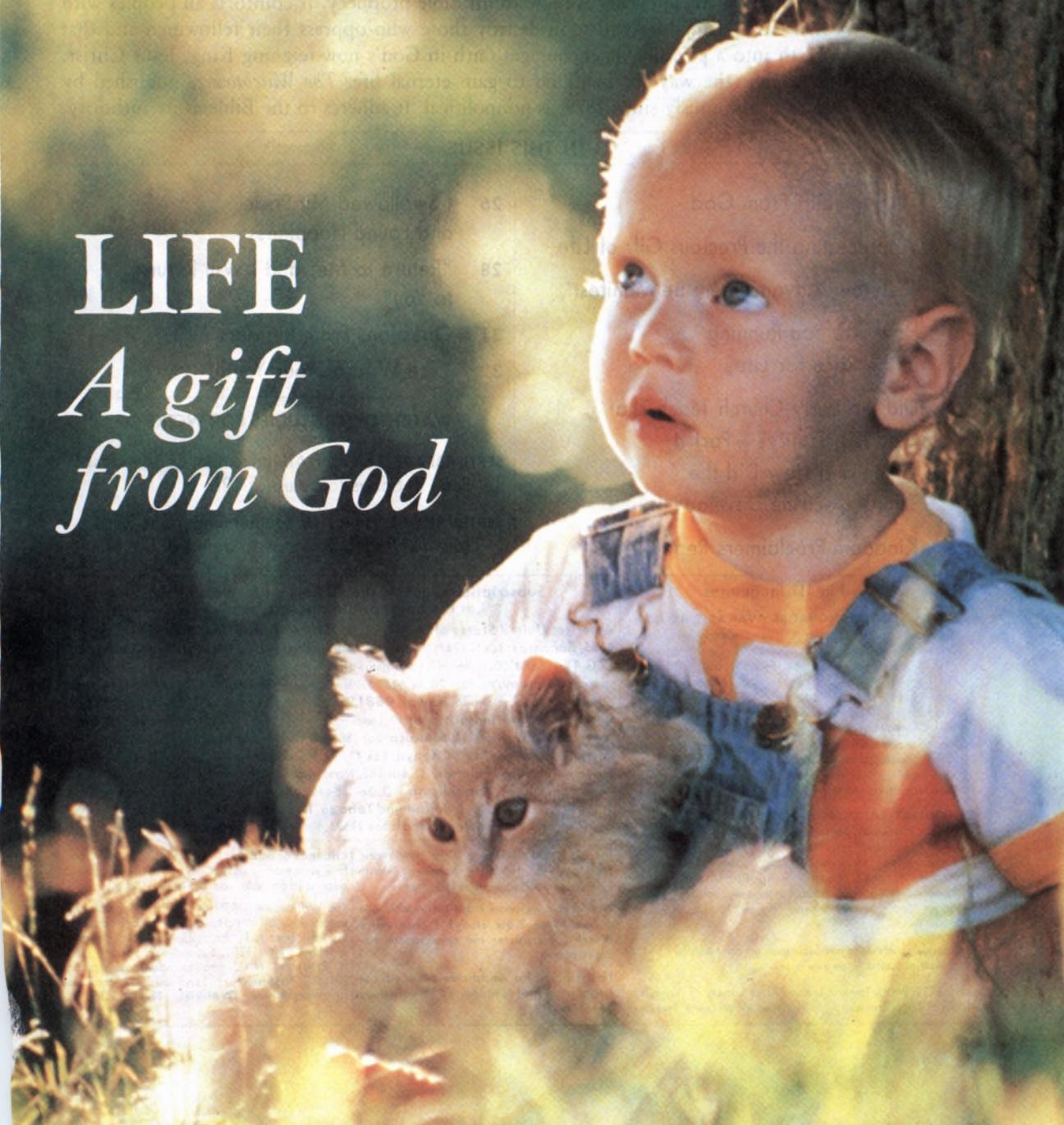


AUGUST 1, 1992

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

LIFE
*A gift
from God*



THE WATCHTOWERTM

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

August 1, 1992

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

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Life—A Gift From God
- 4 Appreciating the Precious Gift of Life
- 8 'Let Your Advancement Be Manifest'
- 13 How Are You Running
in the Race for Life?
- 19 Did the Early Church Teach That
God Is a Trinity?—Part 4
When and How Did the
Trinity Doctrine Develop?
- 25 Kingdom Proclaimers Report

- 26 I Swallowed My Pride
and Found Happiness
- 28 "Return to Me, and I Will Return
to You"
- 31 Questions From Readers
- 32 "The Wife of Your Youth"

WATCHTOWER STUDIES FOR WEEKS OF

- SEPTEMBER 7: 'Let Your Advancement Be Manifest.'
Page 8. Songs to be used: 123, 8.
- SEPTEMBER 14: How Are You Running in the Race
for Life? Page 13. Songs to be used: 34, 181.

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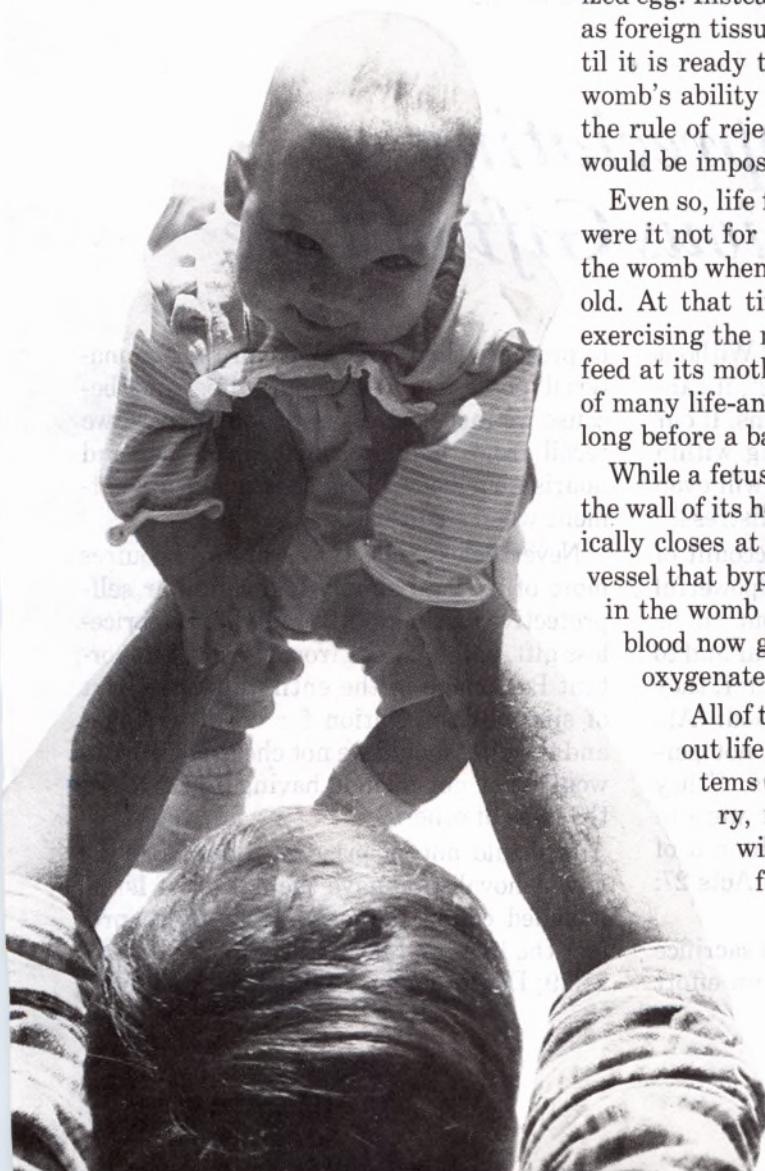
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LIFE A Gift From God



TWENTY-FOUR hours a day, our heart pumps precious blood through our body. We fall asleep, and our lungs continue to expand and contract. We eat a meal, and the food is automatically digested. All of this takes place every day, with little or no conscious effort on our part. These mysterious and wondrous processes, so easily taken for granted, are part of the gift we call life. In a sense it is a gift that can be called miraculous.

Consider the process of human conception and birth. Although the body normally rejects foreign tissue, the womb makes an exception for a fertilized egg. Instead of rejecting the growing embryo as foreign tissue, it nourishes and protects it until it is ready to emerge as a baby. Without the womb's ability to make this crucial exception to the rule of rejecting foreign tissue, human birth would be impossible.

Even so, life for a newborn baby would be short were it not for a development that takes place in the womb when a fetus is only about four months old. At that time it begins sucking its thumb, exercising the muscles that will later enable it to feed at its mother's breasts. And this is just one of many life-and-death matters that are resolved long before a baby's birth.

While a fetus is in the womb, there is a hole in the wall of its heart. This hole, however, automatically closes at birth. Additionally, a large blood vessel that bypasses the lungs while the fetus is in the womb automatically constricts at birth; blood now goes to the lungs, where it can be oxygenated as baby takes its first breath.

All of this is just the beginning. Throughout life, a series of elegantly designed systems (such as the respiratory, circulatory, nervous, and endocrine systems) will perform and coordinate their functions with an efficiency that staggers human comprehension—all for the perpetuation of life.

No wonder that an ancient

writer said with reference to God: "I shall laud you because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, as my soul is very well aware."—Psalm 139:14.

Clearly, the writer of those beautiful words did not believe that life is simply the product of blind, evolutionary chance or accident. If such were the case, we would have no real obligations or responsibilities as to how we should use our lives. However, the mechanisms of life clearly reflect design, and design requires a designer. The Bible

sets out this principle: "Of course, every house is constructed by someone, but he that constructed all things is God." (Hebrews 3:4) It is therefore vital to "know that Jehovah is God. It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves." (Psalm 100:3) Yes, life is more than a benign accident; it is a gift from God himself.—Psalm 36:9.

Such being the case, what obligations do we have toward the Giver of life? How does he expect us to use our lives? These and related questions will be considered in the next article.

Appreciating the Precious Gift of Life

LIFE—what a precious possession! Without it we can do nothing. Once it is lost, it cannot be restored by any human means. If our life is in danger, we do everything within reason to preserve it. Why, some will even call for superhuman aid when in distress!

We are reminded of the Bible account of a ship that was caught up in a powerful storm at sea. When it was about to be wrecked, "the mariners began to fear and to call for aid, each one to his god." Later, they one and all called out to the true God: "Ah, now, O Jehovah, may we, please, not perish." The Bible account also says: "They kept hurling out the articles that were in the ship to the sea, in order to lighten it of them."—Jonah 1:4-6, 14; compare Acts 27:18, 19.

Those sailors were even ready to sacrifice cherished material possessions in an effort

to preserve their lives. We can replace material possessions—but not life. And because we instinctively cherish our lives, we recoil from danger. We feed, clothe, and nourish our bodies. We seek medical treatment when we are sick.

Nevertheless, the Giver of life requires more of us than simply following our self-protective instincts. After all, life is a priceless gift, and it comes from the most important Personage in the entire universe. Out of sincere appreciation for both the Giver and the gift, should we not cherish life? And would that not include having a regard for the lives of others?

It should not surprise us, then, that the Law Jehovah God gave the nation of Israel included commandments designed to protect the lives and health of others. (Exodus 21:29; Deuteronomy 22:8) Christians today

**Does your life-style reflect
an appreciation for life?**

should likewise be safety conscious. For example, if you have youngsters in your home, do you carelessly leave within reach such things as beads, pins, or sharp objects that could cause severe harm to a child innocently playing with or swallowing them? Are dangerous chemicals and medicines stored out of the reach of children? If water is spilled on the floor, are you quick to clean it up so as to prevent an accident? Do you see to the immediate repair of faulty appliances? Does your vehicle receive regular maintenance? Are you a safe driver? If you really appreciate the preciousness of life, you will be moved to take reasonable precautions in these and similar areas.

Sad to say, though, some take even their own life for granted. For example, who today does not know that cigarette smoking is unhealthy? Yet, millions are enslaved by the habit, while their health deteriorates each time they inhale the poisonous smoke. Others abuse drugs, and still others alcohol, all to their detriment. AIDS is a killer disease for which there is no known cure. But many could have avoided contracting the disease if they had shunned sexual immorality, certain kinds of drug abuse, and blood transfusions. What a tragic lack of appreciation for life!—Romans 1:26, 27; 2 Corinthians 7:1.



Change Is Possible!

Those who appreciate their Grand Creator, Jehovah, have a powerful reason to view life as precious. Life is his sacred gift. They are therefore willing to make whatever changes are necessary to treat it as a divine gift. Consider the experience of Kwaku, a teacher in Ghana. A reckless alcoholic, he was throwing his life away.

Kwaku recalls: “I tried to force my wife to respect me, which often led to heated arguments and fights, particularly when I was drunk. Because of overindulgence in alcohol, I was often broke, and I frequently defaulted in providing money for the support of the family. Understandably, this irritated my wife very much. Whenever I ran out of funds (and this happened very often), I did anything I could to support my habit. Once I

went so far as to make personal use of monies I had collected from my pupils for the purpose of registering them for a public exam. I went on a drinking spree and also bought drinks for my drinking companions. The day of reckoning soon caught up with me. Had it not been for the timely intervention of my headmaster, I would have lost my job.

"My life was a mess. I was embarrassed, but I soon got over it. Then I started developing suicidal thoughts because I felt I was a failure in life. Still, I could not break free from alcohol addiction. But when one day in a bar I got involved in a drunken brawl and was stabbed, it painfully dawned on me that my love for alcohol would some day cost me my life.

"All along, Jehovah's Witnesses had periodically been visiting our house, trying to interest us in the Bible. My wife and I always dodged them because we thought they were a nuisance. On one occasion, though, I decided to listen to them out of sympathy. A study of the Bible soon opened my eyes to the wonderful prospect of living forever in God's new system. The more I studied the Bible with the help of Jehovah's Witnesses, the deeper my appreciation grew for Jehovah as our Life-Giver and for his gift of life, and the more impressed I became with the practicality of the Bible's counsel. This further encouraged me to clean up my life. This was not easy, as I continually had to resist the tot [liquor] as well as my old companions. Jehovah, the Hearer of prayer, saw the determination of my heart and heard me.*

"My wife, although not one of Jehovah's Witnesses, now holds me and my religion in high esteem because of the great transformation that she observes in my life and in

our marital relationship. Our neighbors no longer need to intervene in fights between my wife and me. I cherish the peace of mind I now enjoy. Surely, appreciating Jehovah God as our Life-Giver, adopting his viewpoint on the preciousness of life, and obeying his instructions on how to live is the only worthwhile way of life."

God's Offer of Eternal Life

Thousands, like Kwaku, have been helped by Jehovah's Witnesses to "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Ephesians 4:24) They have come to appreciate not only their present life but also the hope of life eternal in an earthly paradise. The Bible promises that in that Paradise of God's making, no inhabitant of the earth will again experience the gnawing pangs of hunger, for "Jehovah of armies will certainly make for all the peoples . . . a banquet of well-oiled dishes."—Isaiah 25:6.

At present, life, although a wonderful gift, is only temporary. Everyone faces death, and what a traumatic blow death is! To watch someone you love disappear from among the living into the stillness of the grave is very distressing, to say the least. But under God's Kingdom, ruled by Christ, Jehovah's promise will be fulfilled: "Death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:4.

At that time the gift of life will be extended in marvelous fashion. Survivors of the final tribulation on this earth will have the opportunity to enter into the fullness of life. And then, by means of the resurrection, a bringing back to life, Jehovah God will restore his priceless gift to those asleep in death. (John 5:24, 28, 29) This will mean the return of dead loved ones and God-fearing men of old!

Is all of this too good to be true? No, for

* Recovery from alcoholism is a formidable task, often requiring professional help. See our companion magazine, *Awake!* of May 22, 1992, for helpful information on this subject.

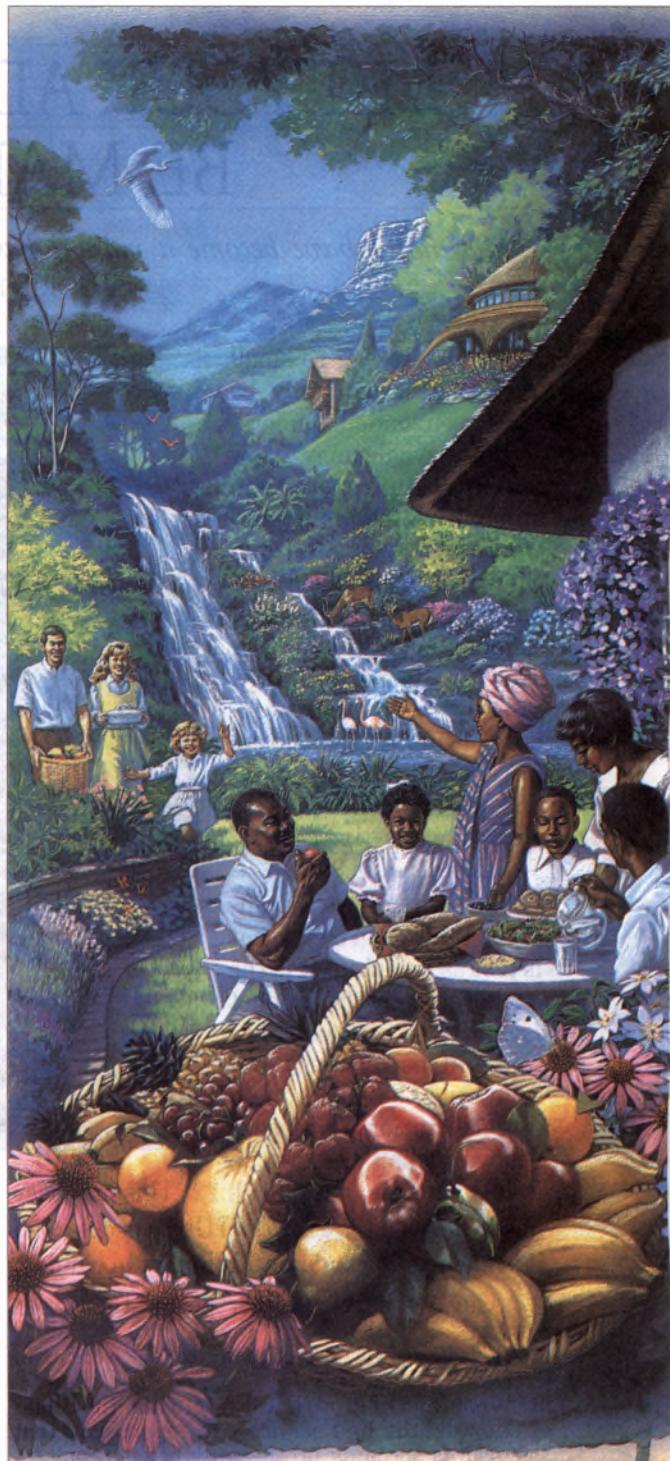
God's new world will allow us to enjoy the pleasures of life eternally!

"with God no declaration will be an impossibility."—Luke 1:37; compare Job 42:2.

Furthermore, Jehovah God himself has furnished mankind a guarantee that all of this will take place. How? By sacrificing the one dearest to his heart, his dear Son, Jesus Christ, to ransom us from sin and death. Romans 8:32 assures us: "He [Jehovah God] who did not even spare his own Son but delivered him up for us all, why will he not also with him kindly give us all other things?" The Bible tells us that this will include cleansing mankind of moral decadence and eliminating all forms of injustice, crime, and violence. (Isaiah 11:9) Never again will life be viewed as cheap.

Even now, under imperfect conditions, life can be very enjoyable. Who does not delight in the tantalizing aroma of food, the feel of a gentle breeze on a warm day, the sight of a majestic mountain, a gorgeous sunset, a serenely flowing stream, breathtakingly colorful flowers, the sound of sweet music, or the song of birds? Pause for a moment. Think, what would it be like to enjoy such things for an eternity?

Does it make any sense, then, to throw away the precious privilege of living forever because of any temporary pleasure that a senseless, self-indulgent course of life may offer? (Compare Hebrews 11:25.) Wisely, the Bible exhorts us 'to live the remainder of our lives, no more for the desires of men, but for God's will.' (1 Peter 4:2) We heartily encourage you, yes, urge you, to do so by studying God's Word, the Bible, and putting into practice the things you learn. (John 13:17) You will thus come into a good relationship with Jehovah, the God overflowing with goodness and mercy, who can reward you with eternal life!



'LET YOUR ADVANCEMENT BE MANIFEST'

"Now that I have become a man, I have done away with the traits of a babe."

—1 CORINTHIANS 13:11.

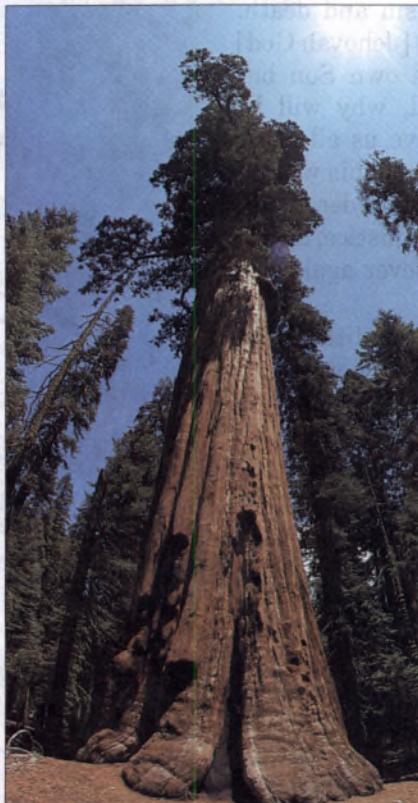
FROM an egg so small that it can only be seen under a microscope, a whale may grow into a creature more than a hundred feet long and weighing over 80 tons. Similarly, from one of the smallest seeds, the giant sequoia may grow to be over 300 feet tall. Truly, growth is one of the wonders of life. As the apostle Paul put it, we can plant and water, but it is "God who makes it grow."

—1 Corinthians 3:7.

² There is, however, another kind of growth that is just as amazing. It is the one foretold by the prophet Isaiah: "The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time." (Isaiah 60:22) This prophecy has to do with the growth of God's people, and it is undergoing a major fulfillment in our day.

³ The 1991 service-year report of the world-

1. How is growth a testimony to the wonder of creation?
2. What kind of growth was foretold in the Bible?
3. How did the 1991 service-year report show that Jehovah is speeding up the work of his people?



wide activity of Jehovah's Witnesses shows that the number of Kingdom publishers reached a new peak of 4,278,820, and a total of 300,945 persons were baptized during the year. With the influx of so many new ones, 3,191 new congregations were formed, together with a corresponding number of new circuits and districts. That is more than eight new congregations a day, almost one new circuit every two days. What marvelous growth! Clearly, Jehovah is speeding things up, and his blessing is upon the efforts of his people.—Psalm 127:1.

Time for Self-Examination

⁴ Though heartwarming to see, this blessing also brings with it certain responsibilities. Will there be enough mature and willing individuals to look after the spiritual needs of all these new ones? As we look ahead to the future, it is staggering to think of the number of pioneers, ministerial servants, elders, and traveling overseers

4. What questions must be considered as we look to the future?

that will be needed to care for the growth and expansion, as well as the number of volunteer workers needed in the branch offices and Bethel Homes around the world to support that work. Where will this great number of people come from? There is no doubt that the harvest is great. But who today are in a position to care for all the workers needed to reap that harvest?—Matthew 9:37, 38.

⁵ It has been reported, for example, that in some parts of the world, there are congregations with as many as a hundred Kingdom publishers served by only one elder along with one or two ministerial servants. Sometimes one elder has to serve in two congregations. In other places the need for qualified Christian ministers to conduct home Bible studies is so great that new ones have to be put on waiting lists. In still other areas, new congregations are formed at such a rapid rate that three, four, or even five congregations have to share one Kingdom Hall. Perhaps you have seen growth like this in your own area.

⁶ What does the foregoing tell us? That in view of the times, all of us need to examine our circumstances to see if we are making the best use of our time and assets in order to respond to the need. (Ephesians 5:15-17) The apostle Paul wrote to Hebrew Christians of the first century: “For, indeed, although you ought to be teachers in view of the time, you again need someone to teach you from the beginning the elementary things of the sacred pronouncements of God; and you have become such as need milk, not solid food.” (Hebrews 5:12) As those words indicate, individual Christians also need to grow. And there is a real danger that one may linger in spiritual infancy rather than progress to Christian maturity. In harmony with this,

5. What situations exist in some areas because of rapid growth?
6. Why is self-examination timely on our part?

Paul urges us: “Keep testing whether you are in the faith, keep proving what you yourselves are.” (2 Corinthians 13:5) Have you examined yourself to see if you have been growing spiritually since the time of your baptism? Or have you been standing still? How, though, can one tell?

“Traits of a Babe”

⁷ “When I was a babe, I used to speak as a babe, to think as a babe, to reason as a babe; but now that I have become a man, I have done away with the traits of a babe,” said the apostle Paul. (1 Corinthians 13:11) In spiritual development, at one time all of us were like children in our thinking and actions. However, for advancement to be manifest, we must do away with “the traits of a babe,” as Paul said. What are some of these traits?

⁸ First, note Paul’s words at Hebrews 5:13, 14: “Everyone that partakes of milk is unacquainted with the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to mature people, to those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong.” Are you ‘acquainted with the word of righteousness’? Do you know God’s Word, the Bible, well enough to be capable of using it to “distinguish both right and wrong”? Paul said that mature people are able to do so because they regularly take in “solid food.” Thus, one’s desire or appetite for solid spiritual food is a good indicator of whether one has grown up spiritually or still remains a spiritual babe.

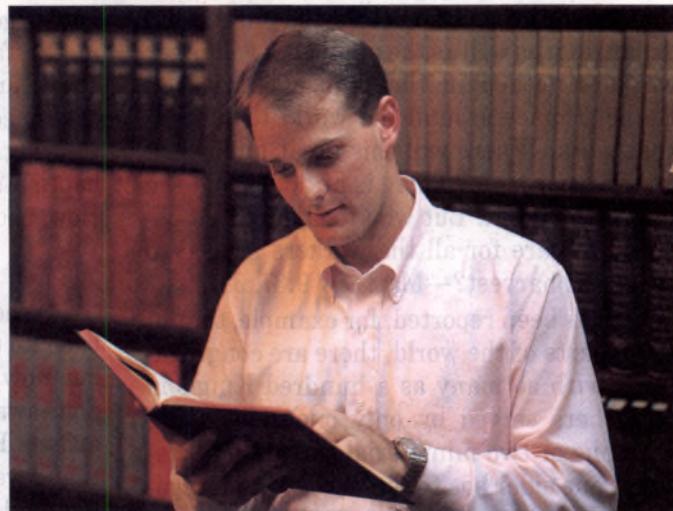
⁹ How, then, is your spiritual appetite? How do you view the abundant supply of spiritual food that Jehovah regularly provides

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7. For spiritual advancement to be manifest, what must we do?
 8. According to Paul’s words at Hebrews 5:13, 14, what is one trait of a spiritual babe?
 9. How is one’s spiritual appetite an indication of one’s spiritual progress?

**Do you take time to read
Bible-based publications?**

through Bible-based publications and Christian meetings and assemblies? (Isaiah 65:13) No doubt you rejoice greatly if new publications are released at annual district conventions. But what do you do with them once you get home? What do you do when a new issue of the *Watchtower* or *Awake!* magazine arrives? Do you take time to read these publications, or do you just flip through them to look at the highlights and then add them to others on your bookshelf? Similar questions could be posed regarding Christian meetings. Do you regularly attend all the meetings? Do you prepare for as well as participate in them? Apparently some have fallen into poor spiritual feeding habits, skimming and eating on the run, as it were. How different it was with the psalmist, who said: "How I do love your law! All day long it is my concern." Further, King David said: "I will laud you in the big congregation; among a numerous people I shall praise you." (Psalm 35:18; 119:97) Clearly, the degree to which we appreciate spiritual provisions is an indicator of our spiritual progress.

¹⁰ Paul pointed out another trait of a spiritual babe when he warned: "We should no longer be babes, tossed about as by waves and carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men, by means of cunning in contriving error." (Ephesians 4:14) As parents well know, children are curious about everything. In a way this is a positive trait because it enables them to explore and to learn and gradually to de-



velop into mature persons. The danger, however, lies in their being easily distracted by one thing after another. What is worse, because of lack of experience, this curiosity often leads them into serious trouble, even endangering themselves and others. This is also true of spiritual babes.

¹¹ What, though, did Paul have in mind when he said that spiritual babes are tossed about by "every wind of teaching"? Here, "wind" is translated from the Greek word *a'ne-mos*, regarding which the *International Critical Commentary* observes that it is evidently "chosen as suitable to the idea of changeableness." This is well illustrated by Paul's next words, "by means of the trickery of men." The word "trickery" in the original language basically means "dice" or "dice-playing," that is to say, a game of chance. The point is that we are constantly confronted with new ideas and pursuits that may seem harmless, tempting, even worthwhile. Paul's words apply primarily to matters related to our faith—ecumenical movements, social

10. What trait of a spiritual babe is indicated at Ephesians 4:14?

11. (a) What did Paul have in mind in using the expression "every wind of teaching"? (b) What 'winds' are we confronted with today?

and political causes, and the like. (Compare 1 John 4:1.) But the principle also holds good with regard to the ever-changing fads and fashions of the world—styles, entertainment, foods, health or exercise routines, and so on. Because of lack of experience and good judgment, the spiritual babe may be overly distracted by such things and thus may be prevented from making spiritual advancement and fulfilling his more important Christian obligations.—Matthew 6:22-25.

¹² Another trait of young children is their constant need for help and attention. They are neither aware of nor concerned with responsibilities; childhood is the time of life when almost everything is just fun and games. As Paul put it, they ‘speak as a babe, think as a babe, reason as a babe.’ They take it for granted that others will take care of them. The same can be said of the spiritual babe. When a new one gives his first Bible talk or first starts out in the field ministry, the spiritual parent is delighted to do everything to help. What happens if the new one continues to rely on such help and proves unable to accept the responsibility of caring for himself? Clearly that would be an indication of lack of self-application.

¹³ In this regard recall the apostle Paul’s admonition that although we should “go on carrying the burdens of one another,” still “each one will carry his own load.” (Galatians 6:2, 5) Of course, it takes time and effort for one to learn to shoulder one’s Christian responsibilities, and it might mean making sacrifices in certain areas. However, it would be a serious mistake to allow oneself to be so involved with the fun and games of life, be they recreation, trips, gadgets, or even un-

12. How do young children differ from adults with regard to responsibility?
13. Why must each one learn to carry his own load?

necessary pursuit of secular work, that one merely stands on the sidelines, so to speak, with no desire to increase one’s share in the disciple-making work or to reach out for spiritual advancement and responsibility. “Become doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves with false reasoning,” urged the disciple James.—James 1:22; 1 Corinthians 16:13.

¹⁴ Yes, there are many easily discernible traits that distinguish a child from an adult. The important thing, however, as Paul put it, is that we gradually do away with the traits of a babe and grow up. (1 Corinthians 13:11; 14:20) Otherwise, we may be retarded in a spiritual sense. But how does one make progress? What is involved in maintaining spiritual growth to maturity?

How Advancement Becomes Manifest

¹⁵ Well, how does growth take place in the natural world? “Each individual begins life as a single cell,” explains *The World Book Encyclopedia*. “The cell takes in materials and converts them into the building blocks that it needs to grow. Thus, the single cell grows from within. This cell can multiply and divide to form other cells. The process of building, multiplying, and dividing is growth.” The noteworthy point here is that growth takes place *from within*. When proper nourishment is taken in, assimilated, and put to use, growth results. This is clearly seen in the case of a newborn infant. As we know, a newborn takes in a steady supply of a specially formulated food, milk, which is rich in fat and protein, the materials needed for growth. The result? The amount of

14. Why should we not be satisfied with displaying the traits of a spiritual babe?
15. What are the basic steps in the process of growth?

growth in terms of weight and height that a baby gains in the first year is never matched in any other year of normal growth for the rest of its life.

¹⁶ There is much that we learn from this natural process of growth that we can apply to our spiritual progress from basics to maturity. First of all, a steady feeding program is essential. Think back to the time when you first started to study the Bible. If you are like most others, you probably knew practically nothing about God's Word. But week by week you prepared your lessons and had your Bible study, and in a relatively short time, you came to understand all the basic teachings of the Scriptures. That, you must admit, was phenomenal growth, and all as a result of regularly feeding on God's Word!

¹⁷ What, though, about now? Do you still follow a regular feeding program? One should never think that just because one has been baptized, there is no longer any need for a regular and systematic study to take in nourishing spiritual food. Even though Timothy was a mature Christian overseer, Paul urged him: "Ponder over these things; be absorbed in them, that your advancement may be manifest to all persons." (1 Timothy 4:15) How much more does each of us need to do so! If you are interested in making your spiritual advancement manifest, such efforts are indispensable.

¹⁸ Letting one's advancement be manifest does not mean making a special effort to show off what one knows or trying to impress others. Jesus stated: "You are the light of the world. A city cannot be hid when situated

16. What kind of growth is seen in most new Bible students, and how is that made possible?
17. Why is a regular spiritual feeding program indispensable?
18. How does one's spiritual advancement become manifest?

upon a mountain" and, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 5:14; 12:34) When our hearts and minds are filled with the good things of God's Word, we cannot help but manifest this in what we do and say.

¹⁹ Hence, the question is: Do you regularly study the Bible and attend Christian meetings to take in the nourishing material that can stimulate your internal, spiritual growth? Do not be satisfied with being a passive observer when it comes to spiritual development. Take positive steps to make sure that you are making full use of the abundant spiritual food Jehovah provides. If you are one whose 'delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law you read in an undertone day and night,' then it can also be said of you: "He will certainly become like a tree planted by streams of water, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither, and everything he does will succeed." (Psalm 1:2, 3) What, though, can be done to make sure that you will continue to make spiritual advancement? This we will discuss in the next article.

19. What should we be determined to do regarding our spiritual progress, and with what result in view?

Can You Answer?

- Why is it timely to check our spiritual advancement?
- How is spiritual growth related to spiritual appetite?
- What is meant by "every wind of teaching"?
- Why must each one carry his own load?
- How is spiritual advancement achieved?



HOW ARE YOU RUNNING IN THE RACE FOR LIFE?

"Do you not know that the runners in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may attain it." —1 CORINTHIANS 9:24.

THE Bible likens our quest for everlasting life to a race. Toward the end of his life, the apostle Paul said of himself: "I have fought the fine fight, I have run the course to the finish, I have observed the faith." He urged his fellow Christians to do the same when he said: "Let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."
—2 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 12:1.

² The comparison is an apt one because a race consists of a start, a set course, and a finish line, or goal. So it is with the process

1. To what does the Bible liken our Christian course?
2. What encouraging start do we see in the race for life?

of our spiritual progress toward life. As we have seen, every year hundreds of thousands of people are getting off to a good start in the race for life. In the last five years, for example, 1,336,429 persons have formally started in the race by dedication and water baptism. Such a vigorous start is most encouraging. The important thing, however, is to stay in the race until the finish line is reached. Are you doing this?

The Race for Life

³ To emphasize the importance of keeping in the race, Paul admonished: "Do you not know that the runners in a race all run,

- 3, 4. (a) How did Paul point out the importance of keeping up the pace in the race? (b) How have some failed to heed Paul's advice?

but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may attain it.”—1 Corinthians 9:24.

⁴ True, in the ancient games, only one could receive a prize. However, in the race for life, *everyone* is eligible for the prize. It is only necessary to stay the course to the finish! Happily, many have faithfully run the course to the end of their lives, as the apostle Paul did. And millions continue to run. Some, though, have failed to press forward or make advancement toward the finish line. Instead, they allowed other things to hinder them so that they either fell out of the race or became disqualified in some way. (Galatians 5:7) This should give all of us cause to examine how we are running in the race for life.

⁵ The question may be asked: What did Paul have in mind when he said that “only one receives the prize”? As noted earlier, he did not mean that among all of those who started out in the race for life, only one will receive the reward of everlasting life. Obviously that could not be the case, for time and again, he made it clear that it is God’s will that people of all sorts should be saved. (Romans 5:18; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11) No, he was not saying that the race for life is a competition in which each participant tries to defeat all the others. The Corinthians knew only too well that that kind of competitive spirit existed among the contestants at their Isthmian Games, said to be even more prestigious at that time than the Olympic Games. What, then, did Paul have in mind?

⁶ In citing the illustration of the runner, Paul was primarily discussing his own

5. Was Paul comparing the race for life to a competitive game? Explain.

6. What does the context reveal about Paul’s discussion of the runner and the race?

prospects for salvation. In the preceding verses, he described how he had worked hard and exerted himself in many ways. (1 Corinthians 9:19-22) Then, in verse 23, he said: “But I do all things for the sake of the good news, that I may become a sharer of it with others.” He realized that his salvation was not guaranteed just because he was chosen to be an apostle or because he had spent many years preaching to others. In order to share in the blessings of the good news, he must continue to do everything within his power for the sake of the good news. He must run with full intention of winning, exerting himself just as hard as if he were running in a footrace in the Isthmian Games, where “only one receives the prize.”—1 Corinthians 9:24a.

⁷ There is much that we can learn from this. Although everyone who joins in the race wants to win, only those who are wholly resolved to win have any prospect of doing so. Consequently, we should not feel complacent simply because we have joined the race. We should not feel that everything will be fine because we are ‘in the truth.’ We may bear the name Christian, but do we have the substance to prove that we are Christians? For example, do we do the things we know a Christian should do—attend Christian meetings, share in the field ministry, and so on. If so, that is commendable, and we should strive to persevere in such excellent habits. Is it possible, though, that we can benefit more from what we do? For example, are we always prepared to contribute something to the meetings? Do we endeavor to apply what we learn to our personal life? Do we give attention to improving our skills so that we can give a thorough witness in spite of the obstacles

7. What is needed to “run in such a way that you may attain it”?

we meet in the field? Are we willing to accept the challenge of calling back on interested ones and conducting home Bible studies? "Run in such a way that you may attain it," urged Paul.—1 Corinthians 9:24b.

Exercise Self-Control in All Things

⁸ In his lifetime, Paul had seen many who had slowed down, drifted away, or given up in the race for life. (1 Timothy 1:19, 20; Hebrews 2:1) That is why he repeatedly reminded his fellow Christians that they are in a strenuous and continuous contest. (Ephesians 6:12; 1 Timothy 6:12) He took the illustration of the runner one step further and said: "Moreover, every man taking part in a contest exercises self-control in all things." (1 Corinthians 9:25a) In saying this, Paul was alluding to something with which the Corinthian Christians were well acquainted, namely, the rigorous training followed by the contestants at the Isthmian Games.

⁹ Here is a vivid description of a contestant in training:

"Contentedly and without a murmur he submits himself to the rules and restrictions of his ten months' training, without which he may as well not compete. . . . He is proud of his little hardships, and fatigues, and privations, and counts it a point of honour scrupulously to abstain from anything which might in the slightest degree diminish his chance of success. He sees other men giving way to appetite, rest-

8. What might have prompted Paul to urge his fellow Christians to 'exercise self-control in all things'?

9, 10. (a) How does one source describe the contestants in the Isthmian Games? (b) What is particularly worthy of note about the description?

ing while he is panting with exertion, luxuriating in the bath, enjoying life at pleasure; but he has scarce a passing thought of envy, because his heart is set on the prize, and severe training is indispensable. He knows that his chances are gone if in any point or on any occasion he relaxes the rigour of the discipline."—*The Expositor's Bible*, Volume V, page 674.

¹⁰ Of particular interest is the observation that the one under training "counts it a point of honour" to follow such a rigorous routine of self-denial. In fact, he "has scarce a passing thought of envy" at the ease and comfort that he sees others enjoying. Can we learn something from this? Yes, indeed.

¹¹ Recall Jesus' words that "broad and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are the ones going in through it; whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are the ones finding it." (Matthew 7:13, 14) As you endeavor to travel on the 'cramped road,' do you envy the freedom and ease that those on the other road seem to enjoy? Do you feel that you are missing out on some of the things others are doing, which may not seem so bad in themselves? It is easy for us to feel this way if we fail to keep in mind the reason we are undertaking this course. "Now they, of course, do it that they may get a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one," Paul said.—1 Corinthians 9:25b.

¹² The winner at the Isthmian Games received a wreath of Isthmian pine or some other such plant, which probably withered

11. What improper view must we guard against while engaged in the race for life?

12. Why can it be said that the glory and fame that people have sought are like the corruptible crown awarded at the Isthmian Games?



The champion's wreath, as well as the glory and honor, is a fading one

in a few days or weeks. Of course, it was not for the perishable wreath that the athletes contended but for the glory, honor, and fame that came with it. One source relates that when the victor returned home, he was welcomed as a conquering hero. Often city walls were torn down for his procession to pass through, and statues were erected in his honor. In spite of all of this, however, his glory was still corruptible. Today, few people have any idea who those conquering

heroes were, and most really do not care. Those who sacrifice their time, energy, health, and even family happiness to gain power, fame, and riches in the world, but who are not rich toward God, will find that their materialistic “crown,” like their life, is merely passing.—Matthew 6:19, 20; Luke 12:16-21.

¹³ Contestants in an athletic game may be willing to accept the rigorous requirements of training, such as those described

13. How is the life course of one in the race for life different from that of an athlete?

above, but only for a limited time. Once the games are over, they go back to a normal way of life. They may still train from time to time to maintain their skills, but they no longer follow the same course of severe self-denial, at least not until the next contest is due. It is not so with those who are in the race for life. With them, training and self-denial must be a way of life.—1 Timothy 6:6-8.

¹⁴ "If anyone wants to come after me," said Jesus Christ to a gathering of disciples and others, "let him disown himself (or, "he must say, 'No' to self," Charles B. Williams) and pick up his torture stake and follow me continually." (Mark 8:34) When we accept this invitation, we must be prepared to do so "continually," not because there is some special merit in self-denial, but because one moment's indiscretion, one lapse in good judgment, may undo all that has been built up, even jeopardizing our eternal welfare. Spiritual progress is usually made at a rather slow pace, but how quickly it can be nullified if we are not on guard constantly!

¹⁵ Furthermore, Paul urged that we must exercise self-control "in all things," that is, we must do so consistently in all aspects of life. This makes good sense because if a trainee overindulges or lives licentiously, what will be the good of all the physical pain and fatigue that he endures? Likewise in our race for life, we must exercise self-control in all things. A person may control himself in such things as drunkenness and fornication, but the value of this diminishes if he is haughty and contentious. Or what if he is long-suffering and kind toward others, but harbors some secret sin in

14, 15. Why must a contender in the race for life exercise self-control continually?

his private life? For self-control to be fully beneficial, it must be exercised "in all things."—Compare James 2:10, 11.

Run "Not Uncertainly"

¹⁶ Seeing the strenuous efforts needed to succeed in the race for life, Paul went on to say: "Therefore, the way I am running is not uncertainly; the way I am directing my blows is so as not to be striking the air." (1 Corinthians 9:26) The word "uncertainly" literally means "unevidently" (*Kingdom Interlinear*), "unobserved, unmarked" (*Lange's Commentary*). Hence, to run "not uncertainly" means that to every observer it should be very evident where the runner is heading. *The Anchor Bible* renders it "not on a zigzag course." If you saw a set of footprints that meanders up and down the beach, circles around now and then, and even goes backward at times, you would hardly think the person was running at all, let alone that he had any idea where he was heading. But if you saw a set of footprints that form a long, straight line, each footprint ahead of the previous one and all evenly spaced, you would conclude that the footprints belong to one who knows exactly where he is going.

¹⁷ Paul's life shows clearly that he was running "not uncertainly." He had ample evidence to prove that he was a Christian minister and an apostle. He had but one objective, and he exerted himself vigorously all his life to gain it. He was never sidetracked by fame, power, riches, or comfort, even though he could perhaps have attained any of these. (Acts 20:24; 1 Corinthians 9:2; 2 Corinthians 3:2, 3; Philippians 3:8,

16. What does it mean to run "not uncertainly"?
17. (a) How did Paul show that he was running "not uncertainly"? (b) How can we imitate Paul in this regard?

13, 14) As you look back at your life course, what kind of track do you see? A straight line with a clear direction or one that wanders aimlessly? Is there evidence that you are contending in the race for life? Remember, we are in this race, not just to go through the motions, as it were, but to get to the finish line.

¹⁸ Drawing a parallel with another athletic event, Paul further said: "The way I am directing my blows is so as not to be striking the air." (1 Corinthians 9:26b) In our contest for life, we have many enemies, including Satan, the world, and our own imperfection. Like an ancient boxer, we must be able to beat them down by well-aimed blows. Happily, Jehovah God trains us and helps us in the fight. He provides instructions in his Word, in Bible-based publications, and at Christian meetings. However, if we read the Bible and the publications and go to meetings but do not put into practice what we learn, are we not wasting our efforts, "striking the air"? Doing so puts us in a very dangerous position. We think we are putting up a fight and thus get a false sense of security, but we are not defeating our enemies. That is why the disciple James admonished: "Become doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves with false reasoning." Just as "striking the air" will not disable our enemies, neither will being "hearers only" ensure that we are doing God's will.—James 1:22; 1 Samuel 15:22; Matthew 7:24, 25.

¹⁹ Finally, Paul told us his secret to success: "I pummel my body and lead it as a slave, that, after I have preached to others, I myself should not become disapproved

18. (a) What would be comparable to "striking the air" on our part? (b) Why is that a dangerous course to follow?

19. How can we make sure not to become disapproved somehow?

somehow." (1 Corinthians 9:27) Like Paul, we too must gain the mastery over our imperfect flesh rather than allow it to be our master. We need to root out fleshly tendencies, longings, and desires. (Romans 8:5-8; James 1:14, 15) Doing so can be painful, since the word translated "pummel" literally means 'hit under the eye' (*Kingdom Interlinear*). Is it not, though, better to suffer a black eye, as it were, and live than to give in to the desires of the fallen flesh and die?—Compare Matthew 5:28, 29; 18:9; 1 John 2:15-17.

²⁰ Today, we are nearing the finish line of the race. The time for the prizes to be given out is at hand. For anointed Christians, it is "the prize of the upward call of God by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14) For those of the great crowd, it is life everlasting on a paradise earth. With so much at stake, let us be resolved, as was Paul, that we "not become disapproved somehow." May every one of us take to heart the injunction: "Run in such a way that you may attain it."—1 Corinthians 9:24, 27.

20. Why is it now especially urgent to examine how we are running in the race for life?

Do You Recall?

- Why is it apt to compare a Christian's life to a race?
- How is the race for life different from a footrace?
- Why must we exercise self-control continually and "in all things"?
- How does one run "not uncertainly"?
- Why is it dangerous to be just "striking the air"?

DID THE EARLY CHURCH TEACH THAT GOD IS A TRINITY?

Part 4

When and how did the Trinity doctrine develop?

The first three articles of this series showed that the Trinity doctrine was not taught by Jesus and his disciples nor by the early Church Fathers.

(*The Watchtower* of November 1, 1991; February 1, 1992; and April 1, 1992)

This final article will discuss how the Trinity dogma developed and what part was played by the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E.

IN THE year 325 C.E., Roman emperor Constantine convened a council of bishops in the city of Nicaea in Asia Minor. His purpose was to resolve the continuing religious disputes over the relationship of the Son of God to Almighty God. Regarding the results of that council, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says:

"Constantine himself presided, actively guiding the discussions, and personally proposed . . . the crucial formula expressing the relation of Christ to God in the creed issued by the council, 'of one substance [*ho-mo-o'sis*] with the Father.' . . . Overawed by the emperor, the bishops, with two exceptions only, signed the creed, many of them much against their inclination."¹

Did this pagan ruler intervene because of his Biblical convictions? No. *A Short History of Christian Doctrine* states: "Constantine had basically no understanding whatsoever of the questions that were being asked in Greek theology."² What he did understand

was that religious disputes threatened the unity of his empire, and he wanted them resolved.

Did It Establish the Trinity Doctrine?

Did the Council of Nicaea establish, or affirm, the Trinity as a doctrine of Christendom? Many assume that this was the case. But the facts show otherwise.

The creed promulgated by that council did assert things about the Son of God that would allow various clergymen to view him as equal to God the Father in a certain way. Yet, it is enlightening to see what the Nicene Creed did not say. As originally published, the entire creed stated:

"We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true

God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down and became incarnate, becoming man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead;

"And in the Holy Spirit."³

Does this creed say that Father, Son, and holy spirit are three persons in one God? Does it say that the three are equal in eternity, power, position, and wisdom? No, it does not. There is no three-in-one formula here whatsoever. The original Nicene Creed did not establish or affirm the Trinity.

That creed, at most, equates the Son with the Father in being "of one substance." But it does not say anything like that about the holy spirit. All it says is that "we believe . . . in the Holy Spirit." That is not Christendom's Trinity doctrine.

Even the key phrase "of one substance" (*homoousios*) did not necessarily mean that the council believed in a numerical equality of Father and Son. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states:

"Whether the Council intended to affirm the numerical identity of the substance of Father and Son is doubtful."⁴

Had the council meant that the Son and the Father were one numerically, it would still not be a Trinity. It would only be a two-in-one God, not three-in-one as required by the Trinity doctrine.

"A Minority Viewpoint"

At Nicaea, did the bishops in general believe that the Son was equal to God? No, there were competing points of view. For example, one was represented by Arius, who taught that the Son had a finite beginning in time and was therefore not equal to God but was subordinate in all respects. Athanasius, on

the other hand, believed that the Son was equal to God in a certain way. And there were other views.

Regarding the council's decision to consider the Son of the same substance (consubstantial) as God, Martin Marty states: "Nicaea actually represented a minority viewpoint; the settlement was uneasy and was unacceptable to many who were not Arian in outlook."⁵ Similarly, the book *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* notes that "a clearly formulated doctrinal position in contrast to Arianism was taken up by a minority only, although this minority carried the day."⁶ And *A Short History of Christian Doctrine* notes:

"What seemed especially objectionable to many bishops and theologians of the East was the concept put into the creed by Constantine himself, the *homoousios* ["of one substance"], which in the subsequent strife between orthodoxy and heresy became the object of dissension."⁷

After the council, disputing continued for decades. Those who were for the idea of equating the Son with Almighty God even fell out of favor for a time. For example, Martin Marty says of Athanasius: "His popularity rose and fell and he was exiled so often [in the years after the council] that he virtually became a commuter."⁸ Athanasius spent years in exile because political and church officials opposed his views that equated the Son with God.

So to assert that the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. established or affirmed the Trinity doctrine is not true. What later became the Trinity teaching was not in existence at the time. The idea that the Father, Son, and holy spirit were each true God and equal in eternity, power, position, and wisdom, yet but one God—a three-in-one God—was not developed by that council nor by earlier Church

Fathers. As *The Church of the First Three Centuries* states:

"The modern popular doctrine of the Trinity . . . derives no support from the language of Justin [Martyr]: and this observation may be extended to all the ante-Nicene Fathers; that is, to all Christian writers for three centuries after the birth of Christ. It is true, they speak of the Father, Son, and prophetic or holy Spirit, but not as co-equal, not as one numerical essence, not as Three in One, in any sense now admitted by Trinitarians. The very reverse is the fact. The doctrine of the Trinity, as explained by these Fathers, was essentially different from the modern doctrine. This we state as a fact as susceptible of proof as any fact in the history of human opinions."

"We challenge any one to produce a single writer of any note, during the first three ages, who held this [Trinity] doctrine in the modern sense."⁹

Nicaea, though, did represent a turning point. It opened the door to the official acceptance of the Son as equal to the Father, and that paved the way for the later Trinity idea. The book *Second Century Orthodoxy*, by J. A. Buckley, notes:

"Up until the end of the second century at least, the universal Church remained united in one basic sense; they all accepted the supremacy of the Father. They all regarded God the Father Almighty as alone supreme, immutable, ineffable and without beginning. . . ."

"With the passing of those second century writers and leaders, the Church found itself . . . slipping slowly but inexorably toward that point . . . where at the Council of Nicaea the culmination of all this piece-meal eroding of the original faith was reached. There, a small volatile minority, foisted its heresy upon an acquiescent majority, and with the political authorities behind it, coerced, ca-

joled and intimidated those who strove to maintain the pristine purity of their faith untarnished."¹⁰

The Council of Constantinople

In 381 C.E., the Council of Constantinople affirmed the Nicene Creed. And it added something else. It called the holy spirit "Lord" and "life-giver." The expanded creed of 381 C.E. (which is substantially what is used in the churches today and which is called "the Nicene Creed") shows that Christendom was on the brink of formulating a full-blown Trinitarian dogma. Yet, not even this council completed that doctrine. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* acknowledges:

"It is interesting that 60 years after Nicaea I the Council of Constantinople I [381 C.E.] avoided *homoousios* in its definition of the divinity of the Holy Spirit."¹¹

Scholars have been puzzled by the apparent mildness of expression on the part of this creed; its failure, for example, to use the word *homoousios* of the Holy Spirit as consubstantial with the Father and Son."¹²

That same encyclopedia admits: "Homoousios does not appear in Scripture."¹³ No, the Bible does not use that word either for the holy spirit or for the Son as being consubstantial with God. It was an unbiblical expression that helped lead to the unbiblical, indeed, antibiblical, doctrine of the Trinity.

Even after Constantinople, it was centuries before the Trinity teaching was accepted throughout Christendom. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says: "In the West . . . a general silence seems to have prevailed with regard to Constantinople I and its creed."¹⁴ This source shows that the council's creed was not widely recognized in the West until the seventh or eighth century.

Scholars also acknowledge that the Athanasian Creed, often quoted as a standard definition and support of the Trinity, was not written by Athanasius but by an unknown

God will cause political authorities to turn against false religion

author much later. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* comments:

"The creed was unknown to the Eastern Church until the 12th century. Since the 17th century, scholars have generally agreed that the Athanasian Creed was not written by Athanasius (died 373) but was probably composed in southern France during the 5th century. . . . The creed's influence seems to have been primarily in southern France and Spain in the 6th and 7th centuries. It was used in the liturgy of the church in Germany in the 9th century and somewhat later in Rome."¹⁵

How It Developed

The Trinity doctrine began its slow development over a period of centuries. The trinitarian ideas of Greek philosophers such as Plato, who lived several centuries before Christ, gradually crept into church teachings. As *The Church of the First Three Centuries* says:

"We maintain that the doctrine of the Trinity was of gradual and comparatively late formation; that it had its origin in a source entirely foreign from that of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; that it grew up, and was ingrafted on Christianity, through the hands of the Platonizing Fathers; that in the time of Justin, and long after, the distinct nature and inferiority of the Son were universally taught; and that only the first shadowy outline of the Trinity had then become visible."¹⁶



Before Plato, triads, or trinities, were common in Babylon and Egypt. And the efforts of churchmen to attract unbelievers in the Roman world led to the gradual incorporation of some of those ideas into Christianity. This eventually led to acceptance of the belief that the Son and the holy spirit were equal to the Father.*

Even the word "Trinity" was only slowly accepted. It was in the latter half of the second century that Theophilus, bishop of Antioch in Syria, wrote in Greek and introduced the word *tri-as'*, meaning "triad," or "trinity." Then the Latin writer Tertullian in Carthage, North Africa, introduced into his writings the word *trinitas*, which means "trinity."[#] But the word *tri-as'* is not found in the inspired Christian Greek Scriptures, and the word *trinitas* is not found in the Latin translation of the Bible called the *Vulgate*.

* For further information, see the brochure *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

[#] As shown in previous articles in this series, although Theophilus and Tertullian used these words, they did not have in mind the Trinity believed by Christendom today.

Neither expression was Biblical. But the word "Trinity," based on pagan concepts, crept into the literature of the churches and after the fourth century became part of their dogma.

Thus, it was not that scholars examined the Bible thoroughly to see if such a doctrine was taught in it. Instead, secular and church politics largely determined the doctrine. In the book *The Christian Tradition*, author Jaroslav Pelikan calls attention to "the non-theological factors in the debate, many of which seemed ready again and again to determine its outcome, only to be countermanded by other forces like unto themselves. Doctrine often seemed to be the victim—or the product—of church politics and of conflicts of personality."¹⁷ Yale professor E. Washburn Hopkins put it this way: "The final orthodox definition of the trinity was largely a matter of church politics."¹⁸

How unreasonable the Trinity doctrine is compared with the simple Bible teaching that God is supreme and has no equal! As God says, "to whom will you people liken me or make me equal or compare me that we may resemble each other?"—Isaiah 46:5.

What It Represented

What did the gradual development of the Trinity idea represent? It was part of the falling away from true Christianity that Jesus foretold. (Matthew 13:24-43) The apostle Paul also had foretold the coming apostasy:

"The time is sure to come when, far from being content with sound teaching, people will be avid for the latest novelty and collect themselves a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes; and then, instead of listening to the truth, they will turn to myths."—2 Timothy 4:3, 4, Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*.

One of those myths was the Trinity teaching. Some other myths alien to Christianity that also gradually developed were: the in-

herent immortality of the human soul, purgatory, Limbo, and eternal torment in hellfire.

So, what is the Trinity doctrine? It is actually a pagan doctrine masquerading as a Christian one. It was promoted by Satan to deceive people, to make God confusing and mysterious to them. This results in their also being more willing to accept other false religious ideas and wrong practices.

"By Their Fruits"

At Matthew 7:15-19, Jesus said that you could tell false religion from true religion in this way:

"Be on the watch for the false prophets that come to you in sheep's covering, but inside they are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will recognize them. Never do people gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles, do they? Likewise every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit . . . Every tree not producing fine fruit gets cut down and thrown into the fire."

Consider one example. Jesus said at John 13:35: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." Also, at 1 John 4:20 and 21, God's inspired Word declares:

"If anyone makes the statement: 'I love God,' and yet is hating his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot be loving God, whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that the one who loves God should be loving his brother also."

Apply the basic principle that true Christians must have love among themselves to what happened in both world wars of this century, as well as in other conflicts. People of the same religions of Christendom met on battlefields and slaughtered one another because of nationalistic differences. Each side claimed to be Christian, and each side was



True religion will survive God's judgments

supported by its clergy, who claimed that God was on their side. That slaughter of "Christian" by "Christian" is rotten fruitage. It is a violating of Christian love, a denial of the laws of God.—See also 1 John 3:10-12.

A Day of Reckoning

Thus, the falling away from Christianity led not only to ungodly beliefs, such as the Trinity doctrine, but also to ungodly practices. Yet, there is a day of reckoning to come, for Jesus said: "Every tree not producing fine fruit gets cut down and thrown into the fire." That is why God's Word urges:

"Get out of her [false religion], my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues. For her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind."—Revelation 18:4, 5.

Soon God will 'put it into the hearts' of the political authorities to turn against false religion. They will "make her devastated and . . . will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire." (Revelation 17:16, 17) Destroyed forever will be false religion with its pagan philosophies about God. In effect, God will say to the practitioners of false religion as Jesus said in his day:

"Your house is abandoned to you."—Matthew 23:38.

True religion will survive God's judgments, so that, finally, all honor and glory will be given to the One whom Jesus said is "the only true God." He is the One identified by the psalmist who declared: "You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth."—John 17:3; Psalm 83:18.

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KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Letting Their Light Shine in India



THE good news of the Kingdom is being preached in India by 11,524 joyful Witnesses. (Matthew 24:14) The 1,066 baptized during the 1991 service year are Kingdom proclaimers, letting their light shine to others. How happy all were to see 28,866 attend the Memorial celebration of Christ's death!

□ Many first learn of the Kingdom hope through informal witnessing. For example, a Witness spoke about the Kingdom to his workmates, who are also carpenters. One workmate responded and began to let his light shine to his family and friends. These joyfully passed on this wonderful Kingdom message to others. According to reports, in just a few years, 'more than 30 persons had accepted the truth.' Jehovah blessed him and his new spiritual brothers for letting their light shine.

□ A young brother in another congregation let his light shine by witnessing informally to fellow students in school. Some of them were interested in the Kingdom hope, and he often explained the Bible to them until after midnight. One, a Catholic, took a firm stand for the truth despite being warned by the priest of severe consequences if he continued associating with the Witness. The stu-

dent, however, was convinced that he was learning Bible truth from the Witnesses, and he continued taking in knowledge. In due time he was baptized and now serves as a ministerial servant in the congregation. He rejoices in the hope that comes through the wonderful light of truth!—Romans 12:12.

□ Another who listened to this young Witness was a well-known student, an atheist, who used to mock those who professed to believe in God, but one day he joined in the discussion and asked many questions. He was surprised when he got logical answers to all his questions and came to the conclusion that the Bible is God's Word. He progressed in Bible knowledge and finally got baptized. His Hindu father opposed him to the point of putting him out of his house. However, this young man's firm stand for the truth was rewarded when two of his fleshly brothers and two of his friends accepted the truth and were baptized. One of his brothers now serves at the branch office in India.

□ A student organizer also joined in the discussions with the young Witness. He was a chain smoker and a heavy drinker. At one time, he had wanted to beat up two fellow students who had learned the truth from the Witness. Because of accepting the truth, they had refused to join a college strike and also would not donate blood during a blood-collection campaign spearheaded by the student organizer. This young man is now happy to be a light-bearing Witness of Jehovah.

□ In all, the student who first let his light shine has been instrumental in helping 15 of his peers to dedication and baptism by witnessing to them informally.

It is a joy to see many in that vast land accepting the Bible's hope of God's new world and joining the worldwide brotherhood that Jehovah God is gathering to live forever under his Kingdom.

I Swallowed My Pride and Found Happiness

IN 1970, I was 23 years old and ambitious. At my place of employment at an automobile club in Ivrea, Italy, I was made chief clerk. I was determined to be somebody. And yet I was very depressed and gloomy. Why?

My husband spent most of his time in bars playing cards with his friends, and he left me to shoulder most of the family responsibilities. Our relationship began to deteriorate. We quarreled over the smallest things. As a result, my mind became crowded with negative thoughts.

'No one is really interested in you,' I would say. 'They only want to take advantage of your position.' I would tell myself: 'God can't exist because if he did, he wouldn't permit so much suffering and wickedness. Life is nothing but a race toward death.' I could not understand why this was so.

Beginning of a Change

One day in 1977, two of Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on our door. My husband, Giancarlo, invited them inside, and they went into the living room to talk. His intention was to have them become evolutionists like him, but they were the ones who changed *his* thinking!

Soon Giancarlo also began to make changes in his life. He became more patient,



devoting more time and attention to me and our daughter. He tried to talk to me about the things he was learning, but I would invariably close the conversation on a bitter note.

Then one day when the Witnesses called, I sat down and really listened. They spoke about the end of this system of things and about God's Kingdom, the Paradise earth, and the resurrection of the dead. I was stunned! I didn't sleep for the next three nights! I wanted to know more, but pride prevented me from asking my husband questions. Then one day he sternly told me: "Today you're going to listen. I have the answers to all your questions." Then he just poured out Bible truths to me.

Giancarlo told me that Jehovah is the name of the Creator, that His principal attribute is love, that He sent His Son as a ransom so that we might have everlasting life, and that after the destruction of the wicked at Armageddon, Jesus Christ will resurrect the dead during his Thousand Year Reign. He said that resurrected ones would grow to mental and physical perfection and that they would have the opportunity to live forever on earth in Paradise.

The next day, I accompanied my husband to the Kingdom Hall for the first time. Af-

terward I said to him: "These people love one another. I want to continue coming here because they are really happy." I began attending meetings regularly, and a Bible study was conducted with me. I thought a lot about what I was learning and soon became convinced that I had found the true people of God. In 1979 my husband and I symbolized our dedication to Jehovah by being baptized.

The Full-Time Ministry

At a circuit assembly later that year, a discourse was given encouraging the full-time preaching activity. I felt moved to take up that service, and I went to Jehovah in prayer about the matter. But then I got pregnant, and my plans were interrupted. Over the next four years, we had three children. Two of them, on different occasions, developed life-threatening physical defects. Thankfully, in each case, they fully recovered.

Now I felt that I could not put off any longer my plans for the full-time ministry. I quit my secular work to concentrate better on my responsibilities as a wife and mother. My husband and I made plans to live on a single income, which meant giving up all nonessentials. Yet, Jehovah richly blessed us, never abandoning us to poverty or need.

In 1984 my daughter, who was then 15 and had recently been baptized, began the full-time ministry as a pioneer. At the same time, my husband was appointed an elder. And me? Feeling I could not yet pioneer, I set the goal of 30 hours a month in the preaching work. I reached it and said to myself: 'Well done! You are doing plenty.'

Once more, though, pride became my problem. (Proverbs 16:18) I kept thinking how well I was doing and that I didn't need

to make any further spiritual progress. My spirituality began to wane, and I even began losing the good qualities I had acquired. Then I received the discipline that I needed.

In 1985 two traveling overseers and their wives were guests in our home as they made their periodic visit to our congregation. Observing these humble, self-sacrificing Christians really caused me to meditate on matters. I did research on the subject of humility, using the Watch Tower Society publications. I thought about the great humility Jehovah shows in his dealings with us sinful humans. (Psalm 18:35) I knew I had to change my thinking.

I implored Jehovah to help me cultivate humility so as to serve him the way he wanted me to and to guide me in using the gifts that I have to his glory. I filled out an application for the pioneer service, and I began serving him in the full-time ministry in March 1989.

I can say now that I am *truly* happy and that swallowing my pride is what has contributed to my happiness. I have found a real reason for living—that of helping needy ones to come to know that Jehovah, the true God, is not far from those who seek him.—*As told by Vera Brandolini.*

In Our Next Issue

Is the Gift of Tongues
Part of True Christianity?

Keep Building One Another Up

Social Entertainment—Enjoy the
Benefits, Avoid the Snares

“Return to me, and I will return to you”

THE family was enjoying a delightful outing in the woods. Then, Peter, the youngest, strayed away, chasing down a hill after a squirrel. Suddenly, the sky filled with clouds, and rain began to fall. At first it was a gentle shower, but gradually it became a downpour. The family hurriedly gathered their belongings and ran for their vehicle. And everyone wondered where Peter was.

Peter, meantime, was trying to get back to the family. It was difficult to see ahead, and the path up the hill was slippery in the rain. Unexpectedly, the ground seemed to disappear under his feet as he stumbled into a deep, hidden hole. He tried to climb out, but the sides were too slippery.

Rainwater poured down the hill and was filling the hole with mud. Peter was in real danger of drowning. But then his father found him and pulled him out with a rope. Later, Peter was severely scolded for wandering away. Yet, wrapped up in blankets in the arms of his mother, a scolding was very easy to accept.

This experience well illustrates what happens to some who used to be among God's people. They have fallen into the deep hole of this system of things and are desperately trying to crawl out and return to the haven of Jehovah's organization. How pleasing it is to know that Jehovah is merciful and ready to 'lower a rope' and help them back to safety!

Jehovah's Merciful Dealings

Back in the days of Israel, at the completion of the building of the temple, Solomon offered a prayer of dedication in which he begged Jehovah to listen to petitions directed toward the temple. He then said: "In case they [the Israelites] sin against you (for there is no man that does not sin), and you have to be incensed at them and abandon them to the enemy, . . . and they indeed come to their senses in the land where they have been carried off captive, and they actually return and make request to you for favor in the land of their captors, . . . you must also hear from the heavens, your established place of dwelling, their prayer and their request for favor."—1 Kings 8:46-49.

Solomon's request was fulfilled on many occasions during the history of Israel. Time and again, God's people turned aside and abandoned him. Then they recognized their error and returned, seeking him. And Jehovah forgave them. (Deuteronomy 4:31; Isaiah 44:21, 22; 2 Corinthians 1:3; James 5:11) Through Malachi, Jehovah summed up a thousand years of dealing with His people when He said: "From the days of your forefathers you have turned aside from my regulations and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you."—Malachi 3:7.

Causes for Stumbling

As with the Israelites, a number of God's people today turn aside and separate themselves from Jehovah's organization. Why?

Some go after something that appears innocent at first, like Peter chasing the squirrel. This is what happened with Ada. She reports: "It was a custom for all of us workmates to go to lunch together at some nearby restaurant at noontime. So when they invited me to have a cup of coffee at the end of the day, it was not difficult to accept. I reasoned that I was not using time that should be used for meetings or for preaching. I did not realize that this might be a failure to observe the principle at 1 Corinthians 15:33.

"Soon, I was going horseback riding with them on Saturdays. Then I was going to the movies and the theater with them. That led to my missing some meetings. Finally, I was not going to any meetings nor sharing in the preaching work. When I realized what was happening, I was no longer associating with the organization."

In other cases the reason might be a serious hidden sin that makes the person feel unworthy of serving God. (Psalm 32:3-5) Or an individual might stumble over something that was said or done by Christian companions, not understanding, as Solomon said, that "there is no man that does not sin." —1 Kings 8:46; James 3:2.

Still others get discouraged when they receive discipline. (Hebrews 12:7, 11) The attraction of materialistic life-styles has led many to cease serving God. Often, in the search for worldly success, they have immersed themselves so thoroughly in secular work that there has been no room in their lives for God's service. (Matthew 13:4-9; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10) Is the situation of such ones hopeless?

Will You Respond to Jehovah's Invitation?

On one occasion Jesus said something that was hard to understand, and some were

stumbled. The record says: "Many of his disciples went off to the things behind and would no longer walk with him." But not all were stumbled. The Bible account continues: "Jesus said to the twelve: 'You do not want to go also, do you?' Simon Peter answered him: 'Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life.'" (John 6:66-68) Jesus' apostles wisely perceived that it would be disastrous to leave Jesus.

Some who fall away eventually come to a similar conclusion. They realize that leaving God's organization was a disastrous step to take and that only with Jehovah and Christ will they find the sayings that lead to life. Once they come to such a realization, they should also realize that it is never too late to reconsider, ask Jehovah for forgiveness, and come back to him. It was Jehovah himself who gave the invitation: "Return to me, and I will return to you."—Malachi 3:7.

Really, where can a sincere Christian find happiness if it is not in serving Jehovah? If a person drifts away after having been a part of God's organization for some time, what awaits him in the world outside? He will quickly realize that he is now part of a world that is getting more and more violent. He will find himself involved in a system of things full of hypocrisy, lies, fraud, and immorality, a world as dangerous and unpleasant as the mudhole that threatened the life of young Peter. When he comes to his senses and realizes that his eternal life is in jeopardy, he should lose no time in seeking help to extricate himself from the situation. Still, returning may not be easy.

Are you one who has tried to return to Jehovah but found it difficult? Then know that you need help. And believe that your brothers and sisters in God's organization are willing to offer you help. But you have to



make an effort to show Jehovah your desire. It is time to 'come to your senses' and 'actually return to Jehovah.'—1 Kings 8:47.

Helped to Return

Ada explains what helped her to return to Jehovah: "At just the right moment, the sister who had conducted the study with me invited me to attend a circuit assembly with her. She was so sweet! And she did not reproach me at all! She showed so much love. A year had gone by since I attended my last meeting, but I had been meditating on the emptiness of the world and on the fact that, behind the glitter, there was only sadness, frustration, and immorality. So I decided to attend the assembly. Once at the theater where it was held, I went to the last row of seats and hid myself in a dark corner. I did not want the brothers to see me and ask questions.

"However, the program gave counsel that I badly needed. When it was over, I was determined not only to return to Jehovah's people but also to devote myself to him with all my heart. The brothers received me with open arms and the 'prodigal' returned." (Luke 15:11-24) All that happened some

Will you respond to Jehovah's invitation, "Return to me"?

time ago, and Ada has now been in full-time service for more than 25 years.

The case of another individual who wandered away had a similar happy outcome. Some elders gave José counsel that reflected more their own thinking than Bible principles. José, discouraged and resentful, eventually fell into inactivity. For eight years he was separated from God's people, and during that time he married an unbeliever and became father to children, one of whom he allowed to be baptized in the Catholic Church.

Finally, he was helped when the circuit overseer made shepherding calls on him and encouraged the elders to do the same. He was restored and was happy to see his wife take an interest in the truth. José is at present serving as an elder in the congregation. As these two experiences show, Jehovah does not withhold blessings from those who respond to his loving invitation to return.

In order to enjoy such blessings, though, one first has to appreciate the help offered and respond to it. In most congregations the brothers remember those who have become inactive and visit them from time to time, trying to help them. Responding to such help shows appreciation for Jehovah's mercy.—James 5:19, 20.

In truth, this is the time to respond to Jehovah's invitation: "Return to me." (Malachi 3:7; Isaiah 1:18) Do not wait any longer. World events are moving with remarkable swiftness. The best place to be during the stormy times that lie ahead is within Jehovah's organization, safe under his protection. Only those who take refuge in Jehovah have a firm hope of being hidden from his wrath on the great day of his anger. —Zephaniah 2:2, 3.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Should we understand from Job 1:8 that during the period when Job lived, he was the only human who was faithful to Jehovah?

No. That conclusion is not justified by Job 1:8, which says:

"Jehovah went on to say to Satan: 'Have you set your heart upon my servant Job, that there is no one like him in the earth, a man blameless and upright, fearing God and turning aside from bad?' " God provided a similar assessment at Job 2:3, asking Satan: "Have you set your heart upon my servant Job, that there is no one like him in the earth, a man blameless and upright, fearing God and turning aside from bad?"

The book of Job itself indicates that Job was not the only human alive whom God accepted as faithful. Beginning in chapter 32, we read about Elihu. Though being a younger man, Elihu corrected the error of Job's outlook and magnified the true God.—Job 32:6-33:6, 31-33; 35:1-36:2.

Consequently, God's comment that 'there was no one like Job in the earth' must mean that Job was

particularly outstanding as a man of uprightness. Likely Job lived in the interval between the death of Joseph in Egypt and the beginning of Moses' service as God's prophet. During that period a large number of Israelites resided in Egypt. There is no reason to think that all of them were unfaithful and unacceptable to God; probably there were many who trusted in Jehovah. (Exodus 2:1-10; Hebrews 11:23) Yet, none of them played a prominent role, as Joseph had, nor were those worshippers outstanding as to true worship, as Moses would be in leading the nation of Israel out of Egypt.

Living elsewhere, though, there was a man of noteworthy integrity. "There happened to be a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man proved to be blameless and upright, and fearing God and turning aside from bad."—Job 1:1.

Jehovah could thus mention Job as a conspicuous or notable example of faith and devotion. Similarly, Bible writers Ezekiel and James retrospectively singled out Job as setting a pattern of righteousness and endurance.—Ezekiel 14:14; James 5:11.

ANNUAL MEETING

OCTOBER 3, 1992

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the members of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania will be held on October 3, 1992, at the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, New Jersey. A preliminary meeting of the members only will convene at 9:30 a.m., followed by the general annual meeting at 10:00 a.m.

The members of the Corporation should inform the Secretary's Office now of any change in their mailing addresses during the past year so that the regular letters of notice and proxies can reach them shortly after August 1.

The proxies, which will be sent to the members along with the notice of the annual meeting, are

to be returned so as to reach the Office of the Secretary of the Society not later than August 15. Each member should complete and return his proxy promptly, stating whether he is going to be at the meeting personally or not. The information given on each proxy should be definite on this point, since it will be relied upon in determining who will be personally present.

It is expected that the entire session, including the formal business meeting and reports, will be concluded by 1:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter. There will be no afternoon session. Because of limited space, admission will be by ticket only. No arrangements will be made for tying in the annual meeting by telephone lines to other auditoriums.

"The Wife of Your Youth"



ADULTERY almost seems like an everyday event." So say many experts, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. Does such a statement surprise you? Yet, psychiatrist Frank Pittman estimates that about 50 percent of husbands and from 30 percent to 40 percent of wives have been unfaithful. If that is true, almost half of all married people commit adultery!

Does that mean that immorality is all right? By no means! The spread of infidelity does not make it right—any more than the growth of street crime makes it right to rob someone. Immorality hurts. For example, mankind today is afflicted by a pandemic of dangerous sexually transmitted diseases all of which could be easily controlled if people led moral lives. The killer disease AIDS would never have got the foothold it has if people had not been so loose in their sexual lives.

Besides, even the most sophisticated and "enlightened" feel enormous pain when their partners are unfaithful. One act of infidelity can cause wounds that take half a lifetime to heal.

The most important point, though, is that playing fast and loose with marriage vows is gross disrespect for God, since he is the Author of marriage. The Bible says: "Let marriage be honorable among all." We are also warned: "God will judge fornicators and adulterers."—Hebrews 13:4.

Hence, wise people heed the inspired words: "Rejoice with the wife of your youth." (Proverbs 5:18) They seek contentment and happiness with their marriage mates. In doing so they guard their physical and emotional health, and most important, they bring honor to the grand Author of marriage, Jehovah God.

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