

AUGUST 15, 2001

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Making a Success of Youth

THE WATCHTOWER®

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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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A Book Most Young People *Do Without*

"**H**OW should I know whether the Bible is really the Word of God? As a book, it does not interest me," remarked a young woman named Beate.

In Germany, where Beate lives, most young people share her feelings; hence, they attach little importance to reading the Bible. A recent survey there revealed that, roughly, 1 percent of young people read the Bible very often, 2 percent often, 19 percent rarely, and close to 80 percent never at all. The figures would likely be similar in other lands, perhaps also where you live. Clearly, the Bible is a book most young people do without.

No wonder, then, that Bible illiteracy is widespread among the younger generation! Early in the year 2000, the newspaper *Lausitzer Rundschau* reported on a survey that revealed how many people were familiar with the Ten Commandments and used them as a guideline in life. Of the over-60's generation, 67 percent knew the commandments and were guided by them; for the under 30's, the figure was just 28 percent. Yes, to many young people, the Word of God is unfamiliar territory.

Some Hold a Different View

On the other hand, all over the world, there are millions of young people who have found the Word of God to be extremely valuable. Alexander, for instance, is 19 years of age and reads the Bible every morning before



going to work. "I could not imagine a better start to the day," he notes. Sandra makes a point of reading a portion of the Bible every evening. "It has become part of my daily routine," she explains. And Julia, who is 13 years old, has already developed a pattern of reading at least one chapter of the Bible before going to bed at night. "I really enjoy it, and I want to carry on that practice in the future."

Which view is correct and wise? Is the Bible really worth reading? Is it valuable and important for the younger generation? What do you think?

Making Your Youth a Success



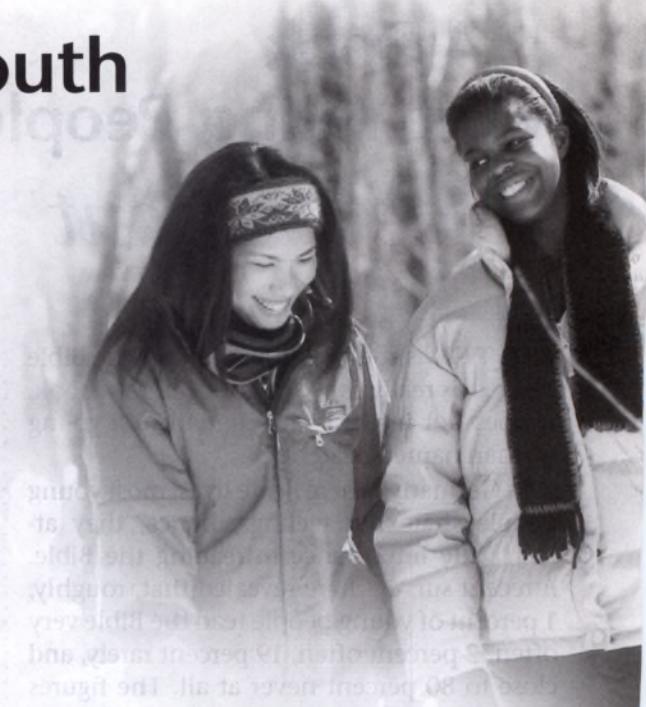
RESIDENTS of one European country were asked to choose from three alternatives: beauty, riches, or youth. The top choice was youth. Yes, people of all age groups regard the teenage years and the early 20's as a special time in life. And everyone wants youths to make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. But how?

Can the Bible help? The answer is definitely yes. Let us examine two areas in which God's Word can be of special help to young people, perhaps of more help to the young than to any other age group.

Getting Along With Others

Jugend 2000 is a report on a wide-ranging survey of the attitudes, values, and behavior of more than 5,000 young people in Germany. The survey reveals that when youths pursue leisure activities—such as listening to music, engaging in sports, or just hanging out—they are almost always with other people. Perhaps more than any other age group, young people want to be with their peers. Surely it follows that one of the secrets of success in youth is getting along with others.

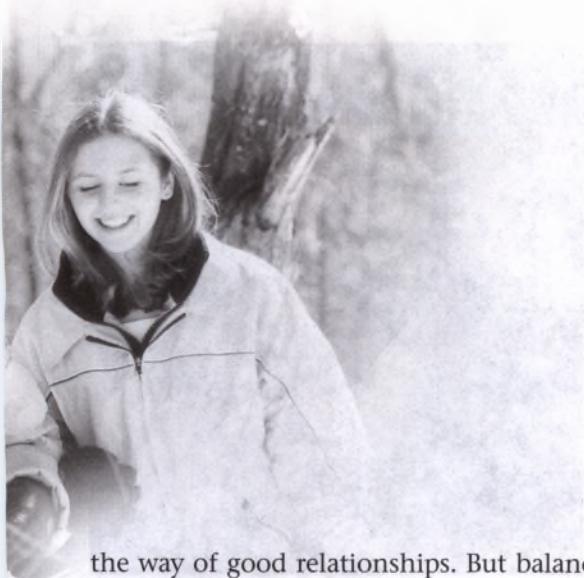
But it is not always easy to get along with others. Indeed, human relations is an area where young men and women admit they often have problems. Here the Bible can be a



real help. God's Word contains basic guidance for youths in building balanced relationships. What does the Bible say?

One of the most important principles of human relations is called the Golden Rule: "Always treat others as you would like them to treat you." Treating others with respect, dignity, and kindness encourages them to treat you the same way. Kind behavior can neutralize an atmosphere of friction and stress. If you become known for your considerate behavior toward others, you are likely to gain their recognition and acceptance. Does it not make you feel good to be accepted by others?—Matthew 7:12, Revised English Bible.

The Bible advises you to "love your neighbor as yourself." You need to love yourself in the sense of caring for yourself and having a healthy measure of self-respect, not too much and not too little. Why does that help? Well, if you do not feel good about yourself, you may be overcritical of others, which gets in



the way of good relationships. But balanced self-worth is a platform on which you can build strong friendships.—Matthew 22:39.

Once a friendship develops, it needs to be bonded by effort on both sides. Investing time in a friendship should make you feel good, since “there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” One form of giving is forgiving, which involves overlooking minor mistakes and not expecting perfection of others. The Bible tells us: “Let your reasonableness become known to all men.” Indeed, “as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men.” What if a friend points out a weakness on your part? How do you react? Consider this practical advice from the Bible: “Do not hurry yourself in your spirit to become offended,” since “the blows a friend gives are well meant.” Is it not true that friends influence your thoughts, speech, and behavior? Hence, the Bible warns: “Bad associations spoil useful habits.” On the other hand, “he that is walking with wise persons will become wise.”—Acts 20:35; Philippians 4:5; Romans 12:17, 18; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Proverbs 13:20; 27:6, *REB*; 1 Corinthians 15:33.

Marco speaks for many young men and women when he says: “Biblical principles are

a big help in getting along with others. Some people I know simply live for themselves and what they can get out of life. The Bible teaches us to think, not so much of ourselves, but of others. As far as I can see, that is the best approach to good human relations.”

What young people like Marco learn from the Bible helps them not only in youth but for years into the future. And concerning the future, we find another way the Bible can be of special help to the younger generation.

Anxiety About the Future

Many young people have an inquiring mind. Perhaps more than any other age group, they want to know what is happening and why. And the Bible, more than any other book, explains the reasons for world conditions and tells us what to expect in the future. This is what the younger generation wants to know. Why can we be sure?

One of the secrets of success in youth is getting along with others

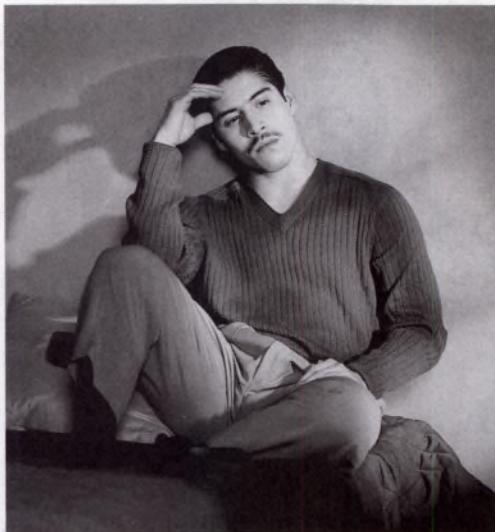
Well, although it is widely believed that youths live just for the present, some surveys reveal a slightly different picture. They show that youths often take careful note of what is going on around them, and then they draw their own conclusions about how life is likely to be in the future. Evidence of this is that 3 out of 4 young men and women think “often” or “very often” about the future. Although youths are generally optimistic, the majority of young people view the future with some anxiety.

Why the anxiety? Many of the next generation of adults already have problems with crime, violence, and drug abuse. Youths

worry about getting steady employment in a highly competitive society. They feel under pressure to get good grades at school or to be a high achiever at work. One 17-year-old lamented: "We live in a dog-eat-dog society. Everyone tries to get his own way. You always have to prove what you can do, and that makes me sick." Another young person, aged 22, said: "Achievers get on in life and can live comfortably. Bad-luck candidates, who for one reason or another cannot keep up, just get left behind." Why is life so competitive? Will life always be this way?

Realistic Explanation

When young people look with dismay or alarm at society, they are agreeing—knowingly or unknowingly—with the Bible. God's Word shows that today's "dog-eat-dog society" is a sign of the times. The apostle Paul wrote about our day in a letter to a young man named Timothy: "Critical times hard to deal with will be here." Why critical, and why hard to deal with? Because, as Paul further wrote, people would be "lovers of themselves, lov-



Perhaps more than any other age group, youths want to know what is happening and why

Tip From a Young Servant of Jehovah

Alexander is 19 years of age. He was raised in a family of Jehovah's Witnesses, and he thoroughly enjoys putting his whole heart into his faith. But this was not always the case. Alexander explains:

"Believe it or not, I associated with Jehovah's Witnesses as an unbaptized youth for over seven years. During that time, my worship was halfhearted, simply a matter of routine. I guess I just did not have the courage to take an honest look at myself."

Then Alexander's attitude changed.

He continues:

"My parents and friends in the congregation kept urging me to read the Bible daily, to get to know Jehovah personally. In the end, I decided to try. So I cut down on my television watching and made Bible reading part of my early morning routine. At last, I began to understand what the Bible is all about. I got to see how it can help me as a person. And—most important of all—I understood that Jehovah wants me to get to know him. Once I took that to heart, my own personal relationship



ers of money, self-assuming, haughty, . . . unthankful, disloyal, . . . fierce." Is that not an accurate description of how many people behave today?—2 Timothy 3:1-3.

The Bible states that these critical times would occur "in the last days," before major changes are brought on all human society. These changes will affect everyone, young and old alike. What sort of changes? A heavenly government will shortly take over the rulership of human affairs, and subjects will enjoy "the abundance of peace" everywhere. "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." Feelings of anxiety and alarm will belong to the past.—Psalm 37:11, 29.

Only the Bible gives reliable insight into the future. When a young person knows what to expect over the next few years, he can prepare for developments and feel secure and more in control of his life. This feeling reduces stress and anxiety. In this way the special need of the younger generation—to understand society and to know what the future will bring—is addressed in the Bible.

Success in Youth

What is the test of success in youth? An advanced education, material possessions, and a wide circle of friends? Many may think so. The teenage years and early 20's should provide an individual with a good start for later life. In other words, success in youth may be an indication of what will come later.

As we have seen, the Bible can help a young person to make a success of his younger years. Many youths have already discovered this to be the case in their own lives. They read God's Word daily and apply what they learn. (See "Tip From a Young Servant of Jehovah," on page 6.) Indeed, the Bible is truly a book for young people today because it can help them to "be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work."—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

with him began to grow, and friendships within the congregation improved. What a difference the Bible has made in my life! I recommend that every young servant of Jehovah read the Bible daily."

There are millions of young people all over the world who associate with Jehovah's Witnesses. Are you one of them? Would you like to profit from reading the Bible regularly? Why not follow the example of Alexander? Cut down on less important activities and make Bible reading a part of your daily routine. You will certainly benefit.

Victory at Federal Constitutional Court

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES in Germany gained a landmark victory at the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe. They thus took an important step in connection with their recognition.

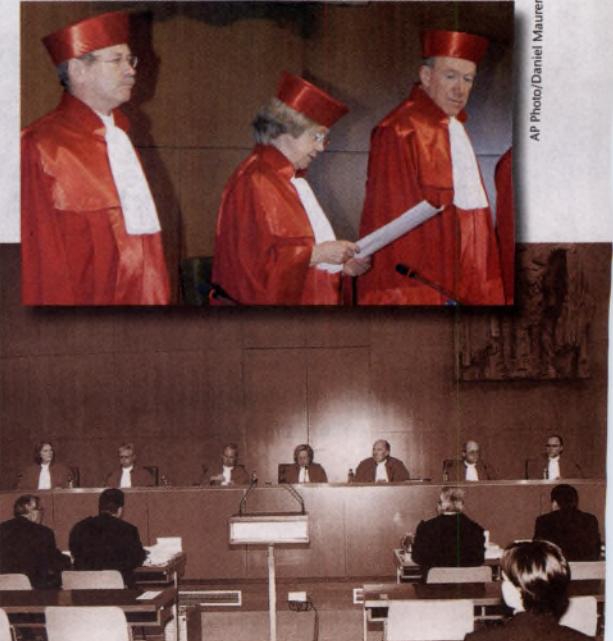
Jehovah's Witnesses have been active in Germany for over 100 years. They survived bitter persecution at the hands of two 20th-century dictatorships—the National Socialists and the Communists. Since 1990, the Witnesses have sought to attain legal recognition as a corporation of public law. Following two favorable court verdicts and one reversal, the Witnesses appealed to the Federal Constitutional Court, which announced its ruling on December 19, 2000.

Unanimous Decision for Jehovah's Witnesses

All seven justices of the court ruled in favor of the Witnesses. The judges overturned a 1997 judgment by the Federal Administrative Court and instructed that court to reconsider the application by the Witnesses.

The Federal Constitutional Court used the occasion to comment on the fundamental relationship between the State and religious groups. Basically, the status of a religion "is determined, not by its beliefs, but by its behavior."

The court also observed that when Witnesses practice "Christian neutrality," they do "not attack the principle of democracy" and do "not wish to replace democracy with another form of government." Hence, non-participation in political elections should not count against the Witnesses in their claim for legal recognition.—John 18:36; Romans 13:1.



AP Photo/Daniel Maurer

The court further noted that a believer—whether a Witness or someone of another faith—could at times find himself in a situation where the demands of the State and the requirements of his faith are at odds. Should the individual follow his conscience by "obeying the tenets of faith more than the law," the State might view this as being justified and within the scope of religious freedom.—Acts 5:29.

The court ruling hit the headlines. There was hardly a newspaper in Germany that did not contain a report on the case. All major television and radio stations broadcast reports or interviews. Never before has the name Jehovah been given such wide publicity in Germany.



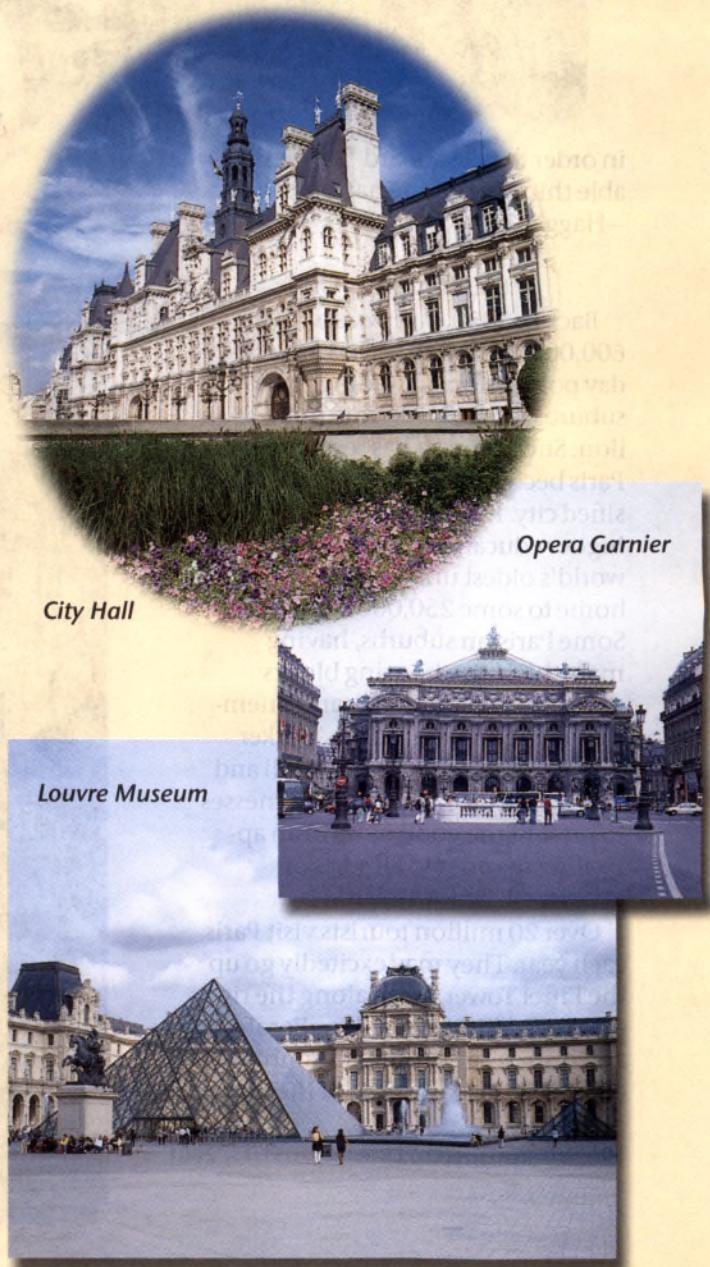
SHINING AS ILLUMINATORS IN THE CITY OF LIGHT

Fluctuat nec mergitur, or “She is buffeted by the waves but she does not sink,” is the motto of the city of Paris.

LIKE a ship, over the past 2,000 years, Paris has braved countless foreign storms and internal mutinies to stay afloat. Now one of the world’s most beautiful cities, Paris is loved for its grandiose architecture, leafy boulevards, and world-famous museums. Some think of it as the haunt of poets, painters, and philosophers. Others savor its gastronomic delights and admire its haute couture.

Historically, Paris has been a bastion of Catholicism. Two hundred years ago, because of its crucial role in a European intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment, Paris came to be called the City of Light. Today, knowingly or not, most Parisians are more influenced by philosophy dating back to that period than by religion.

Man’s wisdom, however, has not illuminated people’s lives as expected. Many today are seeking enlightenment from a different source. For some 90 years now, Jehovah’s Witnesses have been “shining as illuminators” in Paris. (Philippians 2:15) Like deft mariners, they have had to adjust constantly to changing currents or events



*Sharing the Bible's message
with busy people wherever
they are to be found*



in order to take aboard "the desirable things of all the nations."
—Haggai 2:7.

A Challenging City

Back in 1850, Paris was a city of 600,000 inhabitants. The present-day population, including the suburbs, is well over nine million. Such growth has resulted in Paris becoming France's most diversified city. It is a world center of higher education, has one of the world's oldest universities, and is home to some 250,000 students. Some Parisian suburbs, having many high-rise housing blocks marked by delinquency and unemployment, represent Paris' darker side. Undoubtedly, it takes skill and adaptability for Jehovah's Witnesses to present the good news in an appealing manner to all sorts of people.—1 Timothy 4:10.

Over 20 million tourists visit Paris each year. They may excitedly go up the Eiffel Tower, stroll along the river Seine, or linger in sidewalk cafés and bistros, absorbing the ambience. Yet, the daily pace of life for

Parisians can be quite hectic. "People are always rushing," explains Christian, a full-time minister. "When they get back from work, they're exhausted." Talking to these busy people is not easy.

One of the biggest problems faced by Jehovah's Witnesses in Paris, though, is contacting people in their homes. Some buildings are equipped with an intercom. With crime rising, however, apartment buildings often have coded entrances, and access is impossible. This no doubt contributes to the fact that in some areas, there is a ratio of only 1 Witness to 1,400 persons. Telephone witnessing and informal witnessing, therefore, are increasingly used. Have Jehovah's Witnesses been able to let their "light shine" in other ways?—Matthew 5:16.

Opportunities and places for informal witnessing are abundant. Martine saw a woman who seemed distressed standing at a bus stop. The woman had just lost her only daughter. Martine gave her a brochure containing the Bible's comforting resurrection hope. Then she had no contact with her for a few months. When Martine saw the lady again, she was able to start a Bible study with her. Despite opposition from her husband, the woman became a Witness.

Fruitful Informal Witnessing

Paris' public transport system is one of the most efficient in the world. The celebrated Metro carries 5,000,000 passengers daily. Paris' central underground station, Châtelet-Les-Halles, is said to be the world's largest and busiest. Opportunities for meeting people there are numerous. Alexandra takes the Metro to work daily. One day she chatted with a young man who was terminally ill with leukemia. Alexandra gave him a tract about the Paradise hope. A Bible discussion was held at the same time and place each day for six weeks. Then one day the man stopped com-

ing. Shortly thereafter, his wife telephoned Alexandra and told her to come to the hospital, as her husband was in a critical state. Sadly, Alexandra arrived too late. Following his death, the man's wife moved to Bordeaux, in southwest France, where she was visited by local Witnesses. What wonderful news it was for Alexandra to hear one year later that the widow had become a baptized Christian Witness of Jehovah, with the hope of seeing her husband resurrected!—John 5:28, 29.

An elderly Christian woman spoke to Renata on a train traveling from Paris to Limoges, in the center of France. In her native Poland, Renata had studied theology, Hebrew, and Greek for five years, but she had lost faith. Three months before, she had prayed to God. Although not really interested in what the elderly sister had to say and not thinking she would hear from her again, Renata gave her her telephone number. The sister, however, was persistent and made sure that shortly afterward Renata received a visit. When a Witness couple came to see her, Renata thought, 'What are they going to teach me?' Despite her seminary training, Renata was humbly drawn by Bible truth. "I understood it was the truth straightforwardly," she explains. Now she is happy to share the Bible's message with others.

Michèle was taking driving lessons. Other students in her driving theory class started talking about sex before marriage. Michèle voiced her disapproval. One week later, the driving instructor, Sylvie, asked her: "Are you one of Jehovah's Witnesses?" Sylvie was impressed by Michèle's Bible-based viewpoint. A Bible study was started, and one year later Sylvie was baptized.

The numerous parks and gardens in Paris provide a beautiful backdrop for conversing with people. Taking advantage of a break, Josette went to the park, where an elderly lady, Aline, was taking a walk. Josette

explained the marvelous promises to be found in the Bible. A Bible study was arranged, and Aline soon progressed to the point of baptism. Now, at the age of 74, Aline is a very productive regular pioneer minister, happy to share Christian truth with others.

Light for All the Nations

Witnesses in Paris do not need to sail to far-off lands to enjoy rich cultural diversity. Almost 20 percent of the population are foreign. There are Christian congregations and groups in some 25 different languages.

Flair and imagination often contribute to good results in this special evangelizing assignment. One Filipino Witness created her own special territory. While shopping, she has been able to start numerous Bible studies by striking up conversations with other Filipinos in stores.

It pays to take the initiative in preaching. In December 1996, upon learning that a world-famous circus was coming to town, Witnesses in one foreign-language congregation decided to try to contact the performers. One evening after the show, they were able to speak to the artists who were returning to their hotel. This initiative resulted in the placing of 28 Bibles, 59 Christian books, 131 brochures, and 290 magazines. At the end of the three-week stay, one of the acrobats asked: "How can I become one of Jehovah's Witnesses?" Another declared: "I'll preach in my country!"

Hidden Treasures to Be Found

Wherever they look, visitors to Paris discover delightful architectural treasures from bygone eras. More precious things, however, are still waiting to be found. Aniza came to France along with her uncle, who is a diplomat. She regularly read the Bible at home. One day as she was leaving the house hurriedly, a pioneer gave her the tract *Why You Can Trust the Bible*. An appointment was

made for the following week, and a Bible study was started. Aniza received a lot of family opposition. She progressed in her study to the point of baptism. How does she view the privilege she has to share the truth with others? "At first the preaching work was hard because I'm shy. Still, when I read the Bible, it galvanizes me. I can't rest, doing nothing." That attitude characterizes many Witnesses in Paris, who have "plenty to do in the work of the Lord."—1 Corinthians 15:58.

Bible truth also shines into the housing projects on Paris' outskirts, revealing other "gems." With a view to borrowing some recordings, Bruce went to visit his friend, who had just become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Finding his friend discussing the Bible with some of Bruce's acquaintances, Bruce listened to the conversation. He accepted the offer of a Bible study but had some problems. "I was very well-known in the area. My oldest brother was always fighting, and I organized loud dance parties. How would others accept the fact that I was becoming a Witness?" Despite persistent requests to organize parties, Bruce stopped that activity. One month later he started preaching: "Everyone in the area wanted to know why I had become a Witness." Soon afterward he got baptized. In time, he had the privilege of attending the Ministerial Training School.

Searching for treasures can take great effort. What joy, though, when the work pays off! Jacky, Bruno, and Damien were bakers in Paris. "It was impossible to contact us because we worked all the time and were never in," explains Jacky. Patrick, a regular pioneer, saw that there were some small rooms at the top of a building, and he figured that at least one was occupied. His persistent efforts to reach the occupants reaped dividends when one afternoon he finally contacted Jacky, who was staying there temporarily. The result? The three friends became Witnesses and

were able to find other work that allowed them to have a fuller share in theocratic activity.

Calming the Storm

Recently, some of the media in France have portrayed Jehovah's Witnesses as a dangerous religious cult. In 1996, Witnesses wholeheartedly shared in the distribution of more than nine million copies of a special information tract entitled *Jehovah's Witnesses—What You Need to Know*. Results were most positive.

A special effort was made to reach everyone. Many officials expressed their appreciation for the Witnesses. One municipal counselor wrote: "Jehovah's Witnesses have done well to distribute this tract. It sets the record straight." A doctor commented: "I've been waiting for this for a long time!" One man from the Paris area wrote: "I read *Jehovah's Witnesses—What You Need to Know* by chance. I'd like to know more and take advantage of the offer of a free home Bible study." Another wrote: "Thank you for your honesty." One Catholic lady told the Witnesses: "Ah! You've finally responded to these lies!"

A special joy for many young Witnesses in the Paris area was the preaching campaign organized for the Catholic World Youth Days in 1997. Although the temperature was over 95 degrees Fahrenheit, about 2,500 Witnesses took part. In the space of just a few days, they left 18,000 copies of the brochure *A Book for All People* with youngsters from all parts of the globe. In addition to giving a fine witness to Jehovah's name and sowing seeds of truth, the campaign galvanized the young Witnesses. One young sister, who cut short her vacation so as to have a full share in this special effort, wrote: "Jehovah has a happy people on earth who use their strength to praise his name. These two days, so full and rich, were truly worth all the vacations of a lifetime! (Psalm 84:10)"



February 28, 1998, marked the 65th anniversary of a decree issued by Hitler that resulted in the banning of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany. Witnesses in France used that date for public presentations in rented halls of the video *Jehovah's Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault*, which details the persecution Jehovah's people suffered. Over seven million invitations were distributed. Historians and former camp inmates gave moving testimonies. In the Paris area, almost 5,000 attended, including a significant number of non-Witnesses.

Many in Paris greatly appreciate spiritual light, and they are glad that Kingdom publishers are shining brightly as illuminators. It is as Jesus declared: "The harvest is great, but the workers are few." (Matthew 9:37) The determined spirit of Jehovah's Witnesses in overcoming the challenges of preaching in the city has made Paris a City of Light in a special sense, to Jehovah's praise.

ABRAHAM—AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH

"[Abraham was] the father of all those having faith."—ROMANS 4:11.

HE WAS the forefather of a mighty nation, a prophet, a businessman, a leader. Yet, among Christians today, he is best remembered for the quality that moved Jehovah God to view him as a friend—his unwavering faith. (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23) His name was Abraham, and the Bible calls him “the father of all those having faith.”—Romans 4:11.

² Did not men before Abraham, such as Abel, Enoch, and Noah, show faith? Yes, but it is with Abraham that the covenant was made to bless all nations of the earth. (Genesis 22:18) He thus became the figurative father of all who would put faith in the promised Seed. (Galatians 3:8, 9) In a sense, Abraham can be considered our father, for his faith serves as an example to be imitated. His whole life may be viewed as an expression of faith, for it consisted of numerous tests and trials. Indeed, long before Abraham faced what might be called his supreme test of faith—the command to offer up his son Isaac—Abraham proved his faith in many lesser trials. (Genesis 22:1, 2) Let us now examine some of these early tests of faith and see what lessons they can teach us today.

The Command to Leave Ur

³ The Bible introduces us to Abram (later known as Abraham) at Genesis 11:26, which

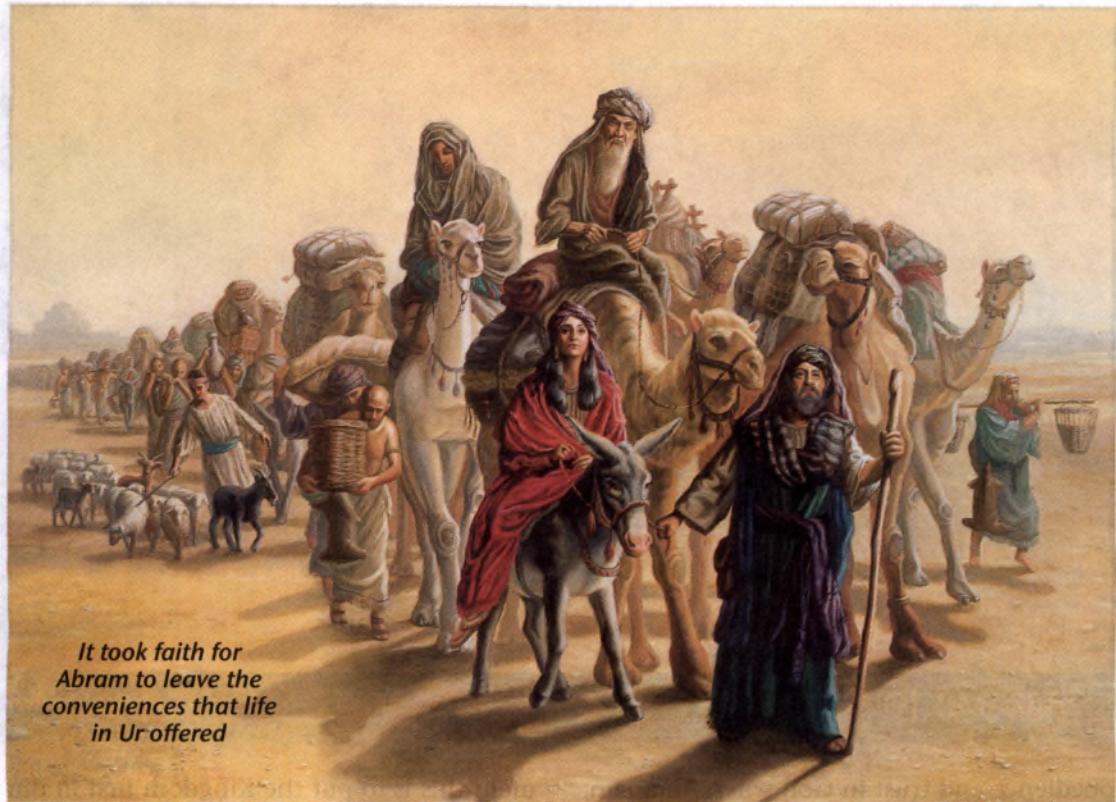
1, 2. (a) How is Abraham remembered among true Christians today? (b) Why is Abraham called “the father of all those having faith”?

3. What does the Bible tell us about Abram’s background?

says: “Terah lived on for seventy years, after which he became father to Abram, Nahor and Haran.” Abram was a descendant of God-fearing Shem. (Genesis 11:10-24) According to Genesis 11:31, Abram lived with his family in prosperous “Ur of the Chaldeans,” a city that once sat east of the Euphrates River.* Thus, he did not grow up as a tent-dwelling nomad but as a city dweller in a place that offered much in the way of luxury. Imported goods could be purchased in Ur’s bazaars. Whitewashed 14-room homes, complete with indoor plumbing, lined its streets.^{**} For all its material advantages, Ur presented a serious challenge to any who wanted to serve the true God. It was a city steeped in idolatry and superstition. Indeed, its landscape was dominated by a towering ziggurat honoring the moon-god Nanna. No doubt Abram was under much pressure to share in this vile worship, perhaps including pressure from some relatives. According to some Jewish traditions, Abram’s father, Terah, was himself a maker of idols. (Joshua 24:2, 14, 15) Whatever the case, Abram was not a practitioner of degrading false worship. His aged forefather Shem was still alive and no doubt shared

* Though the Euphrates presently runs about ten miles east of the former site of Ur, evidence indicates that in ancient times the river ran just west of the city. Thus, Abram could later be referred to as coming from “the other side of the [Euphrates] River.”—Joshua 24:3.

** 4. (a) What challenges did Ur present to worshippers of the true God? (b) How did Abram come to put faith in Jehovah?



*It took faith for
Abram to leave the
conveniences that life
in Ur offered*

his knowledge of the true God. As a result, Abram put faith in Jehovah, not Nanna!—Galatians 3:6.

A Test of Faith

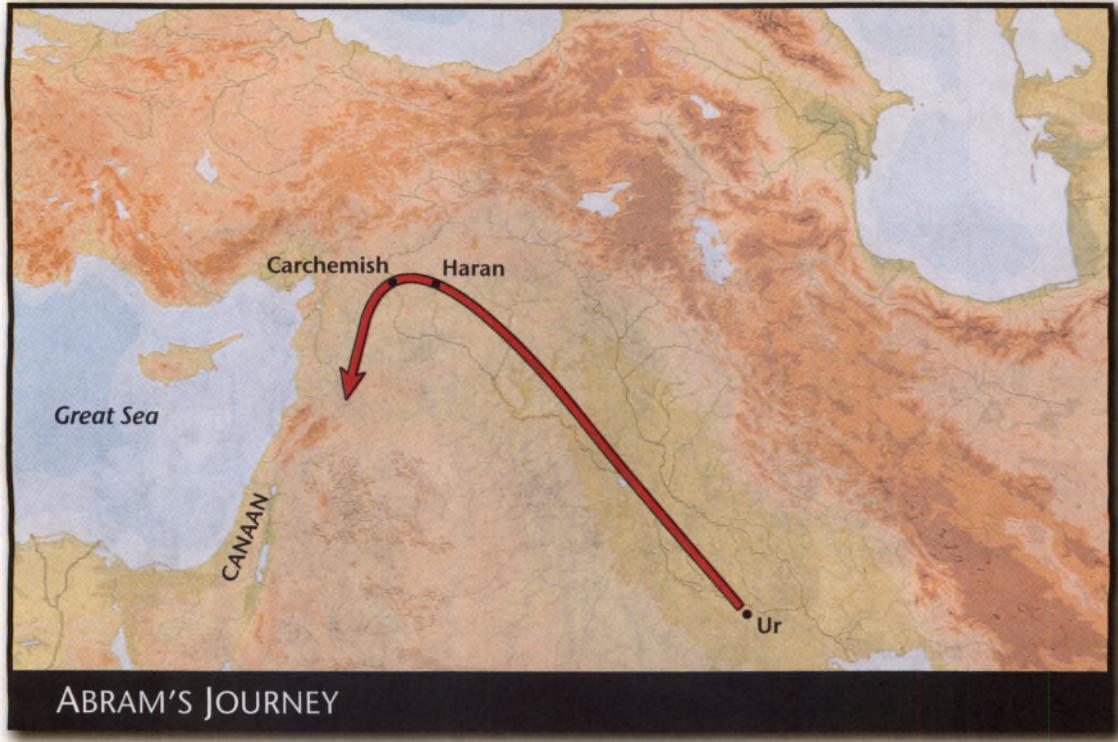
⁵ Abram's faith was to be put to the test. God appeared to him and commanded: "Go your way out of your country and from your relatives and from the house of your father to the country that I shall show you; and I shall make a great nation out of you and I shall bless you and I will make your name great; and prove yourself a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and him that calls down evil upon you I shall curse, and all the fami-

5. What command and promise did God give to Abram while he was still in Ur?

lies of the ground will certainly bless themselves by means of you."—Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 7:2, 3.

⁶ Abram was old and childless. How could he be made into "a great nation"? And just where was this land to which he was ordered to go? God did not then tell him. It therefore took real faith for Abram to leave prosperous Ur and all its comforts. The book *Family, Love and the Bible* observes about ancient times: "The gravest of all punishments that could be meted out to a family member who became guilty of a serious crime was to cast him out, to deprive him of his 'membership' in the family. . . . This is why it was such an extraordinary manifestation of unquestioning

6. Why did it take real faith for Abram to leave Ur?



Based on a map copyrighted by Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est. and Survey of Israel

ABRAM'S JOURNEY

obedience and trust in God when Abraham, following the divine call, left, not only his country, but also his kindred.”

⁷ Christians today may face similar tests. Like Abram, we may feel pressure to put material interests ahead of theocratic concerns. (1 John 2:16) We may have opposition from unbelieving family members, including disfellowshipped relatives, who might try to lure us into unwholesome association. (Matthew 10:34-36; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 15:33) Abram thus set a fine example for us. He put friendship with Jehovah ahead of everything—even family ties. He did not know exactly how, when, or where God’s promises would be fulfilled. Still, he was willing to stake his life on those promises. What fine encourage-

ment this is to put the Kingdom first in our own lives today!—Matthew 6:33.

⁸ What about Abram’s immediate family members? Evidently, Abram’s faith and conviction had a dramatic effect on them, for both his wife, Sarai, and his orphaned nephew named Lot were moved to obey God’s call and leave Ur. Abram’s brother Nahor and some of his offspring later left Ur and took up residence in Haran, where they worshiped Jehovah. (Genesis 24:1-4, 10, 31; 27:43; 29:4, 5) Why, even Abram’s father, Terah, agreed to leave with his son! The Bible thus credits him, as family head, with making the move toward Canaan. (Genesis 11:31) Might we too enjoy a measure of success if we tactfully witness to our relatives?

8. What effect did Abram’s faith have upon his immediate family members, and what might Christians learn from this?

⁹ Before setting out on his journey, Abram had much to do. He had to sell property and goods and purchase tents, camels, food, and needed equipment. Abram may have suffered financial loss in making such hurried preparations, but he was delighted to obey Jehovah. What a momentous day it must have been when the preparations were complete and Abram's caravan stood outside the walls of Ur, ready for travel! Following the curve of the Euphrates River, the caravan traveled northwestward. After weeks of travel, covering some 600 miles, it arrived in a city of northern Mesopotamia called Haran, a major stopping point for caravans.

¹⁰ Abram settled down in Haran, likely doing so out of consideration for his aged father, Terah. (Leviticus 19:32) Many Christians today likewise have the privilege of caring for aging or sick parents, some even having to make an adjustment in order to do so. When that is necessary, such ones can be assured that their loving sacrifices are "acceptable in God's sight."—1 Timothy 5:4.

¹¹ Time passed. "The days of Terah came to be two hundred and five years. Then Terah died in Haran." Abram was surely grieved by this loss, but when the mourning period was past, he immediately departed. "Abram was seventy-five years old when he went out from Haran. So Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot the son of his brother and all the goods that they had accumulated and the souls whom they had acquired in Haran, and they got on their way out to go to the land of Canaan." —Genesis 11:32; 12:4, 5.

9. What preparations did Abram have to make for his journey, and why might that have involved sacrifice?

10, 11. (a) Why did Abram likely remain in Haran for a time? (b) What encouragement can be given to Christians who care for aging parents?

¹² It is interesting to note that while in Haran, Abram 'accumulated goods.' Although he had made material sacrifices in order to leave Ur, Abram left Haran a wealthy man. Clearly, this was due to God's blessing. (Ecclesiastes 5:19) While God does not promise wealth to all his people today, he is faithful to his promise to provide for the needs of those who 'leave homes, brothers, or sisters' for the sake of the Kingdom. (Mark 10:29, 30) Abram also 'acquired souls,' that is, a body of servants. The Jerusalem Targum and the Chaldee Paraphrase say that Abram 'proselytized.' (Genesis 18:19) Does your faith move you to talk to your neighbors, workmates, or schoolmates? Far from settling down and forgetting God's command, Abram had used his time in Haran productively. But now his time there was up. "At that Abram went just as Jehovah had spoken to him."—Genesis 12:4.

Across the Euphrates

¹³ Once again Abram had to travel. Leaving Haran behind, his caravan headed west, traveling some 55 miles. It may be that Abram halted at a spot on the Euphrates across from the ancient trade center of Carchemish. This was a prime spot where caravans crossed.* On what date did Abram's caravan cross the river? The Bible indicates that it took place 430 years before the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt on Nisan 14, 1513 B.C.E. Says Exodus 12:41: "It came about at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, it even came about on *this very day* that all the armies of Jehovah went out of the land of Egypt." Evidently, then, the Abrahamic covenant went

* Centuries later, Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II used rafts to cross the Euphrates near Carchemish. Whether Abram had to do so himself or he and his caravan simply waded across, the Bible does not say.

12. What did Abram do while living in Haran?

13. When did Abram cross the Euphrates River, and what was the significance of this act?



By living in tents, Abram and his household "publicly declared that they were strangers and temporary residents"

into effect on Nisan 14, 1943 B.C.E., when Abram obediently crossed the Euphrates.

¹⁴ Abram had left behind a prosperous city. Yet, he could now envision "the city having real foundations," a righteous government over mankind. (Hebrews 11:10) Yes, with but scant information, Abram had begun to perceive the outline of God's purpose to redeem dying humankind. Today, we are blessed to have a far more extensive understanding of God's purposes than did Abram. (Proverbs 4: 18) The "city," or Kingdom government, for which Abram hoped is now a reality—established in the heavens since 1914. Should we not, therefore, be moved to acts of faith and trust in Jehovah?

14. (a) What could Abram see with his eyes of faith? (b) In what sense are God's people today more blessed than Abram?

The Sojourn in the Promised Land Begins

¹⁵ Genesis 12:5, 6 tells us: "Finally they came to the land of Canaan. And Abram went on through the land as far as the site of Shechem, near the big trees of Moreh." Shechem was 30 miles north of Jerusalem and lay in a fertile valley that has been described as the "paradise of the holy land." Even so, "at that time the Canaanite was in the land." Since the Canaanites were morally perverse, Abram would have to take pains to protect his family from their corrupting influence.—Exodus 34:11-16.

¹⁶ For the second time, "Jehovah now appeared to Abram and said: 'To your seed I am going to give this land.'" How thrilling! Of course, it took faith for Abram to rejoice in

15, 16. (a) Why was courage required for Abram to build an altar to Jehovah? (b) How can Christians today be bold like Abram?

something that would be enjoyed only by his future offspring. Even so, in response Abram “built an altar there to Jehovah, who had appeared to him.” (Genesis 12:7) One Bible scholar suggests: “The rearing [of] an altar in the land was in fact a form of taking possession of it on the ground of a right secured to the exercise of his faith.” Building such an altar was also a courageous act. Doubtless, this altar was of the type later specified in the Law covenant, consisting of natural (unhewn) stones. (Exodus 20:24, 25) It would be dramatically different in appearance from the altars used by the Canaanites. Abram thus took a bold public stand as a worshiper of the true God, Jehovah, exposing himself to ill will and possible physical danger. What about us today? Do some of us—particularly young ones—hold back from letting our neighbors or schoolmates know that we worship Jehovah? May Abram’s bold example encourage all of us to take pride in being servants of Jehovah!

¹⁷ Wherever Abram went, Jehovah’s worship always took priority. “Later he moved from there to the mountainous region to the east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. Then he built an altar there to Jehovah and began to call on the name of Jehovah.” (Genesis 12:8) The Hebrew phrase “call on the name” also means “declare (preach) the name.” No doubt, Abram boldly declared Jehovah’s name among his Canaanite neighbors. (Genesis 14:22-24) This reminds us of our duty to have as large a share as possible in making “public declaration to his name” today.—Hebrews 13:15; Romans 10:10.

¹⁸ Abram did not stay in any of those spots very long. “Afterward Abram broke camp, going then from encampment to encampment toward the Negeb”—the semiarid area

17. How did Abram prove himself to be a preacher of God’s name, and of what does this remind Christians today?

18. What was Abram’s relationship with the inhabitants of Canaan?

south of the mountains of Judah. (Genesis 12:9) By keeping on the move and establishing himself as a worshiper of Jehovah in each new location, Abram and his household “publicly declared that they were strangers and temporary residents in the land.” (Hebrews 11:13) All the while, they avoided getting too close to their pagan neighbors. Christians today must likewise remain “no part of the world.” (John 17:16) While we are kind and courteous to our neighbors and work associates, we are careful not to get entangled in behavior that reflects the spirit of the world alienated from God.—Ephesians 2:2, 3.

¹⁹ Let us not forget that adjusting to the rigors of nomadic life could not have been easy for either Abram or Sarai. They dined on the products of their flocks instead of on food purchased at one of Ur’s well-stocked bazaars; they lived in tents instead of a well-built home. (Hebrews 11:9) Abram’s days were active; he had much to do in managing his flocks and his servants. Sarai no doubt managed the tasks traditionally done by women of that culture: kneading flour, baking bread, spinning wool, sewing garments. (Genesis 18:6, 7; 2 Kings 23:7; Proverbs 31:19; Ezekiel 13:18) Still, new trials were looming on the horizon. Soon Abram and his household would be confronted with a situation that put their very lives at stake! Would Abram’s faith prove equal to the challenge?

19. (a) Why would nomadic life have presented challenges for Abram and Sarai? (b) What further challenges were looming on the horizon for Abram?

Did You Note?

- Why is Abram called “the father of all those having faith”?
- Why did it require faith for Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldeans?
- How did Abram show that he gave priority to Jehovah’s worship?

HAVE FAITH LIKE THAT OF ABRAHAM!

"Those who adhere to faith are the ones who are sons of Abraham."—GALATIANS 3:7.

ABRAM had left a life of comfort in Ur in obedience to Jehovah's command. The inconveniences he experienced in the following years were merely a prelude to the trial of faith that he faced in Egypt. The Bible account says: "Now a famine arose in the land." How easy it would have been for Abram to feel bitter about his situation! Rather, he took practical steps to provide for his family. "Abram made his way down toward Egypt to reside there as an alien, because the famine was severe in the land." Abram's large household would hardly go unnoticed in Egypt. Would Jehovah prove true to his promises and protect Abram from harm?—Genesis 12:10; Exodus 16:2, 3.

² We read at Genesis 12:11-13: "It came about that as soon as he got near to entering Egypt, then he said to Sarai his wife: 'Please, now! I well know you are a woman beautiful in appearance. So it is bound to happen that the Egyptians will see you and will say, "This is his wife." And they will certainly kill me, but you they will preserve alive. Please say you are my sister, in order that it may go well with me on your account, and my soul will be certain to live due to you.' " Although Sarai was over 65 years old, she was still strikingly beautiful. That put Abram's life at risk.*

* According to *Insight on the Scriptures* (published by Jehovah's Witnesses), "an ancient papyrus tells of a Pharaoh who commissioned armed men to seize an attractive woman and kill her husband." So Abram's fears were not exaggerated.

1. How did Abram cope with a new trial in Canaan?
- 2, 3. (a) Why did Abram conceal his wife's true identity? (b) In responding to the situation, how did Abram deal with his wife?

(Genesis 12:4, 5; 17:17) More important, Jehovah's interests were at stake, for he had said that through Abram's seed all the nations of the earth would bless themselves. (Genesis 12:2, 3, 7) Since Abram was still childless, it was critical that he remain alive.

³ Abram spoke to his wife about using a ploy they had earlier agreed upon, namely, to say that she was his sister. Note that although he had patriarchal authority, he did not abuse his position but elicited her cooperation and support. (Genesis 12:11-13; 20:13) In this, Abram set a fine example for husbands to exercise loving headship, and Sarai, by demonstrating her subjection, is an example for wives today.—Ephesians 5:23-28; Colossians 4:6.

⁴ Sarai could say that she was Abram's sister because she really was his half sister. (Genesis 20:12) Furthermore, he was not under obligation to divulge information to people who were not entitled to it. (Matthew 7:6) Faithful servants of God in modern times heed the Bible's command to be honest. (Hebrews 13:18) They would never, for instance, lie under oath in a court of law. When the physical or spiritual lives of their brothers are at stake, such as in times of persecution or civil distress, however, they heed Jesus' counsel to be "cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves."—Matthew 10:16; see *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1996, page 18, paragraph 19.

4. How should faithful servants of God today conduct themselves when the lives of their brothers are at stake?

⁵ How did Sarai respond to Abram's request? The apostle Peter describes women like her as "hoping in God." Sarai could therefore appreciate the spiritual issues involved. Besides, she loved and respected her husband. Sarai thus chose to 'subject herself to her husband' and conceal her married status. (1 Peter 3:5) Of course, doing so exposed her to risks. "As soon as Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians got to see the woman, that she was very beautiful. And the princes of Pharaoh also got to see her and they began praising her to Pharaoh, so that the woman was taken to the house of Pharaoh."—Genesis 12:14, 15.

Jehovah's Deliverance

⁶ How distressing this must have been for Abram and Sarai! It appeared that Sarai was in line to be violated. Moreover, Pharaoh, unaware of Sarai's true marital status, lavished gifts upon Abram, so that "he came to have sheep and cattle and asses and menservants and maidservants and she-asses and camels."* (Genesis 12:16) What contempt Abram must have felt for these gifts! As bad as things may have looked, Jehovah had not abandoned Abram.

⁷ "Then Jehovah touched Pharaoh and his household with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife." (Genesis 12:17) In some undisclosed way, the true cause of these "plagues" was revealed to Pharaoh. He responded immediately: "With that Pharaoh called Abram and said: 'What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, "She is my sister," so that I was about to take her as my

* Hagar, who later became Abram's concubine, may have been among the servants given to Abram at this time.—Genesis 16:1.

5. Why was Sarai willing to obey Abram's request?
- 6, 7. In what distressing circumstance did Abram and Sarai find themselves, and how did Jehovah deliver Sarai?

wife? And now here is your wife. Take her and go!' And Pharaoh issued commands to men concerning him, and they went escorting him and his wife and all that he had."—Genesis 12:18-20; Psalm 105:14, 15.

⁸ Today, Jehovah does not guarantee us protection from the ravages of death, crime, famine, or natural disaster. We are promised that Jehovah will always make available protection from things that can endanger our spirituality. (Psalm 91:1-4) He does so primarily by providing us timely warnings through his Word and "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45) What about the threat of death from persecution? While individuals may be allowed to die, God will never allow the extermination of his people as a whole. (Psalm 116:15) And if death claims some faithful ones, we can be confident of their resurrection.—John 5:28, 29.

Sacrificing to Keep Peace

⁹ With the famine in Canaan evidently over, "Abram went up out of Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the Negeb [the semiarid area south of the mountains of Judah]. And Abram was heavily stocked with herds and silver and gold." (Genesis 13:1, 2) Local residents would thus see him as a man of power and influence, a mighty chieftain. (Genesis 23:6) Abram had no desire to settle down and become involved with Canaanite politics. Instead, "he made his way from encampment to encampment out of the Negeb and to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at first between Bethel and Ai." As always, Abram gave priority to Jehovah's worship wherever he went.—Genesis 13:3, 4.

8. What kind of protection does Jehovah promise Christians today?
9. What indicates that Abram stayed on the move in Canaan?



¹⁰ "Now Lot, who was going along with Abram, also owned sheep and cattle and tents. So the land did not allow for them to dwell all together, because their goods had become many and they were not able to dwell all together. And a quarrel arose between the herders of Abram's livestock and the herders of Lot's livestock; and at that time the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling in the land." (Genesis 13:5-7) The land did not provide enough water and pastureage to sustain both Abram's and Lot's flocks. Tensions and hard feelings thus developed between the herders. Such bickering was unbecoming to worshipers of the true God. If the squabbling continued, a permanent breach might result. So how would Abram handle this situation? He had adopted Lot after the death of Lot's father, perhaps raising him as his own. As the older one of the two, was not Abram entitled to take the best for himself?

¹¹ But "Abram said to Lot: 'Please, do not let any quarreling continue between me and you and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we men are brothers. Is not the whole land available to you? Please, separate from me. If you go to the left, then I will go to the

10. What problem developed between the herders of Abram and Lot, and why was it important that it be resolved quickly?

11, 12. What generous offer did Abram make Lot, and why was Lot's choice unwise?

Abram did not assert his rights but put the interests of Lot ahead of his own

right; but if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.' " Near Bethel there exists what has been called "one of the great view-points of Palestine." Perhaps from there "Lot raised his eyes and saw the whole District of the Jordan, that all of it was a well-watered region before Jehovah brought Sodom and Gomorrah to ruin, like the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt as far as Zoar."—Genesis 13:8-10.

¹² Although the Bible describes Lot as "righteous," for some reason he did not defer to Abram in this matter, nor does it seem that he sought the older man's counsel. (2 Peter 2:7) "Lot chose for himself the whole District of the Jordan, and Lot moved his camp to the east. So they separated the one from the other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, but Lot dwelt among the cities of the District. Finally he pitched tent near Sodom." (Genesis 13:11, 12) Sodom was prosperous and offered many material benefits. (Ezekiel 16:49, 50) While Lot's choice may have seemed wise from a material point of view, it was a poor choice spiritually. Why? Because "the men of Sodom were bad and were gross sinners against Jehovah," says Genesis 13:13. Lot's decision to move there would eventually cause his family much grief.

¹³ Abram, though, displayed faith in Jehovah's promise that his seed would eventually own the entire land; he did not quibble over a small section of it. Generously, he acted in harmony with the principle later stated at 1 Corinthians 10:24: "Let each one keep seeking, not his own advantage, but that of the other person." This is a good reminder for those who might get involved in a financial dispute with a fellow believer. In-

13. How is Abram's example helpful to Christians who might become involved in a financial dispute?

stead of following the counsel at Matthew 18:15-17, some have taken their brothers to court. (1 Corinthians 6:1, 7) Abram's example shows that it is better to suffer financial loss than to bring reproach upon Jehovah's name or to damage the peace of the Christian congregation.—James 3:18.

¹⁴ Abram was to be blessed for his generosity. God declared: "I will constitute your seed like the dust particles of the earth, so that, if a man could be able to count the dust particles of the earth, then your seed could be numbered." How encouraging this revelation must have been for childless Abram! Next, God commanded: "Get up, go about in the land through its length and through its breadth, because to you I am going to give it." (Genesis 13:16, 17) No, Abram would not be permitted to settle in the comfort of a city. He was to remain separate from the Canaanites. Christians today must likewise stay separate from the world. They do not consider themselves superior to others, but they do not closely associate with any who might lure them to engage in unscriptural conduct. —1 Peter 4:3, 4.

¹⁵ In Bible times, before a person obtained possession of land, he was entitled to inspect it. Traveling about may thus have served as a continuous reminder that one day this land would belong to Abram's offspring. Obediently, "Abram continued to live in tents. Later on he came and dwelt among the big trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron; and there he proceeded to build an altar to Jehovah." (Genesis 13:18) Abram once again demonstrated the high priority he assigned to worship. Are family study, family prayer, and meeting attendance given high priority in your family?

14. How was Abram to be blessed for his generosity?
15. (a) What significance may there have been to Abram's travels? (b) What example did Abram set for Christian families today?

The Enemy Attacks

¹⁶ "Now it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam,* and Tidal king of Goiim, that these made war." In the original Hebrew, the opening words ("Now it came about in the days of . . .") have an ominous tone, pointing "to a period of trial ending in blessing." (Genesis 14:1, 2, footnote) The trial began as these four eastern kings and their armies made their devastating invasion of Canaan. Their objective? To squelch the rebellion of the five cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela. Sweeping aside all resistance, they "marched as allies to the Low Plain of Siddim, that is, the Salt Sea." Lot and his family lived nearby. —Genesis 14:3-7.

¹⁷ The Canaanite kings fiercely resisted the invaders, but they suffered a humiliating defeat. "Then the victors took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food

* Critics once claimed that Elam had never had such an influence in Shinar and that the account of Chedorlaomer's attack was a fabrication. For a discussion of archaeological evidence supporting the Bible's account, see *The Watchtower*, July 1, 1989, pages 4-7.

16. (a) Why are the opening words of Genesis 14:1 ominous in tone? (b) What was the reason for the invasion of the four eastern kings?
17. Why was Lot's being taken captive a test of faith for Abram?

Did You Note?

- How did the famine in the land of Canaan prove to be a test of faith for Abram?
- How did both Abram and Sarai set a good example for husbands and wives today?
- What lessons can we learn from Abram's handling of the dispute between his servants and those of Lot?



Abram showed reliance on Jehovah in rescuing his nephew Lot

and went on their way. They also took Lot the son of Abram's brother and his goods and continued on their way. He was then dwelling in Sodom." News of these devastating events soon reached Abram: "After that a man who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew. He was then tabernacling among the big trees of Mamre the Amorite, the brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were confederates of Abram. Thus Abram got to hear that his brother had been taken captive." (Genesis 14:8-14) What a test of faith! Would Abram nurture hard feelings toward his nephew for taking the best of the land? Remember, too, that these invaders came from his homeland, Shinar. To go up against them would be to destroy any possibility of ever returning home. Besides, what could Abram do against an army that the combined forces of Canaan had been unable to defeat?

¹⁸ Abram again put his unquestioning trust in Jehovah. "With that he mustered his trained men, three hundred and eighteen slaves born in his household, and went in pursuit up to Dan. And by night he resorted

18, 19. (a) How was Abram able to rescue Lot?
(b) Who received credit for this victory?

to dividing his forces, he and his slaves, against them, and thus he defeated them and kept in pursuit of them up to Hobah, which is north of Damascus. And he proceeded to recover all the goods, and he recovered also Lot his brother and his goods and also the women and the people." (Genesis 14:14-16) In a display of strong faith in Jehovah, Abram led his vastly outnumbered troops to victory, rescuing Lot and his family. Abram now encountered Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem. "Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine, and he was priest of the Most High God. Then he blessed him and said: 'Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, Producer of heaven and earth; and blessed be the Most High God, who has delivered your oppressors into your hand!' At that Abram gave him a tenth of everything." —Genesis 14:18-20.

¹⁹ Yes, to Jehovah belonged the victory. Because of his faith, Abram once again got to experience Jehovah's deliverance. God's people today do not engage in carnal warfare, but they do face many tests and challenges. Our next article will show how Abram's example can help us to deal with them successfully.

DO NOT GIVE UP IN DOING WHAT IS FINE

"Let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out." —GALATIANS 6:9.

As Jehovah's Witnesses, we delight in doing God's will. We also find refreshment in taking on the "yoke" of discipleship. (Matthew 11:29) Nevertheless, serving Jehovah with Christ is not always easy. The apostle Paul made this plain when he urged fellow Christians: "You have need of endurance, in order that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the fulfillment of the promise." (Hebrews 10:36) Endurance is needed because serving God can be challenging.

² The life of Abraham certainly is a testimony to that fact. Many times he faced difficult choices and stressful circumstances. Being ordered to leave a comfortable life in Ur was just the beginning. Before long he faced famine, hostility from his neighbors, the near loss of his wife, animosity from some kinsmen, and the brutality of war. Greater trials were yet to come. But Abraham never gave up in doing what was fine. This is remarkable when you consider that he did not have the complete Word of God, as we do today. Nevertheless, he no doubt knew of the first prophecy, in which God declared: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed." (Genesis 3:15) As the one through whom the Seed would come, Abraham would naturally be the focus of satanic enmity. Grasping this fact no doubt helped Abraham to endure his trials joyfully.

1, 2. (a) Why is endurance needed in order to serve God? (b) How did Abraham show endurance, and what helped him to do so?

³ Jehovah's people today should also expect tribulations. (1 Peter 1:6, 7) After all, Revelation 12:17 warns us that Satan is 'waging war' with the anointed remnant. Because of their close association with the anointed, the "other sheep" are likewise targets of Satan's wrath. (John 10:16) Besides the opposition Christians might face in their public ministry, they may also experience trialsome pressures in their personal lives. Paul exhorts us: "Let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out." (Galatians 6:9) Yes, although Satan is intent on destroying our faith, we must take our stand against him, solid in the faith. (1 Peter 5:8, 9) What can result from our faithful course? Explains James 1:2, 3: "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet with various trials, knowing as you do that this tested quality of your faith works out endurance."

Frontal Attack

⁴ Abraham's life certainly illustrates the "various trials" a Christian may face today. For example, he had to respond to the attack of the invaders from Shinar. (Genesis 14:11-16) Not surprisingly, Satan continues to use frontal attacks in the form of persecution.

3. (a) Why should Jehovah's people today expect tribulations? (b) What encouragement does Galatians 6:9 give us?
4. How has Satan used frontal attacks in an attempt to break the integrity of God's people?



Many Christian youths suffer persecution, being taunted by peers

Since the end of World War II, dozens of lands have imposed governmental bans on the Christian educational work of Jehovah's Witnesses. The 2001 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* tells of the violence Christians in Angola had to endure at the hands of enemies. Relying on Jehovah, our brothers in such lands have steadfastly refused to quit! They have responded, not by resorting to violence or rebellion, but by discreetly persisting in the preaching work.—Matthew 24:14.

⁵ However, persecution does not necessarily involve violence. Abraham was eventually blessed with two sons—Ishmael and Isaac. Genesis 21:8-12 tells us that on one occasion Ishmael was “poking fun” at Isaac. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul shows that this was more serious than childish play, for he describes Ishmael as *persecuting* Isaac! (Galatians 4:29) Ridicule from schoolmates and verbal attacks by opposers can thus legitimately be called persecution. A young Christian named Ryan recalls the torment he suf-

fered at the hands of classmates: “The 15-minute bus ride to and from school seemed like hours as I was verbally abused. They burned me with paper clips that they had heated with cigarette lighters.” The reason for this harsh treatment? “My theocratic training made me different from the other young people at school.” Nevertheless, with his parents’ support, Ryan was able to endure faithfully. Young ones, have the taunts of your peers caused you to feel discouraged? Well, do not give up! By enduring faithfully, you will experience the fulfillment of Jesus’ words: “Happy are you when people reproach you and persecute you and lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against you for my sake.”—Matthew 5:11.

Everyday Anxieties

⁶ Most of the trials we face today involve normal everyday anxieties. Abraham himself had to cope with tensions that had developed between his herdsmen and those of his nephew Lot. (Genesis 13:5-7) In a simi-

5. How might Christian youths be victims of persecution at school?

6. What things can strain relationships among fellow Christians today?

lar way today, personality differences and petty jealousies can strain relationships and even threaten the peace of the congregation. "Where jealousy and contentiousness are, there disorder and every vile thing are." (James 3:16) How important it is for us not to give up but to put peace ahead of pride, as did Abraham, and seek the interests of others! —1 Corinthians 13:5; James 3:17.

⁷ Being peaceable can be a challenge when we feel that we have been unjustly treated by a fellow believer. Proverbs 12:18 says: "There exists the one speaking thoughtlessly as with the stabs of a sword." Thoughtless words, even if spoken innocently, can cause deep pain. The pain is even greater if we feel that we have been slandered or made the victim of cruel gossip. (Psalm 6:6, 7) But a Christian cannot allow hurt feelings to cause him to give up! If you are in such a situation, take the initiative to correct matters by speaking in a kindly way to the offending one. (Matthew 5: 23, 24; Ephesians 4:26) Be inclined to forgive that person. (Colossians 3:13) By letting go of resentment, we make it possible to heal both our own emotions and our relationship with our brother. Abraham did not hold on to any resentment that he might have felt toward Lot. Why, Abraham rushed to the defense of Lot and his family!—Genesis 14:12-16.

Self-Imposed Trials

⁸ Admittedly, some trials are self-imposed. For example, Jesus commanded his followers: "Stop storing up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal." (Matthew 6:19) Yet, some brothers 'stab

7. (a) What should a person do if he has been hurt by a fellow Christian? (b) How did Abraham set a fine example in maintaining good relations with others?

8. (a) How might Christians 'stab themselves all over with many pains'? (b) Why was Abraham able to have a balanced view of material things?

themselves all over with many pains' by putting material interests ahead of Kingdom interests. (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) Abraham was willing to sacrifice material comforts in order to please God. "By faith he resided as an alien in the land of the promise as in a foreign land, and dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the very same promise. For he was awaiting the city having real foundations, the builder and maker of which city is God." (Hebrews 11:9, 10) Abraham's faith in a future "city," or divine government, helped him not to rely on riches. Would we not be wise to do the same?

⁹ Consider another aspect. The Bible gives this strong direction: "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deceiving his own mind." (Galatians 6:3) Furthermore, we are urged to do "nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism, but with lowliness of mind." (Philippians 2:3) Some bring trials upon themselves by failing to apply this counsel. Driven by a desire for prominence rather than by a desire to do "a fine work," they become discouraged and disgruntled when they do not receive privileges in the congregation.—1 Timothy 3:1.

¹⁰ Abraham set a fine example in 'not thinking more of oneself than necessary.' (Romans 12:3) When he encountered Melchizedek, Abraham did not act as if his favored position with God made him superior. On the contrary, he acknowledged Melchizedek's superior position as priest by paying him a tithe. (Hebrews 7:4-7) Christians today should likewise be willing to conduct themselves as 'lesser ones' and not demand the limelight. (Luke 9:48) If those taking the lead in the congregation seem to be withholding certain privileges from you, do some honest self-examination to determine what refinements you can make

9, 10. (a) How can a desire for prominence create a trial? (b) How might a brother today conduct himself as "a lesser one"?

in your personality or way of handling things. Instead of becoming bitter over the privileges you do not have, take full advantage of the privilege you *do* have—the privilege of helping others to come to know Jehovah. Yes, “humble yourselves . . . under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”—1 Peter 5:6.

Faith in the Things Unseen

¹¹ Another trial may involve the seeming delay of the end of this wicked system of things. According to 2 Peter 3:12, Christians are to be “awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah.” However, many have awaited this “day” for years, some for decades. As a result, some may become discouraged and lose their sense of urgency.

¹² Once again, consider Abraham’s example. He built his whole life on faith in God’s promises, even though there was no chance that they would all be fulfilled within his lifetime. True, he lived long enough to see his son Isaac grow up. But it would be centuries before Abraham’s offspring could be compared

11, 12. (a) Why may some in the congregation lose their sense of urgency? (b) How did Abraham set a fine example in building his life on faith in God’s promises?

Did You Note?

- Why should Jehovah’s people today expect tests and tribulation?
- In what ways might Satan use frontal attacks?
- How can personal conflicts among Christians be resolved?
- How can pride and egotism create trials?
- In what way did Abraham set a good example in waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promises?

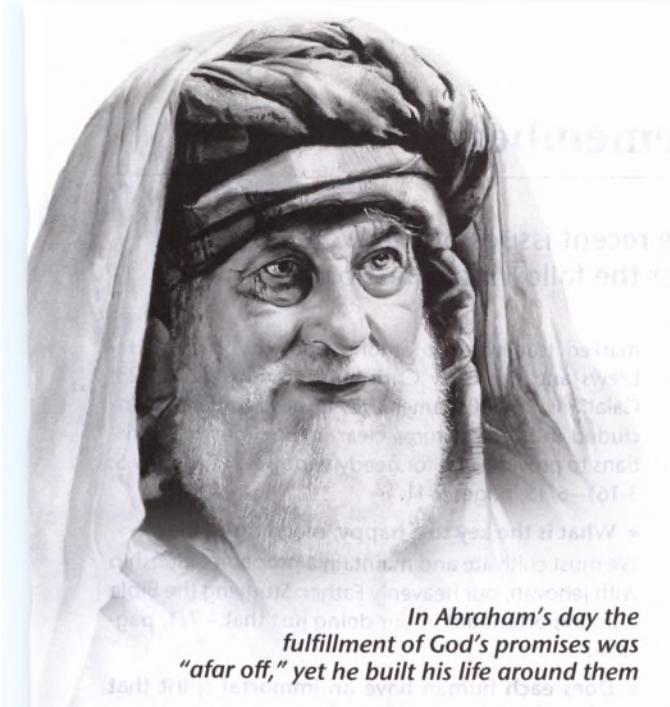
to “the stars of the heavens” or “the grains of sand that are on the seashore.” (Genesis 22:17) Abraham did not become embittered or discouraged, however. The apostle Paul thus said of Abraham and other patriarchs: “In faith all these died, although they did not get the fulfillment of the promises, but they saw them afar off and welcomed them and publicly declared that they were strangers and temporary residents in the land.”—Hebrews 11:13.

¹³ If Abraham could keep his life centered on promises the fulfillment of which were “afar off,” how much more so should we today, with the fulfillment of these things so near! Like Abraham, we must view ourselves as “temporary residents” in Satan’s system, refusing to settle down in a self-indulgent life-style. Naturally, we would prefer that this “end of all things” be here, not simply near. (1 Peter 4:7) Perhaps we are suffering from serious health problems. Or economic pressures may weigh heavily upon us. We must remember, though, that Jehovah brings the end not just to rescue us from grievous circumstances but to sanctify his own name. (Ezekiel 36:23; Matthew 6:9, 10) The end will come, not necessarily at a time convenient to us, but at a time that best serves Jehovah’s purposes.

¹⁴ Remember, too, that “Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) Notice, God is “patient with *you*”—members of the Christian congregation. Evidently, some of us need more time to make changes and adjustments so as to “be

13. (a) How are Christians today like “temporary residents”? (b) Why will Jehovah bring an end to this system of things?

14. How does God’s patience benefit Christians today?



In Abraham's day the fulfillment of God's promises was "afar off," yet he built his life around them

found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace." (2 Peter 3:14) Should we not be grateful, then, that God has shown such patience?

Finding Joy Despite Obstacles

¹⁵ The life of Abraham teaches many lessons to Christians today. He showed not only faith but patience, shrewdness, courage, and unselfish love. He gave the worship of Jehovah priority in his life. It must be remembered, though, that the superlative example for us to imitate was set by Jesus Christ. He too faced numerous trials and tests, but through them all, he never lost his joy. Why? Because he kept his mind focused on the hope ahead. (Hebrews 12:2, 3) Paul thus prayed: "Now may the God who supplies endurance and comfort grant you to have among yourselves the same mental attitude that Christ Jesus had." (Romans 15:5) With the right mental attitude, we can find joy despite obstacles that Satan may throw our way.

15. How was Jesus able to maintain his joy in the face of trials, and how does imitating him benefit Christians today?

¹⁶ When problems seem overwhelming, remind yourself that just as he loved Abraham, Jehovah loves you. He wants you to succeed. (Philippians 1:6) Put your full trust in Jehovah, confident that "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) Develop the habit of reading God's Word daily. (Psalm 1:2) Persevere in prayer, asking Jehovah to help you endure. (Philippians 4:6) He will "give holy spirit to those asking him." (Luke 11:13) Take advantage of the provisions Jehovah has made to sustain you spiritually, such as our Bible-based publications. Also, seek out the support of the brotherhood. (1 Peter 2:17) Faithfully attend Christian meetings, for there you will receive the encouragement you need in order to endure. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Rejoice in the conviction that your endurance leads to an approved condition in God's eyes and that your faithfulness makes his heart rejoice!—Proverbs 27:11; Romans 5:3-5.

¹⁷ Abraham was loved by God as his "friend." (James 2:23) Even so, Abraham's life was a series of stressful trials and tribulations. Christians can therefore expect nothing less during these evil "last days." In fact, the Bible warns us that "wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse." (2 Timothy 3:1, 13) Instead of giving in to despair, realize that the pressures we face give evidence that the end of Satan's wicked system is near. But Jesus reminds us that "he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved." (Matthew 24:13) So, 'do not give up in doing what is fine!' Imitate Abraham, and be among those who "through faith and patience inherit the promises."—Hebrews 6:12.

16. What can we do when our problems seem to be overwhelming?

17. Why do Christians not give in to despair?

Do You Remember?

Have you appreciated reading the recent issues of *The Watchtower*?

Well, see if you can answer the following questions:

- Why should the questions raised in Job chapter 38 merit consideration even today?

Many of the wonderful works to which God directed attention cannot be fully understood even by modern scientists. These include how gravity keeps the earth in orbit, what exactly light is, why the endless variety of snowflakes, how raindrops form, and how energy is involved in thunderstorms.—4/15, pages 4-11.

- What Bible examples can help us cope with negative feelings?

Asaph, Baruch, and Naomi faced periods of discouragement or other negative feelings, and the Scriptural record of their coping successfully with such situations can help us.—4/15, pages 22-4.

- What are some practical ways to help Christian widows?

Friends can kindly and clearly offer to help. Family members or others may be in a position to offer financial or material help, where there is genuine need. Fellow Christians can also help by offering the loving hand of friendship, providing spiritual support and comfort.—5/1, pages 5-7.

- Why is it important to marry "only in the Lord," as 1 Corinthians 7:39 advises?

Marriages to unbelievers have often proved disastrous. Moreover, following this divine advice is a matter of loyalty to Jehovah God. When we comply with God's Word, our hearts do not condemn us. (1 John 3:21, 22)—5/15, pages 20-1.

- Since Jehovah is the one who can forgive our sins, why do Christians confess serious sins to the older men in the congregation?

Yes, it is Jehovah's forgiveness of serious sins that a Christian needs to seek. (2 Samuel 12:13) But just as the prophet Nathan provided help for David, mature older men in the congregation can help remorseful sinners. Going to the elders is in line with the direction given at James 5:14, 15.—6/1, page 31.

- What evidence is there that we should care for orphans and widows who are in need?

The historical record shows that providing such care

marked true worship among both the ancient Hebrews and the early Christians. (Exodus 22:22, 23; Galatians 2:9, 10; James 1:27) The apostle Paul included in the Scriptures clear instructions for Christians to provide care for needy widows. (1 Timothy 5:3-16)—6/15, pages 9-11.

- What is the key to a happy, meaningful life?

We must cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with Jehovah, our heavenly Father. Studying the Bible is an important aid in our doing just that.—7/1, pages 4-5.

- Does each human have an immortal spirit that survives death?

Though some people believe that a spirit—not a soul—is immortal, the Bible does not support this idea. It shows that when a human dies, he returns to the dust and is nonexistent. But God retains the ability to restore him to life, so any hope for future life, through a resurrection, rests with God. (Ecclesiastes 12:7)—7/15, pages 3-6.

- Where was Daniel when the three Hebrews were tested on the plain of Dura?

The Bible does not say. It may be that Daniel was not obliged to be there because of his rank, or he may have been away on an official assignment. But we can be confident that he did not compromise his faithfulness to Jehovah.—8/1, page 31.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

**The Devil
—More Than Just Superstition**

"Seek Peace and Pursue It"

"What Is Brewing in France?"

Questions From Readers

For how long a period of time did Job suffer?

Some people think that Job's trials extended over many years, but the book of Job does not point to such protracted suffering.

The first phase of Job's trials, the loss of family members and goods, appears to have been quite short. We read: "Now it came to be the day when [Job's] sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in the house of their brother the firstborn." Job got one report after another that he had suffered loss—of his cattle, his asses, his sheep, his camels, and of the servants caring for those animals. Apparently, right afterward Job learned of the death of his sons and daughters, who "were eating and drinking wine in the house of their brother the firstborn." It seems that all of this occurred on one day.—Job 1:13-19.

The next phase of Job's trials must have taken more time. Satan approached Jehovah and claimed that Job would fail if the suffering touched him personally—his own body.

Then Job was struck with "a malignant boil from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." The spread of this disease over his entire body may have taken a while. And it would likely have taken time for the news of "all this calamity" to reach

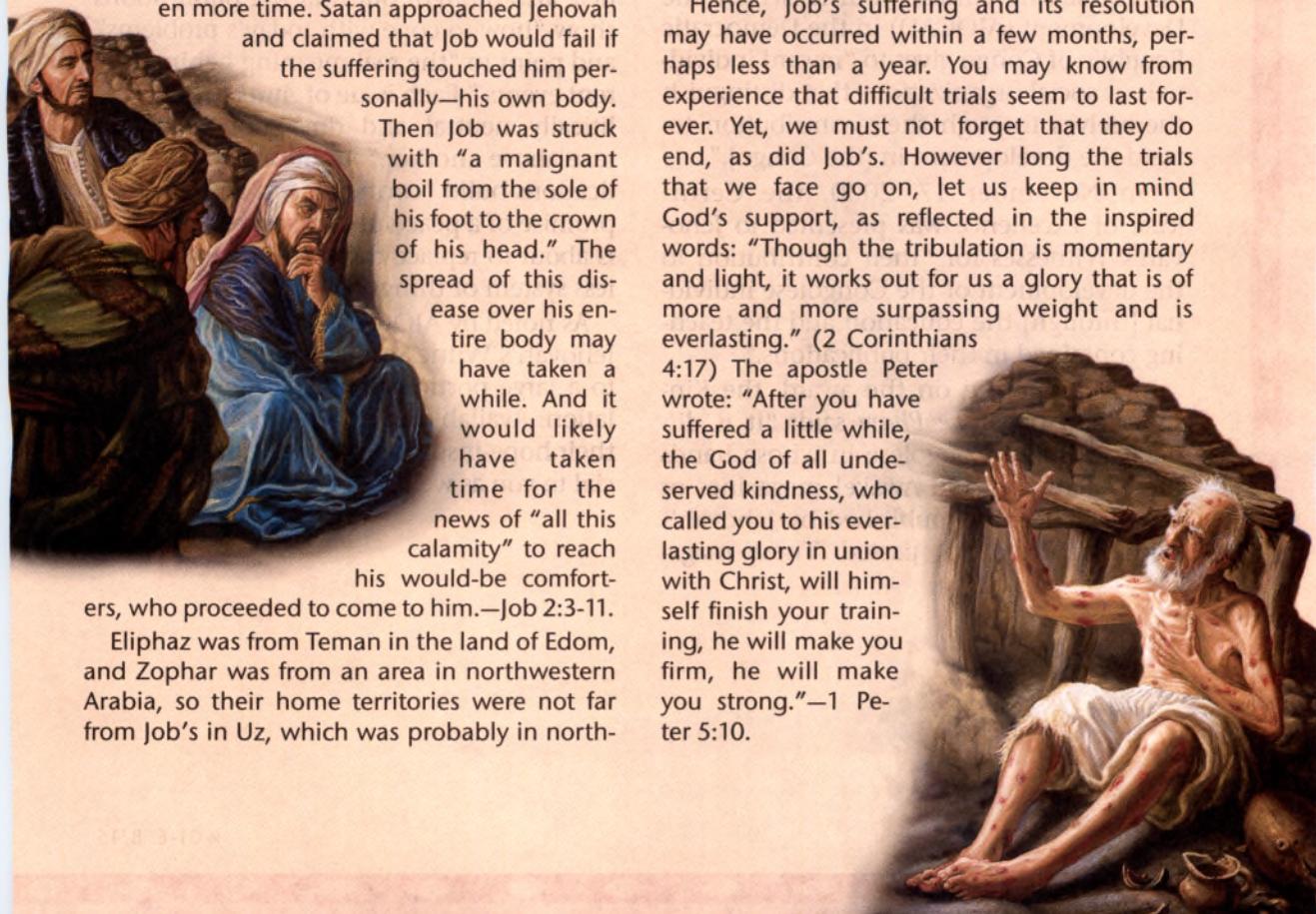
his would-be comforters, who proceeded to come to him.—Job 2:3-11.

Eliphaz was from Teman in the land of Edom, and Zophar was from an area in northwestern Arabia, so their home territories were not far from Job's in Uz, which was probably in north-

ern Arabia. However, Bildad was a Shuhite, and it is understood that his people lived along the Euphrates. If Bildad was in his home area at the time, it might have taken weeks or months for him to hear of Job's situation and to travel to Uz. Of course, it is possible that the three were in Job's vicinity when his suffering began. In any event, when Job's three companions arrived, they "kept sitting with him on the earth seven days and seven nights" without speaking.—Job 2:12, 13.

Then came the final phase of Job's trials, the details of which fill many chapters of the book. There was a series of debates or speeches by those supposed comforters, and Job often responded. After that ended, the young man Elihu offered reproof, and Jehovah corrected Job from the heavens.—Job 32:1-6; 38:1; 40:1-6; 42:1.

Hence, Job's suffering and its resolution may have occurred within a few months, perhaps less than a year. You may know from experience that difficult trials seem to last forever. Yet, we must not forget that they do end, as did Job's. However long the trials that we face go on, let us keep in mind God's support, as reflected in the inspired words: "Though the tribulation is momentary and light, it works out for us a glory that is of more and more surpassing weight and is everlasting." (2 Corinthians 4:17) The apostle Peter wrote: "After you have suffered a little while, the God of all undeserved kindness, who called you to his everlasting glory in union with Christ, will himself finish your training, he will make you firm, he will make you strong."—1 Peter 5:10.





REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO

Association des Journalistes Congolais et Africains pour le Développement



AJOCAD



- Vu les statuts qui la régissent, spécialement dans son article 10 alinéa 4,
- Etant donné qu'un prix d'excellence a été institué par ses membres pour récompenser occasionnellement les individus ou organisations sociales qui se distinguent par leur contribution au développement en RDC,
- Entendu que les membres du jury ont majoritairement décidé en toute souveraineté, l'AJOCAD décerne le présent

DIPLOME D'EXCELLENCE

A: L'ASBL LES TÉMOINS DE JÉHOVAH EN RDC.....

Motifs : Leur contribution au développement de l'homme congolais, à travers l'instruction et l'enseignement, contenus dans leurs publications.

Fait à Kinshasa, le 17/11/2000

Le Président,

Paulin TUNSELE MITANGU

Le Vice-Président

Serge EBONDO

Les Membres du jury

NKONGOLO NGALULA
NKUMA MULAMBA
Clement KONDOKO

[Handwritten signatures of the three members of the jury]

Certificate of Excellence

THAT is what the Association of Congolese and African Journalists for the Development (AJOCAD) in the Democratic Republic of Congo gives to "reward individuals or social organizations that distinguish themselves through their contribution toward the development in [the Congo]."

On November 17, 2000, the Certificate of Excellence was presented to Jehovah's Witnesses for "their contribution to the development of the Congolese individual [through] the education and the teaching contained in their publications."

In commenting on the award, the Kinshasa newspaper *Le Phare* said: "It is difficult to find a Congolese in whose hands the Watchtower and Awake! magazines or other publications published by Jehovah's Witnesses have not passed. These maga-

zines [discuss] all aspects of life." The article also brought out that the publications show "how to cope with today's problems" and point to "the real meaning behind current events." Each issue of *Awake!* "stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another." Additionally, the publications build "confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things."

As noted by AJOCAD, the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses have proved beneficial to a large portion of the Congolese population. Available in hundreds of languages, their hope-inspiring message can be beneficial to you as well.