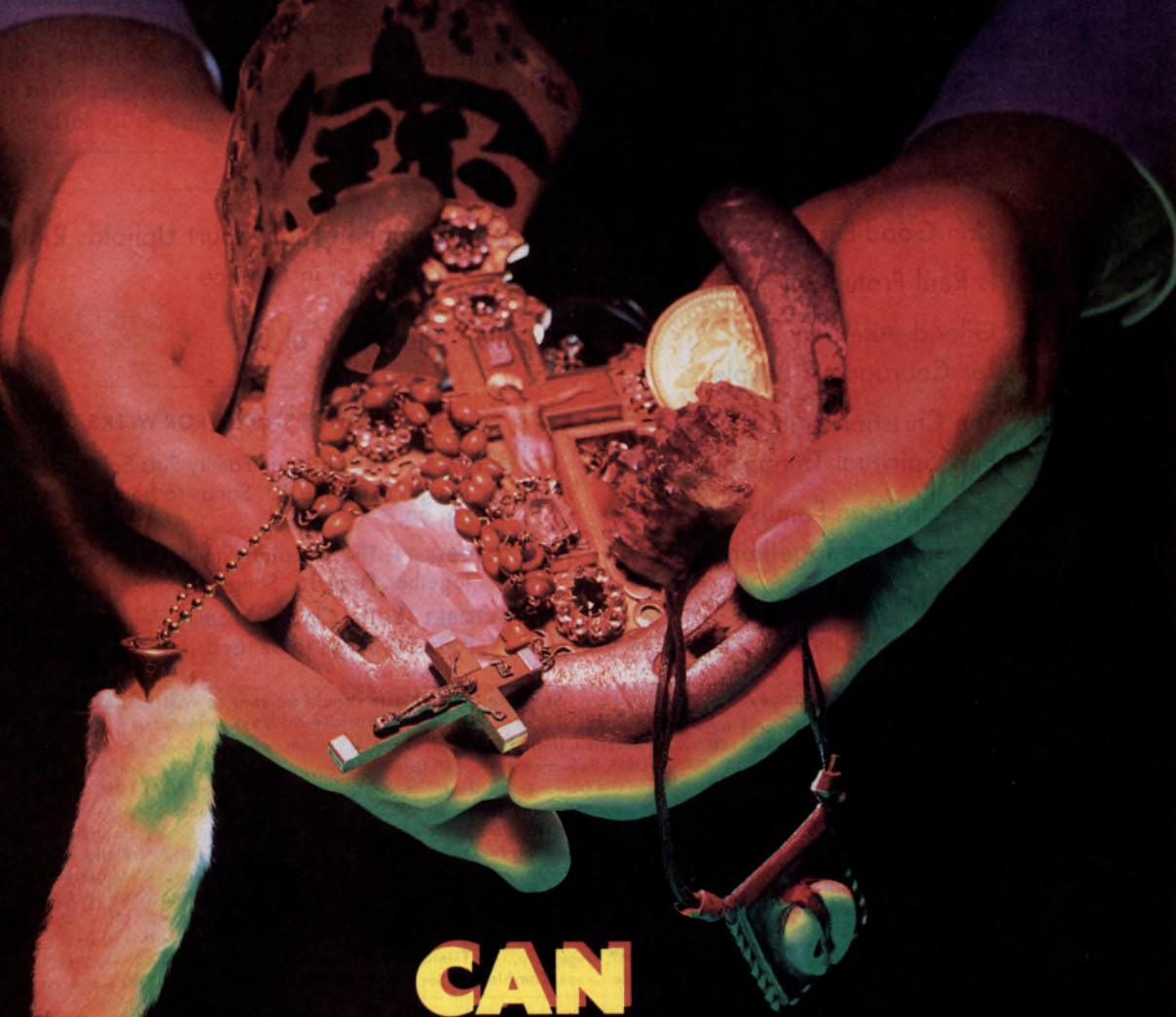


SEPTEMBER 1, 1993

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**CAN
GOOD-LUCK CHARMS
PROTECT YOU?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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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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Can Good-Luck Charms Protect You?

A CRYSTAL carried in a Brazilian man's pocket. An American athlete's lucky penny. A Saint Brigid's cross hanging over a bed in an Irish family's home. Millions of people use such objects as good-luck charms or amulets.* They believe that possessing these charms can ward off harm and bring them good luck.

Consider Brazil, for example. According to the magazine *Veja*, many Brazilians carry "pieces of rock and semiprecious stones to which is attributed the power to attract luck and vital energies to the one who owns them." Fearing to slight the occult powers, others in that land place a religious emblem or text on the wall of their home. Some even use the Bible as a sacred charm; they display it on a table, permanently opened to Psalm 91.

In southern Africa, *muti*, or traditional medicine, is similarly used, not simply for its healing properties, but as protection against bad luck. Sickness, death, financial reverses, and even failed romances are often thought to result from spells cast by enemies or from a failure to appease dead ancestors. *Muti* is usually obtained from a rural medicine man, who concocts potions from plants, trees, or animal parts. Interestingly, though, *muti* is



hardly restricted to the rurals; the practice is widespread in South African cities. Businessmen and university graduates are among those relying on *muti*.

The search for good luck is also common in European lands. The book *Studies in Folklife Presented to Emyr Estyn Evans* informs us: "There is scarcely a parish or town in Ireland in which horseshoes may not be seen fastened on or above the doors of some dwellings or outbuildings." Even more commonplace in that land are rush crosses hanging over beds and doors to bring good luck. Observers say that, on the surface, many of the Irish treat such superstitions in a lighthearted manner. Yet, few ignore them completely.

The Search for Protection

What is the appeal of such superstitious beliefs? Apparently they serve to fill the basic need for safety that people have. Really, how many feel safe in their homes, much less walking the streets at night? Add to that the strain of making a living and caring for children. Yes, we live in what the Bible calls "a time of troubles." (2 Timothy 3:1, *The New English Bible*) So it is only natural that people have a strong desire for protection.

This may be particularly so in cultures where various forms of spiritism and magic are popular. Fear of the supposed spirits of the dead or of being the victim of an enemy's curse can make the so-called protection of a charm or an amulet seem indispensable. At

* Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines "amulet" as "a charm (as an ornament) often inscribed with a magic incantation or symbol to protect the wearer against evil (as disease or witchcraft) or to aid him."

any rate, *The World Book Encyclopedia* notes: "Most people have fears that make them insecure. Superstitions help overcome such fears by providing security. They reassure people that they will get what they want and avoid trouble."

The Dubious Power of Amulets

Hence, amulets, talismans, and charms of various types and shapes are worn, carried, and displayed by people throughout the world. But is it reasonable to believe that a man-made charm can offer any real protection? Many of the items popularly used as charms are mass-produced commercial products. Does it not defy logic and common sense to believe that something assembled in a factory could have magical powers? And even a potion specially prepared by a rural medicine man is nothing more than a mixture of lowly ingredients—roots, herbs, and the like. Why would such a blend have magical properties? Besides, is there any real evidence that people who utilize amulets live any longer—or are any happier—than those

who do not? Do not the ones making such magic charms themselves fall victim to sickness and death?

Far from giving people genuine protection and a feeling of control over their lives, the superstitious use of amulets and charms actually discourages people from intelligently facing up to their problems and encourages them to look to luck as a cure-all. Trusting in the power of amulets can also give the user a false sense of security. A man under the influence of alcohol may claim that his reflexes and abilities are unimpaired, but if he tries to drive, he is likely to bring harm to himself or others. One who places his confidence in the power of an amulet may likewise do himself harm. Laboring under the illusion of being protected, he may be prone to take foolish chances or make unwise decisions.

Belief in the power of amulets poses yet other grave risks that lie hidden from the millions who use them. What are these dangers, and is there any legitimate way to ward off harm? The following article will deal with these questions.

Is Real Protection Possible?

ESSAYIST Ralph Waldo Emerson once declared: "Shallow men believe in luck . . . Strong men believe in cause and effect." Yes, a person who puts faith in the power of magical amulets and good-luck charms surrenders the control of his life to unseen forces. He throws logic and reason to the wind and bows to irrational, superstitious fears.

The Bible, however, can free one from such fears. It shows that amulets and charms are impotent, powerless. How so? Well, according to *The New Encyclopaedia*

Britannica, "amulets are thought to derive power from their connection with [among other things] natural forces." These forces may be 'the spirits of the dead' or 'the power of luck.' But the Bible clearly shows that the dead "are conscious of nothing at all." (*Ecclesiastes 9:5*) Thus, there are no spirits of the dead that can help or hurt the living; nor is there any invisible force like luck that can work in your behalf.

In Bible times, God condemned those leaving him, those forgetting his holy mountain, "those setting in order a table for the

god of Good Luck and those filling up mixed wine for the god of Destiny." Rather than gaining protection, those advocates of luck were consigned to destruction. "I will destine you men to the sword," said Jehovah God.—Isaiah 65:11, 12.

By practicing the magical arts, the ancient nation of Babylon likewise put faith in the protection of mysterious powers. But Babylon suffered calamity nonetheless. "Persist in your spells and your monstrous sorceries," challenged the prophet Isaiah. "Maybe you can get help from them . . . But no! in spite of your many wiles you are powerless." (Isaiah 47:12, 13, *The New English Bible*) In time that nation ceased to exist altogether. Faith in the occult had proved vain. Similarly, no magical amulet, charm, or talisman can do anything to help or protect you.

A Form of Idolatry

Still, some may see no harm in carrying a crystal, a rabbit's foot, or a religious medal. Are these not little more than harmless trinkets? Not according to the Bible. It says that occult paraphernalia is anything but harmless.

The use of amulets is a form of idolatry—something clearly condemned in God's Word. (Exodus 20:4, 5) True, a person may not feel that he is directly worshiping an amulet or a talisman. But does it not manifest a reverent, worshipful attitude toward unseen occult powers if one merely owns one? And is it not true that worshipful attention (such as kissing) is often given the charms themselves? Yet the Bible, at 1 John 5:21, counsels Christians: "Guard yourselves from idols." Would this not include items viewed as charms or amulets?

The Snare of the Occult

Through the use of amulets, many also become ensnared by the occult. True, some

may carry a crystal or a magical potion more out of custom than out of conviction. But just as flirting with a prostitute may lead to contracting AIDS, flirting with the occult may also have disastrous consequences. It was with good reason that God prohibited the Israelites from practicing magic, divination, and fortune-telling. "Everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah," warns the Bible.—Deuteronomy 18:10-14.

Why this stern prohibition? Because the unseen forces behind such practices are neither the spirits of the dead nor the power of luck but are Satan the Devil and his demons.* And the use of amulets is directly linked with demon worship. Says *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*: "In sorcery, the use of drugs, whether simple or potent, was generally accompanied by incantations and appeals to occult powers, with the provision of various charms, amulets, etc."

One possessing an occult charm is therefore dabbling in spiritism. He risks being brought under the sinister influence and control of "the god of this system of things"—Satan the Devil. (2 Corinthians 4:4) With

* For further information, see the brochure *Spirits of the Dead—Can They Help You or Harm You? Do They Really Exist?* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

In Our Next Issue

Why Love Your Neighbor?

Endurance—Vital for Christians

They Compassionately
Shepherd the Little Sheep

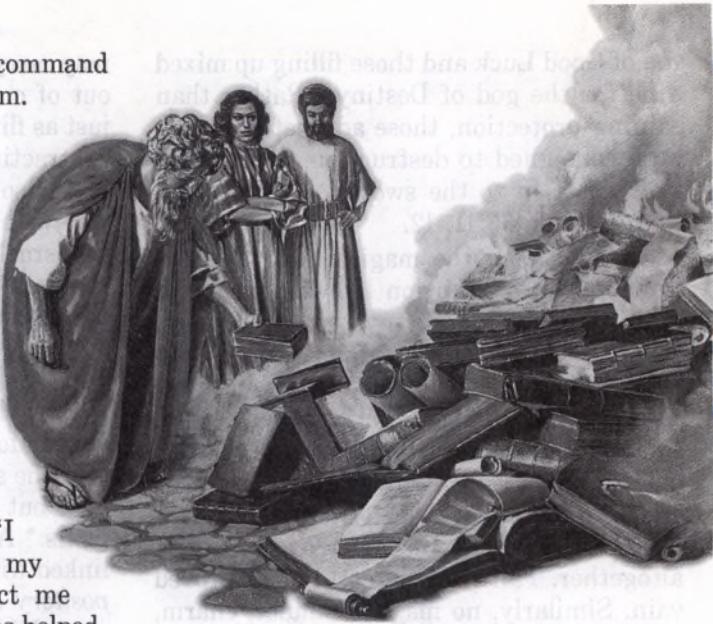
good reason, then, does the Bible command us to avoid all forms of spiritism.
—Galatians 5:19-21.

Breaking the Chains of Superstition

The World Book Encyclopedia nonetheless observes: "Superstitions will probably have a part in life as long as people fear each other and have uncertainties about the future." But Jehovah's Witnesses are helping many to free themselves from harmful superstitions. A South African woman recalls: "I was troubled by evil spirits, and my house was full of *muti* to protect me against them." Jehovah's Witnesses helped her to see the dangers of toying with the occult. Her response? "I started to throw away everything that I possessed that was connected with demonism," she says. "My health improved. I dedicated my life to serve Jehovah and was baptized." She is now free from superstition and spiritism.

Consider, too, the Nigerian herbalist who mixed spiritism with his healing arts. Often using threats and curses, he would customarily drive Jehovah's Witnesses away from his home when they would call. Once he even prepared a special potion, uttered some incantations over it, and blew it in the face of a Witness! "In seven days you will be dead!" he screamed. Seven days later the Witness returned, causing the herbalist to rush out, believing that he had seen a ghost! His magic now exposed as worthless, he consented to a Bible study and eventually became a Witness himself.

You too can be freed from the shackles of fear and superstition. Admittedly, this may not be easy. Perhaps you have grown up in a culture where the use of amulets and charms is commonplace. Christians in an-



Christians in Ephesus got rid of everything related to occultism

cient Ephesus faced such a challenge. They lived in a culture heavily influenced by spiritism. What did they do when they learned the truth of God's Word? The Bible says: "Quite a number of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them up before everybody. And they calculated together the prices of them and found them worth fifty thousand pieces of silver."—Acts 19:19.

Gaining God's Protection

If you rid yourself of all vestiges of the occult, will you not be left without protection? On the contrary, "God is for us a refuge and strength, a help that is readily to be found during distresses." (Psalm 46:1) God's protection will be particularly manifest when he destroys this wicked system of things. "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off."—2 Peter 2:9; compare Psalm 37:40.



**Under God's Kingdom, fear
will be no more**

Meanwhile, 'time and unforeseen occurrence befall us all.' (Ecclesiastes 9:11) God does not promise that his servants will lead a "charmed" life or that he will shield them from all personal harm. Nevertheless, he does promise to protect our spirituality and our relationship with him. (Psalm 91:1-9) How? For one thing, he gives us laws and principles that can benefit us and protect us from Satan's corrupting influence. (Isaiah 48:17) By our gaining a knowledge of Jehovah's ways, 'thinking ability itself will keep guard over us, discernment itself will safeguard us'—for example, from unprofitable or harmful activities.—Proverbs 2:11.

Another way God protects us is by providing "the power beyond what is normal" in times of trial. (2 Corinthians 4:7) And when circumstances threaten to overwhelm a Christian, He gives "the peace of God that excels all thought" to guard the heart and mental powers. (Philippians 4:7) Yes, the Christian is equipped to "stand firm against

the machinations of the Devil."—Ephesians 6:11-13.

How can you acquire such protection? Begin by taking in knowledge of Jehovah and of his Son, Jesus Christ. (John 17:3) Jehovah's Witnesses can do much to help you along these lines. As you cultivate a warm relationship with Jehovah, you will begin to experience his kindly protection. God says, as we read at Psalm 91:14: "Because on me he has set his affection, I shall also provide him with escape. I shall protect him because he has come to know my name."

Indeed, if you are faithful to him, God will eventually bless you with everlasting life in the coming new world. Jehovah guarantees concerning those living at that time: "There will be no one making them tremble; for the very mouth of Jehovah of armies has spoken it." (Micah 4:4) Disease and death will be no more. (Revelation 21:4) Even now, though, you can enjoy a measure of safety—if you cultivate a close relationship with Jehovah. Like the psalmist, you will be able to say: "My help is from Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth."—Psalm 121:2.

**Scenes From
the Promised Land**

GILEAD
Region for
Courageous People

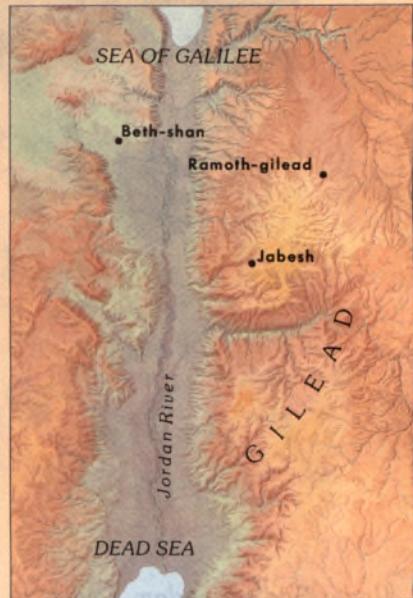


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SHORTLY before Israel crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, Moses urged them: "Be courageous and strong. . . . Jehovah your God is the one marching with you."—Deuteronomy 31:6.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh were included in Moses' exhortation. They had seen 'that the land of Gilead was a place for livestock,' so they had asked to be assigned to live in the region of Gilead.—Numbers 32:1-40.

Gilead was on the other side, the east side, of the Jordan. It was essentially the entire east side, from the north end of the Dead Sea up to the Sea of Galilee. This region rose from the Jordan Valley to well-watered plateaus and rounded hills. So Gilead was a fine region for raising grain and for grazing livestock. The picture above gives you an idea of what part of Gilead was like. But why link courage with such a relatively pleasant area?



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

The tribes choosing to live in Gilead obviously did not do so out of fear. Recall that they agreed to cross the Jordan to fight against enemies in the Promised Land. And upon returning to Gilead, they needed more courage. Why? Well, they were on the frontier, exposed to attack from Ammonites in the southeast and Syrians in the north. And attacked they were.—Joshua 22:9; Judges 10:7, 8; 1 Samuel 11:1; 2 Kings 8:28; 9:14; 10:32, 33.

Those attacks were specific occasions when courage was needed. For example, after Jehovah had let the Ammonites oppress Gilead, God's people repented and turned for leadership to "a mighty, valiant man," whose father was also named Gilead. This valiant, or courageous, man was Jephthah. He is well-known for an oath that reflected that, even though he was courageous, he sought God's direction and support. Jephthah vowed that if God enabled him to subdue the oppressive Ammonites, the first one coming out of his house to meet him would be 'offered as a burnt offering.'



or be sacrificed, to God.* That turned out to be Jephthah's only child, his daughter, who later went to serve at God's sanctuary. Yes, Jephthah and, in a different way, his daughter, showed courage.—Judges 11:1, 4-40.

A display of courage that perhaps is not as well-known occurred during Saul's time. To get the setting, recall that when Saul became king, the Ammonites threatened to bore out the right eye of the men of Jabesh-gilead, which town may have been situated on a wadi running down through the hills to the Jordan. Saul quickly rallied an army to strengthen Jabesh. (1 Samuel 11:1-11) With that background in mind, let us go to the end of Saul's reign and see how courage was shown.

You may remember that Saul and three of his sons died during a war with the Philistines. Those enemies cut off Saul's head and triumphantly hung the corpses of Saul and his sons on the wall of Beth-shan. (1 Samuel 31:1-10; to the right, you see the excavated tell of Beth-shan.) Word of this reached Jabesh, in the hills of Gilead across the Jordan. What could the Gileadites do

in the face of an enemy so powerful that it could vanquish the king of Israel?

Follow on the map. "Immediately all the valiant men rose up and went all night long and took the corpse of Saul and the corpses of his sons off the wall of Beth-shan and came to Jabesh and burned them there." (1 Samuel 31:12) Yes, they undertook a nighttime raid into the stronghold of the enemy. You can understand why the Bible calls them valiant, or courageous.

In time, ten tribes broke away to form the northern kingdom of Israel, and this included Gilead. Surrounding nations, first the Syrians and then the Assyrians, began to take over parts of that territory on the east side of the Jordan. So despite past instances of courage, the people of Gilead paid a price for being in a frontier location.—1 Kings 22:1-3; 2 Kings 15:29.



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

* Careful evaluation of the record refutes the charge that Jephthah made a human sacrifice of his child. See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, pages 27-8, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY PUTS SPIRITUAL THINGS FIRST

"All of you be like-minded, showing fellow feeling, having brotherly affection, tenderly compassionate, humble in mind."—1 PETER 3:8.

HOW well the above text applies in mankind's oldest institution—the family! And how important it is that the parents display leadership in these respects! Their positive qualities and their negative ones will usually show up in the children. Yet, the element of choice remains with each member of a family. As Christians, we can choose to be spiritual persons or fleshly persons. We can choose to please God or to displease him. That choice can re-

sult in either a blessing, everlasting life and peace—or a curse, perpetual death.—Genesis 4:1, 2; Romans 8:5-8; Galatians 5:19-23.

² The apostle's words at 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 8, followed immediately after some fine counsel that he had given to wives and husbands. Peter was truly interested in the welfare of Christian families. He knew that strong spirituality is the key to a united, caring household. Thus, he implied in verse 7 that if his counsel to husbands was ignored,

2. (a) How did Peter show his concern for the family? (b) What is spirituality? (See footnote.)

1. What choice do all of us have, and how can our choice affect our future?

the result would be a spiritual barrier between the husband and Jehovah.* The husband's prayers could be hindered if he neglected the needs of his wife or crushed her with unkindness.

Christ—A Perfect Example of Spirituality

³ The spirituality of a family depends on good example. When the husband is a practicing Christian, he takes the lead in showing spiritual qualities. If there is no believing husband, the mother usually tries to carry that responsibility. In either case, Jesus Christ provides the perfect model to follow. His conduct, his words, and his thinking were always upbuilding and refreshing. Time and again, the apostle Paul directs the reader to Christ's loving pattern. For example, he states: "A husband is head of his wife as the Christ also is head of the congregation, he being a savior of this body. Husbands, continue loving your wives, just as the Christ also loved the congregation and delivered up himself for it."—Ephesians 5:23, 25, 29; Matthew 11:28-30; Colossians 3:19.

⁴ Jesus was the outstanding example of spirituality and headship manifested with love, kindness, and compassion. He was self-sacrificing, not self-indulgent. He always glorified his Father and respected his headship. He took his lead from the Father, so that he could say: "I cannot do a single thing of my own initiative; just as I hear, I judge; and the judgment that I render is righteous, because I seek, not my own will, but the will of him that sent me." "I do nothing of my own initiative; but just as the Father taught

* Spirituality is defined as "sensitivity or attachment to religious values: the quality or state of being spiritual." (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*) A spiritual person is the opposite of a fleshly, animalistic person.—1 Corinthians 2:13-16; Galatians 5:16, 25; James 3:14, 15; Jude 19.

3. How did Paul highlight Christ's example for husbands?
4. What example of spirituality did Jesus set?

me I speak these things."—John 5:30; 8:28; 1 Corinthians 11:3.

⁵ What does this mean for husbands? It means that the model they are to follow in all things is Christ, who always subjected himself to his Father. For instance, as Jehovah provided food for all life-forms on earth, so Jesus provided food for his followers. He did not neglect their basic material needs. His miracles of feeding the 5,000 men and the 4,000 are proof of his care and his sense of responsibility. (Mark 6:35-44; 8:1-9) Likewise today, responsible family heads care for the physical needs of their households. But does their responsibility end there?—1 Timothy 5:8.

⁶ Families also have other, more important needs, as Jesus pointed out. They have spiritual and emotional needs. (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4) We interact with others, both in the family and in the congregation. We need good guidance to motivate us to be upbuilding. In this regard husbands and fathers have a major role to play—even more so if they are elders or ministerial servants. Single parents need similar qualities when helping their children. Parents must understand not only what is being said by family members but also what is being left unsaid. That requires discernment, time, and patience. It is one reason why Peter could say that husbands should be considerate and dwell with their wives according to knowledge.—1 Timothy 3:4, 5, 12; 1 Peter 3:7.

Dangers to Avoid

⁷ Why is attention to family spirituality so important? To illustrate, we might ask, Why

5. In providing for his followers, what example did Jesus set for husbands?
6. (a) What important family needs must be cared for? (b) How can husbands and fathers show understanding?
- 7, 8. (a) What is needed if a family is to avoid spiritual shipwreck? (b) What is needed besides a good start in the Christian course? (Matthew 24:13)



Is it important that a ship's pilot pay close attention to his charts when guiding a ship through dangerous waters containing shoals? In August 1992 the cruise ship *Queen Elizabeth 2* (QE2) was taken through an area of treacherous sandbars and rocks where navigation errors are said to be common. One local resident commented: "A lot of careers have been lost because of that area." The QE2 struck an underwater ledge. It turned out to be an expensive mistake. A third of the hull was damaged, and the ship had to be taken out of service for several weeks for repairs.

⁸ Likewise, if the family "pilot" does not carefully check the chart, God's Word, his family can easily suffer spiritual harm. For an elder or a ministerial servant, the result may be a loss of privileges within the congregation and perhaps serious damage to other family members. Therefore, each Christian should take care not to be overtaken by spiritual complacency, trusting only in former good study habits and zeal. In our Christian course, it is not enough merely to have started well; the journey must be completed successfully.—1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 1 Timothy 1:19.

Attendance at the Congregation Book Study fortifies the family spiritually

⁹ In order to avoid spiritual shoals, rocks, and sandbars, we need to keep up-to-date with our "charts" by a regular study of God's Word. We cannot rely on just the basic study that brought us into the truth. Our spiritual strength depends on a regular and balanced program of study and service. For example, as we attend the congregation's Watchtower Study with this very issue in hand, we can ask ourselves, 'Have I, or have we as a family, really studied this article, looking up the scriptures and meditating on their application? Or have we just underlined the answers? Have we, perhaps, neglected even to read the article before attending the meeting?' Honest answers to these questions may give food for thought and spark a desire to improve—if that is necessary.—Hebrews 5:12-14.

¹⁰ Why is such self-scrutiny important? Because we live in a world dominated by the

9. (a) How important is personal study? (b) What pertinent questions might we ask ourselves?

10. Why is self-scrutiny important?

spirit of Satan, a world that, in many subtle ways, tries to subvert our faith in God and his promises. It is a world that wants to keep us so busy that we have no time to care for spiritual needs. Therefore we might ask ourselves, 'Is my family spiritually strong? Am I as a parent as strong as I ought to be? Are we as a family cultivating that spiritual force actuating the mind that helps us to make decisions based on righteousness and loyalty?'—Ephesians 4:23, 24.

¹¹ Our spirituality should be fortified by every meeting we attend. Those precious hours at the Kingdom Hall or at the Congregation Book Study help to refresh us after the long hours we have to spend trying to survive in Satan's hostile world. How refreshing, for example, it has been to study the book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived!* This has helped us to acquire a better understanding of Jesus, his life, and his ministry. We have carefully read the cited scriptures, done personal research, and thus learned much from the example that Jesus set.—Hebrews 12:1-3; 1 Peter 2:21.

¹² A fine test of our spirituality is the Christian ministry. In order to persevere in our formal and informal witnessing, often in the face of an indifferent or opposed public, we need the right motivation, love of God and love of neighbor. Of course, no one enjoys being rejected, and that can happen in our field ministry. But we should remember that it is the good news that is being rejected, not we as individuals. Jesus said: "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were part of the world, the world would be fond of what is its own. Now because you are no part of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, on this account the world hates you.

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11. Why are Christian meetings spiritually beneficial? Give an example.
 12. How does the field ministry test our spirituality?

... But they will do all these things against you on account of my name, because they do not know him that sent me."—John 15: 18-21.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

¹³ What happens in a family if all but one respect the neatness and tidiness of the house? On a rainy day, all except the forgetful one are careful not to track mud into the house. Muddy footprints everywhere give evidence of that one's carelessness, making extra work for others. The same applies to spirituality. Just one selfish or negligent individual can sully the family's reputation. All in the household, not just the parents, should strive to reflect Christ's mental disposition. How refreshing it is when all work together with everlasting life in view! The mind-set of that family is spiritual (but not self-righteous). There are seldom traces of spiritual neglect in such a household.—Ecclesiastes 7:16; 1 Peter 4:1, 2.

¹⁴ All of us have basic material needs that must be filled to sustain our life on a daily basis. (Matthew 6:11, 30-32) But often our needs are overshadowed by our wants. For example, Satan's system offers us every kind of gadget and device. If we demand always to have the latest in everything, we will never be satisfied, since the latest is soon outdated, and a new state-of-the-art model appears. The commercial world has set up a merry-go-round that never stops. It entices us into seeking ever more money to satisfy ever more wants. This can lead to "many senseless and hurtful desires," or "foolish and dangerous ambitions." It can result in an unbalanced life with less and less time for spiritual activities.—1 Timothy 6:9, 10; *The Jerusalem Bible*.

13. How can one person erode the spirituality of a family?
14. What material temptations does Satan put in our way?

¹⁵ Here again, the example set by the head of the Christian household is very important. His balanced attitude toward secular and spiritual responsibilities should inspire the other family members. It would certainly be damaging if the father gave excellent oral instruction but then failed to live up to his own words. Children can soon see through the do-as-I-say-but-not-as-I-do approach to life. Similarly, an elder or a ministerial servant who encourages others in the house-to-house ministry yet seldom joins his family in that activity soon loses credibility, both in the family and in the congregation.—1 Corinthians 15:58; compare Matthew 23:3.

¹⁶ Hence, we can profitably examine our lives. Are we preoccupied with achieving secular success at the expense of making spiritual progress? Are we going up in the world but down in the congregation? Remember Paul's counsel: "That statement is faithful. If any man is reaching out for an office of overseer, he is desirous of a fine work." (1 Timothy 3:1) A sense of responsibility in the congregation says more about our spirituality than a promotion at work. A careful balance has to be kept so that our employers are not allowed to take us over as if we were dedicated to them and not to Jehovah.

—Matthew 6:24.

Meaningful Communication Promotes Spirituality

¹⁷ Millions of homes today have become virtual lodging houses. How? Family members come only to sleep and eat, and then they dash out. Seldom do they sit around a table to enjoy a meal together. The sense of family is missing. The result? There is a lack

15. In what way is the example of the family head important?
16. What questions might we ask ourselves?
17. What contributes to the cultivating of genuine love in a family?

of communication, no significant conversation. And that can result in a lack of interest in other members, perhaps a lack of real concern. When we love one another, we make time to converse and to listen. We encourage, and we help. This aspect of spirituality involves significant communication between spouses and between parents and children.* It requires time and tact as we draw one another out in order to share our joys, experiences, and problems.—1 Corinthians 13:4-8; James 1:19.

¹⁸ Good communication requires time and effort. It means setting aside time to talk and to listen to one another. One of the biggest impediments to this is that time-consuming apparatus that holds the place of honor in many homes—the TV. This presents a challenge—does TV control you, or do you control it? Controlling TV requires firm resolve—including the willpower to turn it off. But doing so will open the way for us to tune in to one another as family mem-

* For further suggestions on family communication, see *The Watchtower* of September 1, 1991, pages 20-2.

18. (a) What is often a major impediment to communication? (b) On what are meaningful relationships built?

Do You Remember?

- What is spirituality?
- How can a family head imitate the example of Christ?
- How can we avoid threats to our spirituality?
- What can erode the spirituality of a family?
- Why is meaningful communication important?

bers and as spiritual brothers and sisters. Meaningful relationships require good communication, getting to understand one another, our needs and joys, telling one another how much we appreciate all the kind things that have been done for us. In other words, significant conversation shows that we are not taking others for granted.—Proverbs 31:28, 29.

¹⁹ Therefore, if we care for one another in the family setting—and that includes caring for unbelieving family members—we will be doing much toward building up and maintaining our spirituality. In a family setting, we will be following Peter's counsel: "Final-

19, 20. If we care for all in the family, what will we do?

ly, all of you be like-minded, showing fellow feeling, having brotherly affection, tenderly compassionate, humble in mind, not paying back injury for injury or reviling for reviling, but, to the contrary, bestowing a blessing, because you were called to this course, so that you might inherit a blessing."—1 Peter 3:8, 9.

²⁰ We can have Jehovah's blessing now if we strive to maintain our spirituality, and this can work toward our inheriting his blessing in the future when we receive the gift of everlasting life on a paradise earth. There are other things we can do as a family to help one another spiritually. The next article will discuss the benefits of doing things together as a family.—Luke 23:43; Revelation 21:1-4.

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY DOES THINGS TOGETHER

"Now I exhort you, brothers, . . . that you may be fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought."—1 CORINTHIANS 1:10.

IS YOURS a united family? Or does everyone seem to go his or her own way? Do you do things together? Or are all of you seldom in one place at the same time? The very word "family" implies a unified household.* Yet, not all families are united. One British lecturer went as far as to say: "Far

* "Family comes from L[atin] *familia*, orig[inally] the servants and slaves of a great house, then the house itself with master, mistress, children—and the staff."—*Origins—A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, by Eric Partridge.

1. What is the situation regarding unity in many families?

from being the basis of the good society, the family . . . is the source of all our discontents." Is that true of your family? If so, does it have to be that way?

² The unity or disunity of a family usually depends on its leadership, whether from two parents or a single parent. In Bible times, united families that worshiped together enjoyed Jehovah's blessing. This was true in ancient Israel, where Jephthah's daughter, Samson, and Samuel, each in different ways, gave evidence of coming from a godly

2. Which Bible characters give evidence of coming from a good family?

family. (Judges 11:30-40; 13:2-25; 1 Samuel 1:21-23; 2:18-21) In early Christian times, Timothy, Paul's faithful companion on some of Paul's missionary travels, was raised with a knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures by his grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice. What an outstanding disciple and missionary he became!—Acts 16:1, 2; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14, 15; see also Acts 21:8, 9.

Why Do Things Together?

³ Why is it beneficial for families to do things together? Because it builds up mutual understanding and respect. Rather than distancing ourselves from one another, we stay close and give support. A recent article in the journal *Family Relations* stated: "A relatively clear picture has emerged describing specific attributes of 'strong families.' Such qualities include commitment to and appreciation for each other, togetherness, good communication, problem-solving ability, and a strong spiritual dimension."

⁴ When these qualities exist in a family, home is no longer like a gas station, a place to stop by for fuel. It is more than merely a house. It is an inviting place that attracts family members. It is a haven of warmth and affection, compassion, and understanding. (Proverbs 4:3, 4) It is a nest where family unity is found, not a scorpion's lair of friction and division. But how is this achieved?

Togetherness in Family Study

⁵ True worship of Jehovah is learned through use of our reasoning faculty, or the "power of reason." (Romans 12:1) Our conduct should not be governed by momentary emotions like those evoked by means of ora-

3, 4. (a) What qualities should be evident in a united family? (b) How can a home be more than merely a house?

5. What do we exercise in order to learn true worship?

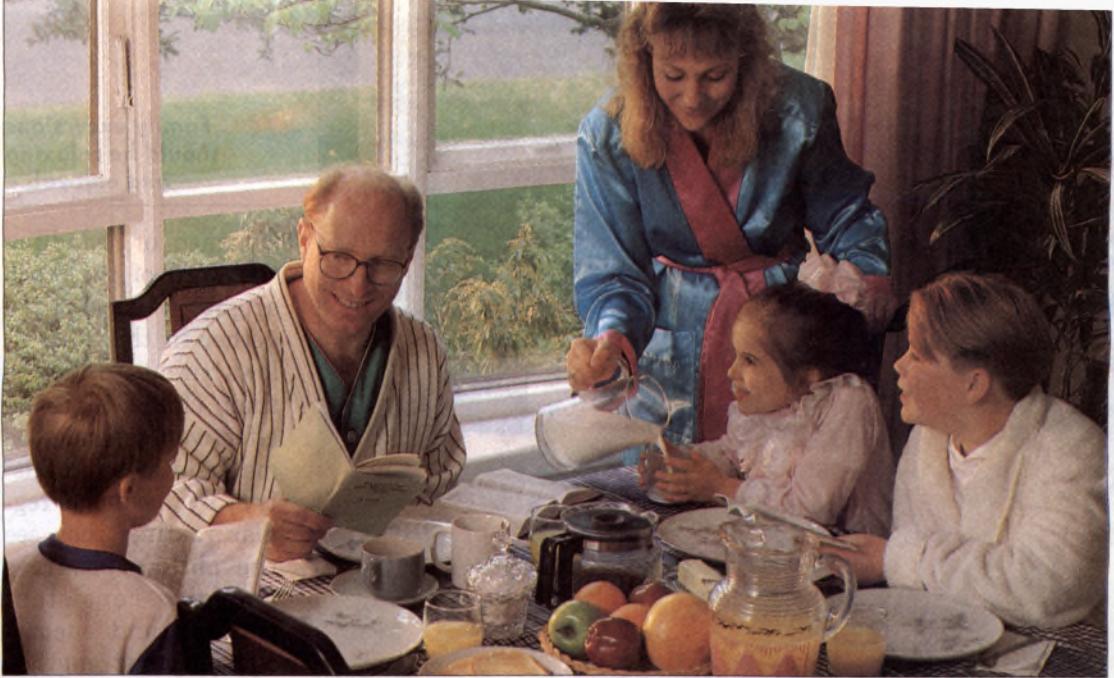
torical sermons and slick TV ministries. Rather, we are motivated by our regular study of and meditation on the Bible and Bible study literature provided by "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45) Our Christian actions are the result of getting the mind of Christ on any situation or temptation that might arise. In that respect, Jehovah is our Great Educator.—Psalm 25:9; Isaiah 54:13; 1 Corinthians 2:16.

⁶ The family Bible study plays an essential role in the spirituality of every Christian family. When do you have your family study? If it is left to chance or to a spur-of-the-moment decision, then it is likely infrequent at best. Togetherness in family study requires a regular, set schedule. Then all know on which day and at what hour they are expected to be available to enjoy a spiritual family get-together. The more than 12,000 members of the worldwide Bethel family know that their family study is on Monday evening. How impressive it is for these Bethel volunteers to remember that they are all sharing the same study as the day concludes, in islands of the Pacific and New Zealand, then progressively in Australia, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, next across Asia, Africa, and Europe, and finally the Americas. Although separated by thousands of miles and many languages, this family study inspires in the Bethel family members a feeling of togetherness. On a smaller scale, you can cultivate the same feeling through your family study.—1 Peter 2:17; 5:9.

⁷ The apostle Peter counsels us: "As newborn infants, form a longing for the unadulterated milk belonging to the word, that through it you may grow to salvation, pro-

6. What worldwide example of family study do we have?

7. According to Peter, how should we view the word of truth?



vided you have tasted that the Lord is kind." (1 Peter 2:2, 3) What a beautiful image Peter evokes with those words! He used the Greek verb *e.pi.po.the'sa.te*, which, according to the *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, comes from a word meaning "to long for, to desire, to crave." It implies intense desire. Have you noticed how a baby animal searches eagerly for its mother's nipple and how contented a human baby is when feeding at its mother's breast? We should have the same desire for the word of the truth. Greek scholar William Barclay stated: "For the sincere Christian, to study God's word is not a labour but a delight, for he knows that therein his heart will find the nourishment for which it longs."

⁸ The family study places a big responsibility on the family head. He has to make sure that the study is interesting to all and that all can participate. Children should not feel that the study is really only for the grown-ups. The quality of the study is more

8. What challenge faces the family head in conducting the family study?

Does your family enjoy at least one meal a day together?

important than the amount of material covered. Make the Bible come alive. Where appropriate, help your children to visualize the areas and features of Palestine where events being discussed took place. All should be encouraged to do their personal research and to share it with the family. In this way children too can 'grow up with Jehovah.'

—1 Samuel 2:20, 21.

Togetherness in Evangelizing

⁹ Jesus said: "In all the nations the good news has to be preached first." (Mark 13:10) Those words give every conscientious Christian an assignment—to evangelize, share the good news of God's Kingdom rule with others. Doing this together as a family can be an encouraging and joyful experience. Mothers and fathers take pride in their children's presentation of the good news. One

9. How can the preaching work be made a happy family experience?

**Family excursions
should be relaxing
and enjoyable**



couple with three sons between the ages of 15 and 21 tell that they have always had the habit of accompanying their children in the public preaching work every Wednesday after school and every Saturday morning. The father said: "We teach them something every time. And we make sure that it is an enjoyable, encouraging experience."

¹⁰ Working together as a family in preaching and teaching can be very fruitful. Sometimes people respond more positively to a child's simple but genuine presentation. Then, Mom or Dad is there to help out if needed. Parents can make sure that their children get progressive training and thus become ministers "with nothing to be

10. How can parents benefit their children in the ministry?

ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright." Preaching together in this way allows parents to observe their child's attitude, effectiveness, and good manners in the ministry. By having a regular routine, they see the child's progress and give consistent training and encouragement to strengthen his or her faith. At the same time, the children see that their parents are good examples in the ministry. In these critical and violent times, working as a united and caring fam-

ily may even provide a measure of safety in high-crime neighborhoods.—2 Timothy 2:15; Philippians 3:16.

¹¹ Children easily detect double standards in adults. If parents do not show a real love for the truth and for the house-to-house ministry, the children can hardly be expected to be zealous. Thus, a healthy parent whose only field service is the weekly Bible study with the children might pay a heavy price when these get older.—Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4.

¹² An advantage of being "fitly united in the same mind" is that perhaps the family can pull together so that at least one mem-

11. What can easily diminish a child's zeal for the truth?

12. How can some families obtain a special blessing from Jehovah?

ber can serve as a full-time pioneer minister in the congregation. Many families around the world do this, and all receive a blessing from the experiences and increased effectiveness of their pioneer member.—2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 2:1-4.

Togetherness in Handling Problems

¹³ In these difficult times of “stress” and “danger,” all of us experience pressure. (2 Timothy 3:1, Revised Standard Version; Phillips) There are problems at work, at school, on the streets, and even in the home itself. Some suffer from ill health or long-standing emotional problems, which sometimes lead to tensions and misunderstandings in the family. How can such situations be handled? By each one withdrawing into a shell? By isolating oneself even while sharing the same home? No. Rather, we need to communicate our anxieties and ask for help. And what better place for this than in a loving family circle?—1 Corinthians 16:14; 1 Peter 4:8.

¹⁴ As any doctor knows, prevention is better than cure. The same holds true with family problems. Open and frank discussion can often prevent problems from becoming serious. Even if serious problems do arise, they can be handled and even solved if the family considers together the Bible principles involved. Often friction can be turned into a smooth relationship by applying Paul’s words at Colossians 3:12-14: “Clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, and long-suffering. Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. . . . Clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union.”

13, 14. (a) What situations can affect the harmony of a family? (b) How can many family problems be prevented?

Togetherness in Recreation

¹⁵ Jehovah is a happy God, and the truth is a happy message—one of hope for mankind. Furthermore, one of the fruits of the spirit is joy. This joy is far different from the momentary exultation of the athlete who triumphs in some competitive sport. It is the deep sustained feeling of satisfaction that overflows in the heart as a result of cultivating an intimate relationship with Jehovah. It is joy based on spiritual values and upbuilding relationships.—Galatians 5:22; 1 Timothy 1:11.

¹⁶ Therefore, as Christian Witnesses of Jehovah, we have no reason to be glum or humorless. Some religions produce people like that because their kind of faith emphasizes negative factors. Their teachings result in a somber, joyless kind of worship, which is neither Biblical nor balanced. They do not produce happy families in God’s service. Jesus saw the need for recreation and relaxation. On one occasion, for example, he invited his disciples to go “privately into a lonely place and rest up a bit.”—Mark 6:30-32; Psalm 126:1-3; Jeremiah 30:18, 19.

¹⁷ Families likewise need time to relax. One parent said about his children: “We do a lot of fun things together—go to the beach, play ball in the park, organize a picnic in the mountains. Occasionally, we have a ‘pioneer day’ together in the ministry; then we celebrate with a special meal, and we may even give one another presents.”

¹⁸ Other suggestions that parents might consider are family excursions to the zoo, to amusement parks, to museums, and to other fascinating places. Hiking in the woods, bird-watching, and gardening are activities

15, 16. (a) What quality should distinguish Christian families? (b) What kind of people do some religions produce, and why?

17, 18. In what appropriate ways might Christian families relax?

that can be enjoyably shared. Parents can also encourage their children to learn to play a musical instrument or engage in a practical hobby. Certainly, balanced parents will make time to play with their children. If families play together, they are more likely to stay together!

¹⁹ A modern trend is for youngsters to want to separate from the family and do their own thing when it comes to relaxation. While there is no harm in a young person's having a hobby or a favorite personal pastime, it would not be wise to let such interests create a permanent separation from the rest of the family. Rather, we want to apply the principle that Paul stated: "[Keep] an eye, not in personal interest upon just your own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others."—Philippians 2:4.

²⁰ What a joy it is for all of us to see families sitting together at conventions and assemblies! That way the older children can often help with the younger ones. Such an arrangement also prevents the tendency of some adolescents to go off in groups to the

19. What modern trend can harm a family?
20. How can assemblies and conventions be joyful times?

Do You Remember?

- Why is it beneficial for families to do things together?
- Why is a regular family Bible study essential?
- Why is it good for parents to engage in the field ministry along with their children?
- Why does it help to discuss problems within the family circle?
- Why should Christian families not be somber and joyless?

rear rows and pay little attention to the convention program. Even traveling to and from assemblies can be joyful when the family is consulted on what route to take, what places to see on the way, and where to stay. Imagine what an exciting time it must have been in Jesus' day for families to travel together up to Jerusalem!—Luke 2:41, 42.

The Blessings of Togetherness

²¹ Successful marriages and united families have never been easy to achieve, and they do not come about by accident. Some seem to find it easier to 'throw in the towel,' dissolve the marriage in divorce, and try to start all over again. Yet, the same problems often present themselves in a second or third marriage. A much better answer is the Christian one: Strive for success by applying the Bible principles of love and respect. United families depend on a spirit of give and take, of unselfishness. One marriage counselor put forward a simple formula to make marriages last. He wrote: "The four critical elements found in almost all good marriages are the willingness to *listen*, the ability to *apologize*, the capacity to provide consistent emotional *support*, and the desire to *touch affectionately*." Those factors can indeed help make a marriage last because they are also based on sound Bible principles.—1 Corinthians 13:1-8; Ephesians 5:33; James 1:19.

²² If we follow the Bible's counsel, we will have a solid basis for a united family, and united families are the foundation of a united and spiritually strong congregation. Thus, we will receive abundant blessings from Jehovah as we unitedly present increased praise to him.

21. (a) How can we strive for success in marriage? (b) What are four good suggestions for a lasting marriage?
22. What are some benefits from having a united family?

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY HELPS THE ELDERLY

"Do not throw me away in the time of old age; just when my power is failing, do not leave me."—PSALM 71:9.

SURVEYS indicate that nearly six in seven (86%) of the abused aged are mistreated by their own families," said *The Wall Street Journal*. The magazine *Modern Maturity* stated: "Abuse of the elderly is only the latest [family violence] to make its way out of the closet and onto the pages of the nation's newspapers." Yes, the elderly in many cultures have become victims of gross abuse and neglect. Ours is truly a time when many are "lovers of themselves, . . . unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection."—2 Timothy 3:1-3.

² Yet, that is not how the elderly were to be treated in ancient Israel. The Law stated: "Before gray hair you should rise up, and you must show consideration for the person of an old man, and you must be in fear of your God. I am Jehovah." The book of inspired wise proverbs counsels us: "Listen to your father who caused your birth, and do not despise your mother just because she has grown old." It commands: "Listen, my son, to the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother." The Mosaic Law taught respect and regard for older ones of both sexes. Clearly, Jehovah desires that the elderly be honored.—Leviticus 19:32; Proverbs 1:8; 23:22.

1. How are the elderly treated in many cultures?
2. According to the Hebrew Scriptures, how does Jehovah view the elderly?

Caring for the Elderly in Bible Times

³ Respect was to be shown not just in words but also in considerate actions. Joseph showed great compassion for his elderly father. He wanted Jacob to make the journey from Canaan to Egypt, a distance of over 200 miles. So Joseph sent to Jacob "ten asses carrying good things of Egypt and ten she-asses carrying grain and bread and sustenance for his father for the way." When Jacob arrived in Goshen, Joseph went to him and "at once fell upon his neck and gave way to tears upon his neck again and again." Joseph showered his father with deep affection. What an inspiring example of concern for the elderly!—Genesis 45:23; 46:5, 29.

⁴ Another beautiful model to follow in kindness for the elderly is Ruth. Although a Gentile, she stuck with her elderly, widowed Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi. She abandoned her own people and took the risk of not finding another husband. When Naomi urged her to return to her own people, Ruth answered with some of the most beautiful words in the Bible: "Do not plead with me to abandon you, to turn back from accompanying you; for where you go I shall go, and where you spend the night I shall spend the night. Your people will be my

3. How did Joseph show compassion for his aged father?
4. Why is Ruth a fine example to follow?

people, and your God my God. Where you die I shall die, and there is where I shall be buried. May Jehovah do so to me and add to it if anything but death should make a separation between me and you." (Ruth 1: 16, 17) Ruth also showed fine qualities when she was willing to marry elderly Boaz under the levirate marriage arrangement.

—Ruth, chapters 2 to 4.

⁵ Jesus set a similar example in his dealings with people. He was patient, compassionate, kind, and refreshing. He took a personal interest in a poor man who had been disabled, unable to walk, for 38 years and cured him. He showed consideration for widows. (Luke 7:11-15; John 5:1-9) Even during the agony of his painful death on the torture stake, he made sure that his mother, possibly in her early 50's, would be taken care of. Except to his hypocritical enemies, Jesus was refreshing company for everyone. Thus, he could say: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls."—Matthew 9:36; 11:28, 29; John 19:25-27.

Who Deserve Consideration?

⁶ Since Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ, set such fine examples in the matter of caring, it is only appropriate that dedicated Christians imitate their pattern. In our midst we have some who have toiled and been loaded down for many years—elderly brothers and sisters who have entered the autumn years of their lives. Some may be our parents or grandparents. Do we take

5. What qualities did Jesus show in dealing with people?
6. (a) Who are deserving of special care? (b) What questions might we ask ourselves?

them for granted? Are we patronizing and condescending with them? Or do we truly appreciate their extensive experience and wisdom? True, some might test our patience with the idiosyncrasies and foibles that are not uncommon to old age. But ask yourself, 'How different would I be under those circumstances?'

⁷ There is a touching story from the Middle East about a young girl's compassion for the elderly. A grandmother was helping in the kitchen and accidentally dropped and broke a china plate. She was upset by her own clumsiness; her daughter was even more irritated. She then called her own little girl and sent her to the local store to buy an unbreakable wooden plate for the grandmother. The girl came back with two wooden plates. Her mother demanded: "Why did you buy two plates?" The granddaughter, hesitating, answered: "One for grandma and the other for you when you are old." Yes, in this world all of us face the prospect of aging. Would we not appreciate being treated with patience and kindness? —Psalm 71:9.

⁸ Never forget that many of our elderly brothers and sisters have behind them a long record of faithful Christian activity. They certainly deserve our honor and consideration, our kind help and encouragement. The wise man correctly said: "Gray-headedness is a crown of beauty when it is found in the way of righteousness." And that gray head, male or female, should be respected. Some of these older men and women are still serving as faithful pioneers, and many men continue to serve

7. What illustrates the need for having empathy with older people?
- 8, 9. (a) How should we treat the older ones in our midst? (b) What do some of those who recently became Christians need to remember?

**Ruth showed elderly Naomi
kindness and respect**

faithfully as elders in the congregations; some do exemplary work as traveling overseers.—Proverbs 16:31.

⁹ Paul counseled Timothy: “Do not severely criticize an older man. To the contrary, entreat him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters with all chasteness.” (1 Timothy 5:1, 2) Those who have recently come into the Christian congregation out of a disrespectful world should especially take to heart Paul’s words, which are based on love. Young ones, do not imitate the bad attitudes you might have seen at school. Do not resent the kind counsel of older Witnesses.

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Hebrews 12:5, 6, 11) However, when the elderly because of poor health or financial problems need help, who have the primary responsibility to assist them?

**The Family’s Role
in Caring for the Elderly**

¹⁰ In the early Christian congregation,

10, 11. (a) According to the Bible, who should take the lead in caring for the elderly? (b) Why is it not always easy to care for the elderly?



problems arose over the care of widows. How did the apostle Paul indicate that such needs should be met? “Honor widows that are actually widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let these learn first to practice godly devotion in their own household and to keep paying a due compensation to their parents and grandparents, for this is acceptable in God’s sight. Certainly if anyone does not provide for



**The elderly are valued members
of the congregation**

those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith.”—1 Timothy 5:3, 4, 8.

¹¹ In times of need, close family members should be the first to help elderly ones.* In this way, grown children can show appreciation for the years of love, work, and care that their parents provided. This may not be easy. As people get older, they naturally slow down, and some even become incapacitated. Others may become self-centered and demanding, perhaps without realizing it. But when we were babies, were we not also self-centered and demanding? And did not our parents come running to help us?

* For detailed suggestions on what family members can do to help the elderly, see *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1987, pages 13-18.

Now things have changed in their old age. So, what is needed? Compassion and patience.—Compare 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8.

¹² The apostle Paul gave practical counsel when he wrote: “Accordingly, as God’s chosen ones, holy and loved, clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, and long-suffering. Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also. But, besides all these things, clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union.” If we ought to show this kind of compassion and love in the congregation, should we not show it even more in the family?—Colossians 3:12-14.

12. What qualities are needed in caring for older ones—and all others in the Christian congregation?

¹³ Sometimes this kind of help may be needed not just by parents or grandparents but also by other elderly relatives. Some older ones who do not have children have served for many years in missionary service, the traveling ministry, and other full-time activity. They have genuinely put the Kingdom first throughout their lives. (Matthew 6:33) Would it not be appropriate, then, to show them a caring spirit? Certainly we have a fine example in the way the Watch Tower Society cares for its elderly Bethel members. At Bethel headquarters in Brooklyn and at a number of the Society's branches, several aged brothers and sisters get daily attention from trained family members assigned to this duty. They are happy to care for these older ones as if they were their own parents or grandparents. At the same time, they learn much from the older ones' experience.—Proverbs 22:17.

The Congregation's Role in Caring

¹⁴ Many countries today have old-age pension systems as well as State-provided medical care for the elderly. Christians can make full use of these provisions where they are entitled to do so. However, in the first century, there were no such provisions. Therefore the Christian congregation took positive action to help the destitute widows. Paul directed: "Let a widow be put on the list [for congregation aid] who has become not less than sixty years old, a wife of one husband, having a witness borne to her for fine works, if she reared children, if she entertained strangers, if she washed the feet of holy ones, if she relieved those in tribulation, if she diligently followed every good work." Thus, Paul

13. Who, besides elderly parents or grandparents, might need help?

14. What provision was made for the elderly in the early Christian congregation?

showed that the congregation also has a role in helping the elderly. Spiritually minded women who did not have believing children qualified for such help.—1 Timothy 5:9, 10.

¹⁵ Where there are State provisions for the elderly, these usually involve paperwork that might seem daunting. In such cases it is appropriate for the overseers in the congregation to arrange for help to be given so that the elderly can apply for, collect, or even upgrade such aid. Sometimes changes of circumstances can result in an increased pension. But there are also many other practical things that the overseers can organize so that the elderly are cared for. What are some of these?

¹⁶ Showing hospitality is a custom stretching back to Bible times. To this day in many Middle Eastern countries, hospitality is shown to strangers, at least to the point of offering a cup of tea or coffee. It is not surprising, then, that Paul wrote: "Share with the holy ones according to their needs. Follow the course of hospitality." (Romans 12:13) The Greek word for hospitality, *phi-lo-xe-ni'a*, literally means "love of (fondness for, or kindness to) strangers." If the Christian should be hospitable to strangers, should he not be even more hospitable to those who are related to him in the faith? An invitation to a meal often represents a welcome break in the routine of an older person. If you want the voice of wisdom and experience at your social gatherings, include the elderly.—Compare Luke 14:12-14.

¹⁷ There are many ways that older ones can be encouraged. If we form a car group

15. Why might help be needed in order to obtain State aid?

16, 17. In what different ways might we show hospitality to the elderly in the congregation?

to go to the Kingdom Hall or to an assembly, are there some older persons who would welcome a ride? Do not wait for them to ask. Offer to take them. Another practical help is to do their shopping. Or if they are able, might we take them along with us on our shopping trip? But make sure that there are places where they can rest and refresh themselves in case that should become necessary. No doubt patience and kindness will be called for, but an elderly person's sincere gratitude can be very rewarding.—2 Corinthians 1:11.

A Beautiful Asset to the Congregation

¹⁸ What a blessing it is to see some gray and white hair (and also heads bald with age) in a congregation! It means that among the vitality and vigor of the younger ones, we have a sprinkling of wisdom and experience—a real asset to any congregation. Their knowledge is like refreshing water that has to be drawn from a well. It is as Proverbs 18:4 puts it: "The words of a man's mouth are deep waters. The well of wisdom is a torrent bubbling forth." How encouraging it is for older ones to feel that they are wanted and appreciated!—Compare Psalm 92:14.

¹⁹ Some in full-time service have felt the need to give up their privileges in order to return home to care for elderly, sick parents. They have made a sacrifice for those who formerly sacrificed for them. One couple, formerly missionaries and still in full-time service, returned home to care for their elderly parents. This they have done for over 20 years. Four years ago the man's mother had to be put in a nursing home.

18. Why are the older ones a blessing to the congregation?

19. How have some made sacrifices for their elderly parents?

The husband, who is now in his 60's, visits his 93-year-old mother every day. He explains: "How could I abandon her? She is my mother!" In other cases congregations and individuals have come forward and offered to keep an eye on older ones so that their children could remain in their assignments. Such selfless love is also worthy of great commendation. Each situation has to be handled conscientiously because the elderly are not to be neglected. Show that you love your elderly parents.—Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2, 3.

²⁰ Indeed, our older brothers and sisters are a crown of beauty for a family or a congregation. Jehovah said: "Even to one's old age I am the same One; and to one's gray-headedness I myself shall keep bearing up. I myself shall certainly act, that I myself may carry and that I myself may bear up and furnish escape." May we show the same patience and care toward our older brothers and sisters in the Christian family.—Isaiah 46:4; Proverbs 16:31.

20. What example has Jehovah given us in caring for the elderly?

Do You Remember?

- What Bible examples do we have of caring for the elderly?
- How should we treat the elderly?
- How can family members care for their elderly loved ones?
- What can the congregation do to help the elderly?
- Why are the elderly a blessing to all of us?

EUROPEAN HIGH COURT UPHOLDS RIGHT TO PREACH IN GREECE

WHY would a man praised by his neighbors be arrested more than 60 times since 1938? Why would this honest shopkeeper from the Greek island of Crete be brought before Greek courts 18 times and serve more than six years in prison? Yes, why would this industrious family man, Minos Kokkinakis, be taken away from his wife and five children and be exiled to various penal islands?

Laws passed in 1938 and 1939 forbidding proselytism are largely responsible. These laws were established by the Greek dictator Ioannis Metaxas, who was acting under the influence of the Greek Orthodox Church.

As a result of this legislation, from 1938 to 1992, there were 19,147 arrests of Jehovah's Witnesses, and the courts imposed sentences that totaled 753 years, 593 of which were actually served. All of this was done because the Witnesses in Greece, as elsewhere, follow the instructions of Jesus Christ to "make disciples of people of all the nations, . . . teaching them to observe all the things" he commanded.—Matthew 28:19, 20.

But on May 25, 1993, a grand victory in behalf of freedom of worship was won! On that date the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, upheld a Greek citizen's right to teach his beliefs to others. In so ruling, this European high court created broad protections for religious

freedom that may have a profound effect on the lives of people everywhere.

Let us take a closer look at the developments, including the indignities suffered by just one Greek citizen, that led up to this momentous court decision.

Early Background

In 1938 this citizen, Minos Kokkinakis, became the first one of Jehovah's Witnesses to be convicted under the Greek law that makes proselytism a criminal offense. Without the benefit of a trial, he was sent to serve 13 months in exile on the Aegean island of Amorgos. In 1939 he was sentenced twice and imprisoned for two and a half months each time.

In 1940, Kokkinakis was exiled for six months to the island of Melos. The following year, during World War II, he was incarcerated in the military prison in Athens for more than 18 months. Regarding that period, he recalls:

"The lack of food in the prison went from bad to worse. We became so weak that we could not walk. If it had not been for the Witnesses from the Athens and Piraeus areas who provided us food from their depleted means, we would have died." Later, in 1947, he was again sentenced and served another four and a half months in prison.

In 1949, Minos Kokkinakis was exiled to the island of Makrónisos, a name that brings

images of horror to the minds of Greeks because of the prison there. Among the some 14,000 inmates then incarcerated at Makrónisos, about 40 were Witnesses. The Greek encyclopedia *Papyros Larousse Britannica* observes: "The methods of cruel torture, . . . the living conditions, which are unacceptable for a civilized nation, and the guards' degrading behavior toward inmates . . . are a disgrace to the history of Greece."

Kokkinakis, who spent a year in the prison on Makrónisos, described conditions: "The soldiers, like members of the Inquisition, would interrogate each inmate from morning till evening. Words fail to describe the tortures they inflicted. Many prisoners lost their sanity; others were killed; a great number were left physically disabled. During those terrible nights while we heard the cries and groanings of those being tortured, we would pray as a group."

After surviving hardships on Makrónisos, Kokkinakis was arrested six more times during the 1950's and served ten months in prison. In the 1960's he was arrested an additional four times and was sentenced to eight months in prison. But remember, Minos

Kokkinakis was only one among hundreds of Jehovah's Witnesses who over the years were arrested and imprisoned because they spoke to others about their faith!

How was it that the terrible injustices perpetrated against Jehovah's Witnesses in Greece finally came before the European Court of Human Rights?

The Test Case

The case had its origin on March 2, 1986. On that date Minos Kokkinakis, then a retired 77-year-old businessman, and his wife called at the home of Mrs. Georgia Kyriakaki in Sitia, Crete. Mrs. Kyriakaki's husband, who was the cantor at a local Orthodox church, informed the police. The police came and arrested Mr. and Mrs. Kokkinakis, who were then taken to the local police station. There they were forced to spend the night.

What was the charge against them? The same one made against Jehovah's Witnesses thousands of times during the previous 50 years, namely, that they were proselytizing. The Greek Constitution (1975), Article 13, states: "Proselytism is prohibited." Consider further the Greek law, section 4, num-

MORE CLERGY-INSPIRED PERSECUTION

Attempts by the clergy in Greece to 'frame trouble by law' has been going on for decades. (Psalm 94:20) Another instance on the island of Crete was recently resolved. Back in 1987 a local bishop and 13 priests had accused nine Witnesses of proselytism. Finally, on January 24, 1992, the case came to trial.

The courtroom was packed. About 35 priests were on hand to support the prosecution's charges. However, most of the seats were already occupied by Witnesses who had come to encourage their Christian brothers. Even before regular proceedings got under way, the attorney for the accused pointed out serious legal mistakes made by the prosecutor.

The upshot was that those involved in the proceedings withdrew for a private conference. After two and a half hours of consultation, the President of the Court announced that the lawyer for the defendants was right. Therefore the accusations against the nine Witnesses were canceled! He ruled that the investigations would need to be started over again to establish whether the accused were guilty of proselytism.

As soon as the announcement was made, pandemonium broke out in the courtroom. The priests started shouting threats and insults. One priest attacked the lawyer for Jehovah's Witnesses with a cross and tried to force him to worship it. The

bers 1363/1938 and 1672/1939, which makes proselytism a criminal offense. It says:

"By 'proselytism' is meant, in particular, any direct or indirect attempt to intrude on the religious beliefs of a person of a different religious persuasion . . . , with the aim of undermining those beliefs, either by any kind of inducement or promise of an inducement or moral support or material assistance, or by fraudulent means or by taking advantage of his inexperience, trust, need, low intellect or naïvety."

The Criminal Court at Lasithi, Crete, heard the case on March 20, 1986, and found Mr. and Mrs. Kokkinakis guilty of proselytism. Both were sentenced to four months in prison. In convicting the couple, the court declared that the defendants had intruded "on the religious beliefs of Orthodox Christians . . . by taking advantage of their inexperience, their low intellect and their naïvety." The defendants were further charged with "encouraging [Mrs. Kyriakaki] by means of their judicious, skilful explanations . . . to change her Orthodox Christian beliefs."

The decision was appealed to the Crete Court of Appeal. On March 17, 1987, this Crete court acquitted Mrs. Kokkinakis but upheld her husband's conviction, although it reduced his prison sentence to three months. The judgment claimed that Mr. Kokkinakis had taken "advantage of [Mrs. Kyriakaki's] inexperience, her low intellect and her naïvety." It said that he "began to read out passages from Holy Scripture, which he skilfully analysed in a manner that the Christian woman, for want of adequate grounding in doctrine, could not challenge."

In a dissenting opinion, one of the appeal judges wrote that Mr. Kokkinakis "should also have been acquitted, as none of the evidence shows that Georgia Kyriakaki . . . was particularly inexperienced in Orthodox Christian doctrine, being married to a cantor, or of particularly low intellect or particularly naïve, such that the defendant was able to take advantage and . . . [thus] induce her to become a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses sect."

Mr. Kokkinakis appealed the case to the Greek Court of Cassation, the Supreme

police had to step in, and the Witnesses were finally able to leave in a quiet manner.

After the trial was canceled, the public prosecutor prepared a new accusation against the nine Witnesses. The trial was set for April 30, 1993, just three weeks before the European Court of Human Rights rendered its decision in the Kokkinakis case. Once again there were many priests in attendance.

The lawyers for the nine defendants lodged the objection that the accusers of the Witnesses were not present in court. In his haste to prepare a new accusation, the public prosecutor had made the serious mistake of not sending summonses to the accusers. So the lawyers for the Witnesses asked

the court to cancel the trial on the basis of this serious error.

At that, the judges left the courtroom and consulted together for almost an hour. Upon their return, the President of the Court, with his head bowed, declared all nine Witnesses innocent of the charges.

The Witnesses in Greece are grateful for the outcome of this case, as well as for the European Court of Human Rights decision rendered in the Kokkinakis case on May 25 of this year. Their prayers are that as a result of these legal victories, they will be able to carry on their Christian lives 'calmly, quietly, and with full godly devotion and seriousness.'—1 Timothy 2:1, 2.

Court of Greece. But that court dismissed the appeal on April 22, 1988. So on August 22, 1988, Mr. Kokkinakis applied to the European Commission of Human Rights. His petition was eventually accepted on February 21, 1992, and was admitted to the European Court of Human Rights.

Issues of the Case

Since Greece is a member-state of the Council of Europe, it is obliged to conform to the Articles of the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 9 of the Convention reads: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance."

Thus, the Greek government became the defendant in a European court. It was accused of openly violating the basic human right of a Greek citizen to practice religion in keeping with the command of Jesus Christ, namely, 'to teach and make disciples.' (Matthew 28:19, 20) Further, the apostle Peter said: "[Jesus] ordered us to preach to the people and to give a thorough witness."—Acts 10:42.

A special 1992 issue of the magazine *Human Rights Without Frontiers* carried the cover title "Greece—Deliberate Violations of Human Rights." The magazine explained on page 2: "Greece is the only country in the EC [European Community] and in Europe having penal legislation which provides for fines and prison sentences to be imposed upon anyone motivating another person to change his religion."

So by now excitement inside and outside legal circles was running high. What would be decided regarding the Greek law that forbids the teaching of one's beliefs to others?

Hearing in Strasbourg

Finally came the day of the hearing—November 25, 1992. There were heavy clouds over Strasbourg, and the cold was chilling, but inside the Court the lawyers warmed to their arguments. For two hours evidence was presented. Professor Phedon Vegleris, an attorney for Kokkinakis, reached the heart of the issue, asking: 'Should this restrictive law designed to protect members of the Greek Orthodox Church from being converted to other religious beliefs continue to exist and be applied?'

Obviously puzzled, Professor Vegleris asked: "I wonder why this [proselytism] law equates orthodoxy with stupidity and ignorance. I was always wondering why should orthodoxy need protection from stupidity, from spiritual incompetence . . . This is something that disturbs and shocks me." Significantly, the government's representative was unable to provide one instance in which this law was applied to anyone other than Jehovah's Witnesses.

The second attorney for Kokkinakis, Mr. Panagiotis Bitsaxis, showed how unreasonable the proselytism law is. He said: "The acceptance of mutual influence is a precondition for a dialogue between adult persons. Otherwise, we would belong to a strange society of silent beasts, who would think but not express themselves, who would talk but not communicate, who would exist but not coexist."

Mr. Bitsaxis also argued that "Mr. Kokkinakis was condemned not 'for something he did' but [for] 'what he is.'" Therefore, Mr. Bitsaxis showed, the principles of religious freedom had been not only violated but totally shattered.

The representatives of the Greek government tried to present a picture different from the real one, claiming that Greece is "a paradise for human rights."



**Minos Kokkinakis
with his wife**

The Decision

The long anticipated date for handing down the decision came—May 25, 1993. In a six to three vote, the Court ruled that the Greek government had violated the religious freedom of 84-year-old Minos Kokkinakis. In addition to vindicating his life course of public ministry, it awarded him \$14,400 in damages. The Court thus rejected the Greek government's argument that Kokkinakis and Jehovah's Witnesses use pressure tactics when discussing their beliefs with others.

Although the Greek Constitution and an archaic Greek law may prohibit proselytism, the high court in Europe ruled that using this law to persecute Jehovah's Witnesses is wrong. It is not in harmony with Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The court decision explained: "Religion was part of the 'constantly renewable flow of human thought' and it was impossible to conceive of its being excluded from public debate."

A concurring opinion of one of the nine

judges said: "Proselytism, defined as 'zeal in spreading the faith,' cannot be punishable as such; it is a way—perfectly legitimate in itself—of 'manifesting one's religion.'

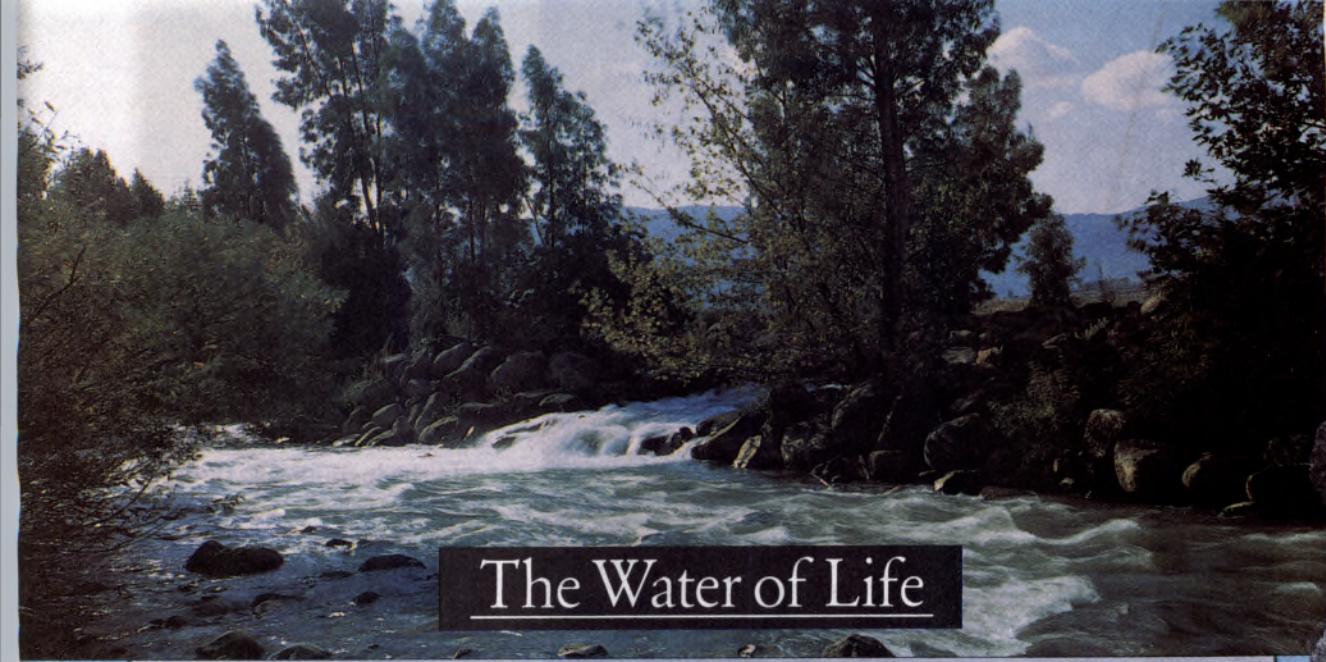
"In the instant case the applicant [Mr. Kokkinakis] was convicted only for having shown such zeal, without any impropriety on his part."

Consequences of the Decision

The clear direction of the European Court of Human Rights is that the officials of the Greek government cease misusing the law that forbids proselytism. Hopefully, Greece will abide by the direction of the court and discontinue its persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses.

It is not the purpose of Jehovah's Witnesses to introduce social changes or to reform the legal system. Their principal concern is to preach the good news of God's Kingdom in obedience to the command of Jesus Christ. To do this, however, they are pleased to 'defend and legally establish the good news,' as did the apostle Paul in the first century.—*Philippians 1:7*.

Jehovah's Witnesses are law-abiding citizens in all countries in which they reside. Above all, however, they are compelled to obey divine law as it is recorded in the Holy Bible. Therefore, if the law of any land forbids them to speak their Bible-based beliefs to others, they are forced to take the apostolic position: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men."—*Acts 5:29*.



Garo Nalbandian

The Water of Life

"LET anyone hearing say: 'Come!' And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life's water free." (Revelation 22:17) "Life's water"—that means all of God's provisions for our salvation based on the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. These provisions are available, and they are free. What wonderful generosity on the part of our God! Why, though, are they symbolized by water?

Well, literal water makes possible the growth of vegetation in the soil, and that makes human life possible. Without water, plant life, and thus human life, cannot exist. Further, your body is 65 percent water. Some health specialists recommend maintaining that ratio by taking in

about two and a half quarts of water a day. All your internal life processes—from digesting food to getting rid of waste—require water. Go a week without water, and you die.

Similarly, "life's water" makes possible and nourishes spiritual life. If we reject the water of life, we have no lasting future. (John 3:36) If we accept it, we can gain everlasting life. No wonder the Samaritan woman responded with interest when Jesus said to her: "Whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty at all, but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water bubbling up to impart everlasting life"! (John 4:14) May we reach out with eagerness and take life's water free.