

FEBRUARY 15, 2009

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

## STUDY EDITION

STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE WEEKS OF:

**April 6-12**

How Jesus' Sayings Promote Happiness

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They "Keep Following the Lamb"

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# Jehovah's Word Is Alive

## Highlights From the Book of Revelation—II

WHAT lies ahead for those who worship Jehovah God and for those who do not? What is the future of Satan and his demons? What blessings will obedient mankind experience during the Thousand Year Reign of Christ? The answers to these and other vital questions are revealed at Revelation 13:1–22:21.\* These chapters contain the last 9 of the 16 visions that the apostle John received near the end of the first century C.E.

"Happy is he who reads aloud and those who hear the words of this prophecy," writes John, "and who observe the things written in it." (Rev. 1:3; 22:7) Reading and applying what we learn from the book of Revelation can affect our heart, strengthen our faith in God and his Son, Jesus Christ, and give us a bright hope for the future.—Heb. 4:12.

### SEVEN BOWLS OF GOD'S ANGER ARE POURED OUT (Rev. 13:1–16:21)

"The nations became wrathful," states Revelation 11:18, "and [God's] own wrath came, and the appointed time . . . to bring to ruin those ruining the earth." Providing background for this, the eighth vision shows the activity of "a wild beast . . . with ten horns and seven heads."—Rev. 13:1.

In the ninth vision, John sees "the Lamb standing upon the Mount Zion" and with him "a hundred and forty-four thousand." They have been "bought from among man-

kind." (Rev. 14:1, 4) Angelic announcements follow. In the next vision, John beholds "seven angels with seven plagues." Evidently, Jehovah himself commands these angels to pour out "the seven bowls of the anger of God" on various features of Satan's world. The bowls contain pronouncements and warnings of the judgments God will execute. (Rev. 15:1; 16:1) These two visions give details of further Kingdom judgments connected with the third woe and the blowing of the seventh trumpet.—Rev. 11:14, 15.

### Scriptural Questions Answered:

**13:8—What is "the scroll of life of the Lamb"?** This is a figurative scroll containing only the names of those who rule with Jesus Christ in his heavenly Kingdom. It includes the names of anointed Christians still on earth, who have the hope of receiving life in heaven.

**13:11–13—How does the wild beast with two horns act like a dragon and make fire come down out of heaven?** The fact that the two-horned wild beast—the Anglo-American World Power—speaks like a dragon indicates that it uses threats, pressure, and violence to enforce acceptance of its form of rulership. It makes fire come out of heaven in that it assumes a prophetlike role by claiming to have conquered the forces of evil in the two world wars of the 20th century and to have won a victory over Communism.

**16:17—What is "the air" upon which the seventh bowl is poured out?** "The air" symbolizes satanic thinking, "the spirit [mental inclination] that now operates in the sons of disobedience." This poisonous air is

\* For a discussion of Revelation 1:1–12:17, see "Highlights From the Book of Revelation—I" in the January 15, 2009, issue of *The Watchtower*.

\*\* For a verse-by-verse consideration of the book of Revelation, see *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*

breathed by Satan's entire wicked system of things.—Eph. 2:2.

### Lessons for Us:

**13:1-4, 18.** "A wild beast" symbolizing human governments ascends "out of the sea," that is, from the turbulent masses of mankind. (Isa. 17:12, 13; Dan. 7:2-8, 17) This beast, created and empowered by Satan, has the number 666, denoting heightened imperfection. Understanding what the beast is helps us so that we neither follow it with admiration nor worship it as mankind in general does.—John 12:31; 15:19.

**13:16, 17.** Despite the hardships we may encounter in carrying out such everyday activities as 'buying or selling,' we should not allow ourselves to be pressured into letting the wild beast rule our lives. Accepting 'the mark of the wild beast in our hand or upon our forehead' would amount to permitting the wild beast to control our actions or affect our thinking.

**14:6, 7.** The angelic proclamation teaches us that we should declare the good news of the established Kingdom of God with urgency. We should help our Bible students to develop a healthy fear of God and to give glory to Jehovah.

**14:14-20.** When "the harvest of the earth," that is, the harvest of those who will be saved, is completed, it will be time for the angel to hurl "into the great winepress of the anger of God" the gathering of "the vine of the earth." That vine—Satan's corrupt visible system of governments over mankind with its "clusters" of evil fruitage—will then be destroyed forever. We should be determined not to be influenced by the vine of the earth.

**16:13-16.** "Unclean inspired expressions" symbolize demonic propaganda intended to ensure that the kings of the earth are not swayed by the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's anger but instead are maneu-

vered into opposition to Jehovah.—Matt. 24:42, 44.

**16:21.** As the end of this world nears, the proclamation of Jehovah's judgments against Satan's wicked system may involve unusually heavy verbal expressions of God's judgments, likely pictured by congealed water. Still, most of mankind will continue to blaspheme God.

### **THE TRIUMPHANT KING RULES** **(Rev. 17:1-22:21)**

"Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion, is a disgusting segment of Satan's wicked world. The 11th vision portrays her as a "great harlot"—an immoral woman—"sitting upon a scarlet-colored wild beast." She is to be completely destroyed by "the ten horns" of the very beast that is carrying her. (Rev. 17:1, 3, 5, 16) Likening the harlot to a "great city," the subsequent vision announces her fall and issues an urgent call to God's people to "get out of her." The demise of the great city is mourned by many. There is rejoicing in heaven, however, because of "the marriage of the Lamb." (Rev. 18:4, 9, 10, 15-19; 19:7) In the 13th vision, the rider of "a white horse" goes to war with the nations. He brings Satan's wicked world to its end.—Rev. 19:11-16.

What about "the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan"? When will he be "hurled into the lake of fire"? That is one of the subjects of the 14th vision. (Rev. 20:2, 10) The last two visions give glimpses of life during the Millennium. As the "revelation" comes to an end, John sees 'a river of water of life flowing down the middle of the broad way,' and a wonderful invitation is extended to "anyone thirsting."—Rev. 1:1; 22:1, 2, 17.

### **Scriptural Questions Answered:**

**17:16; 18:9, 10**—Why do "the kings of the earth" grieve over the very entity they

**themselves have devastated?** The reason for their grief is strictly selfish. After the destruction of Babylon the Great, the kings of the earth evidently come to realize how useful she was to them. She provided a religious front for their oppressive deeds. Babylon the Great also helped them in recruiting youths for the battlefields. Moreover, she played an important part in keeping people in subjection.

**19:12—How is it that no one but Jesus himself knows his unstated name?** This name seems to stand for the position and privileges, such as those stated at Isaiah 9:6, that Jesus enjoys during the Lord's day. No one knows this name but he himself in that his privileges are unique and only he can comprehend what it means to hold such a high office. However, Jesus shares some of these privileges with the members of his bride class, in effect 'writing upon them that new name of his.'—Rev. 3:12.

**19:14—Who will ride with Jesus at Armageddon?** Included among 'the armies in heaven' that join Jesus in God's war will be angels as well as the anointed conquerors who have already received their heavenly reward.—Matt. 25:31, 32; Rev. 2:26, 27.

**20:11-15—Whose names are written in "the scroll [or, "the book"] of life"?** This is the scroll containing the names of all those who come in line to receive everlasting life—the anointed Christians, the members of the great crowd, and the faithful servants of God who will experience the 'resurrec-

tion of the righteous.' (Acts 24:15; Rev. 2:10; 7:9) Those who will come to life in the 'resurrection of the unrighteous' will have their names written in "the scroll of life" only if they act in harmony with the "things written in the scrolls" of instructions opened during the Millennium. However, the entries are not made with indelible ink. The names of the anointed become permanent upon their proving themselves faithful to death. (Rev. 3:5) The names of those who receive life on earth become lasting entries when they pass the final test at the end of the thousand years.—Rev. 20:7, 8.

#### Lessons for Us:

**17:3, 5, 7, 16.** "The wisdom from above" helps us to understand "the mystery of the woman and of the [scarlet-colored] wild beast that is carrying her." (Jas. 3:17) This symbolic wild beast began as the League of Nations and was later revived as the United Nations. Should not the unraveling of this mystery move us to be zealous in preaching the good news of God's Kingdom and proclaiming the day of Jehovah's judgment?

**21:1-6.** We can be absolutely certain that foretold blessings under Kingdom rule will become a reality. Why? Because concerning them, it is said: "They have come to pass!"

**22:1, 17.** The "river of water of life" represents Jehovah's provisions for recovering obedient humans from sin and death. A measure of this water is available now. May we not only gratefully accept the invitation to come and "take life's water free" but also eagerly extend it to others!

*What marvelous blessings obedient mankind will experience under Kingdom rule!*



# HOW JESUS' SAYINGS PROMOTE HAPPINESS

"[Jesus] went up into the mountain; and . . . his disciples came to him; and he . . . began teaching them."—MATT. 5:1, 2.

IT IS the year 31 C.E. Jesus briefly interrupts his preaching tour of Galilee to observe the Passover in Jerusalem. (John 5:1) Returning to Galilee, he prays all night for God's guidance in choosing 12 apostles. The next day a crowd gathers as Jesus heals the sick. With his disciples and others present, he sits down on a mountainside and begins teaching.—Matt. 4:23–5:2; Luke 6:12–19.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus starts his discourse—the Sermon on the Mount—by showing that happiness results from having a good relationship with God. (*Read Matthew 5:1–12.*) Happiness is 'a state of well-being ranging from contentment to intense joy.' The nine happinesses that Jesus pronounced highlight why Christians are happy, and these sayings are as beneficial today as they were nearly 2,000 years ago. Let us now consider each of them.

## "Those Conscious of Their Spiritual Need"

<sup>3</sup> "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need, since the kingdom of the heavens belongs to them." (Matt. 5:3) "Those conscious of their spiritual need" realize that they are spiritually destitute and need God's mercy.

<sup>4</sup> Those conscious of their spiritual need

1, 2. (a) Under what circumstances did Jesus give his Sermon on the Mount? (b) How did Jesus begin his discourse?

3. What does it mean to be conscious of our spiritual need?

4, 5. (a) Why are those conscious of their spiritual need happy? (b) How can our spiritual need be satisfied?

are happy, "since the kingdom of the heavens belongs to them." Accepting Jesus as the Messiah opened up for his early disciples the possibility of ruling with him in God's heavenly Kingdom. (Luke 22:28–30) Whether we personally hope to be a joint heir with Christ in heaven or we look forward to everlasting life in an earthly paradise under Kingdom rule, we can be happy if we are truly conscious of our spiritual need and are fully aware of our dependence on God.

<sup>5</sup> Not all are conscious of their spiritual need, for many lack faith and do not appreciate sacred things. (2 Thess. 3:1, 2; Heb. 12:16) Ways to satisfy our spiritual need include diligent study of the Bible, zealous activity in the disciple-making work, and regular presence at Christian meetings.—Matt. 28:19, 20; Heb. 10:23–25.

## Mourners Who Are "Happy"

<sup>6</sup> "Happy are those who mourn, since they will be comforted." (Matt. 5:4) "Those who mourn" are the same kind of people as "those conscious of their spiritual need." They do not mourn in the sense of complaining about their lot in life. Their mourning is sadness over their own sinful state and the conditions existing because of human imperfection. Why are such mourners "happy"? Because they exercise faith in God and Christ and are comforted by having a good relationship with Jehovah.—John 3:36.

6. Who are "those who mourn," and why are they "happy"?

<sup>7</sup> Do we individually mourn because of the unrighteousness rampant in Satan's world? How do we really feel about what this world has to offer? The apostle John wrote: "Everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father." (1 John 2:16) But what if we sense that our own spirituality is being eroded by "the spirit of the world," the impelling force that dominates human society alienated from God? Then let us pray fervently, study God's Word, and seek the help of the elders. As we draw closer to Jehovah, we will "find comfort" for ourselves, regardless of what is causing us distress.—1 Cor. 2:12; Ps. 119:52; Jas. 5:14, 15.

### How Happy "the Mild-Tempered Ones"!

<sup>8</sup> "Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth." (Matt. 5:5) "Mild-

7. How should we feel about Satan's world?

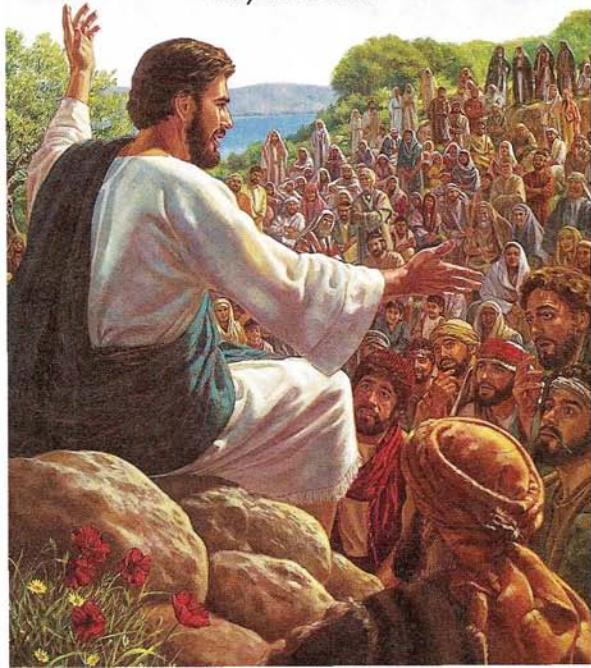
8, 9. What does it mean to be mild-tempered, and why are mild-tempered ones happy?

ness of temper," or meekness, does not suggest weakness or hypocritical gentleness. (1 Tim. 6:11) If we are mild-tempered, we will display meekness by doing Jehovah's will and accepting his guidance. Mildness of temper will also be evident in the way we deal with fellow believers and others. Such meekness harmonizes with the apostle Paul's counsel.—*Read Romans 12:17-19.*

<sup>9</sup> Why are the mild-tempered ones happy? Because "they will inherit the earth," said mild-tempered Jesus. He is the principal Inheritor of the earth. (Ps. 2:8; Matt. 11:29; Heb. 2:8, 9) However, mild-tempered "joint heirs with Christ" share in his inheritance of the earth. (Rom. 8:16, 17) In the earthly realm of Jesus' Kingdom, many other meek ones will enjoy everlasting life.—Ps. 37:10, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Like Jesus, we should be mild-tempered. But what if we are known for having a belligerent spirit? Such an aggressive and hostile attitude may cause people to shy away from us. If we are brothers desiring to have responsibilities in the congregation, this trait disqualifies us. (1 Tim. 3:1, 3) Paul told Titus to keep reminding Christians in Crete "not to be belligerent, to be reasonable, exhibiting all mildness toward all men." (Titus 3:1, 2) What a blessing such mildness is to others!

*The nine happinesses that Jesus highlighted are as beneficial today as they were then*



### They Hunger for "Righteousness"

<sup>11</sup> "Happy are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness, since they will be filled." (Matt. 5:6) The "righteousness" that Jesus had in mind is the quality of doing what is right by conforming to God's will and commandments. The psalmist said that he was "crushed with longing" for God's righteous judicial decisions. (Ps. 119:20) Do we prize

10. How may a lack of mildness affect our privileges of service and our relationship with others?

11-13. (a) What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness? (b) How are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness "filled"?

righteousness so much that we hunger and thirst for it?

<sup>12</sup> Jesus said that those hungering and thirsting for righteousness would be happy because they would be "filled," or fully satisfied. This became possible after Pentecost 33 C.E., for Jehovah's holy spirit then began to "give the world convincing evidence concerning . . . righteousness." (John 16:8) By means of the holy spirit, God inspired men to compile the Christian Greek Scriptures, which are so beneficial "for disciplining in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16) God's spirit also enables us to "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness." (Eph. 4:24) Is it not comforting to know that those who repently seek forgiveness of their sins on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice can attain a righteous standing with God?—*Read Romans 3:23, 24.*

<sup>13</sup> If we have an earthly hope, our hunger and thirst for righteousness will be fully satisfied when we enjoy everlasting life under righteous conditions on earth. Meanwhile, let us be determined to live in harmony with Jehovah's standards. Jesus said: "Keep on . . . seeking first the kingdom and [God's] righteousness." (Matt. 6:33) Doing that will fill our hands with godly work and our heart with true happiness.—1 Cor. 15:58.

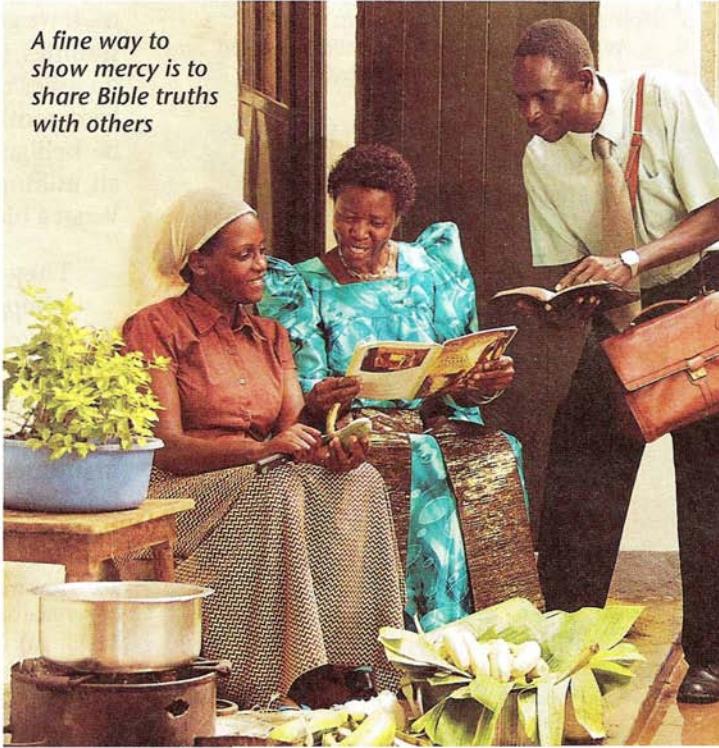
### Why "the Merciful" Are Happy

<sup>14</sup> "*Happy are the merciful, since they will be shown mercy.*" (Matt. 5:7) "The merciful" are moved by compassion and pity

for others. Jesus miraculously relieved the suffering of many because he had pity for them. (Matt. 14:14) Mercy is manifested in a judicial sense when people forgive those who transgress against them, just as Jehovah mercifully forgives repentant ones. (Ex. 34:6, 7; Ps. 103:10) We can show mercy in that way and by our kind words and deeds that bring relief to disadvantaged individuals. A fine way to show mercy is to share Bible truths with others. Moved with pity for a crowd, Jesus "started to teach them many things." —Mark 6:34.

<sup>15</sup> We have reason to agree with Jesus' statement: "Happy are the merciful, since they will be shown mercy." If we treat others mercifully, they are likely to respond in kind. We may find that the mercy we have shown to others will triumph over any adverse judgment that God might otherwise bring to bear against us when we are brought into judg-

*A fine way to show mercy is to share Bible truths with others*



14, 15. How can we show mercy, and why are "the merciful" happy?

ment. (Jas. 2:13) Forgiveness of sins and eternal life are only for the merciful.—Matt. 6:15.

### Why “the Pure in Heart” Are Happy

<sup>16</sup> *“Happy are the pure in heart, since they will see God.”* (Matt. 5:8) If we are “pure in heart,” purity will be evident in our affections, desires, and motives. We will display “love out of a clean heart.” (1 Tim. 1:5) Being inwardly clean, we will “see God.” This does not necessarily mean seeing Jehovah literally, for “no man may see [God] and yet live.” (Ex. 33:20) Since he perfectly reflected God’s personality, however, Jesus could say: “He that has seen me has seen the Father also.” (John 14:7-9) As Jehovah’s worshippers on earth, we can “see God” by observing him act in our behalf. (Job 42:5) For anointed Christians, seeing God reaches its apex when they are resurrected to spirit life and actually see their heavenly Father.—1 John 3:2.

<sup>17</sup> Because a pure heart is morally and spiritually clean, it does not dwell on things that are unclean in Jehovah’s eyes. (1 Chron. 28:9; Isa. 52:11) If we are pure in heart, what we say and do will have the mark of purity, and there will be nothing hypocritical about our service to Jehovah.

### “The Peaceable” Become Sons of God

<sup>18</sup> *“Happy are the peaceable, since they will be called ‘sons of God.’”* (Matt. 5:9) “The peaceable” are identified by what they will do and by what they will not do. If we are the kind of people whom Jesus had in mind, we are peaceable and ‘do not render injury for injury to anyone.’ Instead, we ‘always pursue what is good toward others.’—1 Thess. 5:15.

<sup>19</sup> The Greek term rendered “peaceable” at

16. What does it mean to be “pure in heart,” and how do those possessing that quality “see God”?
17. Being pure in heart will have what effect on us?
- 18, 19. How do “the peaceable” conduct themselves?

Matthew 5:9 literally means “peacemakers.” To be included among the peaceable, we must actively promote peace. Peacemakers do not do anything that ‘separates those familiar with one another.’ (Prov. 16:28) As the peaceable, we take positive steps to “pursue peace with all people.”—Heb. 12:14.

<sup>20</sup> The peaceable are happy because “they will be called ‘sons of God.’” Faithful anointed Christians have been adopted by Jehovah and are “sons of God.” They already have an intimate relationship with Jehovah as his children because they exercise faith in Christ and wholeheartedly worship “the God of love and of peace.” (2 Cor. 13:11; John 1:12) What about Jesus’ peaceable “other sheep”? They will have Jesus as their “Eternal Father” during his Millennial Reign, but at its end he will subject himself to Jehovah and they will become children of God in a complete sense.—John 10:16; Isa. 9:6; Rom. 8:21; 1 Cor. 15:27, 28.

<sup>21</sup> If we are “living by spirit,” peaceableness will be one of our qualities that is readily seen by others. We will not be “stirring up competition with one another” or “provoking . . . each other.” (Gal. 5:22-26; *New International Version*) Instead, we endeavor to be “peaceable with all men.”—Rom. 12:18.

20. Who are now “sons of God,” and who else will eventually become God’s offspring?
21. How will we act if we are “living by spirit”?

### How Would You Answer?

- Why are “those conscious of their spiritual need” happy?
- What accounts for the happiness of “the mild-tempered ones”?
- Why are Christians happy even though they are persecuted?
- Which happiness pronounced by Jesus especially impresses you?

## **Happy Though Persecuted!**

<sup>22</sup> “*Happy are those who have been persecuted for righteousness’ sake, since the kingdom of the heavens belongs to them.*” (Matt. 5:10) Expanding on this, Jesus added: “*Happy are you when people reproach you and persecute you and lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against you for my sake. Rejoice and leap for joy, since your reward is great in the heavens; for in that way they persecuted the prophets prior to you.*”—Matt. 5:11, 12.

<sup>23</sup> Like God’s prophets of old, Christians expect to be reproached, persecuted, and

22-24. (a) What accounts for the happiness of those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake? (b) What will we consider in the next two study articles?

lyingly spoken against—all “for righteousness’ sake.” By faithfully enduring such tests, however, we have the satisfaction of pleasing and honoring Jehovah. (1 Pet. 2:19-21) Our suffering cannot diminish our delight in serving Jehovah now or in the future. It cannot lessen either the happiness of ruling with Christ in the heavenly Kingdom or the joy of being granted everlasting life as one of the earthly subjects of that government. Such blessings provide evidence of God’s favor, benevolence, and generosity.

<sup>24</sup> There is much more to learn from the Sermon on the Mount. Various lessons are considered in the next two study articles. Let us see how we might apply those sayings of Jesus Christ.

# **LET JESUS’ SAYINGS AFFECT YOUR ATTITUDE**

*“The one whom God sent forth speaks the sayings of God.”—JOHN 3:34.*

ONE of the largest cut diamonds known today is the 530-carat Star of Africa. It is truly a precious gem! Far more valuable, however, are the spiritual gems found in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. No wonder, for the sayings of Christ have Jehovah as their Source! Referring to Jesus, the Bible says: “The one whom God sent forth speaks the sayings of God.”—John 3:34-36.

<sup>2</sup> Although the Sermon on the Mount may have been given in less than half an hour, it contained 21 quotations from eight books of the Hebrew Scriptures. So it was solidly based on “the sayings of God.” Let us now see how

1, 2. To what might Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount be likened, and why can we say it was based on “the sayings of God”?

we can apply some of the many priceless sayings found in this masterful sermon of God’s beloved Son.

### **“First Make Your Peace With Your Brother”**

<sup>3</sup> As Christians, we are happy and peaceable because we have God’s holy spirit, and its fruitage includes joy and peace. (Gal. 5:22, 23) Jesus did not want his disciples to lose their peace and happiness, so he warned them about the death-dealing effects of prolonged wrath. (*Read Matthew 5:21, 22.*) He next declared: “*If, then, you are bringing your gift to the altar and you there remember that*

3. After warning his disciples about the effects of wrath, Jesus gave what counsel?

*your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away; first make your peace with your brother, and then, when you have come back, offer up your gift.”—Matt. 5: 23, 24.*

<sup>4</sup> The “gift” that Jesus mentioned was any offering presented at the temple in Jerusalem. For example, animal sacrifices were important because they were then part of the worship rendered to Jehovah by his people. However, Jesus stressed something of greater importance—making peace with an offended brother *before* offering a gift to God.

<sup>5</sup> “Make your peace” means ‘to bring about a reconciliation.’ So, what lesson can we draw from this saying of Jesus? It must surely be that our way of dealing with others has a direct bearing on our relationship with Jehovah. (1 John 4: 20) Indeed, offerings made to God in ancient times were meaningless if the one making them did not treat fellow humans properly.—*Read Micah 6:6-8.*

### **Humility Must Play a Role**

<sup>6</sup> Making peace with an offended brother is likely to test our humility. Humble people do not argue or contend with fellow believers in an effort to establish supposed rights. That would create an unwholesome state of affairs—one similar to that once existing among Christians in ancient Corinth. Concerning that situation, the apostle Paul made this thought-provoking point: “It means altogether a defeat for you that you are having lawsuits with one another. Why do you not

4, 5. (a) What was the “gift” referred to in Jesus’ statement recorded at Matthew 5:23, 24? (b) How important is it to make peace with an offended brother?

6, 7. Why is humility needed when endeavoring to restore peaceful relations with a brother we have offended?



*How good it is to “make your peace” with an offended fellow believer!*

rather let yourselves be wronged? Why do you not rather let yourselves be defrauded?”—1 Cor. 6:7.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus did not say that we should go to our brother just to convince him that we are right and he is wrong. Our objective should be to restore peaceful relations. To make peace, we must honestly express how we feel. We also need to acknowledge that the other person’s feelings have been hurt. And if we have been in error, surely we will want to apologize in a humble way.

### **‘If Your Right Eye Makes You Stumble’**

<sup>8</sup> In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave sound counsel on morality. He knew that our imperfect body members can have a dangerous influence on us. Jesus therefore said: “*If, now, that right eye of yours is making you*

8. Give the substance of Jesus’ words recorded at Matthew 5:29, 30.

*stumble, tear it out and throw it away from you. For it is more beneficial to you for one of your members to be lost to you than for your whole body to be pitched into Gehenna. Also, if your right hand is making you stumble, cut it off and throw it away from you. For it is more beneficial to you for one of your members to be lost than for your whole body to land in Gehenna.”—Matt. 5:29, 30.*

<sup>9</sup> The “eye” spoken of by Jesus represents the power or ability to focus our attention on something, and the “hand” relates to what we do with our hands. If care is not exercised, these body parts may cause us to “stumble” and cease ‘walking with God.’ (Gen. 5:22; 6:9) When tempted to disobey Jehovah, then, we need to take strong action, figuratively tearing out an eye or cutting off a hand.

<sup>10</sup> How can we restrain our eyes from concentrating on immoral things? “A covenant I have concluded with my eyes,” said the God-fearing man Job. “So how could I show myself attentive to a virgin?” (Job 31:1) Job was a married man who was determined not to violate God’s moral laws. That should be our attitude whether we are married or single. To avoid sexual immorality, we need to be guided by God’s holy spirit, which produces self-control in those who love God.—Gal. 5:22-25.

<sup>11</sup> To avoid sexual immorality, we might do well to ask ourselves, ‘Do I allow my eyes to arouse in me an appetite for immoral material readily found in books, on television, or on the Internet?’ Let us also remember these words of the disciple James: “Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire. Then the desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin; in turn, sin,

9. How can our “eye” or “hand” cause us to “stumble”?

10, 11. What can help us to avoid sexual immorality?

when it has been accomplished, brings forth death.” (Jas. 1:14, 15) In fact, if any individual dedicated to God “keeps on looking” with immoral motives at someone of the opposite sex, he needs to make drastic changes comparable to tearing out the eye and throwing it away.—*Read Matthew 5:27, 28.*

<sup>12</sup> Inasmuch as improper use of our hands can result in serious violations of Jehovah’s moral standards, we must be firmly determined to remain morally clean. Therefore, we should heed Paul’s counsel: “Deaden . . . your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Col. 3:5) The word “deaden” stresses the strong measures that must be taken to fight against immoral fleshly desires.

<sup>13</sup> In order to preserve his life, a person is likely to be willing to have a limb surgically amputated. The figurative ‘throwing away’ of the eye and the hand is vital for us to avoid immoral thinking and actions that can cost us our spiritual life. Keeping mentally, morally, and spiritually clean is the only way to escape the everlasting destruction symbolized by Gehenna.

<sup>14</sup> Because of inherited sin and imperfection, maintaining moral cleanliness requires effort. “I pummel my body and lead it as a slave,” said Paul, “that, after I have preached to others, I myself should not become disapproved somehow.” (1 Cor. 9:27) Let us therefore be determined to apply Jesus’ counsel on morality, never allowing ourselves to act in ways that show a lack of gratitude for his ransom sacrifice.—Matt. 20:28; Heb. 6:4-6.

12. What counsel of Paul can help us to fight against immoral desires?

13, 14. Why is it vital to avoid immoral thoughts and acts?

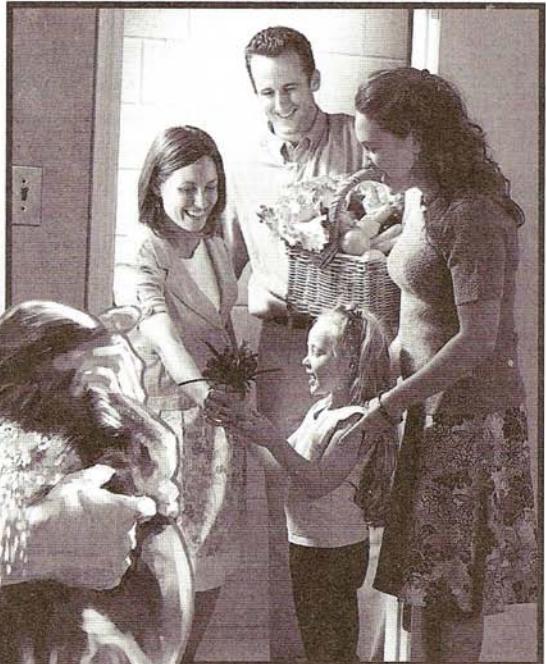
## "Practice Giving"

<sup>15</sup> Jesus' sayings and superlative example promote a giving spirit. He displayed great generosity in coming to the earth for the benefit of imperfect mankind. (*Read 2 Corinthians 8:9.*) Jesus willingly divested himself of heavenly glory to become a man and give his life for sinful humans, some of whom would gain riches in heaven as his joint heirs in the Kingdom. (Rom. 8:16, 17) And Jesus certainly encouraged generosity when he said:

*"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 in return."* (Luke 6:38) 'Pouring into the lap' refers to a custom of some vendors to fill the

15, 16. (a) How did Jesus set an example in giving? (b) What is meant by Jesus' words recorded at Luke 6:38?

*Jehovah blesses those who give cheerfully*



fold of a purchaser's wide upper garment, which was bound with a girdle and made into a pouch for carrying items. Our own spontaneous generosity may result in our receiving a fine measure in return, perhaps when we are in need.—Eccl. 11:2.

<sup>17</sup> Jehovah loves and rewards those who give cheerfully. He himself set the prime example, giving his only-begotten Son "in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Paul wrote: "He that sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:6, 7) Giving of our time, energy, and material resources to promote true worship is sure to bring us joy and rich rewards.—*Read Proverbs 19:17; Luke 16:9.*

## "Do Not Blow a Trumpet Ahead of You"

<sup>18</sup> "*Take good care not to practice your righteousness in front of men in order to be observed by them; otherwise you will have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens.*" (Matt. 6:1) By "righteousness," Jesus meant conduct that conforms to the divine will. He did not mean that godly deeds should never be done in public, for he had told his disciples to "let [their] light shine before men." (Matt. 5:14-16) But we will "have no reward" from

17. How did Jehovah set the prime example of giving, and what kind of giving can bring us joy?

18. Under what circumstances will we "have no reward" from our heavenly Father?

# DO JESUS' SAYINGS INFLUENCE YOUR PRAYERS?

*"When Jesus finished these sayings, the effect was that the crowds were astounded at his way of teaching." —MATT. 7:28.*

**W**E OUGHT to accept the sayings of God's only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and apply them in our life. He certainly spoke like no other man. Why, people were amazed at the way he taught in the Sermon on the Mount!—*Read Matthew 7:28, 29.*

<sup>2</sup> Jehovah's Son did not teach as did the scribes, who based their wordy speeches on the teachings of imperfect humans. Christ taught “as a person having authority” because what he spoke came from God. (John 12:50) So let us see how Jesus’ further sayings in the Sermon on the Mount can and should influence our prayers.

## Never Pray as the Hypocrites Do

<sup>3</sup> Prayer is an important part of true worship, and we ought to pray to Jehovah regularly. But our prayers should be influenced by Jesus’ sayings in the Sermon on the Mount. He said: “*When you pray, you must not be as the hypocrites; because they like to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the broad ways to be visible to men. Truly I say to you, They are having their reward in full.*”—Matt. 6:5.

<sup>4</sup> When praying, Jesus’ disciples were not to imitate such “hypocrites” as the self-

1, 2. Why were the crowds astounded at Jesus’ way of teaching?

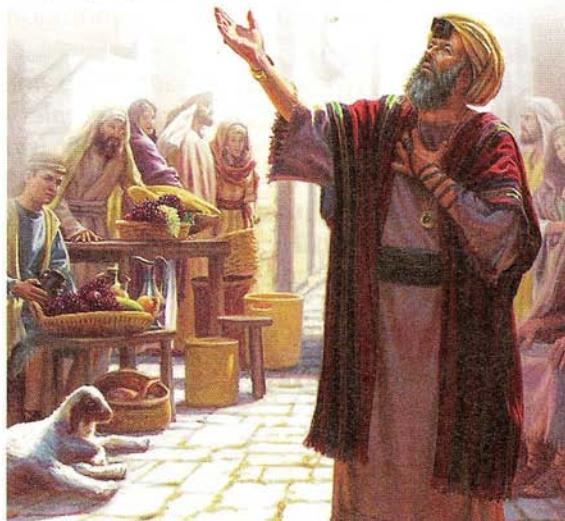
3. Give the essence of Jesus’ words recorded at Matthew 6:5.

4-6. (a) Why did the Pharisees like to pray “standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the broad ways”? (b) How were such hypocrites “having their reward in full”?

righteous Pharisees, whose public display of piety was nothing more than a pretense. (Matt. 23:13-32) Those hypocrites liked to pray “standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the broad ways.” Why? So as to be “visible to men.” First-century Jews customarily prayed as a congregation during the time of the burnt offerings at the temple (about nine o’clock in the morning and three o’clock in the afternoon). Many residents of Jerusalem would pray along with a crowd of worshippers in the temple precincts. Outside that city, devout Jews often prayed twice a day while “standing in the synagogues.”—Compare Luke 18:11, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Since most people were not near the temple or a synagogue for the prayers just mentioned, they might pray wherever they happened to be at those times. Some liked to

*Jesus condemned the hypocrites who prayed just to be seen and heard*



have the times for prayer catch them while they were "on the corners of the broad ways." They wanted to be "visible to men" who were passing through those intersections. The pious hypocrites would "for a pretext make long prayers" in order to be admired by onlookers. (Luke 20:47) That is not the attitude that we should have.

<sup>6</sup> Jesus declared that such hypocrites were "having their reward in full." They greatly desired recognition and praise from fellow humans—and that was all they would get. It would be their full reward, for Jehovah would not answer their hypocritical prayers. On the other hand, God would respond to the prayers of Christ's true followers, as shown by Jesus' further statement on this subject.

<sup>7</sup> "*You, however, when you pray, go into your private room and, after shutting your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you.*" (Matt. 6:6) Jesus' admonition to pray in a private room after shutting the door did not mean that someone could not represent a congregation in prayer. This counsel was meant to discourage public prayer that was offered to call attention to the one praying and to elicit praise from others. We should remember this if we are privileged to represent God's people in public prayer. Let us also comply with Jesus' further admonition respecting prayer.

<sup>8</sup> "*When praying, do not say the same things over and over again, just as the people of the nations do, for they imagine they will get a hearing for their use of many words.*" (Matt. 6:7) Jesus thus cited another abuse of prayer—repetition. He did not mean that we should never repeat heartfelt pleas and ex-

7. What is meant by the counsel to pray in our "private room"?

8. According to Matthew 6:7, what abuse of prayer should we avoid?

pressions of thanksgiving in prayer. In the garden of Gethsemane on the night before he died, Jesus repeatedly used "the same word" in prayer.—Mark 14:32-39.

<sup>9</sup> It would be wrong for us to mimic the repetitious prayers of "people of the nations." "Over and over again," they repeat memorized phrases that include many unnecessary words. It did worshippers of Baal no good to call upon the name of that false god "from morning till noon, saying: 'O Baal, answer us!'" (1 Ki. 18:26) Millions today offer wordy, repetitious prayers, thinking in vain that they "will get a hearing." But Jesus helps us to realize that the "use of many words" in long and repetitious prayers is of no value from Jehovah's standpoint. Jesus further said:

<sup>10</sup> "*So, do not make yourselves like them, for God your Father knows what things you are needing before ever you ask him.*" (Matt. 6:8) Many Jewish religious leaders made themselves like the Gentiles through excessive wordiness when praying. Heartfelt prayer that includes praise, thanksgiving, and petition is an important part of true worship. (Phil. 4:6) Yet, it would be wrong for us to say the same things over and over again with the thought that repetition is necessary to tell God about our needs. When we pray, we should remember that we are addressing the One who 'knows what we need before ever we ask him.'

<sup>11</sup> Jesus' sayings about unacceptable prayers should remind us that God is not impressed by high-sounding speech and superfluous words. We should also realize that public prayer is not an occasion to try to impress listeners or cause them to wonder how long it will be before we say "Amen."

9, 10. In what sense should we not say repetitious prayers?

11. What should we remember if we are privileged to offer public prayer?

Using prayer to make announcements or to counsel the audience would also be out of harmony with the spirit of Jesus' sayings in the Sermon on the Mount.

### Jesus Teaches Us How to Pray

<sup>12</sup> Although Jesus warned against abusing the grand privilege of prayer, he did teach his disciples how to pray. (*Read Matthew 6:9-13.*) The model prayer is not to be memorized in order to be recited over and over again. Instead, it furnishes a pattern for our own prayers. For instance, Jesus put God first with the opening words: "*Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified.*" (Matt. 6:9) We properly address Jehovah as "our Father" because he is our Creator, who dwells "in the heavens," far beyond the earth. (Deut. 32:6; 2 Chron. 6:21; Acts 17:24, 28) Use of the plural term "our" should remind us that our fellow believers also have a close relationship with God. "Let your name be sanctified" is a petition that Jehovah take action to sanctify himself by clearing his name of all the reproach that has been heaped upon it since the rebellion in Eden. In answer to that prayer, Jehovah will remove wickedness from the earth, thus sanctifying himself. —Ezek. 36:23.

<sup>13</sup> "*Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also*

12. How would you explain the significance of the request "let your name be sanctified"?

13. (a) How will the request "let your kingdom come" be fulfilled? (b) What will the doing of God's will on earth involve?

*Do you know why it is appropriate to pray for our daily bread?*

*upon earth.*" (Matt. 6:10) In connection with this request in the model prayer, we should remember that the "kingdom" is the heavenly Messianic government in the hands of Christ and the resurrected "holy ones" associated with him. (Dan. 7:13, 14, 18; Isa. 9:6, 7) Praying for it to "come" is a request that God's Kingdom come against all earthly opposers of divine rulership. That will soon occur, paving the way for a global paradise of righteousness, peace, and prosperity. (Ps. 72:1-15; Dan. 2:44; 2 Pet. 3:13) Jehovah's will is being done in heaven, and asking that it take place on earth is a plea that God carry out his purposes toward our planet, including the removal of his opposers today as he did in ancient times.—*Read Psalm 83:1, 2, 13-18.*

<sup>14</sup> "*Give us today our bread for this day.*" (Matt. 6:11; Luke 11:3) By making this prayerful request, we are asking God to provide necessary food "for this day." This indicates that we have faith in Jehovah's ability to care for our needs on a daily basis. It is not

14. Why is it fitting to ask for "our bread for this day"?



a prayer for surplus provisions. This request for our daily needs may remind us that God commanded the Israelites to gather manna “each his amount day for day.”—Ex. 16:4.

<sup>15</sup> The next request in the model prayer turns our attention to something we need to do. Jesus said: “*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*” (Matt. 6:12) Luke’s Gospel shows that these “debts” are “sins.” (Luke 11:4) Only if we already “have forgiven” those sinning against us may we expect forgiveness from Jehovah. (*Read Matthew 6:14, 15.*) We should forgive others freely.—Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13.

<sup>16</sup> “*Do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the wicked one.*” (Matt. 6:13) How are we to understand these two related requests in Jesus’ model prayer? One thing is certain: Jehovah does not tempt us to commit sin. (*Read James 1:13.*) Satan—“the wicked one”—is the real “Tempter.” (Matt. 4:3) However, the Bible speaks of God as doing things that he is merely permitting. (Ruth 1:20, 21; Eccl. 11:5) Therefore, “do not bring us into temptation” is a petition that Jehovah not permit us to succumb when we are tempted to disobey him. Finally, the plea

15. Explain what is meant by the request “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

16. How are we to understand the requests regarding temptation and deliverance from the wicked one?

### What Are Your Answers?

- What did Jesus say about hypocritical prayers?
- Why should we avoid repetitious wording when we pray?
- Jesus’ model prayer contains what requests?
- How can we ‘keep on asking, seeking, and knocking’?

“deliver us from the wicked one” is a request that Jehovah not allow Satan to overcome us. And we can be confident that ‘God will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear.’—*Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.*

### ‘Keep On Asking, Seeking, Knocking’

<sup>17</sup> The apostle Paul urged fellow believers: “*Persevere in prayer.*” (Rom. 12:12) Jesus made a powerful point along those lines when he declared: “*Keep on asking, and it will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you. For everyone asking receives, and everyone seeking finds, and to everyone knocking it will be opened.*” (Matt. 7:7, 8) It is proper to “keep on asking” for anything that is in harmony with God’s will. In keeping with Jesus’ words, the apostle John wrote: “This is the confidence that we have toward [God], that, no matter what it is that we ask according to his will, he hears us.”—1 John 5:14.

<sup>18</sup> Jesus’ counsel to ‘keep on asking and seeking’ means that we should pray earnestly and not give up. It is also necessary for us to “keep on knocking” to gain access to the Kingdom and enjoy its blessings, benefits, and rewards. But can we be confident that God will answer our prayers? Yes, we can if we are faithful to Jehovah, for Christ said: “Everyone asking receives, and everyone seeking finds, and to everyone knocking it will be opened.” Many experiences enjoyed by Jehovah’s servants prove that God truly is the “Hearer of prayer.”—Ps. 65:2.

<sup>19</sup> Jesus likened God to a loving father who provides good things for his offspring. Imagine that you were present for the Ser-

17, 18. What does it mean to ‘keep on asking, seeking, and knocking’?

19, 20. In view of Jesus’ words recorded at Matthew 7:9-11, how is Jehovah like a loving father?

mon on the Mount and heard Jesus say: “Who is the man among you whom his son asks for bread—he will not hand him a stone, will he? Or, perhaps, he will ask for a fish—he will not hand him a serpent, will he? Therefore, if you, although being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those asking him?”—Matt. 7:9-11.

<sup>20</sup> A human father, although comparatively “wicked” because of inherited sin, has natural affection for his offspring. He would not deceive his child but would strive to provide him with “good gifts.” With a fatherly attitude toward us, our loving heavenly Father provides “good things,” such as his holy spirit. (Luke 11:13) It can strengthen us to render acceptable service to Jehovah, the Provider of “every good gift and every perfect present.”—Jas. 1:17.

## Continue to Benefit From Jesus’ Sayings

<sup>21</sup> The Sermon on the Mount was indeed the greatest discourse ever given on earth. It is remarkable for its spiritual content and clarity. As shown by the points drawn from it in this series of articles, we can benefit greatly if we apply the counsel that this sermon contains. These sayings of Jesus can improve our life now and give us the hope of a happy future.

<sup>22</sup> In these articles, we have examined only a few of the spiritual gems in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. No wonder those who heard his discourse “were astounded at his way of teaching.” (Matt. 7:28) That will undoubtedly be our reaction too when we fill our minds and hearts with these and other priceless sayings of the Great Teacher, Jesus Christ.

21, 22. What is noteworthy about the Sermon on the Mount, and how do you feel about these sayings of Jesus?

## Should You Insist on Your Personal Preferences?

TWO young children are playing together. One child grabs his favorite toy away from the other child and screams, “Mine!” From an early age, imperfect humans display a measure of selfishness. (Gen. 8:21; Rom. 3:23) Moreover, the world in general promotes a me-first attitude. If we are to avoid this spirit, we must put up a hard fight against selfish tendencies. Unless we do so, we can easily stumble others and weaken our relationship with Jehovah.—Rom. 7:21-23.

Encouraging us to take into consideration the effect that our actions have on others, the apostle Paul wrote: “All things are lawful; but

not all things are advantageous. All things are lawful; but not all things build up.” Paul also said: “Keep from becoming causes for stumbling.” (1 Cor. 10:23, 32) In matters involving personal preferences, then, it is the course of wisdom to ask ourselves: ‘Am I willing to forgo certain rights when the peace of the congregation is threatened? Am I prepared to conform to Bible principles, even when it is inconvenient to do so?’

## In Choosing Employment

Most people view their choice of employment as a personal decision that has very

little—if any—impact on others. But consider the experience of a businessman from a small town in South America. He was known as a gambler and a drunkard. As a result of studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, however, he made spiritual progress and changed his way of life. (2 Cor. 7:1) When he expressed interest in preaching publicly with the congregation, an elder tactfully encouraged him to think about the nature of his secular work. For some time, the man had been the town's main distributor of pure cane alcohol—a product having many uses but in that region commonly mixed with soft drinks and consumed for the sole purpose of getting drunk.

The man discerned that if he preached publicly but still sold such a product, this would put the congregation in a bad light and could damage his relationship with God. Although he had a large family to support, he stopped selling alcohol. He now supports his family by selling paper products. This man, his wife, and two of their five children are now baptized. They zealously preach the good news with freeness of speech.

### In Choosing Associates

Is socializing with those who do not share our faith simply a question of personal preference, or are Bible principles involved? One sister wanted to go to a party with a young man who was not a true Christian. Although warned of the dangers, she felt that it was her right to do so and therefore went to the party. Not long after she arrived, she was given a drink laced with a powerful sedative. She woke up several hours later and found that she had been raped by her so-called friend.  
—Compare Genesis 34:2.

While associating with unbelievers may not always result in a tragedy such as that, the Bible warns: "He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is

having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly." (Prov. 13:20) There is no question about it—choosing bad associates exposes us to danger! "Shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself," states Proverbs 22:3, "but the inexperienced have passed along and must suffer the penalty." Our associates can affect us and our relationship with God.—1 Cor. 15:33; Jas. 4:4.

### In Dress and Grooming

Styles and fashions change with every season. However, Bible principles about dress and grooming remain constant. Paul urged Christian women to "adorn themselves in well-arranged dress, with modesty

*Are you willing to forgo your personal preferences in your choice of fashion?*



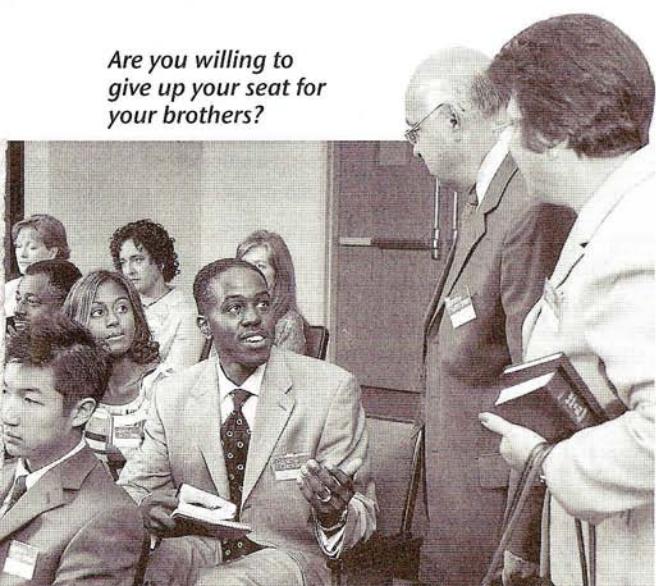
and soundness of mind”—a principle that applies with equal force to men. (1 Tim. 2:9) Paul was not recommending an extremely plain style of dress, nor was he saying that all Christians must have the same taste. But what about modesty? One dictionary defines modesty as “freedom from conceit or vanity . . . propriety in dress, speech, or conduct.”

We need to ask ourselves: ‘Can I honestly say that I am being modest if I insist on my right to dress in a manner that calls undue attention to me? Does my manner of dress send a wrong signal about who I am or the morals I live by?’ We can avoid “giving any cause for stumbling” in this regard by “keeping an eye, not in personal interest upon just [our] own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others.”—2 Cor. 6:3; Phil. 2:4.

### In Business Matters

When serious issues arose relating to wrong or fraudulent dealings in the congregation in Corinth, Paul wrote: “Why do you not rather let yourselves be wronged? Why do you not rather let yourselves be defrauded?” Paul counseled Christians to be willing to give something up rather than to take a

*Are you willing to give up your seat for your brothers?*



brother to court. (1 Cor. 6:1-7) A brother in the United States took this counsel to heart. He had a difference of opinion with his Christian employer about wages that were owed him. Following Scriptural guidelines, the two brothers met time and again but without finding a solution to the problem. Finally, they took the matter “to the congregation,” as represented by Christian elders.—Matt. 18:15-17.

Sadly, the issue still could not be resolved. After much prayer, the employee decided to forfeit most of the money he felt he was owed. Why? He later said, “This disagreement was robbing me of my joy and consuming precious time that could be used in spiritual pursuits.” After making that decision, the brother felt his joy returning, and he sensed Jehovah’s blessing on his service.

### Even in Little Things

Not insisting on our personal preferences also brings blessings in small matters. On the first day of a district convention, a pioneer couple arrived early and secured the exact seats they desired. As the program began, a large family with several children hurried into the crowded coliseum. Noticing that the family was searching for adequate seating, the pioneer couple gave up their two seats. This made it possible for the entire family to sit together. A few days after the convention, the pioneers received a thank-you letter from the family. The letter explained how discouraged they were when they arrived at the convention late. That feeling soon changed to joy and gratitude because of the pioneer couple’s kindness.

When we have the opportunity, let us willingly forgo our preferences in behalf of others. By displaying love that “does not look for its own interests,” we help to maintain peace within the congregation and with our neighbors. (1 Cor. 13:5) But most important of all, we preserve our friendship with Jehovah.

# THEY “KEEP FOLLOWING THE LAMB”

*“These are the ones that keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes.”*

—REV. 14:4.

**A**BOUT two and a half years into his ministry, Jesus “was teaching in public assembly at Capernaum.” Finding his speech shocking, “many of his disciples went off to the things behind and would no longer walk with him.” When Jesus asked his 12 apostles if they also wanted to go, Simon Peter replied: “Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life; and we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:48, 59, 60, 66-69) True disciples of Jesus refused to quit following him. After being anointed with holy spirit, they continued to submit to Jesus’ direction.—Acts 16:7-10.

<sup>2</sup> What can be said about the anointed Christians in modern times? In his prophecy about “the sign of [his] presence and of the conclusion of the system of things,” Jesus referred to the composite body of his spirit-anointed followers on earth as “the faithful and discreet slave,” or “the faithful steward.” (Matt. 24:3, 45; Luke 12:42) As a group, the slave class has established an excellent record of “following the Lamb no matter where he goes.” (*Read Revelation 14:4, 5.*) Its members remain virgins in a spiritual sense by not defiling themselves with the beliefs and practices of “Babylon the Great,” the world empire of false religion. (Rev. 17:5) No doc-

trinal falsehood is “found in their mouths,” and they remain “without blemish” from Satan’s world. (John 15:19) In the future, the remaining anointed ones on earth “will follow” the Lamb right into heaven.—John 13:36.

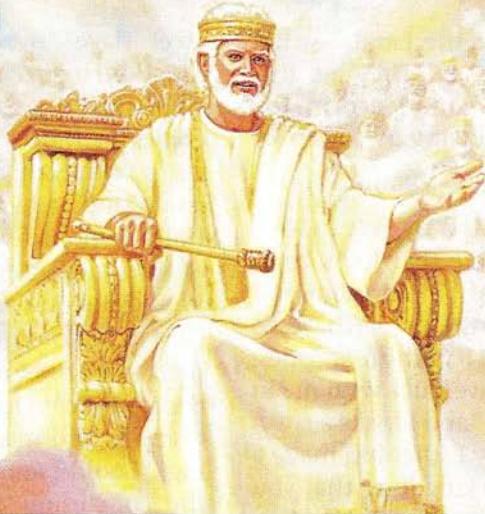
<sup>3</sup> Jesus has appointed the faithful and discreet slave “over his domestics,” that is, the individual members of the slave class, “to give them their food at the proper time.” He has also appointed the slave “over all his belongings.” (Matt. 24:45-47) These “belongings” include the growing “great crowd” of “other sheep.” (Rev. 7:9; John 10:16) Should not individual members of the anointed and the “other sheep” trust the slave appointed over them? There are many reasons why the slave class deserves our trust. Two outstanding reasons are: (1) Jehovah trusts the slave class. (2) Jesus also trusts the slave. Let us examine the evidence that both Jehovah God and Jesus Christ have complete confidence in the faithful and discreet slave.

## Jehovah Trusts the Slave

<sup>4</sup> Consider what makes it possible for the faithful and discreet slave to provide timely, nutritious spiritual food. “I shall make you have insight and instruct you in the way you should go,” says Jehovah. He adds: “I will give advice with my eye upon you.” (Ps. 32:8) Yes, Jehovah provides direction to the slave.

1. How did true disciples of Jesus feel about following him?
2. (a) Who is “the faithful and discreet slave,” or “the faithful steward”? (b) How has the slave established a fine record of “following the Lamb”?

3. Why is it important for us to trust the slave class?
4. Why can we have confidence in the spiritual food served by the faithful and discreet slave?



***Do you know whom Jehovah has chosen to be the future bride for his Son?***

We can therefore have full confidence in the Scriptural insight, understanding, and guidance that we receive from the slave.

<sup>5</sup> Jehovah also blesses the slave class with his holy spirit. While Jehovah's spirit is invisible, what it produces in those upon whom it operates is not. Think of what the faithful and discreet slave has been able to accomplish in giving a worldwide witness about Jehovah God, his Son, and the Kingdom. Jehovah's worshippers are actively proclaiming the Kingdom message in over 230 lands and island groups. Does that not give undeniable evidence that God's spirit is empowering the slave? (*Read Acts 1:8.*) In providing timely spiritual food for Jehovah's people the world over, the slave class must make vital decisions. In making them and putting them into effect, the slave exhibits love, mildness, and other aspects of the spirit's fruitage.—Gal. 5:22, 23.

<sup>6</sup> To appreciate the extent of Jehovah's trust in the faithful slave, reflect on what he

5. What shows that God's spirit is empowering the slave class?

6, 7. To what extent does Jehovah trust the faithful slave?

has promised its members. "The trumpet will sound," wrote the apostle Paul, "and the dead will be raised up incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this which is corruptible must put on incorruption, and this which is mortal must put on immortality." (1 Cor. 15:52, 53) The anointed followers of Christ, who serve God faithfully and die in corruptible human bodies, are resurrected as something more than spirit creatures having everlasting life. They are given immortality—endlessness and indestructibility. Moreover, they receive incorruption, being given bodies that are beyond decay and apparently are self-sustaining. Revelation 4:4 describes these resurrected ones as seated upon thrones with golden crowns upon their heads. The glory of royalty awaits anointed Christians. But there is more.

<sup>7</sup> "The marriage of the Lamb has arrived and his wife has prepared herself. Yes, it has been granted to her to be arrayed in bright, clean, fine linen, for the fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the holy ones," states Revelation 19:7, 8. Jehovah has chosen the anointed Christians to be the future bride for his Son. Incorruption, immortality,

royalty, "the marriage of the Lamb"—what awe-inspiring gifts these are! They are stirring evidence of God's confidence in the anointed, who "keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes."

### The Slave Is Trusted by Jesus

<sup>8</sup> What evidence is there that Jesus completely trusts his spirit-anointed followers? On the last night of his life on earth, Jesus made a promise to his 11 faithful apostles. "You are the ones that have stuck with me in my trials," he told them, "and I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22:28-30) The covenant that Jesus then made with the 11 will extend to all 144,000 anointed Christians. (Luke 12:32; Rev. 5:9, 10; 14:1) If he did not trust them, would Jesus make a covenant that meant sharing his Kingdom power with them?

<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Jesus Christ has appointed the faithful and dis-

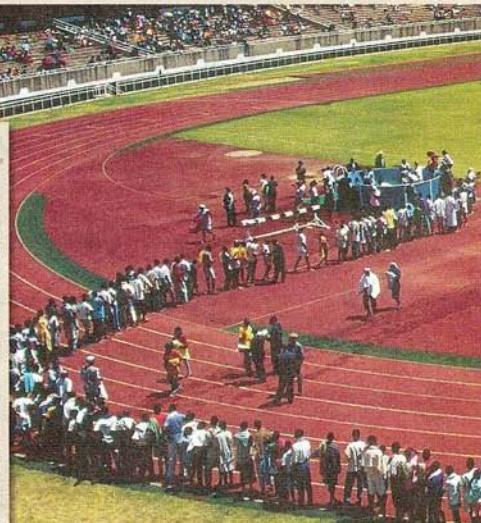
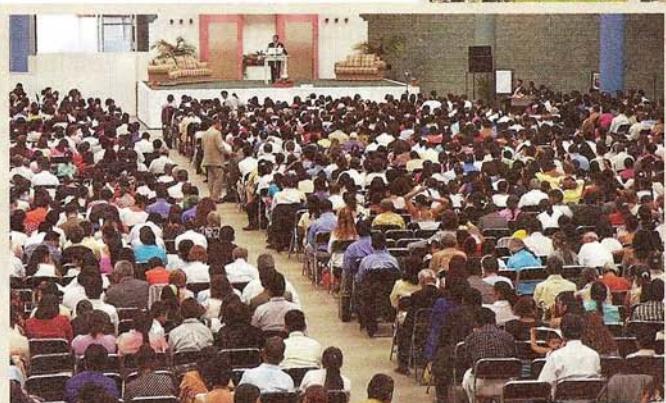
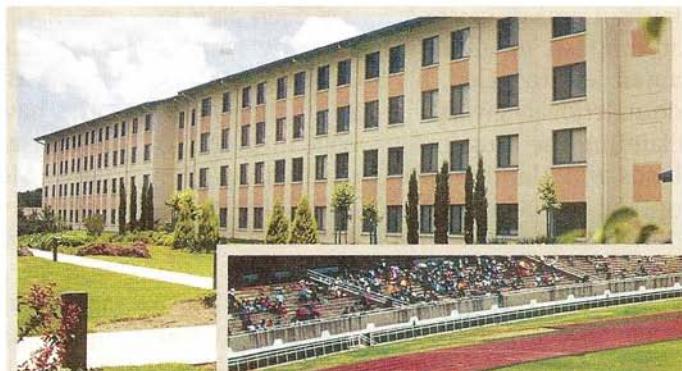
8. How does Jesus show that he has confidence in his spirit-anointed followers?
9. What are included in "all [Christ's] belongings"?

*Jesus Christ has entrusted the faithful and discreet slave with his "belongings"*

creet slave "over all his belongings"—all Kingdom interests on earth. (Matt. 24:47) Included among these belongings are the facilities at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses, at branch offices in various lands, and at Assembly Halls and Kingdom Halls worldwide. Included too is the work of Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making. Would anyone assign someone he did not trust to keep and use his valuable things?

<sup>10</sup> Shortly before he ascended to heaven, the resurrected Jesus appeared to his faithful disciples and made a promise to them, saying: "Look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matt. 28:20) Has this promise proved reliable? In the last 15 years, the number of congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide has grown from some 70,000 to over 100,000—an increase of over 40 percent. And what about the new disciples added? Nearly

10. What shows that Jesus Christ is with his anointed followers?



4.5 million disciples were baptized in the last 15 years—an average of more than 800 a day. These spectacular increases are clear evidence that Christ is directing his anointed followers at their congregation meetings and is supporting them in their disciple-making work.

### The Slave Is Faithful and Discreet

<sup>11</sup> Since Jehovah God and Jesus Christ completely trust the faithful and discreet slave, should we not do the same? After all, the slave has shown itself to be faithful in doing its assigned work. For example, the *Watchtower* magazine has been published for some 130 years. Meetings, assemblies, and conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses continue to build us up spiritually.

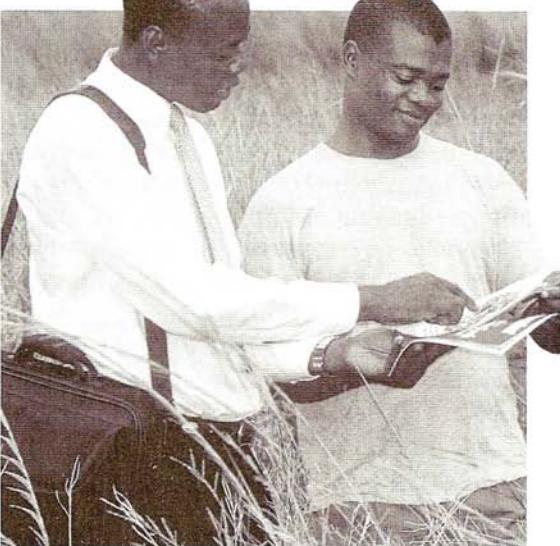
<sup>12</sup> The faithful slave is also discreet in that it neither acts immodestly, running ahead of Jehovah, nor lags behind when God's direction on a matter is clear. For example, while false religious leaders tacitly approve or openly condone as normal the selfish, godless conduct of the people of the world, the slave provides warnings against the pitfalls of Satan's wicked system. The slave is able to provide wise and timely warnings because Jehovah God and Jesus Christ are blessing it. The slave thus deserves our complete trust. How, though, can we demonstrate that we trust the faithful and discreet slave?

### "Go With" the Anointed as They Follow the Lamb

<sup>13</sup> The Bible book of Zechariah speaks of "ten men" who approach "a man who is a Jew" and say: "We will go with you people." (*Read Zechariah 8:23*.) Since "a man who is a Jew" is spoken of as "you people," he is a

11, 12. How has the slave shown itself to be faithful and discreet?

13. According to Zechariah's prophecy, how is it possible to demonstrate trust in the faithful and discreet slave?



*When we share in the witness work, we support the spirit-anointed ones*

composite man. In our time, he represents the remnant of spirit-anointed Christians—part of "the Israel of God." (Gal. 6:16) The "ten men out of all the languages of the nations" represent the great crowd of other sheep. Just as the anointed Christians follow Jesus no matter where he goes, the great crowd 'goes with,' or accompanies, the faithful and discreet slave. Those of the great crowd should never be ashamed to identify themselves as companions of the "partakers of the heavenly calling." (Heb. 3:1) Jesus is not ashamed to call the anointed ones "brothers."—Heb. 2:11.

<sup>14</sup> Jesus Christ considers the loyal support given to his brothers as being given to him. (*Read Matthew 25:40*.) In what way, then, can those who have the earthly hope support Christ's spirit-anointed brothers? Principally by helping them with the Kingdom-preaching work. (Matt. 24:14; John 14:12) While the number of anointed ones

14. How can loyal support be given to Christ's brothers?

on the earth has decreased over the decades, the number of the other sheep has increased. When those who have an earthly hope share in the witness work, serving if possible as full-time evangelizers, they support the spirit-anointed ones in fulfilling the disciple-making assignment. (Matt. 28:19, 20) Not to be overlooked are the opportunities to support this work by making financial contributions in various ways.

<sup>15</sup> As individual Christians, how do we view the timely spiritual food that the faithful slave dispenses by means of Bible-based publications and through Christian gatherings? Do we gratefully partake of it and readily apply what we learn? What is our response to organizational decisions made by the slave? Our willing obedience to the direction provided gives evidence of our faith in Jehovah's arrangement.—Jas. 3:17.

<sup>16</sup> "My sheep listen to my voice," said Jesus, "and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27) That is true of the anointed Christians. What about those who "go with" them? Such ones must listen to Jesus. They must also listen to his brothers. After all, the chief responsibility for caring for the spiritu-

15. How should individual Christians respond to timely spiritual food from the slave and organizational decisions made by the slave?

16. Why should all Christians listen to Christ's brothers?

### What Did You Learn?

- What evidence is there that Jehovah trusts the faithful and discreet slave?
- What shows that Jesus Christ completely trusts the slave class?
- Why does the faithful steward deserve our trust?
- How do we demonstrate that we trust the slave?

al welfare of God's people has been entrusted to them. What does listening to the voice of Christ's brothers involve?

<sup>17</sup> The faithful and discreet slave today is represented by the Governing Body, who take the lead and coordinate the Kingdom-preaching work throughout the earth. The members of the Governing Body are experienced, spirit-anointed elders. They in particular can be described as "those who are taking the lead" among us. (Heb. 13:7) In caring for nearly 7,000,000 Kingdom proclaimers worldwide in over 100,000 congregations, these anointed overseers have "plenty to do in the work of the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58) Listening to the slave class means giving our full cooperation to its Governing Body.

### Those Who Listen to the Slave Are Blessed

<sup>18</sup> Since its appointment, the faithful and discreet slave has been "bringing the many to righteousness." (Dan. 12:3) These include those who have the hope of surviving the destruction of the present wicked system of things. What a blessing this righteous standing with God is!

<sup>19</sup> In the future, when 'the holy city, New Jerusalem [consisting of 144,000] comes down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,' what will those who have listened to the voice of the slave experience? "God himself will be with them," says the Bible. "And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." (Rev. 21:2-4) By all means, then, let us listen to the Christ and his trustworthy spirit-anointed brothers.

17. What does listening to the slave class involve?

18, 19. (a) How are those who listen to the faithful and discreet slave blessed? (b) What should be our determination?

# Christian Funerals

## Dignified, Modest, and Pleasing to God

THE air is filled with the sounds of grief. Mourners dressed in special black garments wail, frantically throwing themselves to the ground in sorrow. Dancers sway to the rhythm of pulsating music. Yet others are eating and celebrating with loud laughter and merrymaking. A few lie on the ground, intoxicated from the free flow of palm wine and beer. What is the occasion? In some parts of the world, these are typical features of a funeral where hundreds of people gather to say their farewells to the dead.

Many of Jehovah's Witnesses live in communities where relatives and neighbors are highly superstitious and fearful of the dead. Millions of people believe that when someone dies, he becomes an ancestral spirit with the ability to help or harm the living. This belief is interwoven with numerous funeral customs. Of course, grieving over a person who has died is normal. On occasion, Jesus and his disciples mourned the death of loved ones. (John 11:33-35, 38; Acts 8:2; 9:39) Yet, at no time did they exhibit any of the extreme expressions of mourning that were common in their day. (Luke 23:27, 28; 1 Thess. 4:13) Why? One reason was that they knew the truth about death.

The Bible clearly states: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all . . . Their love and their hate and their jealousy have already perished . . . There is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol [mankind's common grave], the place to which you are going." (Eccl. 9:5, 6, 10) These inspired Bible verses make it clear that

when someone dies, he is no longer conscious. He cannot think, feel, communicate, or comprehend anything. How should understanding this important Bible truth affect the way Christian funerals are conducted?

### "Quit Touching the Unclean Thing"

Regardless of their ethnic or cultural background, Jehovah's Witnesses strictly avoid any customs associated with the belief that the dead are conscious and can influence the living. Such customs as wake keeping, funeral celebrations, funeral anniversaries, sacrifices for the dead, and widowhood rites are all unclean and displeasing to God because they are linked to the unscriptural, demonic teaching that the soul or spirit does not die. (Ezek. 18:4) True Christians "cannot be partaking of 'the table of Jehovah' and the table of demons," so they do not share in these customs. (1 Cor. 10:21) They obey the command: "Separate yourselves, . . . and quit touching the unclean thing." (2 Cor. 6:17) Taking such a stand, though, is not always easy.

In Africa and elsewhere, it is widely believed that unless certain customs are followed, spirit ancestors will be offended. Failure to comply is considered a serious offense that could result in a community curse or misfortune. Because of refusing to participate in unscriptural funeral rites, many of Jehovah's people have been criticized, insulted, and treated as outcasts by their village communities or extended families. Some have been accused of being antisocial and disrespectful of the dead. At times, unbelievers have forcibly taken over Christian funeral



*Putting in writing our personal wishes concerning funeral arrangements is the course of wisdom*

arrangements. Therefore, how can we avoid confrontation with those who strongly insist on adhering to funeral customs that displease God? Even more important, what can we do to keep ourselves separate from unclean rites and practices that can damage our relationship with Jehovah?

### Make Your Stand Clear

In some parts of the world, it is customary for clan elders and relatives outside the immediate family to have a say in the burial of the dead. A faithful Christian must therefore make it clear that the funeral will be organized and carried out by Jehovah's Witnesses according to Bible principles. (2 Cor. 6:14-16) What happens at a Christian funeral should not disturb the consciences of fellow believers or stumble others who know what we believe and teach about the dead.

When a representative of the Christian congregation is asked to conduct a funeral, the appointed elders can offer helpful suggestions and provide spiritual support so that all the arrangements harmonize with Scriptural guidelines. If some non-

Witnesses desire to introduce unclean practices, it is vital to stand firm and courageously explain our Christian position in a kind and respectful manner. (1 Pet. 3:15) But what if unbelieving relatives still insist on introducing unclean rites into the arrangements? Then the believing family may decide to withdraw from the funeral. (1 Cor. 10:20) When this happens, a simple memorial service may be held at the local Kingdom Hall or at another suitable location in order to share "comfort from

the Scriptures" with those who are sincerely saddened by the death of the loved one. (Rom. 15:4) Even though the body of the deceased is not present, such an arrangement would be dignified and entirely acceptable. (Deut. 34:5, 6, 8) Unkind interference from unbelievers may add to the stress and sorrow of the occasion, but we can find comfort in the knowledge that our determination to do what is right does not go unnoticed by God, who can give us "the power beyond what is normal."—2 Cor. 4:7.

### Put Your Position in Writing

When a person has put in writing his personal instructions regarding his funeral arrangements, it is much easier to reason with non-Witness family members, since they are likely to respect the wishes of the deceased. How the funeral should be conducted, where it should take place, and who should have the sole authority to organize and hold it are important details that need to be put in writing. (Gen. 50:5) Most effective is a document that is signed and witnessed. Those who look ahead with insight and wisdom based on Bi-

ble principles know that they need not wait until they are very old or terminally ill before they consider taking this step.—Prov. 22:3; Eccl. 9:12.

Some have felt uneasy about putting such instructions into a written document. However, doing so is evidence of Christian maturity and loving concern for others. (Phil. 2:4) It is much better to set these matters straight personally than to leave the settling of such arrangements to distressed family members, who may be pressured into accepting unclean practices that the deceased neither believed in nor approved of.

### Keep the Funeral Modest

In many parts of Africa, there is the widespread belief that a funeral must be large and impressive so as not to anger the ancestral spirits. Others use funerals as an opportunity to make a "showy display" of their social and economic status. (1 John 2:16) Much time and effort as well as many resources are devoted to giving the deceased a "proper" burial. To attract as many people as possible, large posters bearing a picture of the deceased are

placed in different locations, thus publicly advertising the funeral. T-shirts bearing a portrait of the deceased are produced and distributed so that they can be worn by mourners. Elaborate, expensive coffins are purchased to impress onlookers. In one African land, some go to the extent of constructing coffins that resemble cars, airplanes, boats, and other objects designed to exhibit wealth, grandeur, and luxury. The corpse may be removed from the coffin and displayed on a specially decorated bed. A woman may be clothed in a white wedding dress and adorned with large amounts of jewelry, beads, and makeup. Would participating in such practices really be fitting for any of God's people?

Mature Christians see the wisdom of avoiding the extremes indulged in by people who neither know nor care about godly principles. We are aware that immodest and unscriptural customs and practices 'do not originate with God, but originate with the world that is passing away.' (1 John 2:15-17) Great care must be exercised so that we are not drawn into an unchristian spirit of

*Christian funerals should be modest and dignified*



competition, trying to outdo others. (Gal. 5:26) Experience shows that when fear of the dead is at the heart of local culture and social life, funerals often become large and difficult to supervise and can therefore quickly get out of control. Venerating the dead can easily inflame unbelievers to the point of unclean conduct. At such funerals, there may be loud and unrestrained wailing, embracing of the corpse, talking directly to it as if it were alive, and attaching money and other items to the body. If this were to happen at a Christian funeral, great reproach would be brought upon Jehovah's name and his people.—1 Pet. 1:14-16.

Knowing the true condition of the dead should certainly give us the courage to conduct our funerals without any trace of worldliness. (Eph. 4:17-19) Although Jesus was the greatest and most important man who ever lived, he was buried in a discreet and modest manner. (John 19:40-42) For those who have "the mind of Christ," there is no disgrace in such a burial. (1 Cor. 2:16) Surely, keeping Christian funerals simple and modest is the best way to avoid what is Scripturally unclean and to maintain a calm atmosphere that is dignified, tasteful, and fitting for those who love God.

### Should There Be Rejoicing?

After the burial, it may be the custom for relatives, neighbors, and others to gather in large numbers to feast and dance to loud music. These funeral celebrations are often associated with heavy drinking and acts of immorality. Some people reason that such merrymaking helps to take away the sadness of death. Others feel that this is just part of their culture. However, many believe that such revelry is a necessary rite of passage that must be performed in order to honor and praise the dead and to release the soul of the deceased to join his ancestors.

True Christians see the wisdom of the Scriptural exhortation: "Better is vexation than laughter, for by the crossness of the face the heart becomes better." (Eccl. 7:3) Moreover, they know the benefits of quietly reflecting on the shortness of life and the hope of the resurrection. Indeed, to those who have a strong personal relationship with Jehovah, 'the day of death is better than the day of their birth.' (Eccl. 7:1) Therefore, knowing that funeral merrymaking is associated with spiritistic beliefs and immoral activity makes it most inappropriate for true Christians to organize or even attend such celebrations. Being in company with funeral revelers would demonstrate a lack of respect for God and for the consciences of fellow worshippers of Jehovah.

### Let Others See the Distinction

How grateful we are to be free from the morbid fear of the dead that is so common among those in spiritual darkness! (John 8:32) As "children of light," we express our sorrow and grief in a way that reflects spiritual enlightenment, a way that is modest, respectful, and tempered by the sure hope of the resurrection. (Eph. 5:8; John 5:28, 29) Such a hope will prevent us from being carried away by the excessive displays of grief often seen among those "who have no hope." (1 Thess. 4:13) It will give us the courage to take a firm stand for pure worship, not succumbing to the fear of man.—1 Pet. 3:13, 14.

Our faithful compliance with Scriptural principles will give people the opportunity to 'see the distinction between those serving God and those not serving him.' (Mal. 3:18) One day, death will be no more. (Rev. 21:4) While we await the realization of that grand promise, may Jehovah find us spotless, unblemished, and completely separate from this wicked world and its God-dishonoring practices.—2 Pet. 3:14.