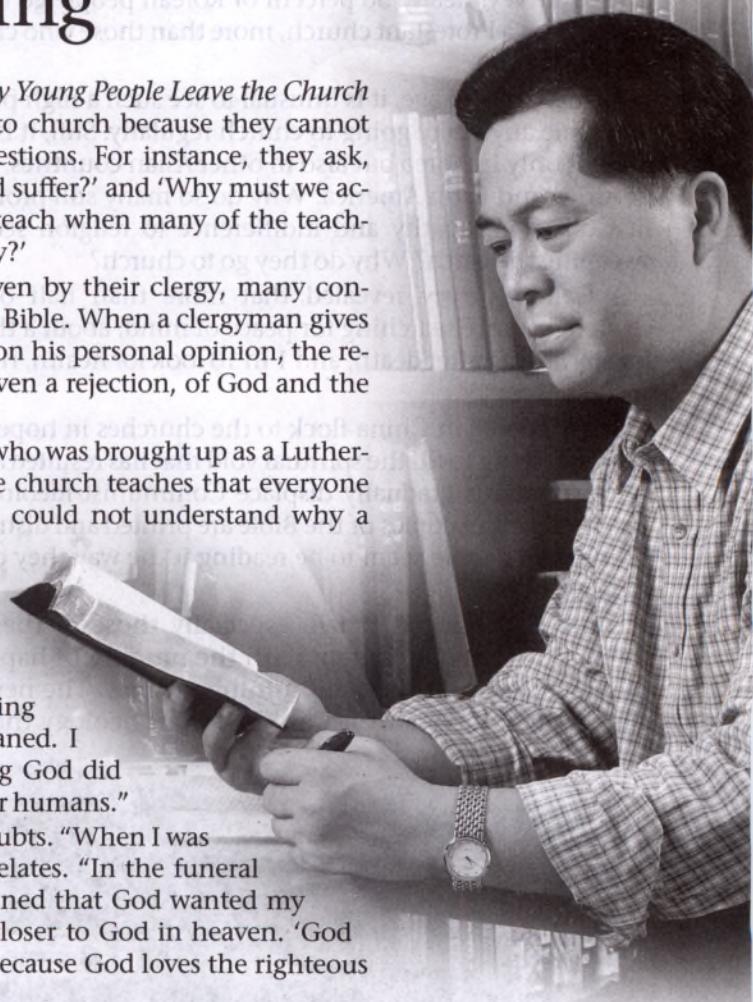
The **RIGHT REASON** for Believing

THE Korean book *31 Reasons Why Young People Leave the Church* asserts that many stop going to church because they cannot find satisfying answers to their questions. For instance, they ask, 'Why do people who believe in God suffer?' and 'Why must we accept everything that the churches teach when many of the teachings are confusing and contradictory?'

Disappointed by the answers given by their clergy, many conclude that there is no answer in the Bible. When a clergyman gives an explanation that is based solely on his personal opinion, the result is often a misunderstanding, even a rejection, of God and the Bible.

That was the experience of Abel, who was brought up as a Lutheran in South Africa. He recalls: "The church teaches that everyone who dies is 'taken' by God. But I could not understand why a God of love would 'take' parents from their children. In rural Africa where I grew up, we would not slaughter a hen until the chicks were grown. If we found that a cow was pregnant, we delayed slaughtering it until the calf was born and weaned. I could not understand why a loving God did not show the same consideration for humans."

Aram, a Canadian, had similar doubts. "When I was 13 years old, my father died," he relates. "In the funeral service, a leading clergyman explained that God wanted my father to die so that he could get closer to God in heaven. 'God takes good people away,' he said, 'because God loves the righteous



ones.' I did not understand how God could be so selfish."

Eventually, both Abel and Aram came in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses, studied the Bible with them and, at last, found the answers to their questions. They developed love for God and a strong faith in him. Finally, they dedicated their life to Jehovah and became loyal servants of his.

Accurate Knowledge —A Key to Belief in God

What can we learn from these experiences? They tell us that as far as belief in God is concerned, accurate Bible knowledge is essential. The apostle Paul told the Christians in the ancient city of Philippi: "This is what I continue praying, that your love may abound yet more and more with accurate knowledge and full discernment." (Philippians 1:9) Paul here relates love for God and for fellow believers to accurate knowledge of God and discernment of what his will is.

This is reasonable, since the first requirement for having trust and confidence in someone is knowing that person—the more completely and accurately, the better. Similarly, accurate knowledge is needed for you to be motivated to believe in God. "Faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld," Paul said. (Hebrews 11:1) Belief in God without accurate knowledge of the Bible is like a house of cards. A little puff is enough to make it fall.

Studying the Bible can help you to find answers to questions like the one that long puzzled Abel and Aram, Why do people die? The Bible explains that "through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned." (Romans 5:12) Humans grow old and die, not because God takes them to be with him, but because Adam

sinned. (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:6, 17-19) Furthermore, the Bible reveals the true hope that Jehovah God offers. Through his Son, Jesus Christ, he provides the hope of a resurrection for sinful mankind.—John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15.

To help us appreciate the truth about the resurrection, the Bible record contains several examples of individuals whom Jesus brought back to life. (Luke 7:11-17; 8:40-56; John 11:17-45) As you read these Bible accounts, note the joy and elation experienced by friends and family of the resurrected ones. Note also that they were moved to praise God and to put faith in Jesus.

Accurate knowledge about God and his purposes can have the same effect on people today. Many were once confused, burdened, and even stumbled by important questions for which they could find no satisfying answers. But as they studied the Bible, they found the answers, and that changed their life completely.

Love for God—Foremost Reason for Serving Him

While accurate knowledge is essential to faith in God, more is needed to move one to obey and to serve him. When asked what is the greatest commandment from God, Jesus said: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind and with your whole strength." (Mark 12:30) If a person loves God the way Jesus indicated, he will be most willing to obey and serve Him. Is that true of you?

Rachel, who has served as a missionary in Korea for several decades, gives this reason for her faith: "I think of Jehovah's generosity toward his creatures, his forgiveness in dealing with his people, and his desire for us to benefit ourselves by letting us know what he wants from us. All such things make my love

for God grow. And that love makes me want to serve him."

Martha, a widow from Germany, has served Jehovah for 48 years. She says: "Why do I serve Jehovah? Because I love him. Every evening I speak to Jehovah in prayer and tell him how deeply grateful I am for all his blessings, especially for the ransom sacrifice."

Yes, love for God makes us want to serve him from the heart. But how does one come to have such love? The strongest stimulus to cultivate love for God is deep appreciation for the love that he has shown us. Note this heartwarming reminder from the Bible: "He that does not love has not come to know God, because God is love. By this the love of God was made manifest in our case, because God sent forth his only-begotten Son into the world that we might gain life through him. The love is in this respect, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent forth his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins."—1 John 4:8-10.

Do you appreciate how great this love is? Just imagine that you were drowning in a rushing stream and a man risked his life to save you. Would you forget him, or would you not be extremely grateful to him? Would you not be willing to do everything you could for him? The love that God showed in providing his Son, Jesus Christ, as the ransom sacrifice is incomparably greater. (John 3:16; Romans 8:38, 39) When your heart is touched by God's love, you will be motivated to love and serve him wholeheartedly.

Blessings Now and in the Future

Although our love for God should be the foremost reason for doing his will, it is heartwarming to know that God rewards those who serve him. The apostle Paul points out: "Without faith it is impossible to please him well, for he that approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the re-

Troubling Questions That Needed Answers

"While being trained in the hospital as a medical student, I saw good people groaning in pain because of diseases and disasters. If there is a God, why do these things happen? Is religion just a means to gain peace of mind?"—*A former Presbyterian in Korea.*

"I often wondered whether my father, an alcoholic, had gone to hell or to heaven. I was terrified by the dead and by the idea of hellfire. I could not understand how a loving God could send someone to suffer eternally in hell."—*A former Catholic in Brazil.*

"What does the future hold for the earth and for mankind? How would mankind be able to live forever? How is mankind to attain true peace?"—*A former Catholic in Germany.*

"The teaching of reincarnation did not make sense to me. Animals do not worship, so if for some reason you are reincarnated into an animal to pay for your sins, how do you rectify matters and progress from that state?"—*A former Hindu in South Africa.*

"I grew up in a Confucian family, and I used to participate in the ceremony for the repose of our ancestors. As I took part in setting the sacrificial table and bowing down, I wondered if the dead ancestors came to eat the food and to see our bowing down to them."—*A former Confucianist in Korea.*

All these individuals found answers to their questions when they studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses.

warder of those earnestly seeking him."—Hebrews 11:6.

Those who love and obey God are truly blessed by him. Many enjoy better health as a result of following Bible principles. (Proverbs 23:20, 21; 2 Corinthians 7:1) Those who apply Bible principles regarding honesty and diligence are generally trusted by their employers and thus enjoy greater economic security. (Colossians 3:23) By putting their trust in Jehovah, God's servants are blessed with peace of mind even under trying circumstances. (Proverbs 28:25; Philippians 4:6, 7) Above all, they confidently look forward to the blessing of everlasting life in the coming earthly Paradise.—Psalm 37: 11, 29.

How do those who are enjoying such blessings from Jehovah feel about him? Jacqueline, a Christian in Canada, expresses her appreciation for God: "He always gives us such wonderful gifts, and he provides the sure hope of everlasting life." Abel, whom we heard from earlier, describes his feelings this way: "The prospect of living forever on a paradise earth was something new to me, and I am looking forward to it. However, even if there were no Paradise, it would still be a

pleasure for me to show my love for God by serving him."

You Too Can Have True Faith

"Jehovah of armies is judging with righteousness; he is examining the kidneys and the heart," says the Bible. (Jeremiah 11:20) Yes, Jehovah is examining what is hidden in the deepest recesses of our being. Each one should examine his own motive for believing in God. Erroneous beliefs and concepts about God may have contributed to wrong actions in the past. But accurate knowledge of the Bible can lead to a right relationship with the Creator, Jehovah God.—1 Timothy 2:3, 4.

Through their free home Bible study arrangement, Jehovah's Witnesses are helping people to gain an accurate knowledge of God. (Matthew 28:20) Many who have accepted such help have come to love God and have developed genuine faith in him. Through a study of the Bible, they have acquired "practical wisdom and thinking ability," which help them to "walk in security" in these perilous days. (Proverbs 3:21-23) Above all, they now entertain a hope "both sure and firm" for the future. (Hebrews 6:19) You too can have true faith and enjoy these blessings.



A Television Program Led Her to Glorify God

THE apostle Paul said that "some are preaching the Christ through envy and rivalry, but others also through goodwill." (Philippians 1:15) On occasion, even those who try to discredit Jehovah's people have unwittingly caused righthearted ones to turn to the truth.

In November 1998, a documentary featuring images of Bethel, the branch facilities of Jehovah's Witnesses in Louviers, France, appeared on French national television. In spite of the varied reactions it received, the program produced positive results in unexpected ways.

Among those who watched the program was Anna-Paula, who lived just 35 miles from Bethel. Anna-Paula, a divorced mother with two children, was looking for a job. So the next morning, she phoned Bethel to inquire about finding employment there. "I had the impression that it was a wholesome place and that the work done there was useful," she said. How surprised she was to learn that all those serving at Bethel are ministers who volunteer their time! After a brief discussion regarding the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses, she agreed to have a Witness call on her.

When Léna, a full-time minister in the local congregation, called, a long conversation ensued, and Anna-Paula accept-

ed the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*.^{*} By the next visit, Anna-Paula had read the book from cover to cover and had a host of questions. She readily accepted a Bible study. Anna-Paula said: "For me, it was the opportunity to discover the Word of God. I had never had a Bible in my hands before."

In January, Anna-Paula visited Bethel, and the following week she attended her first Christian meeting. Shortly thereafter, she started to study the Bible with her children and to witness to her friends. "I couldn't keep what I was learning to myself," she says. "I wanted to share Bible truths with people and to console them." After struggling to overcome a number of personal problems, Anna-Paula began attending meetings regularly. She progressed rapidly and was baptized on May 5, 2002.

What is more, as a result of Anna-Paula's fine example and zealous preaching, her mother began studying the Bible and was soon baptized. "Words can't express the joy that I feel," says Anna-Paula. "I thank Jehovah every day for coming into my life and for all the blessings that he has given me."

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



Above:
Anna-Paula

Below: Entrance
to France branch
office



"TAKE EXQUISITE DELIGHT IN JEHOVAH"

"Take exquisite delight in Jehovah, and he will give you the requests of your heart."

—PSALM 37:4

HAPPY are those conscious of their spiritual need, . . . happy are the merciful, . . . happy are the peaceable." Together with six other descriptions of those who are happy, these statements form the striking introduction to Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount, as recorded by Gospel writer Matthew. (Matthew 5:3-11) Jesus' words give assurance that happiness is within our reach.

² A sacred song penned by King David of ancient Israel draws attention to the Source of true happiness, Jehovah. "Take exquisite delight in Jehovah," David said, "and he will give you the requests of your heart." (Psalm 37:4) But what can make knowing Jehovah and the many facets of his personality an "exquisite delight"? How does a consideration of what he has done and will yet do in accomplishing his purpose offer you the prospect of receiving "the requests of your heart"? An in-depth look at Psalm 37, verses 1 to 11, provides the answers.

"Do Not Be Envious"

³ We are living in "critical times hard to deal with," and wickedness abounds. We have seen come true the apostle Paul's words: "Wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse, misleading and being misled." (2 Timothy 3:1, 13) How easy

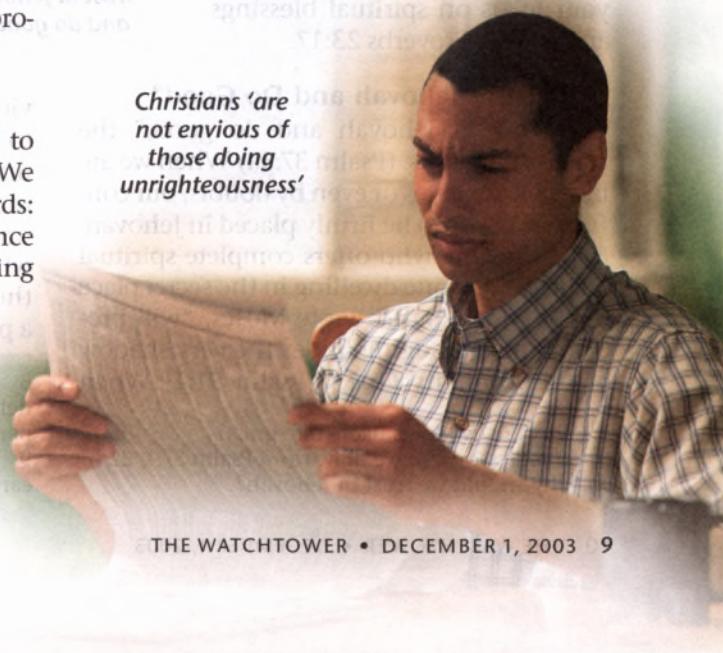
1, 2. Who is the Source of true happiness, and how did King David draw attention to this fact?

3, 4. As recorded at Psalm 37:1, what advice does David give, and why is heeding it appropriate today?

it is to be affected by the apparent success and prosperity of wicked people! All of that can distract us, causing our spiritual vision to get out of focus. Note how the opening words of Psalm 37 alert us to this potential danger: "Do not show yourself heated up because of the evildoers. Do not be envious of those doing unrighteousness."

⁴ The world's media daily bombard us with a list of injustices. Dishonest businessmen get away with fraud. Criminals exploit the vulnerable. Murderers remain undetected or go unpunished. All such examples of the perversion of justice can provoke anger and disturb our peace of mind. The seeming success of evildoers may even prompt feelings of envy. But will our being upset improve the situation? Does envy of the apparent advantages that the wicked enjoy alter the outcome for

Christians 'are not envious of those doing unrighteousness'



them? Most definitely not! And there is really no need for us to become "heated up." Why not?

⁵ The psalmist answers: "For like grass they will speedily wither, and like green new grass they will fade away." (Psalm 37:2) Green new grass may look pretty, but the blades soon shrivel and die. Likewise with evildoers. Their apparent prosperity is not permanent. When they die, their ill-gotten gains help them no more. Justice finally catches up with everyone. "The wages sin pays is death," wrote Paul. (Romans 6:23) Evildoers and all who are unrighteous will finally receive their "wages" and no more. What a profitless way of life!—Psalm 37:35, 36; 49:16, 17.

⁶ Should we, then, allow the fleeting prosperity of evildoers to disturb us? The lesson from the first two verses of Psalm 37 is this: Do not allow their success to cause you to deviate from your chosen course to serve Jehovah. Rather, keep your focus on spiritual blessings and goals.—Proverbs 23:17.

"Trust in Jehovah and Do Good"

⁷ "Trust in Jehovah and do good," the psalmist urges us. (Psalm 37:3a) When we are beset by anxieties or even by doubts, our confidence needs to be firmly placed in Jehovah. He is the One who offers complete spiritual security. "Anyone dwelling in the secret place of the Most High," wrote Moses, "will procure himself lodging under the very shadow of the Almighty One." (Psalm 91:1) When

5. Why are evildoers likened to grass?
6. What lesson can we draw from Psalm 37:1, 2?
7. Why should we trust in Jehovah?

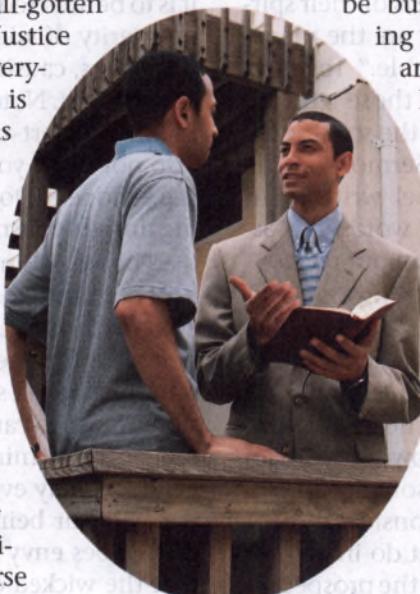
unsettled by the increase of lawlessness in this system of things, we need all the more to lean on Jehovah. If we sprain an ankle, we are pleased to have the arm of a friend for support. Likewise, when we endeavor to walk in faithfulness, we need Jehovah's support. —Isaiah 50:10.

⁸ One antidote to being disturbed by the prosperity of the wicked is to be busy searching out and helping sheeplike ones to come to an accurate knowledge of Jehovah's purpose. In the face of increasing wickedness, we need to be fully occupied with helping others.

"Do not forget the doing of good and the sharing of things with others," said the apostle Paul, "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." The greatest "good" we can do is to share with others the glorious good news of God's Kingdom. Our public preaching truly is "a sacrifice of praise."—Hebrews 13:15, 16; Galatians 6:10.

⁹ "Reside in the earth," David continues, "and deal with faithfulness." (Psalm 37:3b) "The earth" of David's day was the territory Jehovah had given to Israel, the Promised Land. During Solomon's reign its boundaries reached from Dan in the north to Beer-sheba in the south. This was Israel's residence. (1 Kings 4:25) Today, wherever we live on earth, we look forward to the time when the whole planet will become a paradise in the new world of righteousness.

8. How can participation in the Christian ministry help us to avoid being unduly disturbed by the prosperity of the wicked?
9. Explain David's exhortation to "reside in the earth."



*"Trust in Jehovah
and do good"*

In the meantime, we reside in spiritual security.—Isaiah 65:13, 14.

¹⁰ What will be the result when we “deal with faithfulness”? The inspired proverb reminds us: “A man of faithful acts will get many blessings.” (Proverbs 28:20) Our faithfully persevering in preaching the good news wherever we live and to whomever we can certainly brings rewards from Jehovah. For example, Frank and his wife, Rose, took up a pioneer assignment 40 years ago in a town in northern Scotland. The few who had shown interest in the truth there had drifted away. Undeterred, this pioneer couple set about the work of preaching and making disciples. Now there is a flourishing congregation in that town. This couple’s faithfulness has truly had Jehovah’s blessing. “The greatest blessing,” Frank humbly explains, “is simply that we are still in the truth and are useful to Jehovah.” Yes, when we “deal with faithfulness,” we receive and appreciate many blessings.

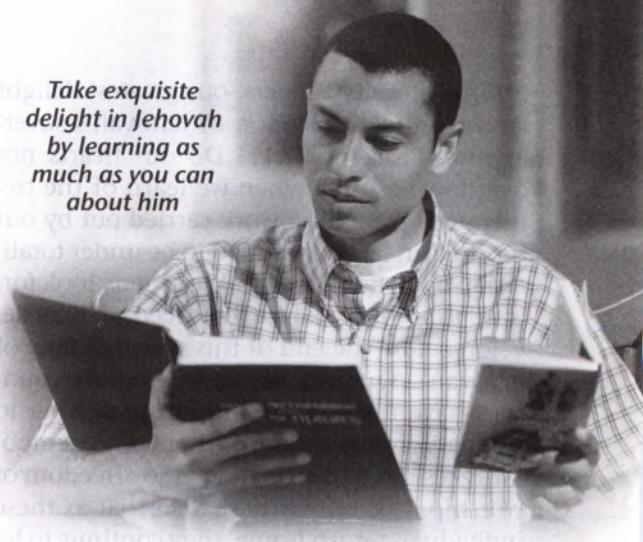
“Take Exquisite Delight in Jehovah”

¹¹ To strengthen our relationship with Jehovah and to maintain our trust in him, we must “take exquisite delight in Jehovah.” (Psalm 37:4a) How do we do that? Rather than being preoccupied with our own situation, difficult though it may be, we make Jehovah our concern. One way to do this is to take time to read his Word. (Psalm 1:1, 2) Does your Bible reading bring you delight? It will when you read with the goal of learning more about Jehovah. Why not pause after reading a portion and ask yourself, ‘What did this passage teach me about Jehovah?’ You may find it helpful to have a notebook or some paper handy when you read the Bible.

10. What is the result when we “deal with faithfulness”?

11, 12. (a) How can we “take exquisite delight in Jehovah”? (b) What goal can you set regarding personal study, and with what probable result?

*Take exquisite
delight in Jehovah
by learning as
much as you can
about him*



Each time you stop to reflect on the meaning of what you have read, jot down a phrase that reminds you of one of God’s endearing attributes. In another psalm, David sang: “Let the sayings of my mouth and the meditation of my heart become pleasurable before you, O Jehovah my Rock and my Redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14) This concentrated attention to God’s Word on our part is “pleasurable” to Jehovah and delightful to us.

¹² How can we derive happiness from our study and meditation? We can make it our aim to learn as much as we can about Jehovah and his ways. Such publications as *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived* and *Draw Close to Jehovah** furnish us much that we can reflect on with appreciation. In turn, David assures the righteous, Jehovah “will give you the requests of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4b) It was this kind of confidence that must have prompted the apostle John to pen the words: “This is the confidence that we have toward him, that, no matter what it is that we ask according to his will, he hears us. Further, if we know he hears us respecting whatever we are asking, we know we are to have the things asked since we have asked them of him.” —1 John 5:14, 15.

* Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

¹³ As integrity keepers, our greatest delight is to see the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty. (Proverbs 27:11) Do our hearts not overflow with joy when we learn of the tremendous preaching work carried out by our brothers in lands that used to be under totalitarian or dictatorial rule? We eagerly look forward to seeing what further freedom may develop before the end of this system. Many of Jehovah's servants living in western countries have a vigorous share in preaching to students, refugees, and others who temporarily reside in the west and enjoy freedom of worship. It is our earnest wish that as these individuals return home, they continue to let the light of truth shine in even apparently impenetrable darkness.—Matthew 5:14-16.

"Roll Upon Jehovah Your Way"

¹⁴ What a relief it is to know that our worries and what may seem to us to be oppressive weights can be lifted! How? "Roll upon Jehovah your way, and rely upon him," says Da-

13. In recent years, what expansion of the Kingdom-preaching work has been observed in many lands?

14. What evidence is there that we can rely on Jehovah?

vid, adding, "and he himself will act." (Psalm 37:5) In our congregations, we have ample evidence that Jehovah is a reliable support. (Psalm 55:22) Those in the full-time ministry, whether as pioneers, traveling overseers, missionaries, or volunteers serving at Bethel, can all testify to the reliability of Jehovah's care. Why not speak to ones you know and ask how Jehovah has helped them? You will undoubtedly hear many experiences showing that even during difficult times, Jehovah's hand is never short. He always provides life's necessities.—Psalm 37:25; Matthew 6:25-34.

¹⁵ When we make Jehovah our confidence and trust in him implicitly, we can experience the psalmist's further words: "He will certainly bring forth your righteousness as the light itself, and your justice as the mid-day." (Psalm 37:6) As Jehovah's Witnesses, we often find ourselves misrepresented. But Jehovah opens the eyes of honesthearted ones to help them realize that our public ministry

15. How does the righteousness of God's people shine forth?

*"The meek ones themselves
will possess the earth"*



is motivated by love for Jehovah and for neighbor. At the same time, our upright conduct, though misrepresented by many, cannot be hidden. Jehovah sustains us through all manner of opposition and persecution. As a result, the righteousness of God's people shines forth like the sun at midday.—1 Peter 2:12.

"Keep Silent . . . Wait Longingly"

¹⁶ The psalmist's next words are: "Keep silent before Jehovah and wait longingly for him. Do not show yourself heated up at anyone making his way successful, at the man carrying out his ideas." (Psalm 37:7) Here David stresses the need for us to wait patiently for Jehovah to act. Although the end of this system has not yet come, this is no cause for complaint. Have we not seen that Jehovah's mercy and patience are far greater than we at first thought? Can we now show that we too wait patiently as we keep busy preaching the good news before the end comes? (Mark 13:10) Now is the time to avoid rash acts that can rob us of our joy and spiritual security. Now is the time to resist ever more strongly the corrupting influence of Satan's world. And now is the time to maintain moral purity and never jeopardize our righteous standing with Jehovah. Let us continue to banish immoral thoughts and avoid unseemly acts toward those of the opposite or, indeed, the same sex.—Colossians 3:5.

¹⁷ "Let anger alone and leave rage," David counsels us. "Do not show yourself heated up only to do evil. For evildoers themselves will be cut off, but those hoping in Jehovah are the ones that will possess the earth." (Psalm 37:8, 9) Yes, we can confidently look forward to the time—now so near—when Jehovah will eradicate from the earth all corruption and those who are responsible for it.

16, 17. In harmony with Psalm 37:7, for what is it now the time, and why?

"Just a Little While Longer"

¹⁸ "Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be." (Psalm 37:10) How those words encourage us as we approach the end of this system and the culmination of disastrous independence from Jehovah! Whatever kind of government or authority has been devised by man has failed miserably. And now we are nearing the time for a return to rule by God, true theocracy, the Kingdom of Jehovah in the hands of Jesus Christ. It will take complete control of the world's affairs and remove all opposers of God's Kingdom.—Daniel 2:44.

¹⁹ In the new world under God's Kingdom, search as you may, you will not be able to find a "wicked one." Indeed, anyone who then rebels against Jehovah will quickly be removed. No one who attacks his sovereignty or who refuses to submit to godly authority will be there. All your neighbors will be like-minded in their desire to please Jehovah. What security that will bring—no locks, no bars, nothing that will mar complete trust and happiness!—Isaiah 65:20; Micah 4:4; 2 Peter 3:13.

²⁰ Then, "the meek ones themselves will

18, 19. What encouragement do you draw from Psalm 37:10?

20, 21. (a) Who are "the meek" of Psalm 37:11, and where do they find an "abundance of peace"? (b) What blessings will be ours if we imitate the Greater David?

Can You Answer?

- What lessons did you learn from Psalm 37:1, 2?
- How can you "take exquisite delight in Jehovah"?
- What evidence is there that we can rely on Jehovah?

possess the earth." (Psalm 37:11a) But who are these "meek ones"? The word translated "meek" comes from a root word meaning "afflict, humble, humiliate." Yes, "the meek ones" are those who humbly wait on Jehovah to right all the injustices inflicted upon them. "They will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:11b) Even now we find an abundance of peace in the spiritual paradise associated with the true Christian congregation.

²¹ Although not yet relieved of afflictions, we support one another and comfort those who are depressed. As a result, true inner con-

tentment is promoted among Jehovah's people. Brothers appointed as shepherds lovingly minister to our spiritual—and at times even physical—needs, enabling us to endure affliction for righteousness' sake. (1 Thessalonians 2:7, 11; 1 Peter 5:2, 3) What a valuable possession this peace is! We also have the hope of everlasting life in the peaceful Paradise at hand. May we, then, imitate the Greater David, Christ Jesus, whose zeal for Jehovah motivated him to serve faithfully to the end. (1 Peter 2:21) By doing so, we will continue to be happy, praising the one in whom we take exquisite delight, our God, Jehovah.

"SHOW YOURSELVES THANKFUL"

"Let the peace of the Christ control in your hearts . . . And show yourselves thankful."—COLOSSIANS 3:15.

IN THE 94,600 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses around the world, we find a thankful spirit. Each meeting begins and ends with a prayer that includes expressions of thanks to Jehovah. We frequently hear "thank you," "you're welcome," or similar expressions on the lips of young and old as well as new and longtime Witnesses as they join in worship and happy fellowship. (Psalm 133:1) What a contrast this is to the selfishness that prevails among many 'who do not know Jehovah and who do not obey the good news!' (2 Thessalonians 1:8) We live in a thankless world. And little wonder when we consider who is the god of this world—Satan the Devil, the greatest exponent of self-centeredness, whose pride and

rebellious spirit permeate human society! —John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19.

² Surrounded as we are by Satan's world, we need to exercise care not to be corrupted by its attitudes. In the first century, the apostle Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians: "You at one time walked according to the system of things of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience. Yes, among them we all at one time conducted ourselves in harmony with the desires of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and the thoughts, and we were naturally children of wrath even as the rest." (Ephesians 2: 2, 3) That is also true of many today. How, then, can we maintain a thankful spirit? What help does Jehovah provide? In what

1. What contrast do we observe between the Christian congregation and the world under Satan's control?

2. What warning do we need to heed, and what questions will we consider?



"Every good gift and every perfect present is from above"



practical ways can we demonstrate that we are truly thankful?

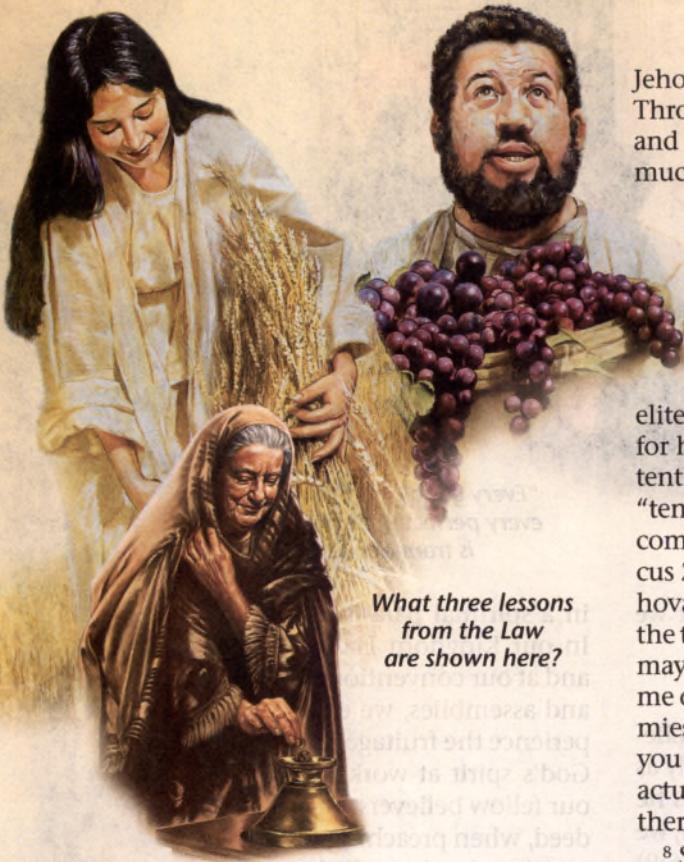
Reasons for Being Thankful

³ It is to Jehovah God, our Creator and Life-Giver, that we owe our gratitude, especially as we consider some of the bounteous gifts he has showered upon us. (James 1:17) Daily, we thank Jehovah that we are alive. (Psalm 36:9) Around us, we observe abundant evidence of Jehovah's handiwork, such as the sun, moon, and stars. Our planet's rich storehouse of life-sustaining minerals, the atmosphere's finely balanced mixture of vital gases, and the intricate cycles in nature all testify to the debt we owe our loving heavenly Father. "Many things you yourself have done, O Jehovah my God," sang King David, "even your wonderful works and your thoughts toward us; there is none to be compared to you. Were I inclined to tell and speak of them, they have become more numerous than I can recount." —Psalm 40:5.

⁴ Though far removed from a physical paradise, Jehovah's servants today relish living

3. For what are we thankful to Jehovah?
4. Why should we thank Jehovah for the happy association we enjoy in our congregations?

in a spiritual paradise. In our Kingdom Halls and at our conventions and assemblies, we experience the fruitage of God's spirit at work in our fellow believers. Indeed, when preaching to people who have little or no religious background, some Witnesses refer to what Paul described in his letter to the Galatians. They first draw attention to "the works of the flesh" and ask their listeners what they have observed. (Galatians 5:19-23) Most readily agree that these characterize human society today. When shown the description of the fruitage of God's spirit and upon being invited to the local Kingdom Hall to see evidence of this for themselves, many quickly acknowledge: "God is really among you." (1 Corinthians 14:25) And this is not limited to the local Kingdom Hall. Travel where you may, when you meet any of the more than six million Witnesses of Jehovah, you find the same happy, joyous spirit. Truly, this upbuilding association is reason for giving thanks to Jehovah, the one who supplies his



*What three lessons
from the Law
are shown here?*

spirit to make it possible.—Zephaniah 3:9; Ephesians 3:20, 21.

⁵ The greatest gift, the most perfect present that Jehovah has bestowed, is that of his Son, Jesus, by means of whom the ransom sacrifice was provided. “If this is how God loved us,” wrote the apostle John, “then we are ourselves under obligation to love one another.” (1 John 4:11) Yes, we show ourselves thankful for the ransom not only by expressing love and gratitude to Jehovah but also by living our lives in a way that manifests love for others.—Matthew 22:37-39.

⁶ We can learn more about showing gratitude by considering the way Jehovah dealt with Israel of old. By means of the Law, which he gave to the nation through Moses,

5, 6. How can we show ourselves thankful for God's greatest gift, the ransom?

Jehovah taught the people many lessons. Through “the framework of the knowledge and of the truth in the Law,” we can learn much that will help us follow Paul’s counsel:

“Show yourselves thankful.”—Romans 2:20; Colossians 3:15.

Three Lessons From the Mosaic Law

⁷ In the Mosaic Law, Jehovah provided three ways by which the Israelites could show their genuine appreciation for his goodness. First, there was the tithe. A tenth of the land’s produce, together with a “tenth part of the herd and flock,” was to become “something holy to Jehovah.” (Leviticus 27:30-32) When the Israelites obeyed, Jehovah blessed them abundantly. “Bring all the tenth parts into the storehouse, that there may come to be food in my house; and test me out, please, in this respect,’ Jehovah of armies has said, ‘whether I shall not open to you people the floodgates of the heavens and actually empty out upon you a blessing until there is no more want.’”—Malachi 3:10.

⁸ Second, in addition to the tithing requirement, Jehovah arranged for the Israelites to make voluntary contributions. He instructed Moses to tell the Israelites: “On your coming into the land where I am bringing you, it must also occur that when you eat any of the bread of the land, you should make a contribution to Jehovah.” Some of the firstfruits of their “coarse meal as ring-shaped cakes” were to be presented as “a contribution to Jehovah” throughout their generations. Note that no specific amount of these firstfruits was required. (Numbers 15:18-21) But when the Israelites offered a contribution in thanksgiving, they were assured a blessing from Jehovah. A similar arrangement is seen in

7. How did the titling arrangement give Israelites the opportunity to show their thankfulness to Jehovah?

8. What distinguished voluntary offerings from titling?

connection with the temple in Ezekiel's vision. We read: "The first of all the first ripe fruits of everything and every contribution of everything out of all your contributions —to the priests it will come to belong; and the firstfruits of your coarse meals you should give to the priest, in order to cause a blessing to rest upon your house."—Ezekiel 44:30.

⁹ Third, Jehovah arranged for the practice of gleaning. "When you people reap the harvest of your land," God instructed, "you must not reap the edge of your field completely, and the gleaning of your harvest you must not pick up. Also, you must not gather the leftovers of your vineyard, and you must not pick up the scattered grapes of your vineyard. For the afflicted one and the alien resident you should leave them. I am Jehovah your God." (Leviticus 19:9, 10) Once again, no specific amount was required. It was up to each Israelite to decide how much to leave for the needy. Wise King Solomon aptly explained: "He that is showing favor to the lowly one is lending to Jehovah, and his treatment He will repay to him." (Proverbs 19:17) Thus Jehovah taught compassion and consideration for disadvantaged ones.

¹⁰ Jehovah blessed the Israelites when they obediently brought in the tithes, gave voluntary contributions, and made provision for the poor. But when the people of Israel failed to show themselves thankful, they lost Jehovah's favor. This led to disaster and eventually exile. (2 Chronicles 36:17-21) What, then, are the lessons for us?

Our Expressions of Thankfulness

¹¹ The principal way we can render praise to Jehovah and express our thankfulness like-

9. What did Jehovah teach through the provision of gleaning?
10. What were the consequences for the people of Israel when they failed to show themselves thankful?
11. What is the principal way we can show our thankfulness to Jehovah?

wise involves an "offering." True, as Christians, we are not under the Mosaic Law, obligated to offer sacrifices of animals or crops. (Colossians 2:14) Nevertheless, the apostle Paul urged the Hebrew Christians: "Let us always offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name." (Hebrews 13:15) By using our abilities and resources to offer a sacrifice of praise to Jehovah, whether in the public ministry or in "the congregated throngs" of fellow Christians, we can express heartfelt thanks to our loving heavenly Father, Jehovah God. (Psalm 26:12) In doing so, what can we learn from the ways in which the Israelites were to express their thankfulness to Jehovah?

¹² First of all, as we have seen, the tithing arrangement was not optional; each Israelite had an obligation in this regard. As Christians, we have the responsibility of participating in the ministry and attending Christian meetings. These activities are not optional. In his great prophecy regarding the time of the end, Jesus pointedly stated: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) Regarding Christian meetings, the apostle Paul was inspired to write: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24, 25) We show our thankfulness to Jehovah when we joyfully accept our responsibility to preach and to teach as well as to associate with our brothers regularly at the congregation meetings, viewing such as a privilege and an honor.

12. As far as our Christian responsibility is concerned, what can we learn from the tithing arrangement?

¹³In addition, we can profit from considering the other two provisions by which the Israelites could show their appreciation—voluntary contributions and gleaning. In contrast to tithing, which was a requirement with a clearly defined commitment, voluntary contributions and the gleaning arrangement did not require a fixed amount. Rather, they allowed for the depth of appreciation a servant of Jehovah had in his heart to prompt him to act. In a comparable way, although we appreciate that participation in the ministry and attendance at Christian meetings are a fundamental responsibility of every servant of Jehovah, do we share in them wholeheartedly and with a willing spirit? Do we view them as an opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation for all that Jehovah has done for us? Do we share liberally in these activities, to the extent our individual circumstances permit? Or do we view all of this only as an obligation that we must discharge? These, of course, are questions that we must answer personally. The apostle Paul put it this way: "Let each one prove what his own

13. What lesson comes from the arrangements for voluntary contributions and gleaning?

work is, and then he will have cause for exultation in regard to himself alone, and not in comparison with the other person."—Galatians 6:4.

¹⁴Jehovah God well knows our circumstances. He is aware of our limitations. He values the sacrifices, great or small, that his servants offer willingly. He does not expect that we will all give the same amount, nor can we do so. When discussing material giving, the apostle Paul told the Corinthian Christians: "If the readiness is there first, it is especially acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what a person does not have." (2 Corinthians 8:12) This principle applies equally well to our service to God. What makes our service acceptable to Jehovah is determined, not by the amount that we do, but by the way we do it—joyfully and wholeheartedly.—Psalm 100:1-5; Colossians 3:23.

14. What does Jehovah expect of us in our service to him?

What sacrifices can we make?



Develop and Maintain the Pioneer Spirit

¹⁵ A rewarding way to show our thankfulness to Jehovah is to enter the full-time ministry. Motivated by love of Jehovah and gratitude for his undeserved kindness, many dedicated servants have made great changes in their lives to allow for more time to serve Jehovah. Some are able to serve as regular pioneers, spending an average of 70 hours every month preaching the good news and teaching people the truth. Others, who may be limited by various circumstances, from time to time arrange to spend 50 hours a month preaching as auxiliary pioneers.

¹⁶ But what of the many servants of Jehovah who can serve neither as regular nor as auxiliary pioneers? They can show thankfulness by developing and maintaining a pioneer spirit. How? By encouraging those who can pioneer, by instilling in their children the desire to pursue a career in full-time service, and by sharing diligently in preaching according to their circumstances. What we give in our ministry depends much on the depth of appreciation in our hearts for what Jehovah has done, is doing, and will yet do for us.

Demonstrating Thankfulness With Our "Valuable Things"

¹⁷ "Honor Jehovah with your valuable things," notes Proverbs 3:9, "and with the firstfruits of all your produce." Servants of Jehovah no longer need to tithe. Rather, Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation: "Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians

15, 16. (a) What connection is there between the pioneer ministry and thankfulness? (b) How can those who are unable to pioneer manifest a pioneer spirit?

17, 18. (a) How can we demonstrate thankfulness with our "valuable things"? (b) What assessment of the widow's contribution did Jesus make, and why?

ans 9:7) Making voluntary contributions to support the worldwide Kingdom-preaching work also demonstrates our thankfulness. Heartfelt appreciation motivates us to do this regularly, possibly setting aside something on a weekly basis, as did the early Christians. —1 Corinthians 16:1, 2.

¹⁸ It is not the amount we contribute that reflects our gratitude to Jehovah. Rather, it is the spirit in which we give. This was what Jesus observed when watching people dropping their gifts into the treasury chests at the temple. When Jesus saw a needy widow drop in "two small coins of very little value," he said: "I tell you truthfully, This widow, although poor, dropped in more than they all did. For all these dropped in gifts out of their surplus, but this woman out of her want dropped in all the means of living she had." —Luke 21:1-4.

¹⁹ May this review of how we can show ourselves thankful prompt us to reexamine the ways by which we show our gratitude. Can we perhaps increase our sacrifice of praise to Jehovah as well as our support of the worldwide work in a material way? To the extent that we do so, we can be assured that our generous loving Father, Jehovah, will be well-pleased that we show ourselves thankful.

19. Why is it good to reexamine the ways in which we show our gratitude?

Do You Recall?

- For what reasons should we be thankful to Jehovah?
- What lessons do we learn from tithing, voluntary contributions, and gleaning?
- How do we cultivate the pioneer spirit?
- How can we use our "valuable things" to thank Jehovah?

Do You ALWAYS Need a Bible Command?

WHEN you were young, your parents likely gave you many rules. As you grew older, you came to appreciate that they had your interests at heart. As an adult, you probably still live by certain principles they instilled in you, even though you are no longer under their authority.

Our heavenly Father, Jehovah, gives us a number of direct commands through his Word, the Bible. For example, he forbids idolatry, fornication, adultery, and theft. (Exodus 20:1-17; Acts 15:28, 29) As we spiritually "grow up in all things," we come to appreciate that Jehovah has our best interests at heart and that his commands are not unduly restrictive.—Ephesians 4:15; Isaiah 48:17, 18; 54:13.

However, there are many situations for which there is no direct command. Thus, some feel that in the absence of a direct Bible law, they are free to do as they please. They argue that if God had felt it necessary, he would have expressed his will in the form of a direct command.

Those who think this way often make unwise decisions that they later deeply regret. They fail to see that the Bible contains not only laws but also indications of God's way of thinking. As we study the Bible and come to know Jehovah's view on matters, we develop a Bible-trained conscience and are helped to make choices that reflect his ways. When we do so, we make his heart glad and we reap the benefits that result from making wise decisions.—Ephesians 5:1.

Outstanding Bible Examples

When we look at Bible accounts of servants of God in ancient times, we find situations in which they took Jehovah's thinking into consideration even when they were not under a direct order. Consider the example of Joseph. At the time he was confronting the immoral advances of Potiphar's wife, there was no divinely inspired written law against adultery. Yet, even without a direct law, Joseph perceived that adultery was a sin not only against his own conscience but also "against God." (Genesis 39:9) Evidently, Joseph recognized that adultery was in violation of God's thinking and will, as expressed in Eden.—Genesis 2:24.

Consider another example. At Acts 16:3, we learn that before taking Timothy along on his Christian journeys, Paul circumcised him. Yet, in verse 4 we read that Paul and Timothy thereafter traveled through the cities delivering "the decrees that had been decided upon by the apostles and older men who were in Jerusalem." Among those decrees was the decision that Christians were no longer under law to get circumcised! (Acts 15:5, 6, 28, 29) Why did Paul feel that it was necessary for Timothy to be circumcised? "Because of the Jews that were in those places, for one and all knew that [Timothy's] father was a Greek." Paul did not want to cause unnecessary offense or stumbling. He was concerned that Christians keep "recommending [themselves] to every human conscience in the sight of

God.”—2 Corinthians 4:2; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

This kind of thinking was typical of Paul and Timothy. Read such passages as Romans 14:15, 20, 21 and 1 Corinthians 8:9-13; 10:23-33, and see how deeply concerned Paul was with the spiritual welfare of others, especially those who might stumble over something that, strictly speaking, was not wrong. And Paul wrote of Timothy: “I have no one else of a disposition like his who will genuinely care for the things pertaining to you. For all the others are seeking their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know the proof he gave of himself, that like a child with a father he slaved with me in furtherance of the good news.” (Philippians 2:20-22) What a fine example these two Christian men set for us today! Rather than opting for personal convenience or preference when not under specific divine command, they imitated the love of Jehovah and his Son by considering how their personal decisions might affect others spiritually.

Consider Jesus Christ, our primary example. In his Sermon on the Mount, he clearly explained that one who grasps the spirit of God’s laws will obey them even beyond what is specifically commanded or forbidden. (Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28) Neither Jesus, Paul, Timothy, nor Joseph adopted the reasoning that in the absence of a specific divine law, a person can do as he pleases. Conforming to God’s way of thinking, these men lived by what Jesus identified as the two greatest commands of all—to love God and to love one’s fellowman.—Matthew 22:36-40.

What About Christians Today?

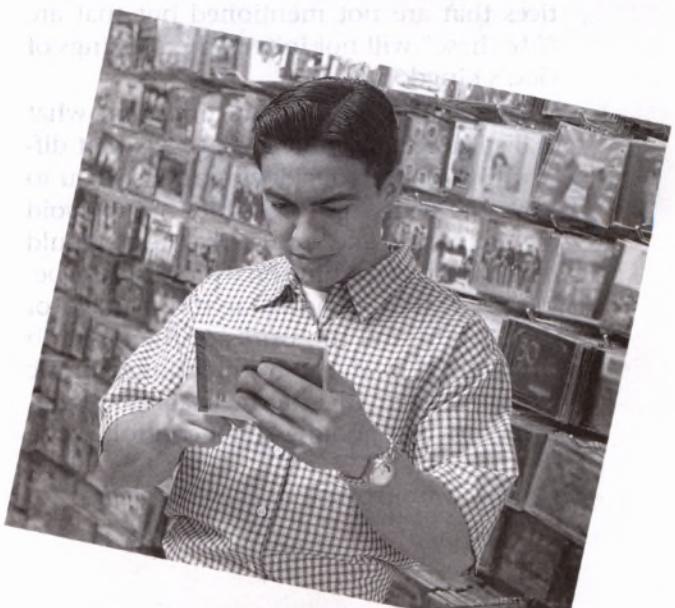
It is clear that we should not approach the Bible as one would a legal document—expecting every obligation to be clearly spelled out. We bring great joy to Jehovah’s heart when we choose to do that which reflects his

thinking, even when there is no specific law to dictate our course. In other words, rather than always having to be told what God wants us to do, we can ‘*perceive* what the will of Jehovah is.’ (Ephesians 5:17; Romans 12:2) Why does this make Jehovah happy? Because it shows that we are not concerned so much with personal preferences and rights as with pleasing him. It also shows that we appreciate his love to the point that we want to imitate it, making such love the force that motivates us. (Proverbs 23:15; 27:11) Additionally, actions based on what is indicated by the Scriptures contribute to spiritual and often physical health.

Let us see how this principle can be applied in personal matters.

Choice of Entertainment

Consider the case of a young man who wants to buy a certain music album. What he has heard from the album is very appealing, but he is concerned because the back cover indicates that the lyrics are sexually explicit and profane. Then, too, he is aware that a large portion of the artist’s recordings are angry and aggressive in spirit. As a lover of Jehovah, this young man is interested in His thoughts and feelings on the matter.



How can he perceive what God's will is in this regard?

In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul lists the works of the flesh and the fruitage of God's spirit. You likely know what is included in the fruitage of God's spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control. But what activities constitute the works of the flesh? Paul writes: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, and they are fornication, uncleanness, loose conduct, idolatry, practice of spiritism, enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, contentions, divisions, sects, envies, drunken bouts, revelries, and things like these. As to these things I am forewarning you, the same way as I did forewarn you, that those who practice such things will not inherit God's kingdom."—Galatians 5:19-23.

Note the very last expression in that list—"things *like* these." Paul did not provide an exhaustive list of everything that would be considered a work of the flesh. It is not as if a person could reason, 'I am Scripturally allowed to engage in any activity that is not on Paul's list of the works of the flesh.' Rather, readers would need to use their perceptive powers in order to identify things that may not appear on the list but are "*like* these." Those who unrepentantly engage in practices that are not mentioned but that are "*like* these" will not inherit the blessings of God's Kingdom.

Thus, we need to *perceive*, or *discern*, what is displeasing in Jehovah's eyes. Is that difficult? Suppose your doctor advised you to eat more fruits and vegetables but to avoid pie, ice cream, and things like these. Would it be hard to determine on which list cake belongs? Now look again at the fruitage of God's spirit and the works of the flesh. To which list does the above-mentioned music album belong? It certainly bears no resemblance to love, goodness, self-control, or the

other qualities associated with the fruitage of God's spirit. One would not need a direct law to perceive that this kind of music is out of harmony with God's way of thinking. The same principles would apply to reading material, movies, television programs, computer games, Web sites, and so forth.

Acceptable Personal Appearance

The Bible also provides principles that have a bearing on matters of dress and grooming. These enable each Christian to be guided in maintaining a fitting and pleasing personal appearance. Here again, the lover of Jehovah sees in this an opportunity, not to do whatever he pleases, but to do what will make his heavenly Father rejoice. As we have already seen, the fact that Jehovah has not given specific regulations in a matter does not mean that he does not care what his people do. Styles differ from one location to another, and even in the same location, they change periodically. However, God provides basic principles that should guide his people at all times and in all places.

For example, 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 says: "Likewise I desire the women to adorn themselves in well-arranged dress, with modesty and soundness of mind, not with styles of hair braiding and gold or pearls or very expensive garb, but in the way that befits women professing to reverence God, namely, through good works." Thus, Christian women—and men—ought to give thought to what sort of appearance people in their area expect of those "professing to reverence God." It is especially proper that a Christian give thought to what his appearance will cause others to think of the Bible message that he carries. (2 Corinthians 6:3) An exemplary Christian will not be overly concerned with his own preferences or supposed rights but, rather, with not becoming a source of distraction or a stumbling block to others.—Matthew 18:6; Philippians 1:10.

When a Christian finds that a certain style in personal appearance has a disturbing or stumbling effect on others, he can imitate the apostle Paul by placing concern for the spiritual well-being of others ahead of his personal preferences. Paul said: "Become imitators of me, even as I am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1) And of Jesus, Paul wrote: "Even the Christ did not please himself." Paul's point of application to all Christians is clear: "We, though, who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those not strong, and not to be pleasing ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor in what is good for his upbuilding."—Romans 15:1-3.

Sharpening Our Perceptive Powers

How can we develop our perceptive powers so as to know how to please Jehovah even

when he has not given specific direction in a matter? If we read his Word daily, study it regularly, and meditate on what we read, we will experience growth in our powers of perception. Such growth does not take place rapidly. Like the physical growth of a child, spiritual growth is gradual and is not immediately discerned. So there is a need for patience, and we should not become frustrated if we do not notice immediate improvement. On the other hand, the mere passing of much time will not of itself sharpen our perceptive powers. Such time must be filled with regular consideration of God's Word as noted above, and we must live that Word to the best of our ability.—Hebrews 5:14.

It might be said that while God's laws test our obedience, his principles test the depth of our spirituality and of our desire to please him. As we grow spiritually, we will place increased emphasis on imitating Jehovah and his Son. We will be eager to base our decisions on God's thinking on matters as indicated by the Scriptures. As we make our heavenly Father happy in all that we do, we will find that our own joy increases as well.

*Clothing styles differ from place to place,
but Bible principles should guide our choices*





"WHAT SHALL I REPAY TO JEHOVAH?"

AS TOLD BY
MARIA KERASINIS

At the age of 18, I was a crushing disappointment to my parents, an outcast among my family, and the laughingstock of my village. Pleadings, coercion, and threats were used to try to break my integrity to God—to no avail. I was confident that loyally sticking to Bible truth would bring spiritual benefits. Looking back on more than 50 years of serving Jehovah, I can only echo the psalmist's words: "What shall I repay to Jehovah for all his benefits to me?"—Psalm 116:12.

I WAS born in 1930, in Aggelokastro, a village about 12 miles from the port of Cenchreae, on the east side of the Isthmus of Corinth, where a congregation of true Christians was established in the first century.
—Acts 18:18; Romans 16:1.

My family led a quiet life. Father was the president of the community and was well respected. I was the third of five children. My parents brought us up as devout members of the Greek Orthodox Church. I attended Mass

every Sunday. I did penance before icons, lit candles in country chapels, and observed all fasts. I often thought of becoming a nun. In time, I became the first one in the family to disappoint my parents.

Thrilled by Bible Truth

When I was about 18 years old, I learned that Katina, the sister of one of my brothers-in-law, who lived in a neighboring village, was reading publications of Jehovah's Wit-

nesses, and she was not going to church anymore. This troubled me a lot, so I decided to help her return to what I felt was the right path. Thus, when she came to visit, I arranged for us to go for a walk, with the intention of stopping by the priest's house. The priest began the conversation with a volley of taunts against Jehovah's Witnesses, calling them heretics who had misled Katina. The discussion continued for three consecutive nights. Katina refuted all his allegations with well-prepared Biblical arguments. Finally, the priest told her that because she was such a good-looking, intelligent girl, she should enjoy her youth while she could and take an interest in God when she got old.

I said nothing to my parents about that discussion, but the following Sunday, I did not go to church. At midday, the priest came straight to our shop. I made up an excuse that I had had to stay in the shop to help Father.

"Is that really the reason, or did that girl influence you?" the priest asked me.

"These people have better beliefs than we do," I said straightforwardly.

Turning to my father, the priest said: "Mr. Economos, kick your relative out immediately; she has set your house on fire."

My Family Turns Against Me

This was in the late 1940's when Greece was going through the violent spasms of civil war. Fearful that the guerrillas might snatch me, Father made arrangements for me to leave the village and go to my sister's house in the village where Katina lived. For the two months I stayed there, I was helped to understand what the Bible says on a number of issues. I was disappointed to see that many of the doctrines of the Orthodox Church are unscriptural. I realized that God does not accept worship through icons, that various religious traditions—such as the veneration of

the cross—are not of Christian origin, and that one has to worship God "with spirit and truth" in order to please him. (John 4:23; Exodus 20:4, 5) Above all, I learned that the Bible offers the bright hope of eternal life on earth! Such precious Bible truths were among the initial personal benefits that I received from Jehovah.

In the meantime, my sister and her husband noticed that I did not make the sign of the cross at mealtimes, nor did I pray before religious icons. One night they both beat me. The next day I decided to leave their home, and I went to my aunt's place. My brother-in-law notified my father. Shortly afterward Father came in tears and tried to change my mind. My brother-in-law knelt down in front of me, begging my pardon, which I gave. To end the matter, they asked me to return to church, but I stood firm.

Back in Father's village, pressures continued. I had no means of communicating with Katina, and I had no literature to read, not even a Bible. I was so happy when one of my cousins tried to help me. When she went to Corinth, she found a Witness and came back with the book "*Let God Be True*" and a copy of the Christian Greek Scriptures, which I started reading in secret.

Life Takes an Unexpected Turn

Fierce opposition continued for three years. I had no contact with any Witnesses, nor could I receive any literature. However, unbeknownst to me, major developments involving my life were about to take place.

Father told me that I had to go to my uncle in Thessalonica. Before leaving for Thessalonica, I went to a seamstress shop in Corinth to have a coat made. What a surprise when I found that Katina worked there! We were so happy to see each other after such a long time. As the two of us were leaving the shop, we met a very pleasant young man who was



going home from work, riding a bicycle. His name was Charalambos. After getting to know each other, we decided that we would get married. It was also about this time, on January 9, 1952, that I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah by getting baptized.

Charalambos had been baptized earlier. He too faced opposition from his family. Charalambos was very zealous. He served as assistant congregation servant and conducted many Bible studies. Soon, his brothers accepted the truth, and today most members of their families also serve Jehovah.

My father really liked Charalambos, so he consented to the marriage, but Mother was not easily persuaded. Despite all of this, Charalambos and I were married on March 29, 1952. Only my oldest brother and one of my cousins came to the wedding. Little did I know then what an incomparable blessing—a real gift from Jehovah—Charalambos would prove to be! As his companion, I was able to build my life around Jehovah's service.

Strengthening Our Brothers

In 1953, Charalambos and I decided to move to Athens. Wanting to do more in the preaching work, Charalambos resigned from his family business and found part-time work. We spent the afternoons together

Charalambos and I were inseparable
in the Christian ministry and conducted many Bible studies.

Because of official restrictions on our ministry, we had to be resourceful. For example, we decided to place a copy of the *Watchtower* magazine in the window of a kiosk, or vending stall, in the center of Athens, where my husband worked part-time. A high-ranking police officer told us that the magazine was banned. However, he asked if he could get a copy and inquire about it at the security office. When they assured him that the magazine was legal, he returned to tell us. As soon as other brothers who had kiosks heard this, they too began to put copies of *The Watchtower* in their kiosk windows. One man obtained *The Watchtower* from our kiosk, became a Witness, and is now serving as an elder.

We also had the joy of seeing my youngest brother learn the truth. He had come to Athens to study at the merchant marine college, and we took him with us to a convention. Our conventions were held secretly in forests. He liked what he heard, but soon afterward he started traveling. On one of his trips, he ended up in a port in Argentina. There, a missionary boarded the ship to preach, and my brother asked for our magazines. We were overjoyed when we received his letter saying: "I have found the truth. Make me a subscriber." Today, he and his family are faithfully serving Jehovah.

In 1958 my husband was invited to serve as a traveling overseer. Since our work was under ban and conditions were very difficult, traveling overseers usually served without their wives. In October 1959, we asked the responsible brothers at the branch office if I might accompany him. They agreed. We were to visit and strengthen the congregations in central and northern Greece.

My husband in his office at the branch

Those trips were not easy. Paved roads were few and far between. Since we did not own a car, we usually traveled by public transportation or in pickup trucks, along with chickens and other merchandise. We wore rubber boots in order to tramp through the muddy roads. Since in every village there was a civil militia, we had to enter the villages under cover of night to avoid interrogation.

The brothers deeply appreciated these visits. Although most of them worked hard in their fields, they made every effort to attend meetings held late at night in various homes. The brothers were also very hospitable and offered us the best they had, although they had very little. Sometimes we slept with the entire family in the same room. The brothers' faith, endurance, and zeal proved to be another rich benefit to us.

Expanding Our Service

In February 1961, while visiting the branch office in Athens, we were asked if we would be willing to serve at Bethel. We answered with Isaiah's words: "Here I am! Send me." (Isaiah 6:8) Two months later, we received a letter instructing us to get to Bethel as soon as possible. Thus, on May 27, 1961, we started serving at Bethel.

We loved our new assignment, and we felt at home immediately. My husband worked in the Service and Subscription departments, and later he served for a time on the Branch Committee. I had various assignments in the home. There were 18 members in the family then, but for almost five years, there were about 40 people because a school for elders was being conducted at Bethel. In the morning, I washed the dishes, helped the cook, made up 12 beds, and set the tables for lunch. In the afternoon, I ironed clothes and cleaned toilets and rooms. Once



a week I also worked in the laundry. There was a lot of work, but I was happy to be able to help.

We kept very busy in our Bethel assignments as well as in the field service. Many times we conducted up to seven Bible studies. On weekends, I accompanied Charalambos as he delivered talks to various congregations. We were inseparable.

We conducted a Bible study with a couple who had close ties to the Greek Orthodox Church and who were personal friends of the cleric who led the antiheretic agency of the church. In their house, they had a room filled with icons, where incense burned continuously and Byzantine hymns played all day. For some time, we visited them on Thursdays to study the Bible, and their cleric friend visited them on Fridays. One day, they asked us to come to their home without fail because they had a surprise for us. The first thing they showed us was that room. They had done away with all the icons and had renovated it. This couple made further progress and were baptized. In total, we have had the joy of seeing about 50 of the people with whom we conducted Bible studies dedicate their life to Jehovah and get baptized.

Associating with anointed brothers was a special benefit that I enjoyed. Visits by



I feel that Bethel service is a great honor

members of the Governing Body, such as Brothers Knorr, Franz, and Henschel, were immensely encouraging. After more than 40 years, I still feel that serving at Bethel is a great honor and privilege.

Coping With Illness and Loss

In 1982 my husband began to show signs of Alzheimer's disease. By 1990 his health had deteriorated, and he eventually needed constant care. During the last eight years of his life, we could not leave Bethel at all. Many beloved brothers in the Bethel family, as well as responsible overseers, made arrangements to help us. Despite their kind assistance, however, I had to spend long hours day and night caring for him. Things were extremely difficult sometimes, and I had many sleepless nights.

In July 1998 my beloved husband passed away. Although I miss him very much, I am comforted by the fact that he is in good hands, and I know that Jehovah will remember him along with millions of others in the resurrection.—John 5:28, 29.

Grateful for Jehovah's Benefits

Although I lost my husband, I am not alone. I still have the privilege of serving at Bethel, and I enjoy the love and care of the whole Bethel family. My extended family

also includes spiritual brothers and sisters from all over Greece. Even though I am now over 70 years old, I am still able to work full days in the kitchen and in the dining room.

In 1999 a life's dream came true when I visited the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York. I cannot describe how I felt. It was an upbuilding and unforgettable experience.

As I look back, I sincerely believe that I could not have used my life in a better way. The best career anyone can have is that of serving Jehovah full-time. I can confidently say that I have never been left in want. Jehovah lovingly cared for my husband and me both spiritually and physically. From personal experience, I understand why the psalmist asked: "What shall I repay to Jehovah for all his benefits to me?"—Psalm 116:12.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Jesus' Family—Who Were They?

They Searched for the Cramped Road

Prove Yourself Ready for Jehovah's Day

Questions From Readers

In what sense did Ezekiel become "speechless," or "mute," during the time of Jerusalem's siege and destruction?

Basically, in the sense that he did not have anything to add to Jehovah's prophetic message that he had already delivered.

The prophet Ezekiel started his service as a faithful watchman for the Israelite exiles in Babylon in "the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin," that is, in 613 B.C.E. (Ezekiel 1:2, 3) On the tenth day of the tenth lunar month of 609 B.C.E., he was notified by divine inspiration of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. (Ezekiel 24:1, 2) What would be the outcome of the siege? Would Jerusalem and its faithless inhabitants escape? As the watchman, Ezekiel had already delivered Jehovah's unmistakable message of doom, and there was no need for Ezekiel to add anything, as if to make that message any more convincing. Ezekiel became speechless as regards anything further on the siege of Jerusalem.—Ezekiel 24:25-27.

Some six months after the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E., an escapee brought news of the desolation of the holy city to Ezekiel in Babylon. The evening before the escapee arrived, Jehovah "proceeded to open [Ezekiel's] mouth . . . , and [he] proved to be speechless no longer." (Ezekiel 33:22) That ended Ezekiel's muteness.

Was Ezekiel literally mute during that time? Obviously not, for even after this "muteness" overtook him, he uttered prophecies directed mainly to the surrounding countries that rejoiced over the downfall of Jerusalem. (Ezekiel, chapters 25-32) Earlier in

Ezekiel's career as a prophet and watchman, Jehovah had told him: "Your very tongue I will make stick to the roof of your mouth, and you will certainly become mute, and you will not become to them a man administering reproof, because they are a rebellious house. And when I speak with you I shall open your mouth." (Ezekiel 3:26, 27) When Jehovah had no message for Israel, Ezekiel was to remain speechless as regards that nation. Ezekiel was to speak what Jehovah wanted him to speak at the time Jehovah wanted him to do so. Ezekiel's muteness implied that he was speechless as far as uttering words of prophetic significance to the Israelites was concerned.



The modern-day watchman class, anointed Christians, have been warning about the doom of Christendom, antitypical Jerusalem. When the "great tribulation" strikes and devastates "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion, the anointed Ezekiel class will need to say nothing more about the demise of Christendom, which constitutes a major part of that empire.
—Matthew 24:21; Revelation 17:1, 2, 5.

Yes, the day will come when the anointed remnant and their companions will become mute, not having anything further to convey to Christendom. That will be when "the ten horns" and "the wild beast" make Babylon the Great devastated and naked. (Revelation 17:16) Of course, this does not mean that Christians will be speechless in a literal sense. Even as they do now, they will praise Jehovah and make mention of him every day and "throughout all generations to come." —Psalm 45:17; 145:2.

"READY FOR

"CONTINUE reminding them to be in subjection and be obedient to governments and authorities as rulers, to be ready for every good work." (Titus 3:1) What good work did the apostle Paul have in mind when he wrote those words to his fellow believers? Bible scholar E. F. Scott pointed to one kind of good work, saying: "Not only were Christians to obey authority, but they must be ready for any good work. . . . When occasion demanded, Christians should be among the foremost in showing public spirit. There would constantly be outbreaks of fire, plague, calamity of various kinds, when all good citizens would desire to help their neighbours."

Christians participate in certain works that are of public concern as long as the works do not conflict with God's laws. (Acts 5:29) For instance, following the direction of the local fire department, the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan, located in Ebina, annually holds a fire drill. On such occasions, all members of the Bethel family come together to listen to instructions given by a representative of the local fire department.

In addition, for over a decade, the branch office has cooperated with the local authorities in an exhibition sponsored to promote fire prevention awareness. At the exhibition, companies and firms from the city demonstrate their fire-fighting and fire-control readiness. The branch has often been given recognition for the skills and cooperation of its staff. In 2001, they were awarded first prize in the exhibition. They are ready to do good work that can be lifesaving in case of fire.



Jehovah's Witnesses seek to cooperate with the secular authorities

A Valuable Service

Jehovah's Witnesses, however, are interested in a more important kind of good work, which is also lifesaving. They regularly call on their neighbors to share the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) The Witnesses encourage people to learn and apply Bible principles in their lives so as to improve their quality of life now and have the hope of everlasting life in a world where true peace and security will prevail.

Some may not appreciate the value of the service provided by Jehovah's Witnesses, considering them to be a nuisance. However, Justice Jean Crepeau of Quebec Superior Court in Canada had a different opinion. Jehovah's Witnesses there had challenged a city bylaw of Blainville, Quebec, that required a permit for their door-to-door visits. In the court's decision, Justice Crepeau stated: "Visits by the Jehovah's Witnesses are a Christian community service and . . . the publications offered by Witnesses to interested citizens are serious literature, dealing

EVERY GOOD WORK”



The Witnesses are noted for helping their neighbors

with subject matters such as religion, the Bible, drugs, alcoholism, youth education, marital problems and divorce.” The ruling went on to say: “The court can only conclude that to compare Jehovah’s Witnesses to peddlers is insulting, degrading, hurtful, and defamatory.”

Jehovah’s Witnesses contribute to the welfare of the community in which they live by helping people to overcome problems in their daily life and bringing them hope for the future. The Bible equips them to accomplish that work. “All Scripture is inspired of

God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work.”—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

Would you like to know how Jehovah’s Witnesses become “ready for every good work”? We invite you to accept their help to learn more about the Bible and thus avail yourself of this vital community service that they perform in your area and the world over.

CISTERNS THAT HOLD NO WATER

IN Bible times, cisterns were man-made underground cavities used principally for the storage of water. During some periods, in the Promised Land, they were the only means of maintaining the vital water supply.

In recording a pronouncement of God, the prophet Jeremiah referred to cisterns in a figurative sense, saying: "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."—Jeremiah 2:13, King James Version.

Having abandoned their God, Jehovah—"the fountain of living waters"—the Israelites had turned to shaky military alliances with pagan nations and to the worship of impotent, false deities. Such hoped-for places of refuge turned out to be, to use Jeremiah's analogy, nothing more than leaky cisterns that were devoid of any protective or saving power.—Deuteronomy 28:20.

Terra-cotta figurine of a mother goddess found in an Israeli grave

Is there a lesson for us today in this historical example? As was the case in Jeremiah's day, the eternal God, Jehovah, continues to be the only Source of life-giving waters. (Psalm 36:9; Revelation 4:11) Only from him, through his Son, Jesus Christ, can humans receive everlasting life. (John 4:14; 17:3) Yet, like Jeremiah's contemporaries, masses of mankind today choose to reject and even undermine the word of God as expressed in the Bible. Instead, they place their reliance on expedient political solutions, empty human reasonings, and futile God-dishonoring ideologies and philosophies. (1 Corinthians 3:18-20; Colossians 2:8) The choice is clear. Where will you place your trust? Will it be in "the fountain of living waters," Jehovah, or will it be in "broken cisterns, that can hold no water"?