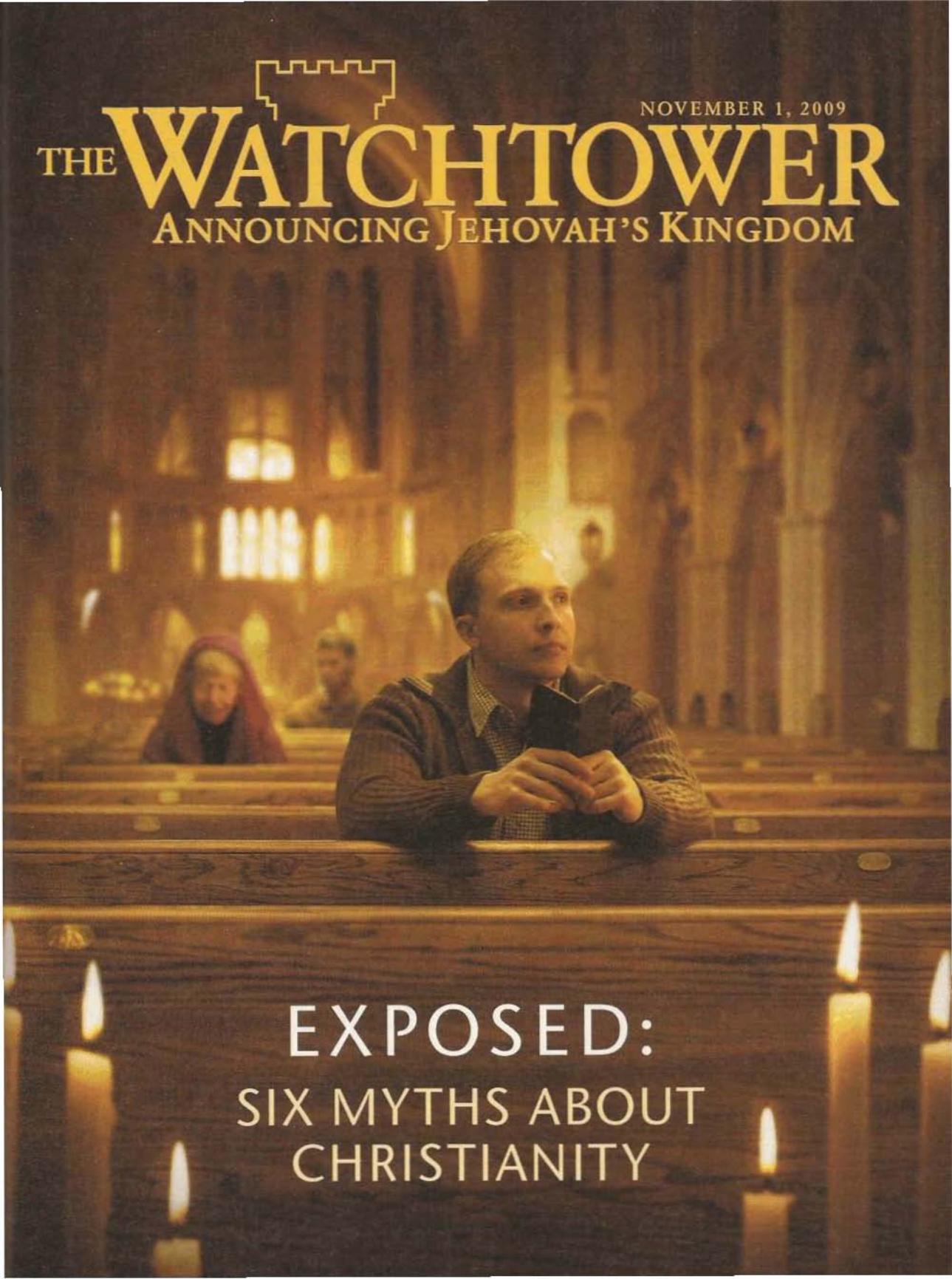


NOVEMBER 1, 2009

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



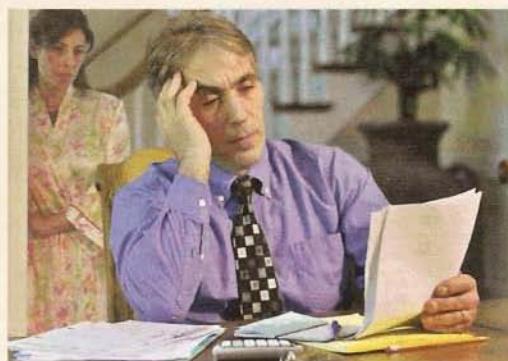
EXPOSED:  
SIX MYTHS ABOUT  
CHRISTIANITY

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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### Keys to Family Happiness —When a Spouse Has Special Needs

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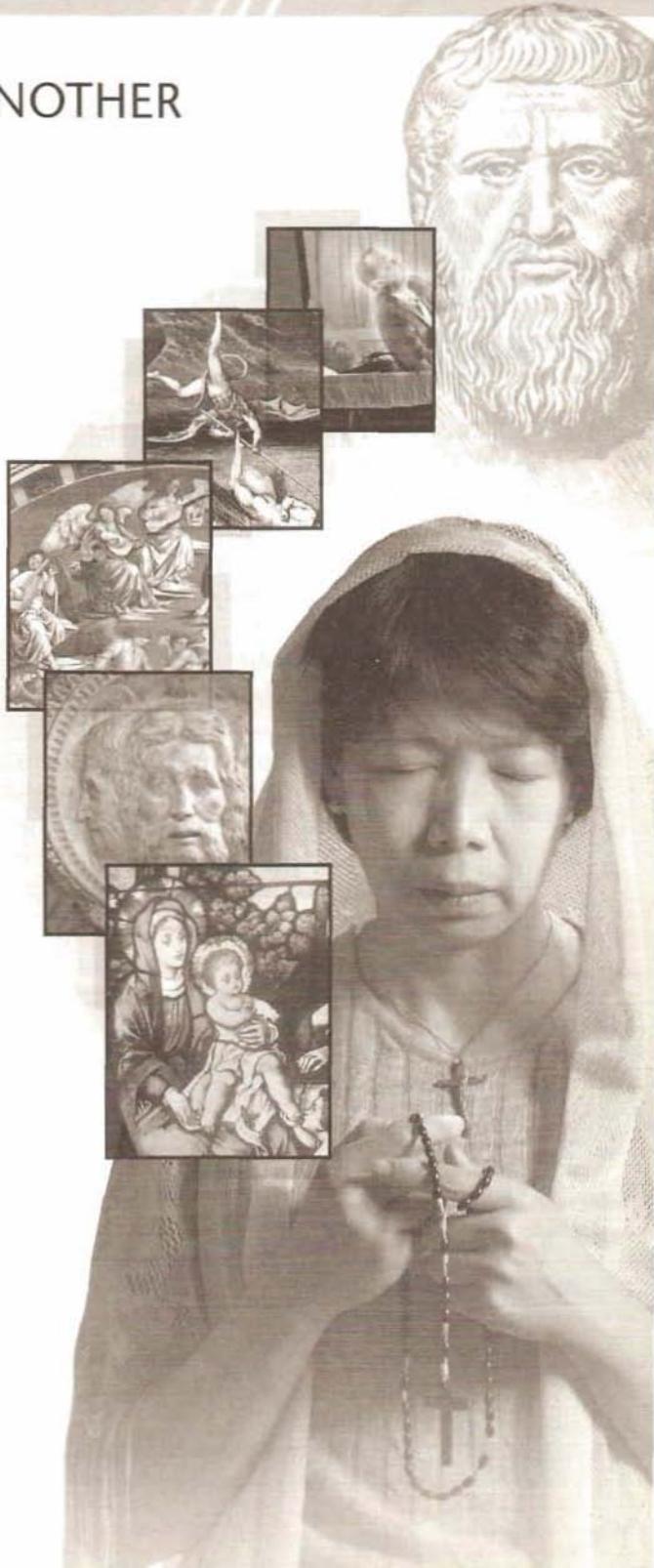
# ONE MYTH LEADS TO ANOTHER

**L**OOK out," wrote the apostle Paul to Christians living in the latter half of the first century C.E. What was he warning against? "Perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men."—Colossians 2:8.

Despite Paul's warning, from the middle of the second century C.E., some Christians began using concepts borrowed from ancient philosophers in order to explain their beliefs. Why? They wanted to be accepted by the educated people of the Roman Empire and thus make more converts.

Justin Martyr, one of the most famous of these Christians, believed that God's Spokesman had manifested himself to Greek philosophers long before the arrival of Jesus. According to Justin and like-minded teachers, the contribution of philosophy and mythology to Christianity made this form of religion truly universal.

Justin Martyr's form of Christianity became very successful in gaining converts. However, the adoption of one myth led to the creation of others and produced what is now commonly believed to be Christian doctrine. To expose these myths, compare what the following reference works say with what the Bible actually teaches.



# MYTH 1: THE SOUL IS IMMORTAL



**What is the origin of the myth?** “The early Christian philosophers adopted the Greek concept of the soul’s immortality and thought of the soul as being created by God and infused into the body at conception.”—*The New Encyclopædia Britannica* (1988), Volume 11, page 25.

**What does the Bible say?** “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”—Ezekiel 18:4, *King James Version*.

Regarding the creation of the first human soul, the Bible says: “Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul [Hebrew, *ne’phesh*].”—Genesis 2:7.

The Hebrew word *ne’phesh*, translated “soul,” means ‘a creature that breathes.’ When God created the first man, Adam, He did not infuse into him an immortal soul but the life force that is maintained by breathing. Therefore, “soul” in the Biblical sense refers to the entire living being. If separated from the life force originally given by God, the soul dies.—Genesis 3:19; Ezekiel 18:20.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul raised questions: Where do souls go after death? What happens to the souls of the wicked? When nominal Christians adopted the myth of the immortal soul, this led them to accept another myth—the teaching of hellfire.

*Compare these Bible verses:* Ecclesiastes 3:19; Matthew 10:28; Acts 3:23

## FACT:

**At death a person ceases to exist**

## THE WATCHTOWER. ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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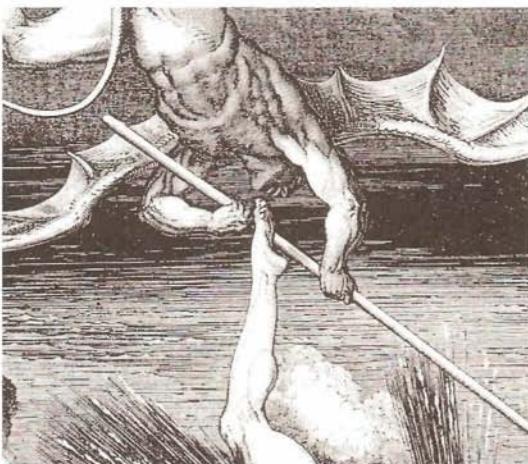
\* CD also available.

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## MYTH 2: THE WICKED SUFFER IN HELL

Barratry—Giampolo/The Devil Illustrations For Dante's Divine Comedy/Dover Publications Inc.



**What is the origin of the myth?** “Of all classical Greek philosophers, the one who has had the greatest influence on traditional views of Hell is Plato.”—*Histoire des enfers* (The History of Hell), by Georges Minois, page 50.

“From the middle of the 2nd century AD Christians who had some training in Greek philosophy began to feel the need to express their faith in its terms . . . The philosophy that suited them best was Platonism [the teachings of Plato].”—*The New Encyclopædia Britannica* (1988), Volume 25, page 890.

“The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, ‘eternal fire.’ The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God.”—*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994 edition, page 270.

**What does the Bible say?** “For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, . . . for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.”—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, Revised Standard Version.

The Hebrew word *Sheol*, which referred to the “abode of the dead,” is translated “hell” in some versions of the Bible. What does this passage reveal about the condition of the dead? Do they suffer in Sheol in order to atone for their errors? No, for they “know nothing.” That is why the patriarch Job, when suffering terribly because of a severe illness, begged God: “Protect me in hell [Hebrew, *Sheol*.]” (Job 14:13; *Douay-Rheims Version*) What meaning would his request have had if Sheol was a place of eternal torment? Hell, in the Biblical sense, is simply the common grave of mankind, where all activity has ceased.

Is not this definition of hell more logical and in harmony with Scripture? What crime, however horrible, could cause a God of love to torture a person endlessly? (1 John 4:8) But if hellfire is a myth, what about heaven?

*Compare these Bible verses:* Psalm 146:3, 4; Acts 2:25-27; Romans 6:7, 23

### FACT:

**God does not punish people in hell**

## MYTH 3: ALL GOOD PEOPLE GO TO HEAVEN

Art Resource, NY



What is the origin of the myth? After the death of Jesus' apostles, by the beginning of the second century C.E., the early Church Fathers gained prominence. Describing their teachings, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (2003), Volume 6, page 687, says: "The general stream of teaching was that heavenly bliss is granted to the disembodied soul immediately after whatever necessary purification follows death."

What does the Bible say? "Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth."—Matthew 5:5.

Although Jesus promised his disciples that he would "prepare a place" for them in heaven, he indicated that the righteous do not automatically go there. (John 3:13; 14:2, 3) Did he not pray that God's will take place "as in heaven, also upon earth"? (Matthew 6:9, 10) In reality, one of two destinies awaits the righteous. A minority will rule in

heaven with Christ, but the majority will live forever on earth.—Revelation 5:10.

Over time, the early church changed its view of its own role on the earth. With what result? "The institutional church increasingly replaced the expected Kingdom of God," states *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The church began solidifying its power by becoming mixed up in politics, ignoring Jesus' explicit statements that his followers were to be "no part of the world." (John 15:19; 17:14-16; 18:36) Under the influence of the Roman Emperor Constantine, the church compromised some of its beliefs, one of which involved the very nature of God.

Compare these Bible verses: Psalm 37:10, 11, 29; John 17:3; 2 Timothy 2:11, 12

### FACT:

**The majority of good people will live forever on earth—not in heaven**



## MYTH 4: GOD IS A TRINITY

Museo Bardini, Firenze



**What is the origin of the myth?** “The impression could arise that the Trinitarian dogma is in the last analysis a late 4th-century invention. In a sense, this is true . . . The formulation ‘one God in three Persons’ was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century.”—*New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967), Volume 14, page 299.

“The Council of Nicaea met on May 20, 325 [C.E.]. 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 with the Father.’ . . . Overawed by the emperor, the bishops, with two exceptions only, signed the creed, many of them much against their inclination.”—*Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1970), Volume 6, page 386.

**What does the Bible say?** “Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God’s right hand. ‘Look! I can see heaven thrown open,’ he said, ‘and the Son of man

standing at the right hand of God.’”—Acts 7: 55, 56, *The New Jerusalem Bible*.

What did this vision reveal? Filled with God’s active force, Stephen saw Jesus “standing at God’s right hand.” Clearly, then, Jesus did not become God again after his resurrection to heaven but, rather, a distinct spiritual being. There is no mention of a third person next to God in this account. Despite attempts to find passages of Scripture to support the Trinity dogma, Dominican priest Marie-Émile Boismard wrote in his book *À l'aube du christianisme—La naissance des dogmes* (At the Dawn of Christianity—The Birth of Dogmas): “The statement that there are three persons in the one God . . . cannot be read anywhere in the New Testament.”

The dogma that Constantine championed was intended to put an end to dissensions within the fourth-century Church. However, it actually raised another issue: Was Mary, the woman who bore Jesus, “the Mother of God”?

**Compare these Bible verses:** Matthew 26:39; John 14:28; 1 Corinthians 15:27, 28; Colossians 1:15, 16

### FACT:

**The Trinitarian dogma is a late fourth-century invention**

## MYTH 5: MARY IS THE MOTHER OF GOD



**What is the origin of the myth?** "Veneration of the mother of God received its impetus when . . . the pagan masses streamed into the church. . . . Their piety and religious consciousness [that of pagans converted to Christianity] had been formed for millennia through the cult of the 'great mother' goddess and the 'divine virgin.'"—*The New Encyclopædia Britannica* (1988), Volume 16, pages 326 and 327.

**What does the Bible say?** "You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called *Son of the Most High*. . . . And so the child will be holy and will be called *Son of God*."—Italics ours; Luke 1:31-35, *The New Jerusalem Bible*.

That passage of Scripture clearly states that Mary was the mother of the "Son

of God," not of God himself. Could she have carried within her the One whom 'the heavens themselves cannot contain'? (1 Kings 8:27) She never made such a claim. It is the teaching about the Trinity that has sown confusion over the identity of Mary. By proclaiming her *Theotokos* (a Greek word meaning "God-bearer"), or "Mother of God," the Council of Ephesus, in 431 C.E., set the stage for Mary worship. The city of Ephesus where this church council was held had for centuries been at the heart of idol worship celebrating the fertility goddess Artemis.

So it was that many aspects of the worship of the image of Artemis that "fell from heaven," such as processions, were integrated into Mary worship. (Acts 19:35) Another practice that crept into Christian teaching was the use of images of Mary and others in worship.

*Compare these Bible verses:* Matthew 13:53-56; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 11:27, 28

### FACT:

**Mary was the mother of the Son of God, not of God himself. The Trinity myth gave birth to the worship of Mary as the Mother of God**

## MYTH 6: GOD APPROVES OF THE USE OF IMAGES AND ICONS IN WORSHIP

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.



**What is the origin of the myth?** “Images were unknown in the worship of the primitive Christians . . . The admission of images into the church in the 4th and 5th centuries was justified on the theory that the ignorant people could learn the facts of Christianity from them better than from sermons or books.”—*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, by McClintock and Strong, Volume 4, pages 503 and 504.

**What does the Bible say?** “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.” (Exodus 20:4, 5, *The Holy Bible—New Inter-*

*national Version*) The apostle John wrote to first-century Christians: “Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”—1 John 5:21.

Are images, as the churches claim, simply a means of approaching and honoring what they represent? “At first,” states *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, “images may have served primarily didactic [teaching] and decorative purposes; at least, they were defended on such grounds. But soon they came to fill admittedly devotional functions. This was especially true of the icons that became a prominent feature of Eastern Orthodoxy.” However, the prophet Isaiah rightly asked: “To whom can you compare God? What image can you contrive of him?”—Isaiah 40:18, *The New Jerusalem Bible*.

Compare these Bible verses: Isaiah 44:13-19; Acts 10:25, 26; 17:29; 2 Corinthians 5:7

### FACT:

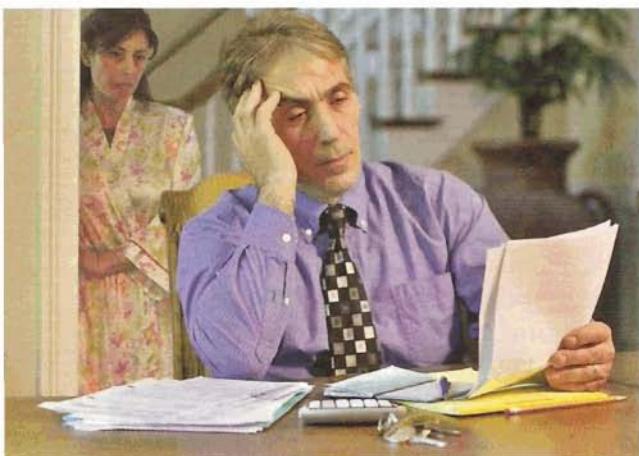
**God does not approve of the use of images and icons**

### REJECT MYTHS, STICK TO THE TRUTH

What can we conclude from this brief review of myths that are still taught by many churches? These “tales [Greek, *my’thos*] artfully spun” cannot rival the simple and comforting truths of the Bible.—2 Peter 1:16, *The New English Bible*.

Therefore, with an open mind, do not hesitate to compare with God’s Word—the source of truth—what you have been taught. (John 17:17) Then, this promise will prove true in your case: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”—John 8:32.

# When a Spouse Has Special Needs



*Since I was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome, my husband has had to do all the secular work. But he never talks to me about our bills. Why does he leave me completely in the dark like this? Our finances must be in such bad shape that he knows I'll panic if I find out.—Nancy.\**

MARRIAGE can be a challenge, but when one mate becomes chronically ill while the other remains healthy, complications can multiply.<sup>#</sup> Are you caring for an infirm mate? If so, do any of the following questions worry you: 'How will I cope if my

\* Some names have been changed.

<sup>#</sup> This article discusses situations wherein a spouse has an ongoing physical illness. However, couples who are coping with physical problems because of an accident or with emotional difficulties such as depression can also be helped by applying the following material.

mate's health declines even further? How long can I continue to take care of my mate and also do all the cooking, cleaning, and secular work? Why do I feel guilty for being the healthy one?

On the other hand, if you are the ailing spouse, you might wonder: 'How can I respect myself when I'm unable to carry my load of responsibility? Does my mate resent me for being sick? Is our happiness as a couple over?'

Sadly, some marriages have not survived the strain caused by a chronic illness. Yet, this does not mean that your marriage is doomed to failure.

Many couples survive and even thrive despite the presence of a chronic ailment. Consider, for example, Yoshiaki and Kazuko. A spinal injury rendered Yoshiaki unable to make even the slightest movement without assistance. Kazuko explains: "My husband needs assistance with everything. As a result of caring for him, my neck, shoulders, and arms ache, and I am an outpatient at an orthopedic hospital. I often feel that caregiving is overwhelming." Despite the difficulties, however, Kazuko says: "Our bond as a couple has become stronger."

What, then, is the key to happiness under such circumstances? For one thing, those who retain a healthy measure of satisfaction and contentment in their marriage view the illness as an assault not only on the ailing spouse but on the two of them as a couple.

After all, if one mate is sick, both are deeply affected, even if in different ways. This interdependent relationship between a husband and wife is described at Genesis 2:24: "A man will leave his father and his mother and he must stick to his wife and they must become *one flesh*." Thus, when a spouse has an ongoing physical ailment, it is critical that both husband and wife work together to meet the challenge.

Additionally, research shows that couples who maintain a good relationship in the face of chronic illness accept their situation and learn effective ways to adapt to it. Many of the coping skills that they have learned echo the timeless advice found in the Bible. Consider the following three suggestions.

### Show Consideration for One Another

"Two are better than one," states Ecclesiastes 4:9. Why? Because, explains verse 10, "if one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up." Do you 'raise your partner up' with expressions of appreciation?

Are you able to look for ways to be of practical assistance to each other? Yong, whose wife is partially paralyzed, says: "I try to be considerate of my wife on every occasion. Whenever I feel thirsty, I consider that she too might be thirsty. If I want to go outside and view the beautiful scenery, I ask her if she would like to join me. We are sharing the pain and enduring the situation together."

On the other hand, if you are receiving care from your mate, are there certain things that you can do for yourself without threatening your health? If so, this can boost your feelings of self-worth and may contribute to your mate's ability to continue providing care.

Rather than assume that you know the best way to show consideration for your

spouse, why not ask him or her what would be most appreciated? Nancy, mentioned at the outset, eventually told her husband how she was affected by not knowing the family's financial status. Now her husband endeavors to be more communicative in this regard.

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**TRY THIS:** List ways that you feel your mate can make your present situation a little easier, and have your spouse do the same. Then switch lists. Each of you should select one or two suggestions that can realistically be implemented.

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### Have a Balanced Schedule

"For everything there is an appointed time," wrote wise King Solomon. (Ecclesiastes 3:1) However, it may seem impossible to maintain a balanced schedule, given the disrupting effect that a chronic sickness can have on a family's routine. What can you do to achieve at least a measure of balance?

Together you might take regular breaks from serious medical concerns. Can you still enjoy some of the things you shared before illness struck? If not, what new activities can you try? It could be something as simple as reading to each other or as challenging as learning a new language. Having a life together outside the illness will strengthen your "one flesh" bond—and increase your happiness.

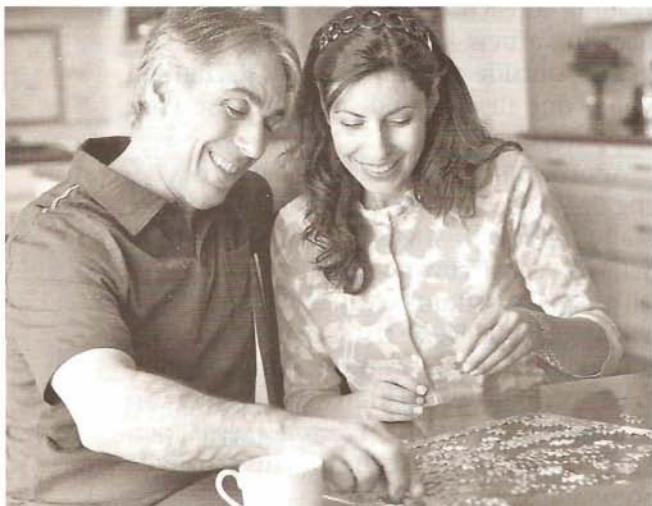
Another aid to maintaining balance is being in the company of others. The Bible states at Proverbs 18:1: "One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing; against all practical wisdom he will break forth." Did you note in that verse that isolation can have an undesirable effect on the mind? By contrast, periodic association with others can lift your spirits and help restore mental perspective. Why not take the initiative to invite someone to visit you?

At times, balance becomes a problem for caregiving spouses. Some take on too much work, slowly wear down, and endanger their own health. Eventually, they may even render themselves unable to continue providing care for their beloved mate. So if you are taking care of a chronically ill spouse, do not ignore your personal needs. Set aside regular quiet time to refresh yourself.\* Some have found it therapeutic to talk out their anxieties from time to time with a trusted friend of the same sex.

**TRY THIS:** List on paper the obstacles you face in taking care of your mate. Then make a list of steps you might take to overcome these or to cope with them more effectively. Instead of overanalyzing them, ask yourself, 'What is the simplest, most obvious way to improve the situation?'

\* Depending on your circumstances, it may be advisable to look into getting at least some part-time help from health-care professionals or community agencies if available.

*In order to achieve balance in your life, can you enjoy a hobby together?*



## Try to Maintain a Positive Outlook

The Bible warns: "Do not say: 'Why has it happened that the former days proved to be better than these?'" (Ecclesiastes 7:10) So avoid dwelling on what might have been. Remember that in this world, all happiness is limited in some way. The key here is to accept your situation and make the best of it.

What can help you and your mate in this regard? Discuss your blessings together. Take delight in even the smallest improvements in your health. Find things to look forward to, and set reachable goals together.

A couple named Shoji and Akiko have applied the above advice with good results. At one point after Akiko was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, they had to leave a special assignment in the full-time Christian ministry. Were they disappointed? Naturally. Yet, Shoji advises any in similar circumstances: "Do not discourage yourself by thinking about things that you can no longer do. Keep a positive outlook. Even if you both have the hope of returning to a normal routine someday, concentrate for now on your life as it is. For me, that means focusing my attention on my wife and helping her." Such practical advice can help you too if your spouse has special needs.

## ASK YOURSELF . . .

*What do my mate and I most need to do right now?*

- Talk more about the illness
- Talk less about the illness
- Worry less
- Show more consideration for each other
- Have a mutual interest outside the illness
- Have more social contact
- Have mutual goals



# THE BIBLE

## A REMARKABLE STORY OF SURVIVAL

THE Bible is the most widely distributed book in history—an estimated 4.8 billion copies have already been circulated. In 2007 alone, more than 64,600,000 copies were produced. To put that into perspective, consider that the best-selling work of fiction that year had an initial printing of 12 million copies in the United States.

On its way to becoming the world's most published book, the Bible survived many hazards. Down through history, it has been banned and burned, and those who would translate it have been oppressed and killed. Yet, one of the greatest threats to the continued existence of the Bible was, not the sudden heat of persecution, but the slow process of decay. Why so?

The Bible is a compilation of 66 smaller books, the oldest of which were written or

**"The transmission of the text of the Hebrew Bible [Old Testament] is of extraordinary exactitude, without parallel in Greek and Latin classical literature."**

—Professor Julio Trebolle Barrera

compiled over 3,000 years ago by members of the nation of Israel. The original writers and those who copied the texts recorded the inspired messages on perishable materials, such as papyrus and leather. None of the original writings have yet been discovered. But thousands of ancient copies of small and large sections of the books of the Bible have been unearthed. A fragment of one of

these books, the Gospel of John, dates to within just a few decades of the original document written by the apostle John.

Why is it remarkable that any copies of the Bible have survived? And how accurately do modern Bibles reflect the messages recorded by the original writers?

### What Happened to Other Ancient Documents?

The survival of the Bible is extraordinary, considering what happened to the writings of nations contemporary with the Israelites. The Phoenicians, for instance, were neighbors of the Israelites during the first millennium B.C.E. These sea traders spread their alphabetic writing system throughout the Mediterranean area. They also profited from an extensive papyrus trade with Egypt and the Greek world. Even so, the *National Geographic* magazine observes regarding the Phoenicians: "Their writings, mostly on fragile papyrus, disintegrated—so that we now know the Phoenicians mainly by the biased reports of their enemies. Although the Phoenicians themselves reportedly had a rich literature, it was totally lost in antiquity."

What about the writings of the ancient Egyptians? The hieroglyphics they carved or painted on temple walls and elsewhere are well-known. The Egyptians are also famous for developing papyrus as a writing material. However, regarding Egyptian records written on papyrus, Egyptologist K. A. Kitchen says: "It has been estimated that some 99 percent of all papyri written from circa 3000 down to the advent of Greco-Roman times have perished completely."

What about Roman records that were written on papyrus? Consider this example. According to the book *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*, Roman soldiers were apparently paid three times a year, and a record of the pay was made on papyrus pay vouchers. It is estimated that during the 300 years from Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) to Diocletian (284–305 C.E.), there were 225,000,000 individual pay records. How many have survived? Only two have been found that are legible.

Why have so few ancient documents written on papyrus survived? Perishable materials, such as papyrus and another common writing material, leather, decay quickly in damp climates. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* says: “Because of the climate, papyrus documents from this period [the first millennium B.C.E.] are likely to be preserved only if they are in a dry desert and in a cave or shelter.”

### What About the Bible Texts?

The original Bible books were evidently written on material as fragile as that used by the Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Ro-

mans. Why, then, did the material contained in the Bible survive to become the world’s most published book? Professor James L. Kugel provides one reason. He says that the original writings were copied “many, many times even within the biblical period itself.”

How do modern translations of the Bible compare with ancient manuscripts? Professor Julio Trebolle Barrera, a member of the team of experts charged with studying and publishing the ancient manuscripts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, says: “The transmission of the text of the Hebrew Bible is of extraordinary exactitude, without parallel in Greek and Latin classical literature.” Respected Bible scholar F. F. Bruce says: “The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning.” He continues: “If the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt.” Certainly, the Bible is a remarkable book. Do you make time to read it each day?—1 Peter 1:24, 25.

*Still in existence today are some 6,000 handwritten copies of the Hebrew Scriptures, or Old Testament, and some 5,000 copies of the Greek Scriptures, or New Testament*



Left: Todd Bolen/Bible Places.com; right: Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

## Did You Know?

### Why does the Bible associate worship of the false god Baal with sex orgies?

The Canaanite divinity Baal was essentially a fertility god. His worshippers believed that Baal was responsible for the productivity of their fields and their livestock. Thus, according to the reference work *Manners and Customs in the Bible*, "sexual activity at local shrines was designed to pro-

mote the fertility of the land by encouraging the storm god Baal and his consort Asherah to engage in divine intercourse, causing abundant harvests and herds."

The Canaanites believed that Baal withdrew to the depths of the earth during the dry season when he was overpowered by Mot, god of aridity and death. The onset of the rains, however, was believed to mark Baal's return to power and a consequent return of abundant vegetation and life. The Canaanites celebrated this season with unrestrained orgies. This explains why the Israelites' attachment to the Baal of Peor resulted in their having "immoral relations with the daughters of Moab."—Numbers 25:1-3.

### What did Jesus mean when he said that the scribes and Pharisees resembled "whitewashed graves"?

Jesus denounced the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites and told them: "You resemble whitewashed graves, which outwardly indeed appear beautiful but inside are full of dead men's bones and

of every sort of uncleanness." (Matthew 23:27) The Jews customarily made tombstones conspicuous by daubing them with whitewash, or lime, at the end of the rainy season, on the 15th day of Adar, a month before the Passover. The rains, in fact, tended to wash the whitening away.

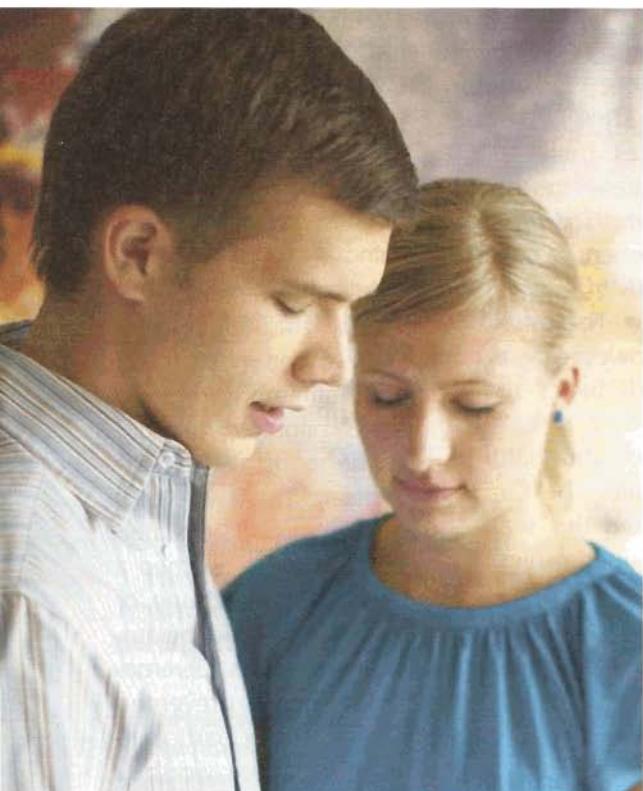
According to *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, the marking of graves was done to protect against defilement of "the numerous pilgrims who traversed the roads at the Passover festival." The law recorded at Numbers 19:16 stated that everyone who touched a dead body, a human bone, or a burial place would be unclean for seven days. Ceremonial uncleanness prevented the Israelites from participating in acts of pure worship, on pain of death. (Leviticus 15:31) Jesus spoke this illustration just days before the Passover; thus, annual tomb-whitewashing would have been fresh in the minds of his listeners. Jesus' point was that his religious opponents were not what they outwardly appeared to be and that contact with them was spiritually defiling.

LIMESTONE STELA OF BAAL-OF-THE-LIGHTNING,  
14TH/13TH CENTURIES B.C.E.



Musée du Louvre, Paris

# About Family Life



## *What view of marriage makes families happy?*

Marriage is a sacred bond. When asked if divorce was permissible, Jesus said: “Did you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife, and the two will be one flesh’? So that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has yoked together let no man put apart. . . . Whoever divorces his wife, except on the ground of fornication, and marries another commits adultery.” (Matthew 19:4-6, 9) When a married couple follow Jesus’ counsel and are faithful to each other, all in the family feel secure and happy.

## *Why does love for God make families happy?*

Jesus said: “‘You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment.” What is the second greatest commandment? Jesus said: “You must love your neighbor [including those living closest to you—your family] as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39) So the key to family happiness is having a good relationship with God because love for him moves us to love one another.

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**For more information,  
see chapter 14 of the book  
*What Does the Bible  
Really Teach?*\***

\* Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.



### *How can husbands and wives make each other happy?*

Husbands make their wives happy when they follow Jesus' example. He was self-sacrificing in his love for his figurative wife, the congregation. (Ephesians 5:25) Jesus said: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve." (Matthew 20:28, *The Holy Bible—New International Version*) Jesus was never dictatorial or harsh with those under his care but was refreshing to them. (Matthew 11:28) Husbands, therefore, should exercise their authority in a kind way that benefits all in the family.

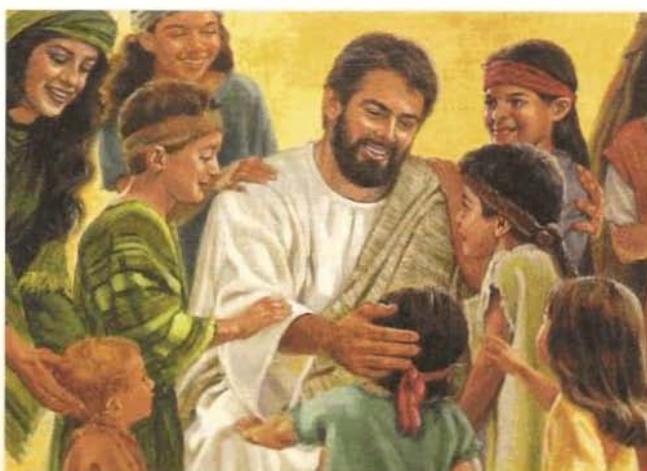
Wives can also benefit from Jesus' example. "The head of the Christ is God," says the Bible. It also states that "the head of a woman is the man." (1 Corinthians 11:3) Jesus did not consider it beneath him to be in subjection to God. He had deep respect for his Father. "I always do the things pleasing to him," said Jesus. (John 8:29) A wife who submits to her husband's headship out of love and respect for God does much to make her family life happy.

### *What can parents learn from Jesus' view of children?*

Jesus spent time with children and was interested in their thoughts and feelings. The Bible says: "Jesus called the infants to him, saying: 'Let the young children come to me.'" (Luke 18:15, 16) On one occasion, people criticized some boys who spoke up about their faith in Jesus. But Jesus commended the youngsters, saying to their critics: "Did you never read this, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings you have furnished praise'?"—Matthew 21:15, 16.

### *What can children learn from Jesus?*

Jesus provided children with a fine example of interest in spiritual things. When he was 12 years old, he was found "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers and listening to them and questioning them." With what effect? "All those listening to him were in constant amazement at his understanding and his answers." (Luke 2:42, 46, 47) Yet, Jesus' knowledge did not make him haughty. Rather, it made him respect his parents. The Bible says: "He continued subject to them."—Luke 2:51.



# How Paradise Was Lost

**Instructions:** Do this exercise in quiet surroundings. As you read the scriptures, imagine that you are part of the event. Visualize the scene. Hear the voices. Feel the emotions of the characters. Let the account come to life.

## ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ GENESIS 3:1-24.

How do you imagine Eve's initial reaction when the serpent began speaking to her? \_\_\_\_\_

Keeping in mind that Adam and Eve sinned *intentionally*, what do you think they were feeling, as reported in verses 7-10? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you visualize the ousting of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, as described in verses 22-24? \_\_\_\_\_

## DIG DEEPER.

What role did Eve's eyes play in her downfall? (Reread verse 6.) \_\_\_\_\_

Why did the fruit become to Eve "something to be longed for"? (Reread verses 4 and 5.) \_\_\_\_\_

What may have moved Adam to join Eve in her sin? (Reread verse 6.) \_\_\_\_\_

How would sin adversely affect the relationship between men and women in generations to come? (Reread verse 16.) \_\_\_\_\_

How was it apparent that the relationship between Adam and Eve was strained as a result of sin? (Reread verse 12.) \_\_\_\_\_

How did Jehovah immediately address the problem so that his purpose would succeed? (Reread verse 15.) \_\_\_\_\_

## APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT... .

The dangers of an independent spirit. \_\_\_\_\_

How the eyes can feed wrong desires. \_\_\_\_\_

The futility of blaming others for our mistakes. \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT ASPECT OF THIS ACCOUNT MEANS THE MOST TO YOU, AND WHY?



# Our Readers Ask

## ARE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES A PROTESTANT RELIGION?

Jehovah's Witnesses do not consider themselves to be a Protestant religion. Why not?

Protestantism arose in 16th-century Europe in an effort to reform the Roman Catholic Church. The word "Protestant" was first applied to the followers of Martin Luther at the Diet of Speyer in 1529. Since then, the term has generally come to describe all those who adhere to the tenets and goals of the Reformation. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th Edition, thus defines a Protestant as "a member of any of several church denominations denying the universal authority of the Pope and affirming the Reformation principles of justification by faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the primacy of the Bible as the only source of revealed truth."

Although Jehovah's Witnesses deny the universal authority of the pope and wholeheartedly support the primacy of the Bible, they differ from Protestant religions in many significant ways. In fact, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* refers to Jehovah's Witnesses as being "distinctive." Consider three ways in which they are different.

First, although Protestant faiths reject certain features of Catholic worship, Reformation leaders retained certain Catholic dogmas, such as belief in the Trinity, hellfire, and the immortality of the human soul. Jehovah's Witnesses, however, believe that those doctrines not only contradict the Bible but also promote



a distorted view of God.—See pages 4-7 of this magazine.

Second, the religion that Jehovah's Witnesses advocate is, not one of negative protest, but one of positive instruction. They take seriously the Bible's counsel: "A servant of the Lord is not to engage in quarrels,

but has to be kind to everyone, a good teacher, and patient. He has to be gentle when he corrects people who dispute what he says." (2 Timothy 2:24, 25, *The Jerusalem Bible*) Jehovah's Witnesses do point out contradictions between what the Bible says and what many religious groups teach. Yet, their goal in doing so is not to reform other religious organizations. Rather, their goal is to help sincere individuals to gain accurate knowledge of God and of his Word, the Bible. (Colossians 1:9, 10) When people of other persuasions insistently disagree with them, Jehovah's Witnesses avoid engaging in fruitless debates.—2 Timothy 2:23.

Third, unlike the Protestant movement, which has splintered into hundreds of denominations, Jehovah's Witnesses have maintained a united global brotherhood. When it comes to Bible doctrine, Jehovah's Witnesses in over 230 countries follow the apostle Paul's counsel to "speak in agreement." There are no divisions among them. Instead, they are genuinely "united in the same mind and in the same line of thought." (1 Corinthians 1:10) They strive within their own ranks "to observe the oneness of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace."—Ephesians 4:3.



# DO YOU NEED TO LEARN Hebrew and Greek?

MOST of the Bible was originally written in just two languages, Hebrew and Greek.\* The writers who used those languages did so under the guidance of God's holy spirit. (2 Samuel 23:2) Therefore, the message they recorded can be described as "inspired of God."—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

However, the majority of people who read the Bible today do not understand Hebrew or Greek. Rather, they need to use a translation of the Bible in their own language. You probably need to do the same. Since these translations do not claim to be inspired, you may have wondered, 'Can I fully understand the message of the Bible while using a translation, or should I try to learn Hebrew and Greek?'

### Factors to Keep in Mind

Before answering that question, you need to keep several factors in mind. First, just having a knowledge of ancient Hebrew or Greek does not in itself miraculously make someone more inclined to understand the message of the Bible. Speaking to the Jewish people of his day, Jesus said: "You are searching the Scriptures, because you think that by means of them you will have everlasting life; and these are the very ones that bear witness about me. And yet you do not want to come to me that you may have life." (John 5:39, 40) What was their problem? Was it a lack of understanding of Hebrew? No, they knew the language well. However, Jesus went on to say: "I well know that you do not have the love of God in you."—John 5:42.

Similarly, the apostle Paul told Greek-speaking Christians in the ancient city of Corinth: "Both the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks look for wisdom; but we preach Christ impaled, to the Jews a cause for stumbling but to the nations foolishness." (1 Corinthians 1:22, 23) Obviously, then, just speaking either Hebrew or Greek was not in itself the key to accepting the message found in God's Word.

A second factor is that although some people today speak modern Hebrew or Greek, these languages are significantly dif-

\* Some sections of the Bible were written in Aramaic, a language closely related to Biblical Hebrew. Examples of this are found at Ezra 4:8 to 6:18 and 7:12-26, Jeremiah 10:11, and Daniel 2:4b to 7:28.

ferent from the Hebrew and Greek that were used to write the Bible. Most Greek-speaking people today find it a challenge to understand Biblical Greek correctly. This is because new words have been added to the language, replacing older terms, and many words that have survived have different meanings. For example, the word rendered "beautiful" at Acts 7:20 and Hebrews 11:23 means "funny" in modern Greek. Additionally, there have been extensive changes in the grammar and syntax of the language.

Even if you were to learn modern Hebrew or modern Greek, it would not necessarily mean that you would understand the Bible more accurately in its original languages. You would still need to rely on dictionaries and grammar books to show you how these languages were used when the books of the Bible were first put into written form.

A third factor is that learning a new language can be a very difficult task. Although it may at first be relatively easy to learn a few phrases in another language, it may take years of constant effort before you will be able to understand the subtle nuances of that language. In the meantime, the old adage may prove true, A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. How so?

### What Is the Meaning of the Word?

Have you ever been asked by someone learning your language about the meaning of a particular word? If so, you know that it is not always easy to give an answer. Why not? Because a word may have several meanings. You may have found yourself asking the person for an example of the word in a sentence. Without that context, it may be difficult for you to determine which meaning of the word may apply. For example, you may be asked the meaning of the English word "iron." This one word can

have different meanings in different contexts. It could mean a type of metal, an instrument for pressing clothes, or a golf club. In another setting, it could refer to shackles or even to a dietary supplement. When describing an action, it may mean to press or smooth clothes with a heated appliance. When used in the expression "iron out," it takes on a completely different meaning, that is, to resolve a problem. Which one is the correct meaning?

A dictionary may provide you with all the possible meanings of a word. Some dictionaries even list these meanings in order of common usage. But it is the context in which the word is used that will help you determine the specific meaning. To illustrate: Suppose you had a little medical knowledge and wanted to find the cause of certain symptoms you were experiencing. You could consult a medical dictionary. It might tell you that in 90 percent of cases, your symptoms mean one thing, but in 10 percent of cases, they indicate something completely different. You would need much more knowledge before you could arrive at the correct diagnosis. Similarly, the fact that a word has a certain meaning in 90 percent of cases does not help you if you are reading an important text where a secondary meaning of the word is used. You need to know more about the context before you can understand the word.

When it comes to studying words found in the Bible, you also need to know the context in which the word appears. For example, the original words that are usually translated "spirit" can have various meanings, depending on the context in which they are used. At times, they can be accurately translated "wind." (Exodus 10:13; John 3:8) In other contexts they refer to the



## The Septuagint

Greek-speaking Jews in the time of Jesus and his apostles made extensive use of the Greek *Septuagint*. This is a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. Not only is the *Septuagint* noteworthy because it was the first known attempt to translate the Holy Scriptures into another language but it is also impressive because of the size of the translation project. A group of translators started work on the *Septuagint* in the third century B.C.E., and the work was completed by others over a hundred years later.

The early Christians were quick to make effective use of the *Septuagint* to prove

Israel Antiquities Authority

that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah. So effective were they that the *Septuagint* began to be viewed by some as a "Christian" translation. This led to its losing popularity among the Jews and resulted in several new translations being produced in Greek. One of those translations was produced by a Jewish proselyte named Aquila in the second century C.E. When describing this translation, one Bible scholar refers to a "quite unexpected feature." Represented by ancient Hebrew characters, the divine name, Jehovah, appears throughout Aquila's Greek translation.

life force found within all living creatures, both humans and animals. (Genesis 7:22; Psalm 104:29; James 2:26) Invisible heavenly creatures are also described as spirits. (1 Kings 22:21, 22; Matthew 8:16) God's active force is called his holy spirit. (Genesis 1:2; Matthew 12:28) The same word is used to designate the force that causes a person to display a certain attitude, disposition, or emotion, as well as the dominant mental inclination manifested by a group of people.—Joshua 2:11; Galatians 6:18.

Although a Hebrew or Greek dictionary may list these various meanings, it is the context that will help you to determine which meaning is the appropriate one.\* This is true whether you are reading the Bible in the original languages or using a translation in your language.

\* It should be noted that some dictionaries and lexicons of Bible words merely list how the word has been translated in a particular version of the Bible, such as the *King James Version*, rather than independently defining the meaning of the word.

## Is It Wrong to Use a Translation?

Some have made great efforts to learn Biblical Hebrew or Biblical Greek or both. Even though they are aware of the limitations of their understanding, they take pleasure in being able to read the Bible in its original languages and feel that all the effort was worthwhile. However, if you are not able to do that, should you feel discouraged and give up in your search for Bible truth? No, not at all! There are several reasons for this conclusion.

First, it is appropriate to use a translation of the Bible. In fact, the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures, or so-called New Testament, often made use of a Greek translation when quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures.\* (Psalm 40:6; Hebrews

\* By the time of Jesus Christ and his apostles, all the books of the Hebrew Scriptures could be read in Greek. This translation came to be called the *Septuagint* and was used extensively by Greek-speaking Jews. Most of the hundreds of direct quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures that are found in the Christian Greek Scriptures are based on the *Septuagint*.

10:5, 6) Although they spoke Hebrew and could have quoted from the original Hebrew Scriptures, they obviously were comfortable with using a translation of those verses that was more widely available to those to whom they were writing.—Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8.

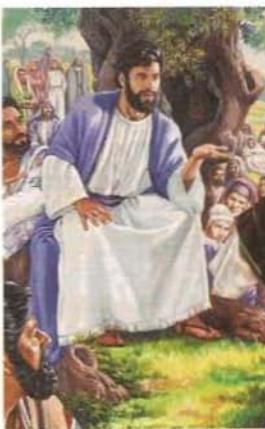
Second, even if a person can understand Bible languages, he can read the words of Jesus only in translation. This is because the Gospel writers wrote down in Greek what Jesus originally said in a form of the Hebrew language.\* Any who feel that the ability to read the words of Jehovah's faithful ancient servants in their original languages confers some kind of special wisdom should consider what that implies. The fact that Jehovah inspired the preserving of the words of his greatest Servant only in translation—in a language widely understood at the time—indicates that the language we read the Bible in is not important. What matters is that we read its inspired message in a form that we can understand and respond to.

Third, the “good news” contained in the Bible was to be made available for humble people of “every nation and tribe and tongue and people.” (Revelation 14:6; Luke 10:21; 1 Corinthians 1:27-29) In harmony with this, the overwhelming majority of people today can learn God's purpose from a copy of the Bible in their own language without having to learn another language. In many languages a number of different translations are available, leaving the reader with a choice.<sup>#</sup>

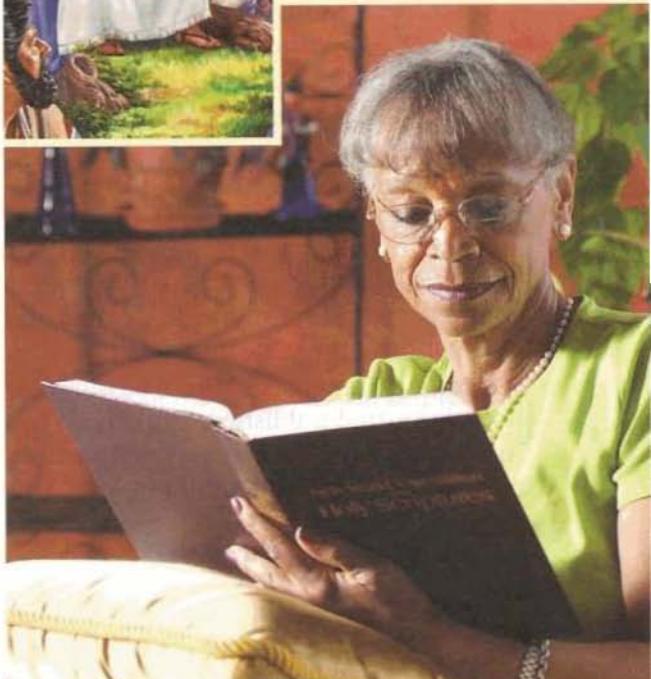
\* It is believed that the Gospel of Matthew was originally written by the apostle Matthew in Hebrew. However, even if that is the case, what has been preserved until today is a Greek translation of the original, possibly made by Matthew himself.

# For a discussion of the different styles of translation and how to select an accurate translation, see the article “How Can You Choose a Good Bible Translation?” in the May 1, 2008, issue of this magazine.

So how can you make sure that you understand the truth found in the Bible? Jehovah's Witnesses have found that a topical study of the Bible, taking into consideration the context, is a useful way to understand the message found in God's Word. For example, they take a particular topic, such as “Marriage,” and look up the verses that refer to that topic. In that way, they allow one part of the Bible to explain what another part means. Why not take advantage of the free home Bible study course that Jehovah's Witnesses offer to all? No matter what language you speak, God desires that “all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth.”—1 Timothy 2:4; Revelation 7:9.



*It is important that we read the Bible's inspired message in a form we can understand and respond to*



# GOOD NEWS IN 500 LANGUAGES

**I**N THE midst of a civil war in Rwanda, a small group of translators flee their homes, leaving behind their possessions. However, they manage to grab their laptop computers, which they take with them to the refugee camps. Why? So that they can continue translating Bible-based publications into the Kinyarwanda language.

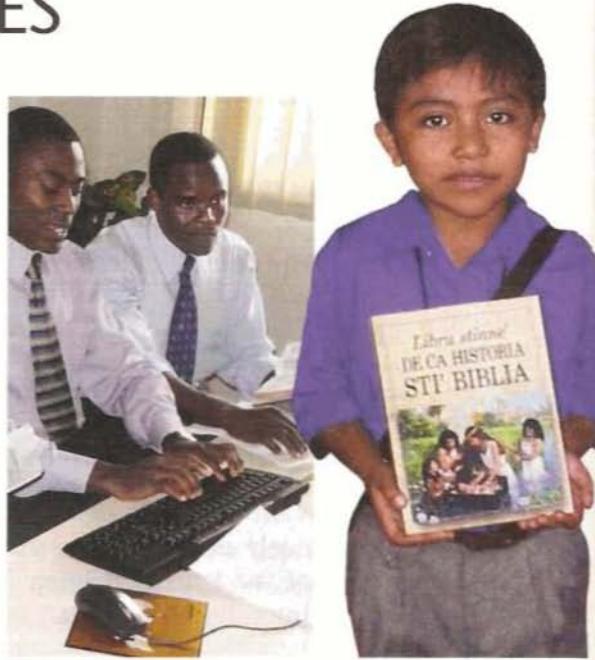
A young woman in Southeast Asia types on her computer late into the night, coping with fatigue, heat, and the regular power outages that interrupt her translation work. Her goal? To meet the printing deadline.

These translators are part of an army of some 2,300 volunteers who work in over 190 locations around the world. They range in age from 20 to nearly 90 and expend themselves tirelessly so that people can receive comfort from the Bible's message in 500 languages.—Revelation 7:9.

## Reaching a Multilingual Population

In recent years, the translation work of Jehovah's Witnesses has grown on an unprecedented scale. For example, in 1985, *The Watchtower* was produced simultaneously in 23 languages—a remarkable accomplishment at the time. Today, *The Watchtower* is available in 176 languages, and all editions are produced simultaneously so that readers around the world are able to study the same information at the same time.

In some 50 languages, *The Watchtower* is the *only* journal published regularly. Why? Commercial printing companies have little incentive to publish literature in local lan-



BENIN

guages. But Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide freely contribute to equalize their resources so that the Word of God and Bible-related publications are available wherever there is a need.—2 Corinthians 8:14.

People highly value the Bible's message in their own language. For example, Bible publications have recently been produced in Miskito, a language spoken by about 200,000 people in Nicaragua. One woman requested *My Book of Bible Stories\** in Miskito, and a local pastor was present when it was delivered. Upon seeing the beautiful book, the pastor wanted it for himself. The woman refused to let him have it, even when the pastor offered her 50 pounds of coffee beans in exchange for the book!

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Some 2,300 volunteers translate Bible literature into 500 languages



SLOVENIA



ETHIOPIA

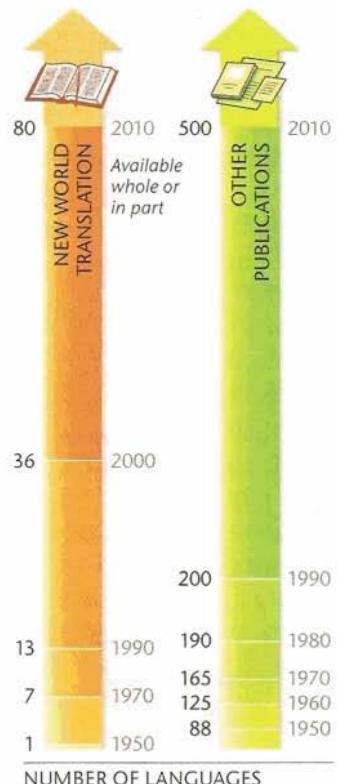


BRITAIN

During the past decade, Bible-based publications have been translated into more than a dozen indigenous languages of Mexico, including Maya, Nahuatl, and Tzotzil. In less than a decade, indigenous- and sign-language congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses increased in that country from 72 to over 1,200. Jehovah's Witnesses may plant the Bible's message in people's hearts, but they leave it to God to make the seeds of truth sprout.—1 Corinthians 3:5-7.

### A Modern Bible Translation in 80 Languages

In recent years, Jehovah's Witnesses have worked hard to produce the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in whole or in part in 80 languages. With what response? One South African Witness said of



the Tswana Bible: "What a beautiful instrument this is. It will enhance my appreciation for God's Word. The language used is easy to read and enjoyable." A Tsonga reader from Mozambique wrote: "Even with all the other Bible-based publications, having no Bible was like having thunder and lightning but no rain! However, the rains came down with the release of the *New World Translation* in Tsonga."

In a remarkable way, those who translate and distribute the good news contained in the Bible are fulfilling an ancient prophecy. It was Jesus Christ himself who said: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." —Matthew 24:14.

# The Bible Changes Lives

Why did a man whose life revolved around motorcycles, drugs, and sports choose to become a full-time minister? What moved a professional gambler to break free from his addiction and support his family by means of honorable work? What prompted a young woman who had been raised as one of Jehovah's Witnesses but who abandoned Bible standards to reconsider her way of life? Consider what these people have to say.



## PROFILE

NAME: **TERRENCE J. O'BRIEN**

AGE: **57**

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: **AUSTRALIA**

HISTORY: **EXPERIMENTED WITH DRUGS, LOVED  
MOTORCYCLES**



**MY PAST:** I spent my childhood in the busy city of Brisbane, the capital of Queensland. My family was Catholic, but after I turned eight, we stopped attending church and never discussed religion. When I was ten, our family moved to the Gold Coast in Australia. We lived near the beach, and I filled my early teen years with swimming and surfing.

Even so, my childhood was not a happy one. My father left our family when I was eight. My mother remarried, and in our household, alcohol and arguments were a regular part of life. One night, after a particularly violent argument between my parents, I was sitting on my bed, vowing that if I ever married, I would never argue with my

wife. Despite domestic problems, our family—made up of six children, mother, and stepfather—remained close.

In my later teens, many of my peers rebelled against authority. They experimented with marijuana, tobacco, and other drugs, and they abused alcohol. I engaged in the same carefree lifestyle as my peers. I also enjoyed riding motorcycles. Even though I was involved in a couple of serious accidents, I continued to love motorcycles and decided to ride my bike across Australia.

Despite all the freedom I had, I often felt depressed when I thought about the state of the world and how unconcerned

most people were about mankind's problems. I longed to know the truth about God, religion, and world conditions. But when I raised my questions to two Catholic priests, I was disillusioned with their answers. I discussed the same topics with various Protestant ministers but was just as

**"Right from the first discussion, I knew I had found something special. At the time, though, I didn't see the need to change my lifestyle in any way"**

disappointed with their responses. Then a friend arranged for me to meet Eddie, one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I had four discussions with Eddie, and each time he used the Bible to answer my questions. Right from the first discussion, I knew I had found something special. At the time, though, I didn't see the need to change my lifestyle in any way.

**HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:** During my journey across Australia, I had discussions with another Witness, whom I met along the way. But when I returned to Queensland, I had no further contact with the Witnesses for six months.

Then one day on my way home from work, I saw two well-dressed men carrying briefcases and walking along the street, and I guessed that they were Jehovah's Witnesses. I approached them, confirmed my guess, and then asked them to study the Bible with me. I immediately began attending the meetings held by the Witnesses and even attended a large convention held in Sydney in 1973. However, when my family—especially

my mother—found out what I was doing, they were very distressed. For this and other reasons, I stopped associating with the Witnesses. For a year, I was absorbed in my other great love, playing cricket.

Eventually, though, I realized that the only time I felt truly happy was when I was studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. I again made contact with them and began attending the meetings. I also broke off association with my drug-taking friends.

What really motivated me to make these changes was what I learned about the Bible character Job. A kindly but firm older Witness named Bill was regularly discussing the Bible with me. After we had studied the story of Job, Bill asked me who else Satan has accused of serving God only halfheartedly. (Job 2:3-5) I listed all the Bible characters I knew, and Bill patiently replied, "Yes, yes, them too." Then he looked me in the eye and said, "Satan is saying that about you as well!" I nearly fell off my chair. Prior to that study, I knew that the doctrines I was learning were true. But now I understood why I should act on what I was learning. Four months later, I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

**HOW I HAVE BENEFITED:** I shudder to think what my life would be like now if I had not learned to live by Bible standards. Most likely, I would be dead. Many of my former associates died as a result of drugs or alcohol. They also had unhappy marriages. I can only assume that my life would have been the same.

I am now married, and my wife, Margaret, and I enjoy serving at the Australia branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses. None of my family have joined me in worshipping Jehovah. Yet, over the years, Margaret and I have

had the pleasure of studying the Bible with a number of individuals and couples who have transformed their lives, just as I did. In the process, we have made many beautiful friends. In addition, Margaret, who was raised as a Witness, has helped me to keep

the vow I made almost 40 years ago. For more than 25 years, we have been happily married. We don't always see eye to eye, but so far we haven't had an argument. We both feel that we have the Bible to thank for that.



## PROFILE

NAME: **MASAHIRO OKABAYASHI**

AGE: **39**

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: **JAPAN**

HISTORY: **GAMBLER**



**MY PAST:** I was raised in Iwakura, a relatively small place about half an hour's train ride from Nagoya. I remember both my mother and my father as very kind people. I learned later, though, that my father was a *yakuza*, or gangster, who for a while supported our family of five by perpetrating frauds. He drank heavily every day, and when I was 20 years old, he died of cirrhosis of the liver.

My father was Korean, so our family was often discriminated against by the rest of the community. This fact and other problems made my teen years miserable. I enrolled in high school but attended only occasionally and quit after one year. I already had a police record, and that combined with being half Korean made it difficult for me to find work. Eventually, I did find a job, but I injured my knees and couldn't do physical work.

I started making a living playing pachinko, a form of gambling that involves a de-

vice similar to a pinball machine. By that time, I was living with a girl who wanted me to find a serious job and marry her. But I was making a lot of money gambling, and I didn't want to change my lifestyle.

**HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:** One day, one of Jehovah's Witnesses came to our door and left me the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* I had never considered this question before. However, after reading the book, I agreed to learn more about the Bible. I had always wondered what happens at death. The clear answers I received from the Bible about this and other topics made me feel as if scales had fallen from my eyes.

I saw the need to apply what I was learning from the Bible. So I legalized my marriage, stopped smoking, cut my long hair that had been dyed blond, and cleaned up my appearance. I also quit gambling.

None of these changes were easy to make. For example, I couldn't give up tobacco in my own strength. But with earnest prayer and reliance on Jehovah God, I did quit. Also, the first job I got after giving up pachinko was a real challenge for me. I made only half of what I had made gambling, and the work was hard and stressful. One Bible passage that helped me through that difficult time was Philippians 4:6, 7. It says: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." On many occasions, this promise has proved true for me.

**HOW I HAVE BENEFITED:** When I first started studying the Bible with Jehovah's Wit-

nesses, my wife was not happy. But when she saw the big changes I was making in my conduct, she joined my study sessions and began attending the meetings of Jehovah's

**"I couldn't give up tobacco  
in my own strength.  
But with earnest prayer and  
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Witnesses with me. Now both of us are Jehovah's Witnesses. It is such a blessing to be able to serve God together!

Before I studied the Bible, I thought that I was happy. Now, though, I know what real happiness is. Living by Bible standards is by no means easy, but I am certain that it is the best way of life.



## PROFILE

NAME: **ELIZABETH JANE SCHOFIELD**

AGE: **35**

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: **UNITED KINGDOM**

HISTORY: **LIVED FOR THE WEEKENDS**

**MY PAST:** I grew up in Hardgate, a small town just outside of Glasgow, Scotland. When I was seven, my mother, who had become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, began teaching me about the Bible. By the time I was 17, though, I was more interested in socializing with my school friends—going to

nightclubs, listening to heavy metal music, and drinking alcohol. The farthest thing from my mind was anything spiritual. I lived for the weekends. However, all of that changed when I was 21.

I went to visit some of my relatives in Northern Ireland. While there, I witnessed

the Orange Walk, a Protestant parade. The sheer hatred and bigotry that I saw expressed between Protestants and Catholics on that occasion shocked me. In fact, it shook me to my senses. I remembered the things that my mother had taught me from the Bible and knew that God would never approve of those who ignore his loving standards. Then it dawned on me that I had been busily pursuing my own interests, ignoring how God wanted me to live my life. I decided that when I returned home to Scotland, I would seriously investigate what the Bible teaches.

**HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:** The first time that I went back to a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses in my hometown, I felt awkward and nervous. However, everyone made me feel welcome. As I began to apply the things I was learning from the Bible, a very kind member of the congregation took a special interest in me. She really helped me to feel a part of the congregation again. The friends I formerly associated with continued to invite me out to nightclubs, but I told them that I was serious about living by Bible standards. Eventually, they stopped contacting me.

In the past, I had viewed the Bible as little more than a rule book. Now my attitude changed. I began to see the Bible characters as real people who had feelings and weaknesses, just like me. They too had made mistakes, yet Jehovah God forgave them when they were genuinely sorry. I gained confidence that even though I had turned my back on God when I was young, he would forgive me and forget my past mistakes if I tried hard to please him.

My mother's conduct also deeply impressed me. Although I had abandoned

God, she never did. Her steady example of loyalty made me realize that serving Jehovah was worth the effort. When I was young and went preaching from door to door with my mother, I never enjoyed it and couldn't imagine spending hours preaching to people. Now, though, I decided to put Jesus' promise at Matthew 6:31-33 to the test. He said: "Never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' . . . Your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other

*"In the past, I had viewed the Bible as little more than a rule book. Now my attitude changed. I began to see the Bible characters as real people who had feelings and weaknesses, just like me"*

things will be added to you." Soon after I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I quit my full-time job, got part-time employment, and became a full-time minister.

**HOW I HAVE BENEFITED:** When I was younger and living just for the weekends, I never felt satisfied. My life was empty. Now that I have become fully involved in serving Jehovah, I have a feeling of contentment. My life has meaning and purpose. I am now married, and my husband and I travel to different congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses each week, encouraging them. I view this work as the greatest privilege of my life. I am so grateful to Jehovah for giving me a second chance!

# Jehovah Gives Us a Choice

*Deuteronomy 30:11-20*

"I HAVE often had the unreasoning fear that I would prove unfaithful to Jehovah." So stated one Christian woman who felt that her bad experiences as a child doomed her to failure. Is that the case? Are we really helpless victims of circumstance? No. Jehovah God has given us the gift of free will, so we can make our own choices about how we will live. Jehovah wants us to make the right choices, and his Word, the Bible, tells us how we can do that. Consider the words of Moses, as found in Deuteronomy chapter 30.

Is it difficult to know what God requires of us and then to do it?<sup>\*</sup> Moses states: "This commandment that I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it far away." (Verse 11) Jehovah does not ask the impossible. His requirements are reasonable and reachable. They are also knowable. We do not have to ascend "into the heavens" or journey "to the other side of the sea" in order to learn what God expects of us. (Verses 12, 13) The Bible plainly tells us how we should live.—Micah 6:8.

Jehovah, however, does not force us to obey him. Moses says: "I do put before you today life and good, and death and bad." (Verse 15) We are free to choose between life and death, good and bad. We can choose to worship and obey God with blessings in

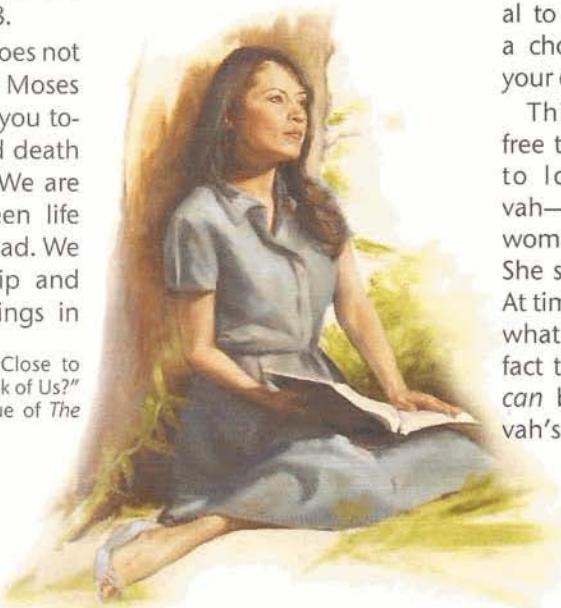
view, or we can choose to disobey him and suffer the consequences. Either way, the choice is ours.—Verses 16-18; Galatians 6:7, 8.

Does it matter to Jehovah which course we choose? Of course it does! Inspired by God, Moses said: "Choose life." (Verse 19) How, though, do we choose life? Moses explained: "By loving Jehovah your God, by listening to his voice and by sticking to him." (Verse 20) If we come to love Jehovah, we will want to listen obediently to him and stick loyally to him, come what may. By means of such a course, we choose life—the best way of life now with the prospect of life everlasting in God's coming new world.—2 Peter 3:11-13; 1 John 5:3.

The words of Moses teach a reassuring truth. No matter what you may have experienced in this wicked world, you are not a helpless victim; neither are you doomed to failure. Jehovah has dignified you with the gift of free will. Yes, you can choose to love Jehovah, to listen to him, and to remain loyal to him. If you make such a choice, Jehovah will bless your efforts.

This truth—that we are free to make our own choice to love and serve Jehovah—brought comfort to the woman quoted at the outset. She says: "I do love Jehovah. At times, I have forgotten that what is most important is the fact that I love Jehovah. So I can be faithful." With Jehovah's help, so can you.

\* See the article "Draw Close to God—What Does Jehovah Ask of Us?" in the October 1, 2009, issue of *The Watchtower*.



- Do all good people really go to heaven? See page 6.
- Was Mary actually "the Mother of God"? See page 8.
- How does God feel about the use of images and icons in worship? See page 9.
- How can you cope if your spouse is sick or injured? See pages 10-12.
- Has the Bible's message been changed? See pages 13-14.
- What can each member of the family do to make life at home happier? See pages 16-17.