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FEBRUARY 15, 1978

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



Who was she?

**Are there women
like her today?**

**"An Excellent Woman"
Displays Loyal Love**

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A WATCHTOWER enables a person to look far into the distance and announce to others what is seen. Likewise, this magazine, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, aids the reader to see what the future holds. Since it began publication in 1879, "The Watchtower" has held faithfully to God's Word as its authority. It stays clear of all political involvement. It points to the Bible prophecies showing that Jesus Christ is God's means for restoring peace and harmony to this globe. It shows that this Son of God, on the basis of his shed blood, will release mankind from sin and death to enjoy eternal life in happiness on a paradise earth. Because Jehovah God will accomplish all this soon through his kingdom by Jesus Christ, "The Watchtower" announces that kingdom as the real hope for mankind.

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Ten cents a copy

Watch Tower Society offices	Yearly subscription rates for semi-monthly editions in local currency
America, U.S., 117 Adams St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201	\$2.00
Australia, 11 Beresford Rd., Strathfield, N.S.W. 2135	A\$2.50
Canada, 150 Bridgeland Ave., Toronto, Ontario M6A 1Z5	\$2.00
England, Watch Tower House, The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN	£1.70
Hawaii, 1228 Pensacola St., Honolulu 96814	\$2.00
New Zealand, 6-A Western Springs Rd., Auckland 3	NZ\$3.00
Nigeria, West Africa, P.O. Box 194, Yaba, Lagos State	#1.40
Philippines, P.O. Box 2044, Manila 2800	₱10.00
South Africa, Private Bag 2, P.O. Elandsfontein, 1406	R1.80

(Monthly editions cost half the above rates.)

Remittances for subscriptions should be sent to the office in your country. Otherwise send your remittance to 117 Adams Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201.

Printed in U.S.A.

NOW PUBLISHED IN 79 LANGUAGES

SEMIMONTHLY EDITIONS

Afrikaans, Arabic, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese, Chishona, Cibemba, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hiligaynon, Ibo, Igbo, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malagasy, Norwegian, Portuguese, Sesotho, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Thai, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

MONTHLY EDITIONS

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The Bible translation used in "The Watchtower" is the modern-language "New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures," unless otherwise indicated.

Notice of expiration is sent at least two issues before subscription expires. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS should reach us thirty days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label). Write Watchtower, R.D. 1, Box 300, Wallkill, New York 12589, U.S.A.

POSTMASTER: Send Form 3579 to Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589.

**Average Printing Each Issue:
9,800,000**

Published by
Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society
of Pennsylvania

117 Adams Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201, U.S.A.
Frederick W. Franz, Pres.

Grant Suiter, Secy.

Human Kindness



Essential For Happiness

A CROWD of people was waiting for a subway train. Among them were two individuals apparently having opposite ideals. One was a well-dressed businessman who seemed to represent the "Establishment." The other was a young woman who, by her attire, appeared to be a rebel against the "Establishment." Yet, these two had something in common. This became apparent when an obviously inebriated man staggered to the car door. Somehow he made a misstep so that one leg slipped into the small space between the car and the platform. Surely, he would have had his leg severed at the hip had it not been for the quick action of the businessman and the young woman.

What did these two have in common? Philanthropy—love for fellowman, human kindness. But how far-reaching is this love? Well, in this case, the two persons helped the drunken man to a seat, made

sure that he was not injured, and then went their respective ways. They did what they could to care for the man's need on that occasion. They were acting, in this case, as humans were created to act.

In Biblical Greek, "human kindness" has reference to such a form of love or concern for mankind; it is the doing of little things to make life enjoyable, the showing of hospitality in caring for human needs and comforts. (Acts 27:3; 28:2) An individual expressing human kindness is interested in the well-being of another, often without the personal attachment and involvement that other senses of love convey. For the businessman and the young woman, involvement in the life of the unfortunate drunkard ended when he was safely out of danger.

APPLIED IN EVERYDAY LIVING

Human kindness is essential in the life of a married couple. They may express

romantic love for each other and care for all their responsibilities. Yet, their relationship can become very disappointing if they do not display human kindness toward each other. Spontaneously doing little things to make the other person more comfortable and happy—those little things they were quick to do during courtship—how important these acts of human kindness are! David and Jonathan had affection for each other as close friends. Husbands and wives should have this kind of close friendship.—1 Sam. 18: 1, 3; 2 Sam. 1:26.

A wife needs the security of feeling that she is her husband's closest companion, the one he would rather be with than any other person. If human kindness and close friendship are lacking, the wife begins to feel neglected. 'He doesn't talk to me,' she may say, or 'He is more interested in the duties of his profession or business than he is in me.' And the husband may feel that his wife is making too great a demand on his time and does not appreciate the importance of his other responsibilities. Gradually the other features of love become strained. Problems crop up as a result. However, the problems are sometimes solved by the couple's starting their "courtship" all over again and by their performing little acts of kindness toward each other.

IN THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION

Christians are commanded to show kindness to their brothers in the faith. (Jas. 2:14-17) In the first century, when famine and persecution came upon the Christians in Judea, those in other lands sent

a generous contribution for their relief—an act of human kindness.—Acts 11: 28-30; 12:1-5; 2 Cor. 9:1-5.

An example for elders was the apostle Paul, who went far beyond merely preaching the "good news" to those who listened to him. This was an act of love, but Paul showed tender affection and human kindness in addition. He said to some whom he had taught: "We became gentle in the midst of you, as when a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, having a



Do you extend kindness to those who are not of your background or faith?

"...we were well pleased to impart to you, not only the good news of God [which God had commanded them to do], but also our own souls [an expression of tender affection, brotherly love], because you became beloved to us." —1 Thess. 2:7, 8.

Paul was willing to go out of his way for his Christian brothers and to give of himself. Elders in the Christian congre-

gation today find by experience that the brothers' need for attention and care seldom comes at a convenient time. For example, a brother may approach an elder after a meeting and say: 'I would like to talk to you about a matter, when you have time.' Human kindness to the brother would dictate that, with few exceptions, now is the time. The problem may be serious—at least to the brother. It may have taken a great deal of courage to approach the elder. If the elder delays until it is convenient to himself, he may find that the brother has changed his mind and may not want to talk about the matter. Why? He may have lost his courage. Or he may already have made a decision and now considers it too late for discussion. He may even have become bitter because the elder did not come to his aid when needed.

INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION

Human kindness has its place in other situations involving the personal needs of the congregation's members. A sister may complain to an elder that the air-conditioning unit in the meeting place is set too cold for her comfort. A brother who is hard of hearing may complain of not being able to hear. Are they to be considered "complainers"? Should the elder reason that it is impossible to please everyone and that if the majority is satisfied he has done enough? Not if he has the interest of such brothers at heart. The Bible proverb states: "As for anyone stopping up his ear from the *complaining cry* of the lowly one, he himself also will call and not be answered." (Prov. 21:13) The kind reaction is to consider each "complaint" and exhaust all reasonable possibilities to make everyone comfortable and happy.

Jesus taught this principle in his illustration of the shepherd. He asked: "What man of you with a hundred sheep, on losing one of them, will not leave the ninety-

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nine behind in the wilderness and go for the lost one until he finds it? And when he has found it he puts it upon his shoulders and rejoices." Jesus was emphasizing the importance of giving individual, special attention to each member of the flock.

—Luke 15:4-7.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

One of the most impressive illustrations Jesus used to emphasize human kindness was that of the good Samaritan. When the Samaritan found an injured man on the road, "*he was moved with pity.*" So what did he do? "He approached him and bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine upon them. Then he mounted him upon his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii [coins], gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him, and whatever you spend besides this, I will repay you when I come back here.'" Christ Jesus used this illustration to impress on those who felt that they were righteous that more is required to please God than the traditional duties of being "good" and keeping the Law.—Luke 10:29-37.

APOSTLE SHOWN HUMAN KINDNESS BY A NON-CHRISTIAN

Another situation worthy of consideration is when the apostle Paul was a pris-

oner being transported to Rome. Acts 27: 3 describes the human kindness and compassion shown to Paul by Julius, the army officer in charge. "And the next day we landed at Sidon, and Julius treated Paul with *human kindness* and permitted him to go to his friends and enjoy their care."

Those who supervise personnel can learn from this non-Christian. He was a man who understood the human needs of others. He did not coldly fit everyone into the same mold. A supervisor can show human kindness in this way by realizing the individual human needs and the shortcomings of each one. He will not demand the same from each one. One may be quick to learn new assignments, be fast and efficient in doing his work. It would be easy to show human kindness to this employee. But, how would you treat the one who is slow? The slower one needs more training, attention and time, which may tax the patience of the supervisor. The good supervisor will be interested in the well-being of each and will do little things to make that one's work enjoyable. While he maintains loyalty to his employer, he will be more concerned with the overall benefit of each employee than in following some special rule. Julius did not look into a "rule book" to find out if he could permit Paul to enjoy the care of his friends. If there had been such a book, it probably would have forbidden such kindness.

Later, on that same voyage to Rome, the group suffered shipwreck and all

aboard the ship safely reached shore on the island of Malta. Even though Paul and many with him were prisoners and all were strangers, Luke explained that the islanders "showed us *extraordinary human kindness*, for they kindled a fire and received all of us helpfully because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold." (Acts 28:2, 7, 10) There is a lesson here for us: human kindness can be shown to those who are not of your background or faith. Jesus encourages us: "Prove yourselves sons of your Father who is in the heavens, since he makes his sun rise upon wicked people and good."—Matt. 5:45.

BENEFITS

How are we personally benefited if we show human kindness? It brings rich rewards through personal satisfaction and peace of mind. (Prov. 19:22, 23) Jehovah is pleased when we show kindness. (Mic. 6:8) If we show human kindness by being a good neighbor, like the good Samaritan, we will have blessings from Jehovah and usually from our fellowman. "Practice giving, and people will give to you. They will pour into your laps a fine measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing. For with the measure that you are measuring out, they will measure out to you." (Luke 6:38) Even if these rewards are not immediately apparent, the peace of mind and self-respect transcend, making human kindness worth while.

Using the Tongue in Panama

A TWELVE-year-old Panamanian girl, invalid from birth, could not use her undeveloped arms and legs. But she has a sharp mind and was allowed by her mother to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. "I was wondering how she would ever be able to turn the pages and find a Bible text," remarked the Witness studying with the girl, "but she has no trouble at all. She lies on her stomach on the bed with her books before her and turns the pages with her tongue in a most efficient way, finding the text sometimes even before I do."

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

● In a recent letter to "Chemical & Engineering News," Edward A. Boudreaux, Associate Professor of Chemistry at the University of New Orleans,

Evolution's Probability: Zero

pointed out that "there are a number of scientists who do indeed take issue with the evolution of man from apes, precisely because of what is stated in [the Bible book of] Genesis." Prof. Boudreaux also wrote: "It is particularly pertinent to point out that the eminent theoretical physicist, Eugene P. Wigner, . . . gave an elegant and rigorous proof from group theory, that the probability for spontaneous existence of a self-reproducing unit of any kind is zero."

"While this is not at odds with the Genesis account of creation," said Boudreaux, "it certainly deals a severe blow to the uniformitarian evolutionary hypothesis of life—be it from apes to man or otherwise."

Proponents of the evolution theory unscientifically grasp at one hypothetical possibility after another—all in an effort to prove the unprovable. But no such dilemma faces the realistic person who accepts as truth the Bible's statement: "God proceeded to create the man in his image, in God's image he created him; male and female he created them."—Gen. 1:27; 2:7, 22.

● An international group of 40 scholars is now preparing for publication, in English, a number of works never accepted as part of the Bible.

Part of the Bible? Called the pseudepigrapha (meaning "false writings"), these include such books as "The Assumption of Moses," "The Apocalypse of Ezra" and the "Book of Jubilees." Some 47 works in all, these books reportedly were written between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E.

According to "Newsweek" magazine, the project's director, Prof. James H. Charlesworth of Duke University, believes that when the ten-year undertaking is finished in 1980 "the public will have a dramatically new understanding of Christianity's origins in Judaism." The journal also states: "Among the

more striking discoveries [in the pseudepigrapha] are a pronounced belief in astrology and a luxuriant angel worship which, in the view of some scholars, borders on polytheism."

All of this may seem quite intriguing. But true Christianity was not a normal development of Jewish religious thought. And the fact that these uncanonical writings reveal "a pronounced belief in astrology and a luxuriant angel worship" clearly excludes them from "all Scripture [that] is inspired of God." (2 Tim. 3:16) This is so because the Sacred Scriptures condemn astrology. (Isa. 47:12-15) Also, when the Christian apostle John spoke of falling down before the feet of an angel "to worship him," he was told: "Be careful! Do not do that! . . . Worship God."—Rev. 19:9, 10.

● It has been estimated that over 15,000 people died and more than 100,000 were left homeless in the wake of a cyclone that ravaged

When Warnings Go Unheeded the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh on November 23, 1977. According to Chief Minister J. Vangal Rao, government officials took all "necessary prompt, appropriate and adequate action." So, he contends, the populace had been given sufficient advance warning. Why, then, the great death toll?

A United Press International dispatch from the state capital of Hyderabad quotes Rao as saying that if the villagers "could have been persuaded to move, the local authorities could have done this." But he added: "The fact was that they were very reluctant to move out."

Often, perhaps because of apathy, disbelief or a reluctance to abandon material things, many persons have failed to heed warnings and have died needlessly in disasters. But they could have saved their lives by taking appropriate action. Similarly, many today ignore the Bible's warning that the present system of things shortly will come to an end at God's hand. Wise, indeed, are those who take lifesaving action, 'doing their utmost to be found finally by God spotless, unblemished and in peace.'—2 Pet. 3:10-14.



THE
**SERMON
ON THE
MOUNT**

Happinesses 4 and 5

AS THE fourth 'happiness' of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated: "Happy are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness, since they will be filled." (Matt. 5:6) Luke's account of this statement reads: "Happy are you who hunger now, because you will be filled."—Luke 6:21.

From Luke's Gospel alone one might think that Jesus spoke exclusively of persons who hunger for material food. However, Matthew makes it plain that he meant those with an intense desire for righteousness. However, both these thoughts harmonize. Persons lacking literal food and drink are often more keenly aware of widespread injustice in the present system of things. Hence, their hunger or yearning to see righteousness prevail can be all the more compelling.

The "righteousness" of which Jesus spoke means the quality of rightness that fully conforms to God's will and commandments. Expressing a thought similar to that of Jesus, the psalmist spoke of himself as being "crushed with longing" for God's righteous judicial decisions.—Ps. 119:20; compare Isaiah 26:9, 10.



In contrast with this pronouncement of happiness, Jesus declared: "Woe to you who are filled up now, because you will go hungry." (Luke 6:25) Those who are "filled up" feel satisfied by what this world offers. Though perhaps claiming to believe in God, they neither recognize their deep need for him nor have a longing for his standards of righteousness. (Rev. 3:17) However, times of calamity may momentarily awaken such a hunger for divine guidance. This will be true especially when God brings an end to the present system of things at the coming "great tribulation." (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14) Such formerly self-satisfied persons will then "go hungry." Their frantic cries for God's help and direction will go unheeded. (Compare 1 Samuel 28:4-6; Psalm 18:41; Proverbs 1:28-32.) As far as hearing the word of Jehovah is concerned, at that time they will experience hopeless 'famine and thirst.'—Amos 8:11, 12.

But Jesus declares "happy" those who hunger and thirst for righteousness *now*. Why? Because "they will be filled," that is, fully satisfied. Jesus himself contribut-

ed much to this. While exposing the hypocrisy of pseudopious religious leaders "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous," Jesus taught that all who admitted their sinful state and repently sought forgiveness could attain a righteous standing before God.—Luke 18:9-14; compare Matthew 5:20; 23:23, 24.

The further satisfying of hunger and thirst for righteousness was made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection. Concerning this, we read: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and it is as a free gift that they are being declared righteous by his undeserved kindness through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus."—Rom. 3:23, 24; compare Isaiah 53:11; Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 7:9, 14.

Additional 'filling' of this vital hunger and thirst was possible after Pentecost of 33 C.E., for then the holy spirit began to "give the world convincing evidence concerning . . . righteousness." (John 16:8) This proved to be true as God's spirit was responsible for producing the Christian Greek Scriptures, an indispensable instrument "for disciplining in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16) The same active force of God enables people to put on "the new personality," which replaces wicked practices and hypocrisy with "true righteousness." (Eph. 4:24) Final and complete satisfying of hunger and thirst for righteousness will be experienced when faithful worshipers of God gain eternal life under perfectly righteous conditions.—2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-5.

MERCY TO "THE MERCIFUL"

Next in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "*Happy are the merciful, since they will be shown mercy.*"—Matt. 5:7.

Mercy is not simply a matter of performing charitable deeds, for one might

do that hypocritically. (Matt. 6:1, 2) "The merciful" are persons who are genuinely motivated by tenderly compassionate and sympathetic feelings toward the unfortunate and who therefore act in their behalf. Jesus set a perfect example in this regard. Repeatedly the Scriptures state that before performing miracles to relieve suffering and distress Jesus "felt pity" or was "moved with pity."—Matt. 14:14; 15:32-38; 20:34; Mark 1:40-42; Luke 7:13-15.

Mercy becomes manifest in two ways: (1) in a judicial sense when people forgive those who transgress against them; (2) by positive deeds of kindness, consideration and pity that bring relief to disadvantaged persons.

Christians are directed to "become imitators of God" as the foremost one who freely forgives repentant sinners. (Ex. 34:6, 7; Ps. 103:10; Prov. 28:13; Eph. 4:31-5:2) In a positive way persons who wish to please God must be willing to give whatever help is within their power to those who may be victims of unfortunate circumstances. (Luke 10:20-37) An especially fine way to show mercy is by sharing Bible truth with others. We note that when a crowd of people encountered Jesus on his way to get some rest "he was moved with pity for them, because they were as sheep without a shepherd. And he started to teach them many things."—Mark 6:34.

The merciful are "happy" because of being "shown mercy." In one sense they experience this in day-to-day dealings with fellow humans. Merciful treatment of others prompts them to respond in kind. (Luke 6:38) Most importantly, the merciful will be shown mercy by God. In this regard, James writes: "For the one that does not practice mercy will have his judgment without mercy. Mercy exults triumphantly over judgment." (Jas. 2:13) When brought into judgment by God, truly com-

passionate persons will find that the mercy they have extended to others will in effect triumph over any adverse judgment that God might otherwise bring to bear against them. (2 Tim. 1:16-18) The opportunity

for forgiveness of sins and eternal life are only for merciful persons. "If you do not forgive men their trespasses," declared Jesus, "neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."—Matt. 6:15; 18:35.

LAODICEA -the wealthy city

NEAR Denizli in southwestern Turkey lie the ruins of the ancient city of Laodicea. Known as Diospolis and then as Rhoas, the city was evidently refounded in the third century B.C.E. by the Seleucid ruler Antiochus II, who named it after his wife Laodice. Being at the junction of major trade routes in the fertile Lycus River valley, Laodicea was ideally situated. Roads linked it with such cities as Ephesus, Pergamum and Philadelphia.

The city was very prosperous. And a sizable Jewish population shared in that prosperity. Indicative of this wealth is the fact that when Governor Flaccus ordered the confiscation of the annual contribution destined for the temple at Jerusalem, the amount seized proved to be more than 20 pounds (10 kilos) of gold. Also, when an earthquake during the reign of Caesar Nero caused considerable damage at Laodicea, the inhabitants were able to rebuild without any help from Rome.

Banking and manufacturing contributed to the city's wealth. Laodicea was widely known for the glossy black woolen gar-



ments made there. Black may have been the natural color of a particular breed of sheep. Or, Laodicea may have been famous for the special black dye developed there.

Besides being a banking and manufacturing center, Laodicea was the home of a medical school. So, since Laodicea lay in the region known as Phrygia, it may well be that the eye medicine known as "Phrygian powder" was produced in the city. Hence, it is not surprising that the worship of Aesculapius, a god of medicine, was very prominent at Laodicea.

Despite its commercial advantages, Laodicea did have a problem with its water supply. The city had no hot springs famed for their healing properties, as did nearby Hierapolis. Nor did it have a refreshing cold-water supply, as did neighboring Co-

lossae. Water had to be piped to Laodicea from a source lying a considerable distance to the south. Initially the water was conveyed by means of an aqueduct and then, closer to the city, through cubical stone blocks. These blocks had been bored through the middle and were then cemented together. Since the water had to be transported over a long distance, it likely was lukewarm upon arriving at Laodicea.

THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION AT LAODICEA

Sometime before the year 61 C.E., a Christian congregation came into existence at Laodicea. How was the congregation established? The Bible does not provide specific information on this. However, a Colossian Christian named Epaphras did much to further spiritual interests there. (Col. 4:12, 13, 15) Also, the effect of the apostle Paul's work at Ephesus may have reached as far as Laodicea.—Acts 19:10.

Toward the close of the first century, Christians at Laodicea got into a very bad spiritual condition. Through the apostle John, Jesus Christ directed this message to them: "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or else hot. So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth. Because you say: 'I am rich and have acquired riches and do not need anything at all,' but you do not know you are miserable and pitiable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from me gold refined by fire that you may become rich, and white outer garments that you may become dressed and that the shame of your nakedness may not become manifested, and eyesalve to rub in your eyes that you may see."—Rev. 3:15-18.

It is noteworthy that Jesus Christ evi-

dently drew from the circumstances of Laodicea to illustrate what the congregation needed. Evidently the Christians there shared with the rest of the city's inhabitants in the general prosperity. But spiritually, the congregation, though thinking otherwise, was poor, blind and naked. Hence, what the congregation needed was not the gold handled by Laodicean bankers. It was not black woolen garments manufactured locally. It was not the "Phrygian powder" produced by the medical profession. Nor was it the hot medicinal waters from nearby Hierapolis, or the cool water of Colossae. But the Laodicean congregation did need that which corresponded to these things in a spiritual sense.

To enrich their Christian personality, members of that congregation were in need of a spiritual "gold refined by fire," including faith of greater value than literal gold. (1 Pet. 1:6, 7) They did need "white outer garments," representative of blameless Christian conduct and works. (Rev. 16:15; 19:8) Because of their blindness to Bible truth and Christian responsibilities, they needed spiritual "eyesalve." It was a time for being definite and clear-cut as to their sacred service and, hence, a time for them to become either stimulatingly hot or refreshingly cool and to cease being lukewarm as to Christian activity.

We today can profit from the fine counsel given to Christians at Laodicea. As the Laodiceans needed to guard against being unduly influenced by the materialistic way of life surrounding them, so must we. By maintaining a healthy spiritual outlook, we can avoid getting into a condition like that of certain Christians in prosperous Laodicea. Thus, our lives will be far richer, to our blessing and to God's praise.

The TRUE RICHES of PUERTO RICO

PUERTO Rico means "Rich Port," and truly there are many riches on this small island in the Caribbean. Pleasant temperatures prevail the year around, and the tropical beauty can be breathtaking. Flaming flamboyant trees make delightful 'tunnels' out of some country roads over which they arch. Different shades and hues of bougainvillea adorn walls and road-sides. Inland, mountains reach about 3,900 feet (1,200 meters) into the blue sky. And down by the lovely white-sand beaches palm trees sway in the tropical breeze.

The island, although only some 35 miles wide by 100 miles long (56 by 160 kilometers), is rich in many agricultural products. Here coffee, sugarcane, oranges, grapefruit and bananas grow, as well as a great variety of trees, flowers and shrubs. All over the island, on every hill and in every valley, are people, yes, over 3,000,000 inhabitants. They are a happy, friendly people, with good-looking features.

Due to many industrial incentives and tax benefits in Puerto Rico many industries have come here. Thus many people are more prosperous now, and the standard of living has been raised. However, into this "rich port" have come riches of far greater value, riches that do not fade—spiritual riches!



RICHES TRICKLE IN

Lillian E. Carr and Marie Hawkins came to Puerto Rico in 1935. Their purpose was to bring to the Puerto Rican people the good news regarding God's kingdom, and how it soon will bring blessings to those who put their trust in it. (Matt. 24: 14) They divided the island more or less in two and went from town to town distributing Bibles and Bible helps. They were not the first Jehovah's Witnesses to preach in Puerto Rico, but their activity produced lasting fruitage.

In the town of Arecibo, on the island's northern shore, a man accepted the booklet *Universal War Near*. Because he could not read, he gave it to his friend, Ambrosio Rosa, whom he thought would be interested since he practiced spiritism. Ambrosio liked what he read, and wrote to the Watch Tower Society in Brooklyn, New York, asking for four books that he saw advertised. Soon he was taking in true riches, the kind that result in a good relationship with Jehovah God and that can bring one everlasting life.—John 17:3.

On seeing his enthusiasm over the things that he was learning, Ambrosio's wife told him: "Now that you have a new religion, get me a Bible. But I don't want those books." However, when she saw the book

entitled "Riches," she changed her mind. Soon she was using it in helping herself to search out the priceless riches found in the Bible.

Although there were, at the time, no Kingdom proclaimers among the Puerto Ricans themselves, Ambrosio recognized his responsibility to share with others the good things that he had learned. So one day he began calling on his neighbors with booklets and magazines. A man named Santiago Rodriguez accepted *The Watchtower* and *Consolation* (now called *Awake!*), and subscribed to them. Soon he, too, realized that he should take these spiritual riches to others. Therefore one day he started out from his house with a bag full of magazines, and placed 25 right there among his friends and neighbors.

So, by about 1938, these two faithful Christians had begun to provide spiritual riches for others. There were no congregation meetings to encourage them, no one to train them, but their faith was strong and their love for their Creator impelled them to proclaim the "good news" that they had learned. Soon a little group began studying the Bible together, and others joined them in the preaching work.

These Bible students came to understand that water baptism is a Christian requirement. But who in Puerto Rico could baptize them? One day the group went down to the river, and first Ambrosio baptized Santiago. Then Santiago baptized Ambro-

sio. Afterward they both baptized some of the others. At last Puerto Rico had true riches in earthen vessels in the form of dedicated, baptized Christians serving the true God, Jehovah.

FAITH SOON TESTED

Ambrosio saw an announcement in *The Watchtower* for phonographs, which, at the time, were used extensively by Jehovah's Witnesses in the preaching work. So he ordered one from Brooklyn, where they were produced at the Watchtower Society's factory. As soon as it was received he decided to play the recorded Bible talks in public places. The place he selected was in front of the bank in the town square.

Soon a small crowd gathered to listen. It was not long before the local priest also came along. He was extremely displeased with what he heard, and began shouting, "Fifth Column," and other names, raising his voice higher and louder all the time. Finally a policeman came to see what was going on.

He ordered Ambrosio to leave the area, and to stop playing the records. Ambrosio answered: "I am preaching the good news of the Kingdom. If you want to arrest me, OK, but I will not stop unless you do, and you will have to tell me why I am being arrested."

At this the policeman and the priest left. So Ambrosio opened his large bag and began to distribute all the books and magazines that he had. In a few minutes his bag was



Santiago Rodriguez and Ambrosio Rosa sharing together in spiritual riches

empty. He remembers: "This indeed served to strengthen me, because I could see that even though I was the only proclaimer of the 'good news' there, I was not really alone. I could feel Jehovah's power backing me up."

Ambrosio Rosa is now 81 years old and serves as an elder in a local congregation. He sets a fine Christian example, as does his wife as well. Many of his family have also become Witnesses. Santiago Rodriguez, too, was still active in Jehovah's service until his death at the age of 83 years. He had been privileged to spend almost 27 of those years in the full-time preaching work.

MISSIONARIES SPREAD TRUE RICHES

In March 1944 the first missionaries arrived from the Watchtower School of Gil-ead in New York. How different they found the preaching here! The struggle to learn the language was a particular challenge.

For example, it was embarrassing to learn that one had mistakenly asked the householder if he was "alive" instead of asking whether he lived in that house. ("*¿Está Ud. vivo?*" instead of "*¿vive Ud. aquí?*") Or, there was the missionary who asked a young girl if her young bullock (*novillo*) was coming to the Bible study, when he meant her fiancé (*novio*). But the local inhabitants would usually be very patient and helpful as the missionaries staggered and stuttered through their Spanish.

How could all the people in Puerto Rico be reached with the Kingdom message? In 1947 there were only 71 Witnesses and four congregations. Public meetings were the answer. In 1947, 61 were held in 12 towns, usually in the public plaza or town square. At times the local priest became infuriated and tried to stop the meetings.

In one town the priest had little signs distributed to be tacked on the doors of homes. They read: "Don't bother yourself—we are Catholics." However, a missionary called at the home of a young man who had attended a public meeting, and was pleased to find a sign printed neatly on wood: "Welcome to this house, all of Jehovah's Witnesses."

In 1948, 82 public meetings were held. In the mountain town of Albonito the local Catholic hierarchy was not at all pleased, and published a pamphlet in an effort to discourage attendance. But it just aroused curiosity and more than 100 persons came. So these public meetings served effectively to spread true riches.

Thus in 1949, 253 publishers of the "good news" were busy in seven congregations, and that year 136 public meetings were held.

Over the years more missionaries kept coming to Puerto Rico. A missionary home was opened in the town of San Germán in 1952, and four young girls were sent to work there. How could all the people in this large territory be reached? Well, the local priest helped.

He mounted his jeep, and headed for the houses on the hills and in the valleys where these young Witnesses were preaching. He went from house to house telling the people that if they had obtained any of the books or Bibles they must burn them. Also, he circulated a leaflet warning the people about the girls' work. As a result, the girls suddenly found great interest being shown, as one noted: "We realized now why so many heads would pop out of the windows as we passed by. It was not because we had our clothes on wrong side out or something, but because of the publicity the priest had given us."

Despite the priest's efforts, many persons listened and found what the message was really about. Today there are two con-

gregations of over 100 Kingdom publishers in the center of town, and at least four other congregations have been established in nearby towns that were once served by the San Germán Congregation.

BUILDINGS TO SPREAD TRUE RICHES

Today many beautiful Kingdom Halls built by Jehovah's Witnesses adorn the towns and countryside in Puerto Rico. Along with experienced craftsmen, accountants have served as bricklayers; salesmen as plumbers; schoolteachers as carpenters; bank tellers as plasterers. Women have mixed concrete by hand, as well as prepared meals for the other workers. This has all resulted in an even greater bond of union among the Witnesses.

The largest construction has been of a handsome, two-story branch office, completed in 1969. By that time the number of Witnesses in Puerto Rico had increased to 5,500. All the actual construction was done by the Witnesses themselves. This branch building, as well as the fine Kingdom Halls, have contributed toward the spreading of spiritual riches throughout the island.

SPREAD OF TRUE RICHES CONTINUES

As the number of Kingdom publishers has grown, so too has the problem of finding large enough facilities to hold Christian assemblies. Usually the government has been kind enough to provide the use of baseball parks, but in recent times even these have often proved to be too small. Before using the parks, the Witnesses have repaired doors, plumbing, light fixtures, and even painted certain areas. This has made a fine impression.

In January 1967 an international assembly was held in San Juan, and a total of 8,604 was in attendance. Then, in September 1973, there was a second interna-

tional assembly in Puerto Rico. This time some 5,000 visitors came from other countries. By then the Witnesses on the island had increased to 9,000, and there was real cooperation to care for their visitors.

One activity, for example, was to provide transportation for the visitors to the assembly site. About 200 cars, owned and operated by Puerto Rican Witnesses ran from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. to and from the hotels and the stadium, taking the visitors to the assembly. Then these same Witnesses hurried home to pick up their families and friends to take them to the assembly in time for the first session at 10 a.m. In the evening the same service was provided to take the visitors back to their hotels. What a grand success that assembly proved to be, with a peak attendance of 31,000, and with 1,007 baptized!

Late in 1976 and in January 1977 vandalism was committed against the Roman Catholic Church—in certain places images were burned and other damage was done by fire. A high official of the Church tried to implicate the Witnesses, even using their name in public in connection with this trouble. The situation became very tense. But it is interesting that neither the police, public officials or even the Roman Catholic populace gave any credence to the false statements against Jehovah's Witnesses by this Catholic dignitary.

From those days when spiritual riches were just a trickle, Puerto Rico has truly become a Rich Port. Spiritual treasures abound as the nearly 17,000 Witnesses in 227 congregations visit the people in every corner of the island. This past spring 41,991 attended the memorial of Christ's death. Truly a fine record of faithfulness, of integrity and of a desire to keep on peaceably talking to others about God's kingdom has been built up by Jehovah's Christian witnesses in Puerto Rico.

"An Excellent Woman" Displays Loyal Love

**"Everyone in the gate of my people is aware
that you are an excellent woman."—Ruth 3:11.**

THE darkness of night has fallen and a hushed tranquillity has descended upon Bethlehem, Judah, and its surrounding countryside. At a threshing floor in one of the fields an elderly man is slumbering. But, look! A young woman approaches stealthily, uncovers him slightly and lies down. He awakens, finds her at his feet, and asks, "Who are you?" Her reply? "I am Ruth your slave girl." She has come to him for a special and highly noble purpose. In fact, acknowledging her virtue as the conversation continues, he remarks: "Everyone in the gate of my people is aware that you are an excellent woman."—Ruth 3:9-11.

² What has led to this unusual midnight meeting? Really, who is this woman? And what is the identity of the elderly man? Why does he say that she is known as "an excellent woman"? What qualities does she display? These and other questions fill our minds as we reflect on that extraordinary nighttime scene.

³ The divinely inspired account that we are about to consider, likely written in David's day (about 1090 B.C.E.) by the Hebrew prophet Samuel, is unique as one of only two Bible books bearing a woman's name. (The other is Esther.) Although

1, 2. What midnight meeting gets our attention, and what questions does it raise?

3. (a) We are about to consider what Bible book? (b) When and by whom was this Bible account written, and what does it highlight?

some view the book of Ruth as a touching love story, it is much more than that. The account highlights the purpose of Jehovah God to produce a Kingdom heir, the long-promised Messiah. Moreover, it exalts God's loving-kindness.—Gen. 3:15; Ruth 2:20; 4:17-22.*

ADVERSITY STRIKES!

⁴ The events related in this account occurred in "the days when the judges administered justice" in Israel. The time must be early during that period, for the man we observed with Ruth at the threshing floor was Boaz, the son of Rahab of Joshua's day. (Ruth 1:1; Josh. 2:1, 2; Matt. 1:5) As this intriguing story unfolds, it will span some 11 years, perhaps around 1300 B.C.E.

⁵ Famine has arisen in the land of Judah and holds Bethlehem (or Ephrathah) in its grip. Especially has adversity struck the family of a certain man, Elimelech. Realizing the need to provide life's necessities for those who are his own, he takes decisive action. Soon Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons Mahlon and

* For discussions of the prophetic significance of the book of Ruth, please see *The Watchtower*, Feb. 1, 1972, pp. 76-90, and the book *Preservation*, pp. 169-335, published in 1932 by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society.

4. In what time period did the events related in the book of Ruth occur?

5. What circumstances and realization prompt Elimelech to move his family to Moab, and does this bear any relation to Christian responsibilities?

Chilion can be seen crossing the river Jordan. These Ephrathites become alien residents in Moab, a country on a plateau east of the Dead Sea and south of the Arnon River.—Ruth 1:1, 2; compare 1 Timothy 5:8.

⁶ In time, Elimelech dies, leaving Naomi an aging widow. Later, their two sons enter wedlock with Moabite women. Mahlon marries Ruth, whereas Chilion takes Orpah as his wife. (Ruth 1:4, 5; 4:10) About 10 years pass, and then calamity strikes again. Both of Naomi's sons die, and childless at that. Now the three women are all alone, and surely bereavement and widowhood are hard to bear.

6. Describe the circumstances that lead to bereavement for Naomi, Ruth and Orpah.

⁷ Especially is Naomi sorrowful. She is a Judean and knows about the special deathbed blessing that the patriarch Jacob pronounced on his son Judah in the words: “The scepter will not turn aside from Judah, neither the commander's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him the obedience of the peoples will belong.” This Shiloh will have the royal scepter—will, in fact, be the Messiah, Abraham's Seed through whom all families of the earth will bless themselves. Why, it is possible for women of Judah to bear sons who would be forefathers of that Anointed One! But Naomi's sons have died childless, and she is past the childbearing age. The possibility that Naomi and her family might contribute to the Messianic lineage is remote indeed.—Ruth 1:3-5; Gen. 22:17, 18; 49:10, 33.

7. What possibility appears especially remote for widowed Naomi?



Ruth implores Naomi: ‘Do not plead with me to abandon you, for where you go I shall go’

⁸ Yet, there is at least a glimmer of hope that something good is in the offing. Naomi has heard, perhaps from some traveling Hebrew merchants, that Jehovah has "turned his attention to his people by giving them bread." Yes, the famine has ended and, with divine blessing, again there is bread in Judah, wholesome food at Bethlehem, the "house of bread." It is not long before the three bereaved women are seen "walking on the road . . . to the land of Judah." This is no easy journey, for they must pass through regions usually infested with thieves and desperate men. But Naomi's devotion to Jehovah God and a yearning to be with his people urge her onward despite any perils along the way.—Ruth 1:6, 7.

A TIME OF DECISION

⁹ Will the young widows simply act courteously by accompanying their aged mother-in-law only to Moab's border with Israel? Or will they go farther? We shall see. At some point along the road, Naomi says: "Go, return, each one to the house of her mother." (Ruth 1:8) Why "her mother," when at least Ruth's father still lives? (Ruth 2:11) Well, this is a natural comment for an elderly woman to make to younger women, and their mothers did have well-established homes, unlike their destitute mother-in-law. At any rate, maternal affection would be especially comforting to a sorrowful daughter.

¹⁰ Listen as Naomi continues: "May Jehovah exercise loving-kindness toward you, just as you have exercised it toward the men now dead and toward me. May Jehovah make a gift to you, and do you find a resting-place each one in the house of her husband." (Ruth 1:8, 9) The two Moabite women have displayed loving-kindness, or

8. What factors move Naomi to return to Judah despite any perils along the way?

9. Why are Ruth and Orpah told to return "each one to the house of her mother"?

10. Naomi is willing to dismiss both of her daughters-in-law with what hope?

loyal love, toward Naomi and their late husbands. They have not been like Esau's Hittite wives who were "a source of bitterness of spirit to Isaac and Rebekah." (Gen. 26:34, 35) Now bereft of goods herself, Naomi can look only to God to reward her daughters-in-law. And she is willing to dismiss them with the hope that Jehovah will give each young woman the rest and comfort that comes with having a husband and a home, thus being freed of widowhood and its sorrows.

¹¹ But Ruth and Orpah do not depart. When Naomi kisses them, they begin to raise their voices and weep. Obviously, she is a kind, loving mother-in-law from whom parting would be painful. (Ruth 1:8-10; compare Acts 20:36-38.) But Naomi persists, reasoning: "Do I still have sons in my inward parts, and will they have to become your husbands? Return, my daughters, go, for I have grown too old to get to belong to a husband. If I had said I had hope also that I should certainly become a husband's tonight and also should certainly bear sons, would you keep waiting for them until they could grow up? Would you keep yourselves secluded for them so as not to become a husband's?" Yes, even if Naomi's dead sons were replaced by new sons and these grew up, would these young women refrain from marrying someone else in the meantime? It would be unreasonable to think so. For that matter, as Moabite women their prospects of marrying any man in Judah and then raising a family would be poor indeed.—Ruth 1:11-13.

¹² "No, my daughters," continues Naomi, "for it is very bitter to me because of you, that the hand of Jehovah has gone out against me." (Ruth 1:13) Naomi is

11. (a) Why, apparently, would parting from Naomi be painful for Ruth and Orpah, and does this suggest anything about family relationships among Christians today? (b) Are prospects for remarriage promising for Ruth and Orpah if they stick with Naomi? Why?

12, 13. How are Ruth and Orpah being tested, and what decision does Orpah make?

not charging God with wrongdoing; whatever he does or permits must be right. (Prov. 19:3) But she is grieved for the sake of her daughters-in-law. And for them this has become a time of decision. Will they unselfishly go on with Naomi? Their motives and loyalties are being tested.

¹³ Orpah makes her decision. She tearfully kisses her mother-in-law and departs. "Look!" says Naomi to Ruth. "Your widowed sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods. Return with your widowed sister-in-law." (Ruth 1:14, 15) Yes, Orpah was going back to her people and "her gods." Both she and Ruth had been reared among the "people of Chemosh" and may even have witnessed horrible child sacrifice in the worship of that Moabite false god. Orpah is going back to all of that!—Num. 21:29; 2 Ki. 3:26, 27.

¹⁴ But that is not so with Ruth. "Do not plead with me to abandon you, to turn back from accompanying you," she says, "for where you go I shall go, and where you spend the night I shall spend the night. Your people will be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I shall die, and there is where I shall be buried." To this the Moabitess adds an oath before God, saying: "May Jehovah do so to me and add to it if anything but death should make a separation between me and you." What a moving expression of loyal love! It is, in fact, much more than that. Ruth has chosen a life of service to Jehovah, and Naomi's people—those in a covenant relationship with the true God—will be her people. The Moabitess is determined to serve Jehovah faithfully. Hence, Naomi ends all efforts to send the young woman away.—Ruth 1:16-18.

¹⁵ As the elderly Judean and the younger Moabitess resume their arduous jour-

ney side by side, we have opportunity to reflect upon touching scenes that we have witnessed. Orpah has yielded to self-interest. Whatever progress she may have made in learning about Jehovah has not meant enough to her to keep her from returning to her people and "her gods." Had Ruth selfishly longed for her native land, she, too, could have returned to it. (Compare Hebrews 11:15.) But this young Moabitess has displayed loyal love, not just for aged Naomi, but especially for Jehovah. She has manifested a self-sacrificing spirit and a determination to serve the true God in faith. Observing these contrasting decisions, we also are encouraged not to "shrink back to destruction" but to "have faith to the preserving alive of the soul." —Heb. 10:38, 39.

BETHLEHEM ASTIR!

¹⁶ Finally, the two women reach their destination, Bethlehem. Their presence stirs up the whole town. "Is this Naomi?" the women keep asking. The years have taken a toll. Certainly, the women notice how this once-cheerful woman has been affected by sorrow and affliction. Why, her very response indicates pain of heart!

¹⁷ "Do not call me Naomi [my pleasantness]," she says. "Call me Mara [bitter], for the Almighty has made it very bitter for me. I was full [having a husband and two sons] when I went, and it is empty-handed that Jehovah has made me return. Why should you call me Naomi, when it is Jehovah that has humiliated me and the Almighty that has caused me calamity?" (Ruth 1:19-21) Oh! Naomi is willing to accept what God permits, but she evidently feels that Jehovah is against her. (Ruth 1:13; compare 1 Samuel 3:18.) Unquestionably, in days when a fruitful womb is considered a divine blessing and barren-

14. How does Ruth express herself to Naomi, and so what decision has the Moabitess made?

15. (a) So far, how has Ruth displayed loyal love?

(b) How can we profit from the decisions of Ruth and Orpah?

16. Why do Bethlehem's women keep asking, "Is this Naomi?"

17. What is the significance of Naomi's remark, 'Call me, not Naomi, but Mara'?

ness a curse, it is a humiliation for a woman to have no living offspring. And what hope can Naomi now have of contributing to the Messiah's lineage?

A HUMBLE GLEANER FINDS FAVOR

¹⁸ Naomi and Ruth have come to Bethlehem 'at the commencement of the barley harvest,' in early spring. (Ruth 1:22) Being industrious and willing to serve, Ruth, with Naomi's permission, goes off and begins gleaning behind harvesters in the grainfields. She knows that gleaning is Jehovah's loving provision for the poor and afflicted, the alien resident, the fatherless boy and the widow. In Israel these are permitted to gather or glean any portion of a crop that harvesters inadvertently or intentionally leave behind. (Lev. 19:9, 10; Deut. 24:19-21) Although Ruth has the right to glean, she humbly requests and is granted permission to do so in a certain field. But evidently Jehovah's hand is in the matter as "by chance" she lights "on the tract of the field belonging to Boaz."—Ruth 2:3.

¹⁹ Look! Boaz approaches. He is "a man mighty in wealth," and is the son of Salmon and Rahab. Yes, Boaz is a Judean. Not only is Boaz a considerate master highly esteemed by his workers, but he is a devout worshiper of the true God, for he greets the harvesters with the words "Jehovah be with you," and they reply, "Jehovah bless you."—Ruth 2:1-4.

²⁰ From the young man in charge of the harvesters, Boaz learns that Ruth is the Moabitess who recently came to Bethlehem with Naomi. After receiving permission, she had been gleaning steadily during the morning coolness until the sun mounted in the sky, uncomplainingly enduring the heat. Only now was she sitting temporarily in the house, apparently a mere

18. In gleaning, what will Ruth be doing, and "by chance" on whose field does she light?

19, 20. (a) Who is Boaz? (b) Why can it be said that Ruth is no pampered woman?

reapers' booth. Ruth certainly is no pampered woman!—Ruth 2:5-7.

²¹ Later Boaz urges Ruth not to glean in another field, but to stay close to his young women, who probably followed his reapers and bound the sheaves. Boaz has commanded the young men not to touch her, and she is free to drink from the water vessels that they have filled. Deeply appreciative, Ruth humbly falls upon her face and bows down to the earth, asking: "How is it I have found favor in your eyes so that I am taken notice of, when I am a foreigner?" Well, Boaz is not trying to win her affections to suit an old man's fancy. Rather, he has heard how the Moabitess left her father, mother and homeland, sticking with her elderly mother-in-law. Obviously impressed by Ruth's loyal love and humility, he is moved to say: "May Jehovah reward the way you act, and may there come to be a perfect wage for you from Jehovah the God of Israel, under whose [protective] wings you have come to seek refuge." Surely, as Ruth acknowledges, Boaz has comforted her and has spoken reassuringly to her.—Ruth 2:8-13; Ps. 91:2, 4.

²² At the harvesters' mealtime Boaz says to Ruth: "Approach here, and you must eat some of the bread and dip your piece in the vinegar ['sour wine']." What a refreshing condiment during the heat of the day! To Ruth, Boaz holds out roasted grain, and she partakes to satisfaction, with some left over.—Ruth 2:14; compare *The New English Bible*.

²³ Then it is back to work. In a spirit of generosity, Boaz tells his young men to let Ruth glean "also among the cut-off ears of grain." He even instructs them to "pull out some from the bundles of ears," leaving them behind for her to glean.

21. What is there about Ruth that impresses Boaz, and may Christian women draw any conclusions from this?

22, 23. (a) How does Boaz deal generously with Ruth? (b) In what way are Ruth's industriousness and unselfishness manifested?

Evening comes, and Ruth still is busy 'beating out,' or threshing, what she has gathered. By using a rod or flail to beat the grain by hand right on the ground, one can release the barley from its stalk and chaff. Why, Ruth's gleanings for the day amount to over a half bushel of barley! This she carries back home to Bethlehem. Unselfishly, Ruth also takes out the food that she had left over at mealtime earlier that day and gives it to her needy mother-in-law.—Ruth 2:14-18.

²⁴ Again Ruth is displaying loyal love

24. (a) Why is it no wonder that people view Ruth as "an excellent woman"? (b) So, why is Ruth a fine example for any godly woman?

toward Naomi. Add to this the young woman's love for Jehovah, her industriousness and humility, and it is no wonder that people view her as "an excellent woman." (Ruth 3:11) Surely, Ruth does not eat "the bread of laziness," and because of her hard work she has something to share with someone in need. (Prov. 31:27, 31; Eph. 4:28) And in assuming responsibility toward her elderly widowed mother-in-law, the Moabitess must know the happiness that results from giving. (Acts 20:35; 1 Tim. 5:3-8) Ruth is, indeed, a fine example for any godly woman.

Jehovah Grants "A Perfect Wage"

"**M**AY there come to be a perfect wage for you from Jehovah." Elderly Boaz had said it to the Moabitess Ruth. That had been his heartfelt wish for this fine young woman who had sought protection under the wings of Israel's God. (Ruth 2:12) But would that wish become reality? If so, in what way? We shall see.

² In a loving family, older persons are interested in the activities of younger ones. All of them welcome opportunities to share thoughts and relate the day's activities. It was no different in the humble home at Bethlehem where Naomi and Ruth joined in pleasant conversation during the evening hours. Listen!

³ "Where did you glean today, and where

1-3. (a) Conversation between Naomi and Ruth suggests what about communication in a loving family? (b) What surprise resulted when Ruth told Naomi about the day's gleaning work, and whose guidance thus becomes evident?



"May Jehovah reward the way you act, and may there come to be a perfect wage for you from Jehovah the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."—Ruth 2:12.

did you work?" The good amount of grain and food that Ruth has brought home has prompted Naomi's question. Obviously someone has shown the Moabitess special consideration. "May the one who took notice of you become blessed," says the older woman. But each of them is in line for a heartening surprise. "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz," replies Ruth. How splendid! Surely God's guidance is evident. "Blessed be he of Jehovah, who has not left his loving-kindness toward the living and the dead," exclaims Naomi. "The man is related to us. He is one of our repurchasers."—Ruth 2:19, 20.

⁴ How their spirits are lifted! These women know that a repurchaser (Hebrew, *go·'el'*) is a kinsman (a brother, or other male blood relative) with the right to recover, redeem, repurchase or buy back the person, property or inheritance of the next of kin. For instance, he can buy a hereditary tract of land before it is placed on the public market and thus keep it within the family. Just think! By chance Ruth has lighted on the field of Boaz and he is a repurchaser, a man of Elimelech's family.

⁵ Moreover, Boaz desires that Ruth stay close to his young workers until the entire harvest has been completed. Of course, Naomi approves, saying: "It is better, my daughter, that you should go out with his young women, that they may not annoy you in another field." So the Moabitess will continue gleaning in the field of Boaz for some two to three months, until both the barley and wheat harvests end. Unlike Jacob's daughter Dinah, who kept company with Canaanite girls and brought calamity upon herself and distress to her family, Ruth keeps dwelling with her mother-in-law, while also guarding her

4. How would you define a "repurchaser" of ancient Israel?

5. Unlike Jacob's daughter Dinah, what example does Ruth set regarding association with others?

own associations. A fine example!—Ruth 2:22, 23; Gen. 34:1-31; 1 Cor. 15:33.

HUMILITY IN ACTION

⁶ The weeks pass and the harvest draws to a close. Naomi asks Ruth: "My daughter, ought I not to look for a resting-place for you, that it may go well with you?" (Ruth 3:1) The elderly widow is not selfishly trying to hold the young Moabitess to her, but wants Ruth to know the rest, the comfort, the settled heart and security that would come to her in the home of a good and loving husband. But Naomi also is concerned about preserving her husband Elimelech's name in Israel. (Deut. 25:7) In that regard, she discloses a special plan of action, and her humble daughter-in-law is glad to comply with it. So Ruth bathes, rubs herself with oil, puts on her mantles, or outer garments, and heads out on her noble mission.

⁷ Meanwhile, Boaz—a man of means, but also a hard worker—has been taking advantage of the evening breezes by winnowing barley at the threshing floor. Threshing has broken the grain kernels loose from the chaff, and the straw has been cut into small pieces. Now, in winnowing, all of this is thrown into the air against the wind with a large fork or winnowing shovel. The breeze blows the chaff away, carries the straw to the side, and lets the kernels fall to the threshing floor. This is a happy time, and so these labors are followed by a delightful meal. Boaz eats and drinks and his heart is "feeling good," though there is no indication that he has partaken to excess. (Ps. 104:15) Then he lies down "at the extremity of the grain heap," and soon is sleeping soundly under the starry dome of the heavens.—Ruth 3:1-7.

⁸ Stillness prevails until a shadowy figure

6. How does Naomi show that she unselfishly wants good things to be enjoyed by Ruth?

7. In winnowing barley, what procedure is followed by Boaz?

8. What action does Ruth take with regard to Boaz at the threshing floor, and is her purpose immoral?



"Who are you?" asks Boaz. "I am Ruth your slave girl."
ure approaches slowly, quietly, unobserved. It is a woman, who uncovers slumbering Boaz at his feet and lies down there fully clad. At midnight he begins trembling, bends forward, and is startled to find a woman lying, apparently crosswise, at his feet! Unable to recognize her in the darkness, he asks: "Who are you?" and hears the reply: "I am Ruth your slave girl." But she quickly adds: "And you must spread out your skirt over your slave girl, for you are a repurchaser." (Lev. 25:25) Surprised though Boaz is, he is neither embarrassed nor indignant. Nor is the Moabitess there for any immoral purpose. Humbly, by means of this symbolical action and her words, she has carried out Naomi's instructions. Ruth has made the elderly Judean aware of his obligation as

a repurchaser, a kinsman of her late husband Mahlon and of his deceased father Elimelech. Naomi had been certain that this venture would be successful, and the younger woman evidently was confident that Boaz would deal with her in an honorable manner. (Ruth 3:4, 7-9) But how will he react?

Boaz blesses and commends the humble and loyal Moabitess, saying: "Blessed may you be of Jehovah, my daughter. You have expressed your loving-kindness better in the last instance than in the first instance, in not going after the young fellows whether lowly or rich." In the first instance, Ruth displayed loyal love for Naomi. Now,

9. (a) How has Ruth expressed her loving-kindness in what Boaz calls the "first instance" and the "last instance"? (b) Is Ruth "an excellent woman" because of wealth, hairstyle and expensive garb, or what?

rather than seeking companionship with marriageable young men, the Moabitess is willing to marry a much, much older man in order to raise up a name for her deceased husband Mahlon and for her mother-in-law, Elimelech's aged widow. But how does Boaz feel about that? Reassuringly, he remarks: "And now, my daughter, do not be afraid. All that you say I shall do for you, for everyone in the gate of my people is aware that you are an excellent woman." Ruth has not loudly proclaimed her virtues, and surely it is not wealth, hairstyle and expensive garb that causes others to admire her. Rather, the young woman's fear of Jehovah, her good works, her quiet, mild spirit, her loyal love, her industriousness—acts and traits like these have caused people to view her as "an excellent woman." Is there a godly woman alive who would not desire such a fine reputation?—Ruth 3:10, 11; compare Proverbs 31:28-31; 1 Timothy 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:3, 4.

¹⁰ Will Boaz immediately take Ruth as his wife? No, for there is a closer male relative of Elimelech and Mahlon. "But if he does not take delight in repurchasing you, I will then repurchase you, I myself," avers Boaz with an oath, "as sure as Jehovah lives." Boaz will attend to the matter in the morning.—Ruth 3:13.

¹¹ Since the hour is late, Boaz has Ruth remain until early morning. But nothing immoral takes place, and they arise while it is still dark, evidently to avoid starting any unsavory and groundless rumors. Before the Moabitess departs, Boaz fills her cloak with six measures of barley, perhaps to signify that, just as six working days are followed by a rest day, so the young woman's day of rest is at hand, because he will see to it that she will have a "resting-place," a home with a husband.

10. Why will Ruth not immediately become the wife of Boaz?

11. What prompts Boaz to give Ruth six measures of barley?

(Ruth 1:9; 3:1) Of course, generous Boaz also does not want Ruth to return empty-handed to her mother-in-law.

¹² The Moabitess finally arrives home, and Naomi calls out: "Who are you, my daughter?" Perhaps she does not recognize the one seeking admittance in the dark, but this question may pertain to Ruth's possible new identity in relationship to her repurchaser. Apprised of the past night's events, Naomi is confident that Boaz will keep his word and act quickly. "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out," she urges the young woman, adding, in her feminine wisdom and understanding of human nature, "for the man will have no rest unless he has brought the matter to an end today."—Ruth 3:12-18.

¹³ As those two needy widows bide their time in that humble dwelling, we may profitably consider their faith. Like Naomi, do we personally have confidence in our faithful fellow believers? And, like Ruth, do we readily rely upon Jehovah in times of crisis, sure that his arrangements and provisions are of the very best? (Ps. 37: 3-5; 138:8) Think about Ruth. She does not even know that male relative with the first right in this matter; she has no knowledge of his temperament, and yet she is willing to comply with Jehovah's law on levirate marriage. She must be certain that God will make things work out well. Comparably, are we personally confident that Jehovah "makes all his works cooperate together for the good of those who love God"?—Rom. 8:28; 1 Pet. 5:6, 7.

BOAZ ACTS DECISIVELY

¹⁴ The light of a new day has come to

12. Why does Naomi ask: "Who are you, my daughter?"

13. How may we profit from considering the faith of Naomi and Ruth?

14, 15. (a) Who is the repurchaser more closely related to Elimelech than Boaz is? (b) Apparently because of Naomi's impoverished state, what must she do, and therefore what needs to be done, either by the nearer relative or by Boaz?

Bethlehem.¹⁵ People are moving in its streets, merchants are displaying their wares, small groups are conversing in the open space before the city gate and farmers are leaving for their work in the fields surrounding the town. And seated here at the city gate is Boaz. His eyes seek out the faces of all those passing by. Suddenly, he calls out: "Do turn aside, do sit down here, So-and-so." (Ruth 4:1) Why, this otherwise unnamed man is none other than the repurchaser more closely related to Elimelech than is Boaz. He could possibly have even been a natural brother of the deceased Elimelech.

¹⁶ The city gate is where business transactions are recorded and elders sit in judgment. Therefore, since Boaz is about to represent absent Naomi and Ruth in matters of repurchasing and levirate marriage, he assembles 10 of Bethlehem's elders right there at the gate. (Deut. 16:18; 22:15; 25:7, 8) Then Boaz tells the closer repurchaser: "The tract of the field that belonged to our brother [or, relative] Elimelech, Naomi . . . must sell," apparently because of her impoverished state. (Ruth 4:3) If a poverty-stricken Israelite has to sell the family's land, the repurchaser has the right to redeem it by paying a price based on the number of years left until the Jubilee, when such hereditary property will be returned to the original holder. (Lev. 25:23-25) Rather than trying to bypass the nearer relative and buy the land secretly, honorable Boaz fairly presents the facts publicly. If the nearer relative will repurchase it, fine; otherwise Boaz will do so.

¹⁶ "I shall be the one to repurchase it," says this closer relative. Apparently he is glad to obtain the land and thus increase his holdings. But he is in for a surprise, because Boaz continues: "On the day that you buy the field from Naomi's hand, it is

also from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead man [Elimelech's son Mahlon], that you must buy it so as to cause the name of the dead man to rise upon his inheritance." (Ruth 4:4, 5) If this relative wants that field, he is obliged to marry Ruth and produce offspring to his kinsman—a son who will inherit that tract of land.

¹⁷ Now, that is a different matter altogether. "I am unable to repurchase it for myself," says the unnamed near relative, "for fear I may ruin my own inheritance. You repurchase it for yourself with my right of repurchase, because I am not able to do the repurchasing." (Ruth 4:6) Just how this kinsman would 'ruin his own inheritance' he does not say. But he would spend money for the land, and to that extent would reduce the value of his estate. And then Ruth's son, rather than any sons the near relative might already have, would get the field. None of that for selfish So-and-so! Hence, 'Buy it for yourself, Boaz.'

¹⁸ At that, the unnamed relative follows the prevailing custom concerning right of repurchase and the exchange. He removes one of his sandals and gives it to Boaz. By doing this before witnesses, he is renouncing his right of repurchase in this case. Doubtless his selfish course is the reason he is left unnamed. Now Boaz is authorized to do the repurchasing.—Ruth 4:7, 8; Deut. 25:7-10.

¹⁹ Without delay, Boaz purchases from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and his sons Chilion and Mahlon. Also, he buys Ruth "as a wife to cause the name of the dead man [Mahlon] to rise upon his inheritance" so that his name "may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his place." Yes, Mahlon's name, and therefore that of his father Elimelech, will be remembered by the people and el-

^{16, 17} If the unnamed relative wants to buy the field from Naomi, what else must he do? What is his reaction to that?

^{18, 19} By what act does this closer relative renounce his right of repurchase in this case, and so what does Boaz do?

ders gathered in the future at Bethlehem's gate. "You are witnesses today," states Boaz. In attestation, all the people and older men shout: "Witnesses!"—Ruth 4:9-11.

JEHOVAH GRANTS RUTH "A PERFECT WAGE"

²⁰ It is touching to hear those witnesses add: "May Jehovah grant the wife who is coming into your house to be like Rachel and like Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel [for their offspring became numerous]; and you prove your worth in Ephrathah and make a notable name in Bethlehem. And may your house become like the [very populous] house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, from the offspring that Jehovah will give you out of this young woman." (Ruth 4:11, 12) Yes, those witnesses already give credit to Jehovah for that prospective son through Ruth, the loyal Moabitess.

²¹ So it is that Boaz takes Ruth as his wife and has relations with her. Jehovah grants her conception, and she bears a son. What happiness prevails! To the joyful grandmother, Naomi, Bethlehem's women-folk say: "Blessed be Jehovah, who has not let a repurchaser fail for you today; that his name may be proclaimed in Israel. And he has become a restorer of your soul and one to nourish your old age, because your daughter-in-law who does love you, who is better to you than seven [natural] sons, has given birth to him." Delighted Naomi puts the child in her bosom and becomes its nurse, or caretaker.—Ruth 4:13-16.

²² "A son has been born to Naomi," the neighbor ladies are saying. They consider the child to be the son of Elimelech and his widow. And why not? Ruth did become the wife of Boaz in behalf of aged Naomi,

20. What do the witnesses desire that Jehovah grant the wife that is coming into the house of Boaz, and to whom do they give credit for the prospective son through Ruth?

21, 22. Why do the neighbor ladies say: "A son has been born to Naomi"?

in harmony with the law of levirate marriage. Boaz and Ruth have performed a service to Jehovah, and it is noteworthy that the women of the neighborhood name the child Obed, meaning "servant" or "one serving." The young one is the legal heir to the Judean house of Elimelech.—Ruth 4:17.

²³ Some months have passed since Boaz said to Ruth: "May Jehovah reward the way you act, and may there come to be a perfect wage for you from Jehovah." (Ruth 2:12) Now, by fathering Obed, Boaz has become an instrument in the blessing he had wished for the young Moabitess. One day, Obed, a descendant of Judah through Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon and Boaz, will have a son named Jesse, who will become the father of David, Israel's second king.—Ruth 4:18-22.

²⁴ This real-life drama provides evidence of God's guidance in selecting individuals for the preservation of the most important human line of descent, the one leading to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. True, Israelite women married to men of the tribe of Judah had the possible prospect of contributing to the Messiah's earthly lineage. (Gen. 49:10) But that a Moabitess was so privileged illustrates the principle that "it depends, not upon the one wishing nor upon the one running, but upon God, who has mercy." (Rom. 9:16) Ruth had chosen Jehovah as her God, and in great mercy he granted her "a perfect wage" in permitting that humble woman to become a link in the Messiah's line of descent.—Matt. 1:3-6, 16; Luke 3:23, 31-33.

²⁵ Surely, that "perfect wage" granted by God to loyal Ruth should move thought-

23. How has Boaz become an instrument in the blessing he had wished for Ruth?

24. (a) The drama just considered gives evidence of God's guidance in what respect? (b) What, then, was the "perfect wage" granted to Ruth by Jehovah?

25. How should we be affected by considering the "perfect wage" that God granted to Ruth?

ful persons to approach him in implicit faith, confident that Jehovah exists and that "he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Heb. 11:6) Yes, the book of Ruth portrays Jehovah as a God of love who acts in behalf of those devoted to him. Moreover, it proves that God's purposes never fail. Hence, we can and should have the same spirit as that

expressed by David, who declared: "We will cry out joyfully because of your salvation, and in the name of our God we shall lift our banners. May Jehovah fulfill all your requests. Now I do know that Jehovah certainly saves his anointed one. He answers him from his holy heavens with the saving mighty acts of his right hand."

—Ps. 20:5, 6.



do you value your privacy?

HE WAS a young man who valued his privacy. Not that he was a hermit or a recluse in a monastery. No, he was a public figure. He was exposed to crowds of people almost daily. He was a teacher. The accounts we have of him agree that he was the greatest teacher ever on earth. He lived to give of himself constantly. Yet, at the same time, he managed carefully to have some time to himself.

He knew that a person, to have inward depth and personal self-sufficiency, needs

time to himself—time to think and reflect and meditate and ponder. More than that, being an intensely religious man, he knew and felt the need to pray. To draw away from fellow humans for a while meant opportunity to search himself to the inmost recesses in the presence of his God, and to draw close to his heavenly Father.

His deep inner resources, which included his perfect knowledge of the Scriptures, would have made it possible for him to maintain balance and self-sufficiency in personal qualities even were he to suffer

long-term solitary confinement. Various translations* of the records about him tell us that he "retired into the desert," "kept out of the way in lonely places and prayed." Other accounts say that "long before daylight" he "left by himself" for a lonely place to be "absorbed in prayer."—Luke 5:16; Mark 1:35.

This young man was Jesus Christ. In spite of the constant press of crowds and the close fellowship with his intimate associates, Jesus somehow managed to have some privacy.

ARE YOU A "PRIVATE PERSON"?

What about you? Do you appreciate having some time to yourself? When you are upset, do you seek privacy? Do you "have your say in your heart, upon your bed, and keep silent"? (Ps. 4:4) A young wife and mother who had gone through a harrowing family crisis withdrew from some of her friends for a time. They felt hurt at her attitude. But her husband explained: "Mary is a very private person. Give her time. She will get her emotions and her thinking straightened out."

Was it wrong for Mary to be a "private person" who needed time to herself to "sort things out"? No, not unless she used her private time to brood and to nurse resentful feelings toward others, or to withdraw in prolonged isolation to the point of becoming a warped, ingrown personality. "One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing; against all practical wisdom he will break forth." (Prov. 18:1) But if for a time in privacy one's thoughts and feelings are guided by wholesome principles, it can prove to be a healthful process from which emerge clear thinking and balanced emotions.

To what extent are you a private person? Do you at times enjoy your own

company? If your conscience bothers you, can you, in privacy, face the issue honestly and then seek to correct the matter? Do you benefit from reflecting on new things learned? Are you absorbed in efforts to broaden your understanding of matters? Do you like to ponder over constructive questions and problems?

Or, are you more like those persons who seem to lack the ability to think, or even feel, for themselves? Such persons would not, perhaps could not, enjoy their own private company. They seem impelled to be around others as much as possible. It would appear that if they cannot talk to someone they cannot think for themselves. Indiscriminately, they pour out everything and anything that crosses their mind and heart. What would happen to such a person if confined to solitary imprisonment? What would happen to you?

INNER DEVELOPMENT

When you awaken in the small hours at night, what do you think about? Do you drift into a reverie? The psalmist David learned to benefit from times of wakefulness: "Really, during the nights my kidneys have corrected me."—Ps. 16:7.

Many persons feel that if they search long and deep within themselves, they will eventually uncover some depository of profound truth and meaning. It might be true that deep and persistent "soul-searching" will help us better to understand our views, tendencies, attitudes, feelings, ambitions, longings and the like. But if we rely on the Bible as our guide, it will teach us that much of what we find within ourselves needs to be corrected, even discarded, yes, replaced with the makings of a new self. It informs us that we are inwardly more like a vessel or receptacle—receptive but to a great extent empty and barren. We can receive, absorb, digest and exercise knowledge and wisdom, and grow in discernment. But all such building ma-

* Translations cited in this article include the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*; *The New English Bible*; *The Bible in Living English*; *An American Translation*; *The New American Bible*; Moffatt's translation.

terials of the intellect must come from a source outside ourselves. "When wisdom enters into your heart and knowledge itself becomes pleasant to your very soul, thinking ability itself will keep guard over you, discernment itself will safeguard you," says one inspired proverb. And another points to the one sure, safe Source of outside knowledge: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight."—Prov. 2:10, 11; 3:5, 6.

DEVELOPING THINKING ABILITIES

Personal privacy can be a time to think, to study, to meditate, to develop thinking abilities. Yes, we may be born with the ability to play music or excel in athletics. Yet, what if we never trained such abilities? We might as well never have had them. The same is true with thinking abilities. The ability to think develops only to the extent that we feed upon information, experience and training.

Developing ability to think is not easy. It is real mental work. Let us say that we wish to develop some special thinking ability, for example, the ability to judge types of persons to a reliable degree. First, we think of a person, someone we know. That person can be seen, heard, touched and discerned with the physical senses. But does such discernment involve thinking? No.

Furthermore, as we begin to think about the person, do not our emotional reactions toward that person start interfering? Before we are really *thinking*, have we not started *feeling* about the person—registering likes, dislikes, respect, disrespect, trust, distrust—reacting emotionally before beginning an intellectual appraisal?

But let us say that we force ourselves simply to **THINK** of the person. Think of the person's views, attitudes, behavior,

abilities, accomplishments and the like. How well do we understand such qualities in anyone? Could we make logical predictions as to how the person might react under given circumstances? Appraising mental, emotional and spiritual qualities in a person requires the ability to think. We find ourselves involved with intangibles beyond discernment with mere physical senses such as sight, sound and touch. At the same time we have to make sure that feelings have not slipped in under the guise of thoughts to throw our mental processes off track.

RESOLVING THE CONFLICT BETWEEN HEART AND HEAD

The heart, or seat of emotion, tends to overrule the head, the seat of intellect. Sexual attraction, for example, can turn sound judgment, even the conscience, completely around. The mind can be set to working overtime, planning, scheming and conniving to satisfy a sensual desire. That is why the Bible counsels: "More than all else that is to be guarded, safeguard your heart, for out of it are the sources of life." (Prov. 4:23) The heart above all else must be disciplined and trained to respond to Bible guidance. It must be taught to appreciate spiritual qualities. These qualities spring from God's own heart. The human heart should warm to them, because man was made in the image of his Creator. (Gen. 1:26) "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control": these are listed as the fruitage of God's spirit in the scripture at Galatians 5:22, 23.

With a concordance, trace those words—"love," "joy," "peace"—through the Scriptures. Then you begin to realize how much study and private contemplation can be spent profitably in searching for discernment. You are seeking to understand the personal qualities of your Creator with a view to taking them on as qualities of

your own personality. You need His help in imitating Him. That is why prayer, along with study, is an indispensable part of the process of grasping spiritual discernment. All of this requires some privacy.

THE NEED FOR PRIVACY

When Joshua was commanded to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land, Jehovah instructed him to stick closely to the "book of the law" that had been delivered through Moses. "You must in an undertone read in it day and night." (Josh. 1:8) Joshua must spend time in private, prayerful study. As various translations put it, "keep [it] in mind day and night," "study it day and night."

The psalmist Asaph resolved: "With my

QUESTIONS from READERS

● Does the Bible set forth any specific definitions as to what is moral or immoral as regards the sexual relationship between husband and wife? Is it the responsibility of congregational elders to endeavor to exercise control among congregation members in these intimate marital matters?

It must be acknowledged that the Bible does not give any specific rules or limitations as regards the manner in which husband and wife engage in sexual relations. There are brief descriptions of fitting love expressions, such as at Proverbs 5:15-20 and various verses in the Song of Solomon (1:13; 2:6; 7:6-8). These, and texts such as Job 31:9, 10, at least provide an indication of what was customary or normal as regards love play and sexual relations and coincide with what is generally viewed as customary and normal today.

The most forceful counsel in the Scriptures is that we should have complete love for God and love for our neighbor as ourselves; a husband is to love his wife as he does his own

heart I will show concern, and my spirit will carefully search." "I meditate in my heart," "wonder to myself in the night," "my spirit will carefully search," "I muse and make mental explorations," "musing in my inward quest."—Psalm 77:6, as rendered by different translations.

"Ponder over these things; be absorbed in them," the apostle Paul stressed in counseling young Timothy. (1 Tim. 4:15) At another time he wrote: "Give constant thought to what I am saying."—2 Tim. 2:7, *The New English Bible*.

In order to do these necessary things we, like Jesus, will benefit by making room in our lives for a reasonable degree of personal privacy; privacy for thinking and study and prayerful meditation.

body and to cherish her and assign her honor. (Matt. 22:37-40; Eph. 5:25-31; 1 Pet. 3:7) As the apostle states, love "does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked." (1 Cor. 13:4, 5) This would certainly preclude the forcing upon one's marriage mate unusual practices that the mate considers distasteful or even repugnant and perverted.

Beyond these basic guidelines the Scriptures do not go and, hence, we cannot do more than counsel in harmony with what the Bible does say. In the past some comments have appeared in this magazine in connection with certain unusual sex practices, such as oral sex, within marriage and these were equated with gross sexual immorality. On this basis the conclusion was reached that those engaging in such sex practices were subject to disfellowshiping if unrepentant. The view was taken that it was within the authority of congregational elders to investigate and act in a judicial capacity regarding such practices in the conjugal relationship.

A careful further weighing of this matter, however, convinces us that, in view of the absence of clear Scriptural instruction, these are matters for which the married couple themselves must bear the responsibility before God and that these marital intimacies do not come within the province of the congregational elders to attempt to control nor to take disfel-

lowshiping action with such matters as the sole basis.* Of course, if any person chooses to approach an elder for counsel he or she may do so and the elder can consider Scriptural principles with such a one, acting as a shepherd but not attempting to, in effect, "police" the marital life of the one inquiring.

This should not be taken as a condoning of all the various sexual practices that people engage in, for that is by no means the case. It simply expresses a keen sense of responsibility to let the Scriptures rule and to refrain from taking a dogmatic stand where the evidence does not seem to provide sufficient basis. It also expresses confidence in the desire of Jehovah's people as a whole to do all things as unto him and to reflect his splendid qualities in all their affairs. It expresses a willingness to leave the judgment of such intimate marital matters in the hands of Jehovah God and his Son, who have the wisdom and knowledge of all circumstances necessary to render the right decisions. It is good for us to remember that "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God" and that "each of us will render an account for himself to God." (Rom. 14:7-10, 12) "We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of the Christ, that each one may get his award for the things done through the body, according to the things he has practiced, whether it is good or vile."—2 Cor. 5:10.

It is also good to recognize that when the apostle wrote his counsel at Colossians 3:5, 6, he did not address it just to single persons but to married persons as well. He said: "Deaden, therefore, your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." At 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 Paul further counsels that "each one of

you should know how to get possession of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in covetous sexual appetite such as also those nations have which do not know God . . . For God called us, not with allowance for uncleanness, but in connection with sanctification."

By his reference to "sexual appetite" the apostle certainly is not condemning the normal sexual desire that finds proper outlet and expression within the marriage arrangement. We have a normal appetite for food and drink and can properly satisfy it. But one can become a glutton or a drunkard by self-indulgent and unrestrained eating and drinking. So, too, one could get so preoccupied with sex that satisfying sexual desire becomes paramount and the chief aim in itself, rather than an adjunct or subordinate complement to the expressing of love that the Bible urges. When this is the case, then the individual reaches the point of greediness 'which is idolatry,' and the sexual desire is that which is idolized.—Eph. 5:3, 5; Phil. 3:19; Col. 3:5.

What, then, of a situation where a married person, perhaps a wife, approaches a congregational elder with the complaint that her marriage mate is abusing her by forcing sexual practices upon her that she rejects as repugnant and perverted? If the marriage mate is willing to discuss the matter, the elder, possibly in company with another elder, can offer to try to help the couple to solve their problem, giving Scriptural counsel.

What if a married person claims that certain sexual practices of the marriage mate are sufficiently gross to come within the scope of the Greek term *porneia* as used at Matthew 19:9 ("fornication," *New World Translation*)? As has been shown, the Scriptures do not give specific information that allows for positive identification of certain sexual practices within marriage as being—or not being—*porneia*. It may be noted that the Greek term is drawn from a word having the basic meaning of "to sell" or to "surrender or give oneself up to," and thus *porneia* has the sense of "a selling or a giving of oneself up to lust or lewdness." The verb form (*porneuo*) includes among its meanings that of "to debauch." (Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*) If a married person believes that the sexual practices of the mate, though not involving someone outside the marriage, are nevertheless of such a gross nature as to constitute a clear surrender to lewdness or a debauching in lewdness, then

* Reference has been made to the apostle's statements at Romans 1:24-27 regarding "the natural use" of male and female bodies. As is evident and has been consistently acknowledged, these statements are made in the context of homosexuality. They do not make any direct reference to sexual practices by husband and wife. It must also be acknowledged that even those love expressions that are completely normal and common between husband and wife would be "unnatural" for persons of the same sex and immoral for unmarried people. Whatever guidance these apostolic statements provide as regards sex practices within marriage, therefore, is indirect and must be viewed as only of a persuasive but not a conclusive nature, that is, not the basis for setting up hard and fast standards for judgment. At the same time there is the possibility and perhaps a likelihood that some sex practices now engaged in by husband and wife were originally practiced only by homosexuals. If this should be the case, then certainly this would give these practices at least an unsavory origin. So the matter is not one to be lightly dismissed by the conscientious Christian simply because no direct reference to married persons appears in the aforementioned texts.

that must be his or her own decision *and responsibility.*

Such a one may hold that the circumstances provide Scriptural basis for divorce. If so, he or she must accept full responsibility before God for any divorce action that might be taken. Elders cannot be expected to express approval (Scripturally) of divorce, if they are not sure of the grounds. At the same time they are not authorized to impose their conscience on another when the matter is a questionable one. (Jas. 4:11, 12) Having expressed what Scriptural counsel they find fitting, they can then make clear to the one involved the seriousness of the matter and the full responsibility that must rest upon him or her if divorce action is taken. If a person is simply seeking a pretext to break the marriage bonds, then such a one can only expect God's disfavor, for of such treacherous dealing with one's mate God says that "he has hated a divorcing." (Mal. 2:16) "God will judge fornicators and adulterers" and anyone divorcing simply on a pretext and then remarrying will not escape that judgment. (Heb. 13:4) The elders can be confident

that the Lord "will both bring the secret things of darkness to light and make the counsels of the hearts manifest" in his due time. (1 Cor. 4:4, 5) Anyone who sows in deceit and treachery will not escape a harvest of suffering, for "God is not one to be mocked."—Gal. 6:7, 8.

Even as congregation elders accord to their brothers and sisters the right to exercise their personal conscience in matters where the Scriptures are not explicit, so, too, the elders have a right to exercise their own consciences as to their view of those engaging in questionable actions. If they sincerely feel that the actions of a congregation member in these matters are such that they could not conscientiously recommend him or her for any exemplary service within the congregation, that is their prerogative.—1 Tim. 1:19; 3:2-12; 5:22.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

March 26: "An Excellent Woman" Displays
Loyal Love. Page 16. Songs to Be Used:
15-26

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Page 21. Songs to Be Used: 77, 29.