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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**How Precious Is
Life to You?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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How Precious Is Life to You?

A TEENAGE boy jumped to his death from the eighth floor of an apartment building. He had read a book that described a death leap as being "free from pain or uneasiness or fear; rather, it feels good." The author of this book, published in Japan, claimed that he was only offering "suicide as one of life's choices."

People who commit suicide are not the only ones who manifest disregard for life today. Reckless drivers also show very little respect for life. Some even drink and drive, many speeding down the road to death.

Others show how little they value their life by the emphasis they place on pleasure. Smokers refuse to rid themselves of cigarettes, although smoking can cause death and has been called slow-motion suicide. Instead of maintaining chastity in this sex-mad world, many pursue a promiscuous course that often leads to death.

Without even being aware of it, some rob themselves of years of life by overeating, overdrinking, insufficient exercise, and pleasure seeking. Japanese author Shinya Nishimaru warned: "Unrestrained eating habits upset physiological functions, and the pursuit of nothing but convenience and pleasure eats away people's vitality." Some share the view of those of ancient times who said: "Let there be eating and drinking, for tomorrow we shall die."—Isaiah 22:13; 1 Corinthians 15:32.

Yes, disregard for life is rampant today. Hence, it might well be asked, How precious is life to you? Should life be guarded at all costs? And is there anything more valuable than our present life?



Treasure the Real Life

IS THIS life all there is? By encouraging us to "get a firm hold on the real life," the Bible indicates that there is more. (1 Timothy 6:17-19) If our present life is not the real life, what is?

The context of the foregoing scripture shows that it is "everlasting life" on which a God-fearing person should get a firm hold. (1 Timothy 6:12) For the vast majority, this means everlasting life on earth. Adam, the first man, had the prospect of living forever on a paradise earth. (Genesis 1:26, 27) He would die only if he ate from "the tree of the knowledge of good and bad." (Genesis 2:17) But because Adam and his wife, Eve, disobediently ate from that tree, God pronounced the death sentence. 'In the day they ate from it,' they died in God's eyes and began their tumble into physical death. Their life was no longer of the quality that they had enjoyed at first.

The Way to "the Real Life"

In order to make "the real life" possible, Jehovah God made an arrangement to rescue mankind. To help us understand this arrangement, let us imagine a small factory. All the machines in it are faulty and cause trouble for the operators because the first worker years ago ignored the operator's manual and damaged all the ma-

chines. Present-day operators can only do their best to work with what they have. The factory owner wants to rebuild the machines to help his workers, and he is setting aside the funds necessary for that purpose.

The first 'machine operator,' Adam, did not treasure the life he had been given. Hence, he passed on to his offspring an imperfect life, similar to a malfunctioning machine. (Romans 5:12) Like the later operators in the factory, who could not remedy the situation, Adam's offspring have been unable to attain the real life for themselves. (Psalm 49:7) To correct this seemingly hopeless situation, Jehovah sent his only-begotten Son to earth to buy back everlasting life for mankind. (Luke 1:35; 1 Peter 1:18, 19) By dying a sacrificial death for

the sake of mankind, God's only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, provided the funds—the life that corresponds to the one Adam lost. (Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 2:22) With this precious sacrifice, Jehovah now has the basis for providing the real life.

For obedient mankind, Jesus' ransom sacrifice will mean life eternal on a paradise earth. (Psalm 37:29) This hope is extended to all who survive "the war of the great day of God the Almighty," referred to as Har-Magedon. (Revelation 16:14-16) It will eradicate all wickedness from



the earth. (Psalm 37:9-11) Those in God's memory who die before that time will be resurrected to Paradise restored on earth and will have the prospect of enjoying the real life that is in store for all who obey God.—John 5:28, 29.

Need to Cherish Our Present Life

This does not mean that we can rightly show disregard for the sanctity of our present life. Will the owner of the factory spend time and money rebuilding a machine for a worker who does not take care of it? Rather, would the employer not entrust the rebuilt machine to a person who did his best to maintain the old one?

Life is a precious gift from Jehovah. As the benevolent source of that gift, he wants us to cherish it. (Psalm 36:9; James 1:17) Speaking of Jehovah's concern for people on earth, Jesus said: "Even the hairs of your heads are all numbered." (Luke 12:7) Jehovah commanded the Israelites not to murder, which naturally included not murdering oneself. (Exodus 20:13) This helps us to avoid viewing suicide as an option.

Knowing Jehovah's loving interest in our welfare, God-fearing people apply Bible principles to present-day practices. For instance, because true Christians are required to 'cleanse themselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear,' they shun tobacco and mind-altering addictive drugs.—2 Corinthians 7:1.

God's interest in human life is further seen in his counsel to maintain "a calm heart" and to avoid immoral conduct. (Proverbs 14:30; Galatians 5:19-21) By adhering to these high standards, we are protected from such things as detrimental rage and sexually transmitted diseases.

Jehovah's concern for the lives of his people is also evident in his admonition

to refrain from overeating and overdrinking. (Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Proverbs 23:20, 21) Christians are warned that greedy persons and drunkards will not inherit God's Kingdom, that is, they will never experience the real life. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 1 Peter 4:3) By encouraging moderation, Jehovah teaches us to benefit ourselves.—Isaiah 48:17.

When we abide by God's standards, we show that we treasure our present life. Of course, even more significant is the real life. Since it is everlasting, true Christians attach more importance to it than to their present life. When Jesus Christ sacrificed his life, he subjected himself to the will of Jehovah. Obedience to his Father meant far more to him than did his life here on the earth. Jesus' course resulted in his resurrection and in his receiving immortal life in heaven. (Romans 6:9) His death also means everlasting life for obedient mankind who exercise faith in his ransom sacrifice.—Hebrews 5:8, 9; 12:2.

Vital Law on Blood

Understandably, Jesus' followers reflect his thinking. They seek to please God in all things, even as Christ did. For one thing, this explains why they refuse blood transfusions, which some doctors call lifesaving. Let us see how a person shows that he treasures the real life by refusing blood transfusions.

Like Jesus Christ, true Christians desire to be alive in God's eyes, and that requires complete obedience to Him. God's Word commands Christ's followers: "Keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication." (Acts 15:28, 29) Why was this law about blood included among the commands binding upon Christians?

The Law given to the Israelites required abstinence from blood. (Leviticus 17:13, 14) Christians are not under the Mosaic Law. But they realize that the command not to eat blood predated the Law; it had earlier been given to Noah after the Deluge. (Genesis 9:3, 4; Colossians 2:13, 14) This command applied to all the offspring of Noah, from whom all nations of the earth have descended. (Genesis 10:32) In addition, the Mosaic Law helps us to see the reason for God's insistence on the sanctity of blood. After forbidding the Israelites to consume blood of any kind, God said: "The soul of the flesh is in the blood, and I myself have put it upon the altar for you to make atonement for your souls, because it is the blood that makes atonement by the soul in it." (Leviticus 17:11) Blood was reserved by God for sacrificial use upon the altar. His law on the sanctity of blood reveals his authority over all life on the earth. (Ezekiel 18:4; Revelation 4:11) Seeing our life from Jehovah's standpoint, we realize that it does not belong to us but is only entrusted to us by God.

Just as the operator in our illustration was responsible for a machine, we are entrusted with our present life. What would you do if your machine required repair and a mechanic suggested patching it up by using parts specifically forbidden in the operator's manual? Would you not consult other mechanics to see if the machine

could be fixed in harmony with the manual's instructions? Human life is far more important and complex than a machine. In his inspired Word, the manual for keeping humans alive, our Maker forbids the use of blood to sustain life. (Deuteronomy 32:46, 47; Philippians 2:16) Is it not reasonable to stick to the requirements of that manual?

Really, Christian patients who ask for bloodless management of their case are not rejecting all medical treatment. They are merely asking for treatment that will show respect for their life—both present and future. Doctors who courageously respect the stand taken by Christians testify to the benefits of treating them in harmony with their request. "Meeting Jehovah's Witnesses led me to a new set of values," says one surgeon who used to administer blood extensively. Now he tries to treat even non-Witnesses without blood.

Treasuring the Real Life

What was the new set of values that this surgeon found through treating Jehovah's Witnesses? He now realizes that treating a patient involves not just the part of the body that is affected by disease but the whole person. Should not a patient be allowed to ask for the best care for his or her physical, spiritual, and emotional welfare?

To 15-year-old Kumiko, a blood transfusion to treat her deadly leukemia was the worst possible option. Trying to length-



en her life by this means for a few weeks, months, or even years was not worth what it would cost her in the long run. Having dedicated her present life to Jehovah God as one of his Witnesses, she respected the sanctity of life and blood. Although her father and other relatives strongly opposed her stand, Kumiko stood firm. Her doctor once asked her: "If your God forgives failures, wouldn't he forgive you even if you accepted a blood transfusion?" Kumiko refused to compromise and thus repudiate her Bible-based belief. "Keeping a tight grip on the word of life," she maintained her stand. (Philippians 2:16) As her unbelieving grandmother said, "Kumiko would not abandon her faith." Soon the attitude of her father and her grandmother as well as that of the attending doctors changed.

Kumiko's strong faith in Jehovah God, who can resurrect her from the dead, moved many hearts. While still alive, she entreated her father: "Even if I die, I will be resurrected in the Paradise. But if you are destroyed at Har-Magedon, I won't see you. So please study the Bible." Her father just kept saying: "When you get well, I will." But when Kumiko died from her relentless illness, her father put into her casket a note that said: "I'll see you in Paradise, Kumiko." After the funeral service, he spoke to those who attended the service and said: "I promised Kumiko that I would see her in Paradise. Although I still can't believe it because I have not studied enough, I am determined to look into it. Please help me." Others in her family also started to study the Bible.

Kumiko had true respect for life and wanted to live. She appreciated all that her doctors did to save her present life. By complying with instructions in the Creator's manual, however, she proved that she treasured the real life. For millions, that will be everlasting life on a paradise earth. Will you be among them?



Jehovah's Witnesses Around the World

BETWEEN the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean lies the lush, tropical island of Puerto Rico. Christopher Columbus claimed it for Spain in 1493 and named it San Juan Bautista after John the Baptizer. Its largest city was long called Puerto Rico, or "Rich Port." In time, this name came to apply to the whole island, while the city came to be called San Juan.

Puerto Rico has proved to be a rich port in many respects. Much gold was shipped from here in the early years of Spanish rule. The island now exports sugarcane, coffee, plantains, and citrus fruits, although manufacturing and service industries account for much of the economy today. However, Puerto Rico has proved to be a rich port in a far more important sense.

The good news about God's Kingdom began to be preached here in the 1930's. Today, there are over 25,000 publishers of the good news in Puerto Rico. In 1993 the staff at this branch of the Watch Tower Society increased from 23 to over 100. This increase was necessary so that the branch could oversee the translation of Bible literature into Spanish, making such publications available to some 350,000,000 Spanish-speaking people worldwide.

A New Field

The branch office also reports: "A new field has opened up in Puerto Rico because we have been making efforts to take the Kingdom message to the deaf. One sister relates the following experience: 'I was working among the deaf and visited a lady with two small children. When she realized that I was a Witness, she rejected me right away because her husband, who was also deaf, did not like Jehovah's Witnesses.'

"Some months later this same lady visited a friend who was studying the Bible with the Witnesses. She joined in and enjoyed it very much. I visited the lady again, and she repeated that her husband did not like the Witnesses. However, she wanted to understand the Bible and was tired of her church because they taught nothing. We started to study, using a tract. One day she told me to come back on Saturday because her husband would be there. "But he doesn't like us, does he?" I asked. She replied: "He wants to find out what this is all about."

"The next day both of them were knocking on my door! Since the husband had many questions, I invited them to our meetings for the deaf. He was there before I was and has not missed a meeting since then. He

is preaching to other deaf persons, has attended an assembly, and is looking forward to baptism.'"

The branch report continues: "At our district convention this year, the whole program was presented in sign language, so many deaf people were in attendance with their families. A very emotional moment came during the final talk when the speaker mentioned the work being done among the deaf and said that about 70 were present. There was great applause, but, as the speaker noted, the deaf could not hear it. So asking the deaf to look at the audience, the speaker repeated the question, 'Are you happy to have your deaf brothers here with you?' and asked the audience to applaud by waving both hands. It was a wonderful sight to see 11,000 brothers and sisters applauding by waving their hands. Our deaf brothers and sisters were overjoyed and felt a part of the great brotherhood. Many shed tears of joy."

As Jehovah's Witnesses share in the harvest work in Puerto Rico, no doubt it will continue to be a rich port. God's "sheep," whom he calls "the desirable things of all the nations," will keep coming in so that Jehovah's house is filled with glory.
—John 10:16; Haggai 2:7.



PUERTO RICO



COUNTRY PROFILE 1994 Service Year	
PEAK NUMBER WITNESSING:	25,428
RATIO:	1 Witness to 139
MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE:	60,252
AVERAGE PIONEER PUBLISHERS:	2,329
AVERAGE BIBLE STUDIES:	19,012
NUMBER BAPTIZED:	919
NUMBER OF CONGREGATIONS:	312
BRANCH OFFICE:	GUAYNABO

THE JOY OF JEHOVAH IS OUR STRONGHOLD

"This day is holy to our Lord, and do not feel hurt, for the joy of Jehovah is your stronghold."—NEHEMIAH 8:10.

JEHOVAH is an incomparable stronghold. And what is a stronghold? It is a fortified place, one of security or survival. David of ancient Israel considered God to be his stronghold. For instance, consider the song that David directed to the Most

1, 2. (a) What is a stronghold? (b) How did David show that he took refuge in Jehovah?

High “in the day that Jehovah had delivered him out of the palm of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul,” the king of Israel.—Psalm 18, superscription.

² David began that moving song with the words: “I shall have affection for you, O Jehovah my strength. Jehovah is my crag and my stronghold and the Provider of escape



for me. My God is my rock. I shall take refuge in him, my shield and my horn of salvation, my secure height." (Psalm 18:1, 2) Unjustly outlawed and pursued by King Saul, upright David took refuge in Jehovah, just as a person may run into a fortified place to survive some calamity.

³ The joy that Jehovah gives is an unfailing stronghold for those walking in his way as integrity keepers. (Proverbs 2:6-8; 10:29) To have God-given joy, of course, people must do the divine will. In this regard, consider what happened in Jerusalem in Ezra's day. The copyist Ezra and others imparted understanding through a meaningful reading of the Law. Then the people were urged: "Go, eat the fatty things and drink the sweet things, and send portions to the one for whom nothing has been prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord, and do not feel hurt, for the joy of Jehovah is your stronghold." "Great rejoicing" resulted as the Jews applied the knowledge they had gained and held a joyous Festival of Booths. (Nehemiah 8:1-12) Those who had 'the joy of Jehovah as their stronghold' gathered strength for his worship and service. Since the joy of Jehovah was their stronghold, we should expect God's people today to be joyful also. What, then, are some of their present-day reasons for joy?

"Nothing but Joyful"

⁴ One outstanding reason for joy is the provision Jehovah makes for assembling together. The assemblies and conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses bring them joy today, just as the annual festivals held by the Israelites brought joy to their hearts.

3. Why did the Jews of Ezra's day experience "great rejoicing"?

4. What is one outstanding source of joy for Jehovah's people?

The people of Israel were told: "Seven days you will celebrate the festival [of booths] to Jehovah your God in the place that Jehovah will choose, because Jehovah your God will bless you in all your produce and in every deed of your hand, and you must become nothing but joyful." (Deuteronomy 16:13-15) Yes, God wanted them to "become nothing but joyful." The same is true of Christians, for the apostle Paul urged fellow believers: "Always rejoice in the Lord. Once more I will say, Rejoice!"—Philippians 4:4.

⁵ Since Jehovah wants us to be joyful, he gives us joy as one of the fruits of his holy spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) And what is joy? It is the delightful emotion caused by the expectation or acquisition of good. Joy is a state of true happiness, even exultation. This fruit of God's holy spirit sustains us under trial. "For the joy that was set before him [Jesus] endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2) The disciple James wrote: "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet with various trials, knowing as you do that this tested quality of your faith works out endurance." But what if we do not know what to do about a certain trial? Then we can confidently pray for wisdom to deal with it. Acting in harmony with heavenly wisdom enables us to resolve problems or to cope with persistent trials without losing the joy of Jehovah.—James 1:2-8.

⁶ The joy that Jehovah gives strengthens us to promote true worship. That is what happened in the days of Nehemiah and Ezra. Jews of that time who had the

5. (a) What is joy, and how do Christians acquire it? (b) How can we have joy despite trials?

6. What relationship exists between joy and true worship?

joy of Jehovah as their stronghold were strengthened to further the interests of true worship. And as they promoted the worship of Jehovah, their joy increased. The same is true today. As worshipers of Jehovah, we have grounds for great rejoicing. Let us now consider a few more of our many reasons for joy.

Relationship With God Through Christ

⁷ Our close relationship with Jehovah makes us the happiest people on earth. Before becoming Christians, we were part of unrighteous human society that is ‘in darkness mentally and alienated from the life that belongs to God.’ (Ephesians 4:18) How glad we are that we are no longer alienated from Jehovah! Of course, it takes effort to remain in his favor. We must “continue in the faith, established on the foundation and steadfast and not being shifted away from the hope of that good news.” (Colossians 1:21-23) We can rejoice that Jehovah drew us to his Son in accord with Jesus’ own words: “No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him.” (John 6:44) If we truly appreciate our precious relationship with God through Christ, we will guard against anything that could ruin it.

⁸ Forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus’ ransom sacrifice is a great cause of joy because this is what makes our relationship with God possible. By his willful course of sin, our forefather Adam brought death upon all mankind. However, the apostle Paul explained: “God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Paul also wrote:

7. Regarding Jehovah, what reason do Christians have for joy?
8. How has Jesus contributed to our joyful state?

“As through one trespass the result to men of all sorts was condemnation, likewise also through one act of justification the result to men of all sorts is a declaring of them righteous for life. For just as through the disobedience of the one man many were constituted sinners, likewise also through the obedience of the one person many will be constituted righteous.” (Romans 5:8, 18, 19) How joyful we can be that Jehovah God is pleased to redeem those of Adam’s offspring who avail themselves of such a loving provision!

Religious Freedom and Enlightenment

⁹ Freedom from Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, is another reason to be joyful. It is divine truth that has set us free. (John 8:32) And freedom from this religious harlot means that we do not share in her sins, experience her plagues, and end up in destruction with her. (Revelation 18:1-8) There is nothing sad about escaping all of that!

¹⁰ Understanding and applying God’s Word in life are causes of great rejoicing. Free from false religion’s influence, we enjoy ever-clearer spiritual insight provided by our heavenly Father through “the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matthew 24:45-47) Of all the people living on the earth, only those exclusively devoted to Jehovah have his holy spirit and the blessed comprehension of his Word and will. It is as Paul said: “It is to us God has revealed them [the things he has prepared for those who love him] through his spirit, for the spirit searches into all things, even the deep things of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10) We

9. Why are we joyful from a religious standpoint?
10. What enlightenment do we enjoy as Jehovah’s people?

can be both grateful and joyous that we are enjoying the progressive understanding indicated in the words of Proverbs 4:18: "The path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established."

Kingdom Hope and Life Eternal

¹¹ Our Kingdom hope also makes us joyful. (Matthew 6:9, 10) As Jehovah's Witnesses, we have long proclaimed that God's Kingdom is the only hope for all mankind. For instance, consider the year 1931, when we embraced the name Jehovah's Witnesses by a resolution joyously acclaimed at 51 conventions around the world. (Isaiah 43:10-12) That resolution and a significant convention address by J. F. Rutherford (then president of the Watch Tower Society) were published in the booklet *The Kingdom, the Hope of the World*. Included in it was another resolution adopted at that convention, one indicting Christendom for her apostasy and for treating Jehovah's counsel with contempt. It also proclaimed: "The hope of the world is God's kingdom, and there is no other hope." Within a few months, Jehovah's Witnesses distributed over five million copies of this booklet in all parts of the earth. Since then we have often affirmed that the Kingdom is mankind's only hope.

¹² We rejoice, too, in the prospect of eternal life under Kingdom rule. The "little flock" of anointed Christians have a joyous heavenly hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," wrote the apostle Peter, "for according to his great mercy he gave us a new birth to a liv-

11. How has the joyful Kingdom hope been shared with others?

12. What joyous life prospects are set before those serving Jehovah?

ing hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance. It is reserved in the heavens for you." (Luke 12:32; 1 Peter 1:3, 4) Today, the vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses look forward to life everlasting in Paradise within the Kingdom's domain. (Luke 23:43; John 17:3) No other people on earth have anything to compare with our joyful prospects. How we should cherish them!

A Blessed Brotherhood

¹³ Being a part of the only God-approved international brotherhood is also a source of great joy. Happily, we have the most desirable associates on earth. Jehovah God himself pointed to our day and said: "I will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory." (Haggai 2:7) True, all Christians are imperfect. However, Jehovah has drawn such individuals to himself through Jesus Christ. (John 14:6) Since Jehovah has drawn to himself people he considers desirable, our joy will abound if we show them brotherly love, esteem them highly, cooperate with them in godly pursuits, uphold them in their trials, and pray in their behalf.

¹⁴ All of this will contribute to our joy. Indeed, it is the joy of Jehovah that is the stronghold of our spiritual brotherhood throughout the earth. Yes, all of us suffer persecution and other hardships. But this should draw us together and give us a sense of unity as part of the one genuine organization of God on earth. As Peter said, we should humble ourselves under

13. How should we view our international brotherhood?

14. What encouragement can we draw from 1 Peter 5:5-11?

God's mighty hand, throwing all our anxiety upon him in the knowledge that he cares for us. We need to be watchful because the Devil seeks to devour us, but in this we are not alone, for Peter adds: "Take your stand against him, solid in the faith, knowing that the same things in the way of sufferings are being accomplished in the entire association of your brothers in the world." And this joyful international brotherhood will never collapse, for we have the assurance that 'after we have suffered a little while, God will finish our training and will make us firm and strong.' (1 Peter 5: 5-11) Think of it. Our joyful brotherhood will last forever!

A Life of Purpose

¹⁵ Joy is ours in this troubled world because we have a purposeful life. We are entrusted with a ministry that makes us and others happy. (Romans 10:10) It surely is a joyous privilege to be God's fellow workers. In this regard, Paul said: "What . . . is Apollos? Yes, what is Paul? Ministers through whom you became believers, even as the Lord granted each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God kept making it grow; so that neither is he that plants anything nor is he that waters, but God who makes it grow. Now he that plants and he that waters are one, but each person will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You people are God's field under cultivation, God's building."—1 Corinthians 3:5-9.

¹⁶ Many examples could be cited to show that serving Jehovah faithfully results in

15. Why can it be said that Jehovah's Witnesses have a purposeful life?
16, 17. What examples can be cited to prove that Jehovah's people have joyous lives of purpose?

a purposeful life that fills us with joy. Typical is this statement: "I looked around the filled Kingdom Hall [on the day of its dedication program] and could see eight members of my family present, including me and my wife and three of our children and their mates. . . . My wife and I have really had a happy, purposeful life in the service of God."

¹⁷ It is also heartening to realize that at any age a person can embark on a joyous life of real purpose in Jehovah's service. • For example, a woman who learned Bible truth in a nursing home was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses at the age of 102. She thus finished her life with joyful purpose, 'fearing the true God and keeping his commandments.'—Ecclesiastes 12:13.

An Unfailing Stronghold

¹⁸ The joy of Jehovah is an unfailing stronghold for the faithful. Yet, having this joy does not mean that we will never have dark hours like those that moved Jesus to say in Gethsemane: "My soul is deeply grieved, even to death." (Mark 14:32-34) Suppose despondency has resulted from our yielding to selfish pursuits. Then let us change our life-style. If our joy has diminished because we unselfishly bear a heavy load of Scriptural responsibilities, perhaps we can make adjustments that will relieve stress and restore our joyous spirit. Moreover, Jehovah will bless us with joy if we seek to please him by vigorously resisting the sinful flesh, the wicked world, and the Devil.—Galatians 5:24; 6:14; James 4:7.

¹⁹ For reasons we have discussed, and for many others, we have great joy. Whether

18. What might be done to overcome despondency and to increase our joy?
19. How should we view any privileges we have in God's organization?

we are congregation publishers or are sharing in some form of the full-time service, all of us can have plenty to do in the Lord's work, and this is sure to contribute to our joy. (1 Corinthians 15:58) Whatever privileges we have in Jehovah's organization, let us be thankful for them and joyfully continue to render sacred service to our loving, happy God.—1 Timothy 1:11.

²⁰ Especially do we have reason to rejoice in our privilege of bearing Jehovah's great name as his Witnesses. Yes, we are imperfect and face many trials, but let us keep

20. What is our greatest privilege, and of what can we be certain?

in mind our wonderful blessings as Jehovah's Witnesses. And remember, our dear heavenly Father will never fail us. We can be sure that we will always be blessed if the joy of Jehovah is our stronghold.

How Would You Reply?

- What is "the joy of Jehovah"?
- How do Christians acquire true joy?
- What are some reasons why Jehovah's Witnesses are joyful?
- Why is the joy of Jehovah an unflinching stronghold?

SERVE JEHOVAH WITH JOY OF HEART

"All these maledictions will certainly come upon you . . . due to the fact that you did not serve Jehovah your God with rejoicing and joy of heart."

—DEUTERONOMY 28:45-47.

J EHOVAH'S servants are joyful, whether they are doing his will in heaven or on earth. Angelic "morning stars" cried out joyfully at earth's founding, and undoubtedly with joy the myriads of heavenly angels 'carry out God's word.' (Job 38:4-7; Psalm 103:20) Jehovah's only-begotten Son was a joyful "master worker" in heaven and found delight in doing the divine will as the man Jesus Christ on earth. Moreover, "for

1. What evidence is there that those serving Jehovah are joyful, wherever they serve him?

the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”—Proverbs 8:30, 31; Hebrews 10:5-10; 12:2.

² The Israelites experienced joy when they pleased God. But what if they disobeyed him? They were warned: “[Maledictions] must continue on you and your offspring as a sign and a portent to time

2. What determined whether the Israelites experienced either blessings or maledictions?

indefinite, due to the fact that you did not serve Jehovah your God with rejoicing and joy of heart for the abundance of everything. And you will have to serve your enemies whom Jehovah will send against you with hunger and thirst and nakedness and the want of everything; and he will certainly put an iron yoke upon your neck until he has annihilated you." (Deuteronomy 28:45-48) Blessings and maledictions made clear who were and who were not Jehovah's servants. Such maledictions also certified that there can be no trifling with God's principles and purposes, nor can there be a despising of them. Because the Israelites refused to heed Jehovah's warnings of desolation and exile, Jerusalem became "a malediction to all the nations of the earth." (Jeremiah 26:6) Let us therefore obey God and enjoy his favor. Joy is one of the many divine blessings experienced by the godly.

How to Serve With "Joy of Heart"

³ The Israelites were to serve Jehovah "with rejoicing and joy of heart." So must God's modern-day servants. To rejoice is "to be glad; be filled with joy." Though the physical heart is mentioned in the Scriptures, it does not literally think or reason. (Exodus 28:30) Its principal function is to pump the blood that nourishes the body cells. In the vast majority of cases, however, the Bible refers to the figurative heart, which is more than the seat of affection, motivation, and intellect. It is said to stand for "the central part in general, the inside, and so for the *interior man* as manifesting himself in all his various activities, in his desires, affections, emotions, passions, purposes, his thoughts, perceptions, imaginations, his wisdom, knowledge, skill, his beliefs and his reasonings, his memory

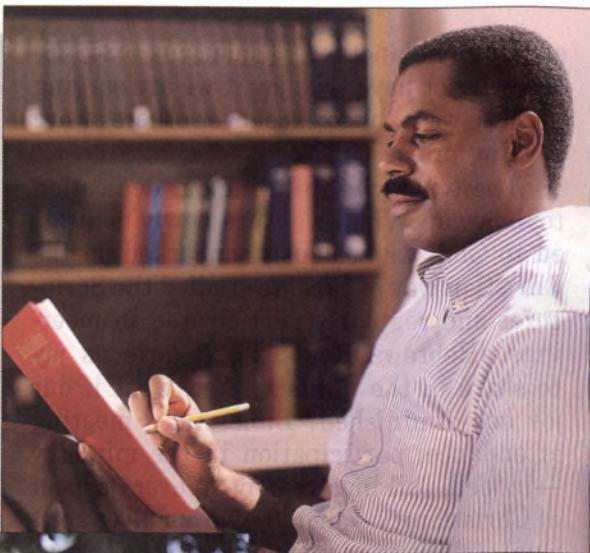
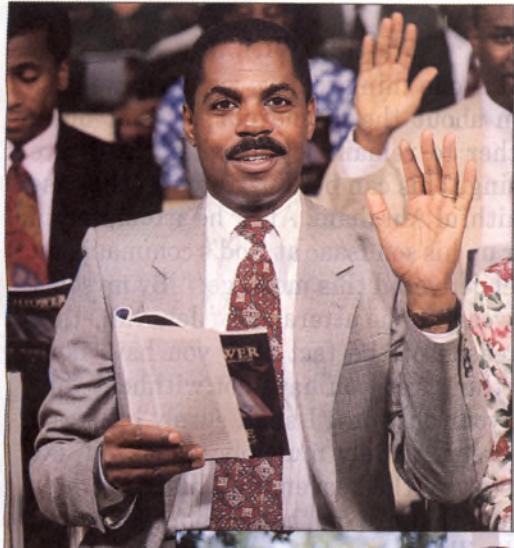
3. What is the figurative heart?

and his consciousness." (*Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis*, 1882, page 67) Our figurative heart involves our feelings and emotions, including joy. —John 16:22.

⁴ What can help us to serve Jehovah with joy of heart? A positive and appreciative view of our blessings and God-given privileges is helpful. For instance, we can reflect joyfully on our privilege of rendering "sacred service" to the true God. (Luke 1:74) There is the related privilege of bearing Jehovah's name as his Witnesses. (Isaiah 43:10-12) To this we can add the joyfulness of knowing that by following God's Word we are pleasing him. And what joy there is in reflecting spiritual light and thus helping many to come out of darkness!—Matthew 5:14-16; compare 1 Peter 2:9.

⁵ Yet, serving Jehovah with joy of heart is not just a matter of positive thinking. It is beneficial to be positive in viewpoint. But godly joy is not something we produce through character development. It is a fruit of Jehovah's spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) If we do not have such joy, we may need to make adjustments in order to avoid thinking or acting in some unscriptural manner that could grieve God's spirit. (Ephesians 4:30) As those devoted to Jehovah, however, let us not fear that a lack of heartfelt joy on some occasion is evidence of divine disapproval. We are imperfect and subject to pain, sadness, and even depression at times, but Jehovah understands us. (Psalm 103:10-14) Let us therefore pray for his holy spirit, remembering that its fruit of joy is God-given. Our loving heavenly Father will answer such prayers and will enable us to serve him with joy of heart. —Luke 11:13.

4. What can help us to serve Jehovah God with joy of heart?
5. What is the source of godly joy?



***Sharing in all features
of Christian life will
increase our joy***

When Joy Is Missing

⁶ If joy is missing in our service, we might eventually slow down in serving Jehovah or even prove unfaithful to him. Hence, it would be wise humbly and prayerfully to consider our motives and make necessary

6. If joy is missing in our service to God, what should we do?

adjustments. To have God-given joy, we must serve Jehovah out of love and with our whole heart, soul, and mind. (Matthew 22:37) We must not serve with a competitive attitude, for Paul wrote: "If we are living by spirit, let us go on walking orderly also by spirit. Let us not become egotistical, stirring up competition with one another,

envying one another." (Galatians 5:25, 26) We will not have true joy if we are serving because we want to excel over others or are seeking praise.

⁷ There is joy in fulfilling our dedication to Jehovah. When we were newly dedicated to God, we zealously embarked on the Christian way of life. We studied the Scriptures and regularly participated in meetings. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) It gave us joy to share in the ministry. Yet, what if our joy has diminished? Bible study, meeting attendance, participation in the ministry—indeed, full involvement in every aspect of Christianity—should give our lives spiritual stability and rekindle both the love we had at first and our former joy of heart. (Revelation 2:4) Then we will not be like some who are rather joyless and are often in need of spiritual assistance. Elders are glad to help, but we must individually fulfill our dedication to God. Nobody else can do this for us. Let us therefore make it our aim to follow the normal Christian routine in order to fulfill our dedication to Jehovah and have true joy.

⁸ If we are to have the joy that is a fruit of God's spirit, we need a clear conscience. As long as King David of Israel tried to conceal his sin, he was miserable. In fact, his life's moisture seemed to evaporate, and he may have become physically sick. What relief he had when repentance and confession took place! (Psalm 32:1-5) We cannot be joyful if we are hiding some serious sin. That might well cause us to live a troubled life. Surely, that is not the way to experience joy. But confession and repentance bring relief and the restoration of a joyful spirit.—Proverbs 28:13.

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7. How can we rekindle our joy of heart?
 8. Why is a clear conscience important if we want to be joyful?

Waiting With Joy

⁹ It is one thing to have joy when we first learn about the divine purpose but quite another to remain joyful when years are passing. This can be illustrated in the case of faithful Abraham. After he attempted to offer up his son Isaac at God's command, an angel delivered this message: "By myself I do swear," is the utterance of Jehovah, 'that by reason of the fact that you have done this thing and you have not withheld your son, your only one, I shall surely bless you and I shall surely multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens and like the grains of sand that are on the seashore; and your seed will take possession of the gate of his enemies. And by means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves due to the fact that you have listened to my voice.' " (Genesis 22:15-18) Undoubtedly, Abraham was overjoyed at this promise.

¹⁰ Abraham may have expected that Isaac would be the "seed" through whom the promised blessings would come. But the passing of years with nothing wonderful being accomplished through Isaac may have tested the faith and joy of Abraham and his family. God's confirmation of the promise to Isaac and later to his son Jacob assured them that the coming of the Seed was still future, and this helped them to maintain their faith and joy. However, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died without seeing the fulfillment of God's promises to them, but they were not joyless servants of Jehovah. (Hebrews 11:13) We too can keep on serving Jehovah with faith and joy while awaiting the fulfillment of his promises.

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- 9, 10. (a) What promise did Abraham receive, but how may his faith and joy have been tested? (b) How can we benefit from the examples of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

Joy Despite Persecution

¹¹ As Jehovah's servants, we can serve Jehovah with joy of heart, even though we suffer persecution. Jesus pronounced happy those persecuted for his sake, and the apostle Peter said: "Go on rejoicing forasmuch as you are sharers in the sufferings of the Christ, that you may rejoice and be overjoyed also during the revelation of his glory. If you are being reproached for the name of Christ, you are happy, because the spirit of glory, even the spirit of God, is resting upon you." (1 Peter 4:13, 14; Matthew 5:11, 12) If you are enduring persecution and suffering for the sake of righteousness, you have Jehovah's spirit and approval, and that certainly promotes joy.

¹² We can meet tests of faith with joy because God is our Refuge. This is made evident in Psalms 42 and 43. For some reason, a certain Levite was in exile. So much did he miss worship at God's sanctuary that he felt like a thirsty hind, or female deer, that longs for water in a dry and barren region. He "thirsted," or yearned, for Jehovah and for the privilege of worshiping God at His sanctuary. (Psalm 42:1, 2) This exile's experience should move us to show gratitude for the association we enjoy with Jehovah's people. If such a situation as confinement due to persecution temporarily prevented us from being with them, let us reflect on past joys together in sacred service and pray for endurance while we "wait for God" to restore us to regular activity with his worshipers.—Psalm 42:4, 5, 11; 43:3-5.

"Serve Jehovah With Rejoicing"

¹³ Joy must be a feature of our service

11. Why can we be joyful despite persecution?
12. (a) Why can we meet tests of faith with joy?
(b) What basic lesson can be learned from the case of a certain Levite in exile?
13. How does Psalm 100:1, 2 show that joy must be a feature of our service to God?

to God. This was shown in a melody of thanksgiving in which the psalmist sang: "Shout in triumph to Jehovah, all you people of the earth. Serve Jehovah with rejoicing. Come in before him with a joyful cry." (Psalm 100:1, 2) Jehovah is "the happy God" and wants his servants to find joy in carrying out their dedication to him. (1 Timothy 1:11) People of all nations should exult in Jehovah, and our expressions of praise should be strong, like the 'triumphant shout' of a victorious army. Since service to God is refreshing, it should be accompanied by rejoicing. Hence, the psalmist urged people to come into God's presence "with a joyful cry."

¹⁴ The psalmist added: "Know [recognize, acknowledge] that Jehovah is God. It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture." (Psalm 100:3) Since Jehovah is our Creator, he owns us as a shepherd does his sheep. So well does God care for us that we gratefully laud him. (Psalm 23) Concerning Jehovah, the psalmist also sang: "Come into his gates with thanksgiving, into his courtyards with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For Jehovah is good; his loving-kindness is to time indefinite, and his faithfulness to generation after generation."—Psalm 100:4, 5.

¹⁵ Today, joyful people of all nations are entering the courtyards of Jehovah's sanctuary to offer thanksgiving and praise. We joyfully bless God's name by always speaking well of Jehovah, and his grand qualities move us to praise him. He is good through and through, and his loving-kindness or compassionate regard for his servants can always be relied on, for it continues to

- 14, 15. How does Psalm 100:3-5 apply to Jehovah's joyful people today?

time indefinite. To "generation after generation," Jehovah is faithful in showing love toward those doing his will. (Romans 8:38, 39) Surely, then, we have good reason to "serve Jehovah with rejoicing."

Rejoice in Your Hope

¹⁶ Paul wrote: "Rejoice in the hope." (Romans 12:12) Anointed followers of Jesus Christ rejoice in the glorious hope of immortal heavenly life that God opened up to them through his Son. (Romans 8:16, 17; Philippians 3:20, 21) Christians with the hope of eternal life in Paradise on earth also have grounds for rejoicing. (Luke 23:43) All of Jehovah's faithful servants have reason to rejoice in the Kingdom hope, for they will either be part of that celestial government or live in its earthly domain. What a joyous blessing!—Matthew 6:9, 10; Romans 8:18-21.

¹⁷ Isaiah also foretold a joyful future for obedient mankind. He wrote: "Jehovah of armies will certainly make for all the peoples, in this mountain, a banquet of well-oiled dishes, a banquet of wine kept on the dregs, of well-oiled dishes filled with marrow, of wine kept on the dregs, filtered. And in this mountain he will certainly swallow up the face of the envelopment that is enveloping over all the peoples, and the woven work that is interwoven upon all the nations. He will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces. And the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for Jehovah himself has spoken it."—Isaiah 25:6-8.

16. In what hopes and prospects can Christians rejoice?

17, 18. (a) What was foretold at Isaiah 25:6-8? (b) How is this prophecy of Isaiah being fulfilled now, and what about its fulfillment in the future?

¹⁸ The spiritual feast we share in today as Jehovah's worshipers is a joyful banquet indeed. In fact, our joy overflows as we serve God zealously in anticipation of the banquet of literal good things he has promised for the new world. (2 Peter 3:13) On the basis of Jesus' sacrifice, Jehovah will remove "the woven work" enveloping mankind because of Adam's sin. What a joy it will be to see sin and death removed! What a delight to welcome back resurrected loved ones, to note that tears have vanished, and to live on a paradise earth, where Jehovah's people will not be reproached but will have given God an answer to the great taunter, Satan the Devil!—Proverbs 27:11.

¹⁹ Does it not fill you with joy and gratitude to know what Jehovah will do for his servants? Indeed, such grand prospects contribute to our joy! Moreover, our blessed hope makes us look to our happy, loving, generous God with sentiments like these: "Look! This is our God. We have hoped in him, and he will save us. This is Jehovah. We have hoped in him. Let us be joyful and rejoice in the salvation by him." (Isaiah 25:9) With our splendid hope firmly fixed in mind, let us bend every effort to serve Jehovah with joy of heart.

19. How should we react to the prospects Jehovah has set before us as his Witnesses?

How Would You Reply?

- How can we serve Jehovah with "joy of heart"?
- What can we do if joy is missing in our service to God?
- Why can Jehovah's people have joy despite persecution?
- What reasons do we have to rejoice in our hope?

Have You Encouraged Anyone Lately?

ELENA was just 17 years old when doctors discovered that she had ovarian cancer. Her mother, Mari, had to cope with the anguish of seeing Elena in excruciating pain.

Eventually, Elena was transferred to a hospital in Madrid, Spain, 1,200 miles from her home in the Canary Islands. In Madrid a team of doctors was willing to operate without blood. (Acts 15:28, 29) But shortly after the operation began, it became clear that Elena's condition was terminal. The cancer had already spread throughout her body, and the surgeons could do little. Elena died eight days after arriving in Madrid.

Mari did not have to face that terrible ordeal alone. At their own expense, two Christian elders accompanied her and her eldest son to Madrid and remained there until Elena's death. "They helped me fill the terrible void I felt inside," explains Mari. "I will never forget the encouragement they gave me. Their spiritual support and practical help were invaluable. They were a true 'hiding place from the wind.'" —Isaiah 32:1, 2.

Jehovah is pleased that loving shepherds such as these care for his sheep so tenderly. (Proverbs 19:17; 1 Peter 5:2-4) Giving encouragement, however, is not just the privilege of elders. All Christians meet together to receive spiritual instruction and to 'encourage one another.' (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Encouragement is an intrinsic part of Christian association.

What Does Encouragement Involve?

Just as a beautiful flower droops when deprived of water, so individuals—both in the family and in the congregation—can wilt from lack of encouragement. On the other hand, timely encouragement can fortify those who face temptation, lift the spirits of the depressed, and invigorate those who are serving God faithfully.

The Greek word translated "encouragement" includes the thought of consolation, exhortation, and comfort. Therefore, encouragement is not limited to telling someone he is doing well. It may also involve providing practical assistance and spiritual help.

Actually, the Greek word translated "encouragement" literally means "a calling to one's side." Walking side by side with our spiritual brothers and sisters enables us to give immediate support if one of them should tire out or stumble. (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10) Interestingly, Jehovah's people "serve him shoulder to shoulder." (Zephaniah 3:9) And the apostle Paul called a certain Christian a "genuine yokefellow." (Philippians 4:3) Pulling together under the same yoke by serving shoulder to shoulder makes the load lighter, especially for those who are not spiritually strong.—Compare Matthew 11:29.

They Gave Encouragement

Since encouragement is so important, let us consider some Scriptural examples of it. When God's prophet Moses was nearing

the end of his life, Jehovah assigned Joshua to be the leader of the Israelites. This was not an easy assignment, as Moses himself well knew. (Numbers 11:14, 15) Hence, Jehovah told Moses to "commission Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him." —Deuteronomy 3:28.

During the time of Israel's judges, Jephthah's daughter willingly complied with her father's vow by giving up the possibility of having a family in order to serve at Jehovah's sanctuary. Did her sacrifice go unnoticed? No, for Judges 11:40 says: "From year to year the daughters of Israel would go to give commendation to the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite, four days in the year." Such visits must have been very encouraging to the self-sacrificing daughter of Jephthah.

Giving encouragement sometimes requires courage. During the apostle Paul's first missionary journey, he encountered fierce opposition in several cities of Asia Minor. He was thrown out of Antioch, barely escaped execution in Iconium, and was stoned and left for dead at Lystra. Shortly thereafter, however, Paul and his companions returned to these cities, "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to remain in the faith and saying: 'We must enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations.'" (Acts 14:21, 22) Paul was prepared to risk his life to encourage these new disciples.

Yet, new disciples are not the only Christians who need encouragement. Years later Paul experienced an arduous journey to Rome, where he was to stand trial. As he approached his destination, he may have been somewhat disheartened. But when he arrived at a point 46 miles southeast of Rome, his spirits rose. Why? Because

brothers from Rome had come to meet him at the Marketplace of Appius and Three Taverns. "Upon catching sight of them, Paul thanked God and took courage." (Acts 28:15) On similar occasions, our just being present may be very encouraging to fellow believers.

Seize Opportunities to Give Encouragement

Many, indeed, are the opportunities to give encouragement. Was your heart moved by a good student talk delivered by a brother or a sister in the Theocratic Ministry School? Are you glad that there are spiritually strong teenagers in the congregation? Has the endurance of the elderly ones impressed you? Did you admire the way one of the pioneers used the Bible in the house-to-house ministry? Then give commendation, and say something encouraging.

Encouragement plays a vital role in the family as well as in the congregation. It can help parents to bring up their children "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) Telling a child that he has done well, and explaining why, can be so encouraging! During the teenage years, when young ones face many temptations and pressures, constant encouragement is vital.

Lack of encouragement during childhood can be quite detrimental. Today Michael, a Christian elder, is outgoing, but he says: "My father never once said I did anything well. So I grew up lacking self-esteem. . . . Although I am now 50 years old, I still appreciate being reassured by my friends that I am doing a good job as an elder. . . . My own experience has taught me how important it is to give encouragement to others, and I go out of my way to give it."

Who Needs Encouragement?

Hardworking Christian elders deserve encouragement. Paul wrote: "We request you, brothers, to have regard for those who are working hard among you and presiding over you in the Lord and admonishing you; and to give them more than extraordinary consideration in love because of their work." (1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13) It is easy to take the hard work of the elders for granted. But words of sincere appreciation and encouragement can make their load seem lighter.

Those among us who are enduring difficult circumstances also need encouragement. "Speak consolingly to the depressed souls, support the weak," the Bible counsels. (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Single parents, widows, teenagers, the elderly, and the infirm are among those who may feel depressed or spiritually weak from time to time.

Maria is a Christian woman who suddenly found herself abandoned by her husband. She said: "Like Job, I wanted to die at times. [Job 14:13] Yet I kept going, thanks to the encouragement I received. Two elders, whom I knew very well, spent many hours helping me to see the value of continuing in full-time service. And two understanding sisters also consoled me, listening patiently as I poured out my heart. By using the Bible, they enabled me to see things from Jehovah's viewpoint. I don't know how many times we read Psalm 55:22, but I do know that by applying this scripture, I slowly recovered my spiritual and emotional balance. This all happened 12 years ago, and I am glad to say that I have continued in full-time service until now. My life is rewarding and happy despite occasional emotional pain. I am convinced that encouragement during a time

like that can make a great deal of difference in a person's life."

Some need encouragement because they have made mistakes and are now struggling to rectify them. Perhaps they have received loving reproof. (Proverbs 27:6) The elders who have given the reproof can be alert to give commendation when they see that the Scriptural counsel is being applied. Their words of encouragement will have a double benefit—confirming their love for the erring one so that he does not become "overly sad" and reminding him of the benefits of applying the counsel.—2 Corinthians 2:7, 8.

A certain elder made a serious mistake and lost his privilege of oversight in the congregation. "When the announcement was made about my removal as an elder, I thought that the brothers would feel uncomfortable in my company," he says. "Nevertheless, the elders kept the reason strictly confidential and went out of their way to give me encouragement. The rest of the congregation likewise extended love and companionship, which definitely promoted my spiritual recovery."

Be Encouraging

In our busy lives, encouragement is easy to overlook. But how much good it can do! To give effective encouragement, you must keep two things in mind. First, think about what to say, so that your encouragement is specific. Second, look for the opportunity to approach a person who deserves commendation or who needs to be built up.

The more often you do this, the happier you will be. After all, Jesus assures us: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) By encouraging others, you will encourage yourself. Why not make it your aim to give encouragement to someone every day?

ASSEMBLING WITH

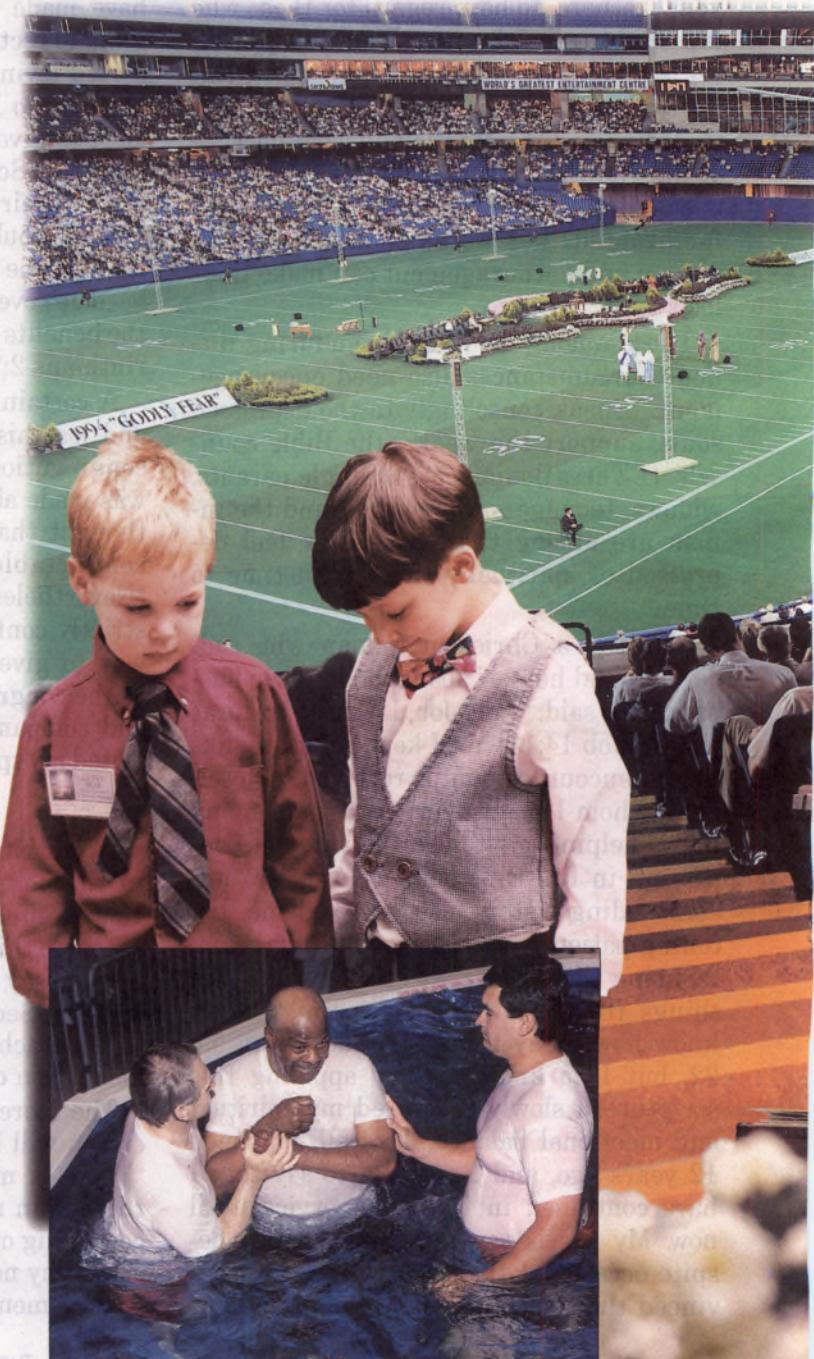
PEOPLE everywhere long for freedom from fear—fear of violence, fear of unemployment, and fear of serious illness. We share that longing. . . . Why, then, are we discussing how to cultivate fear?" That intriguing question was raised by the keynote speaker at each of the "Godly Fear" District Conventions, which began in June 1994.

The millions who attended—first in North America, then later in Europe, Central and South America, Africa, Asia, and the islands of the sea—were eager to learn to cultivate such fear. Why? Because our sharing in the blessings that Jehovah God has for his people depends on our having godly fear. It was to learn about godly fear that the conventioners came together, and during the three-day program, they learned much about this essential Christian quality.

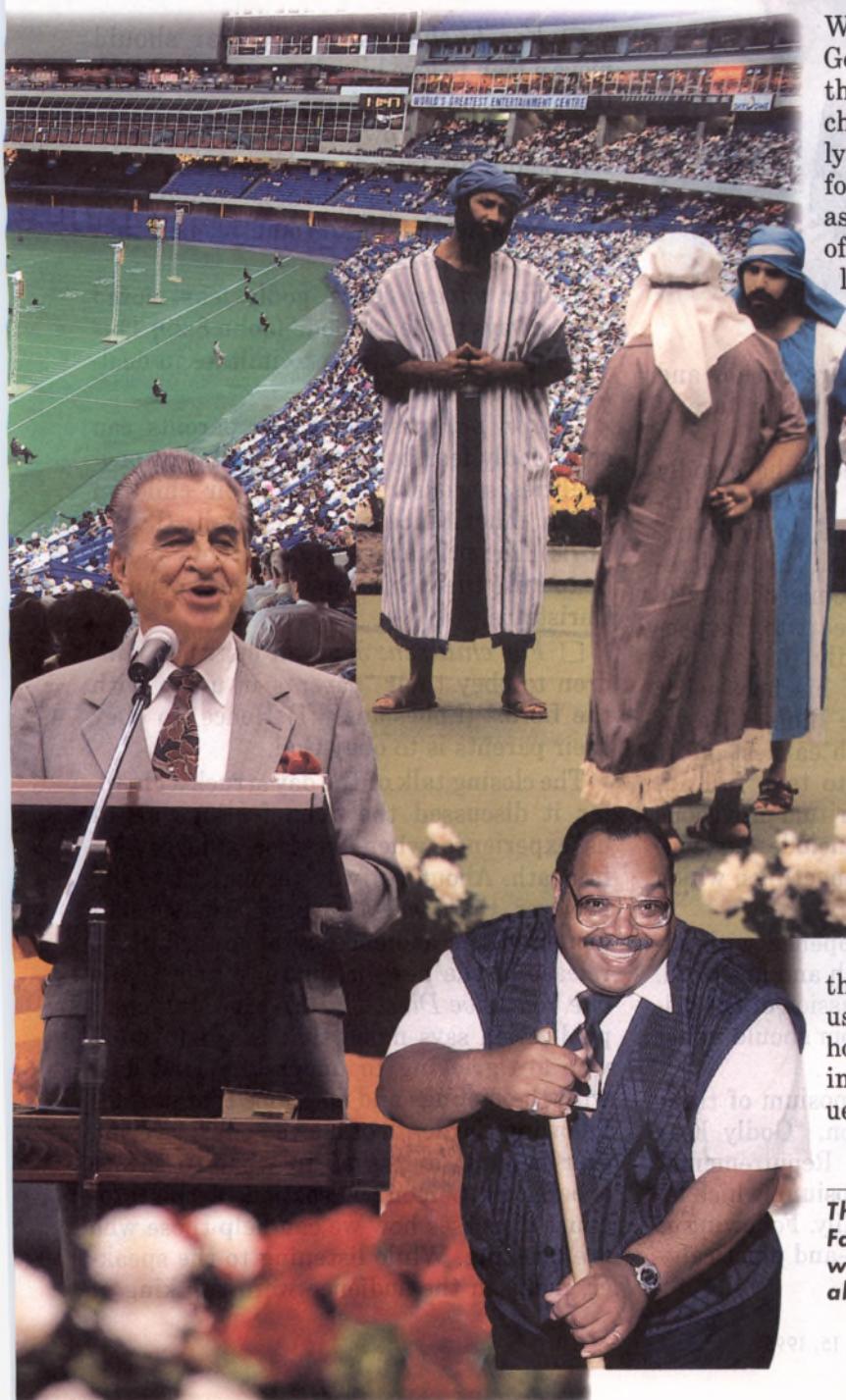
'Fear God and Keep His Commandments'

That was the theme of the first day of the convention, based on Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Baptism candidates need to continue manifesting godly fear



THOSE WHO FEAR GOD



What does it mean to fear God? In the very first part on the program, the convention chairman explained that godly fear reflects awe and a profound reverence for Jehovah as well as a wholesome dread of displeasing him. Such godly fear is not morbid; it is healthful and proper.

How does this healthful fear benefit us?

The following talk, "Do Not Grow Weary and Give Up," explained that godly fear will motivate us to keep God's commandments with joy. Along with love for God and neighbor, such fear will infuse us with spiritual energy. Yes, godly fear can help us to avoid slowing down in the race for everlasting life.

Next on the program were interviews presenting living proof that godly fear can sustain us. Those interviewed told how a reverential fear of God influenced them to continue in the ministry despite

The drama "The Choices You Face" impressed listeners with the need to be decisive about serving Jehovah



**Conventioners were delighted
to receive the new brochure
"When Someone You Love Dies"**

apathy, indifference, or persecution and helped them to endure even in the face of difficult personal trials.

Why, though, do some people have godly fear while others do not? In the talk "Cultivating and Benefiting From Godly Fear," the keynote speaker explained that at Jeremiah 32:37-39, Jehovah promised that He would give a God-fearing heart to His people. Jehovah implants godly fear in our hearts. How? By means of his holy spirit and his inspired Word, the Bible. Clearly, however, we must put forth earnest effort to study God's Word and to take full advantage of the abundant spiritual provisions that he has made. These include our conventions and congregation meetings, which help us to learn to fear him.

The afternoon program opened with admonition to trust in Jehovah and his Word. This was followed by a discussion of the primary ways that the Kingdom should affect our lives as Christians.

Then came the first symposium of three presented at the convention. "Godly Fear Moves Us to Obey Divine Requirements" was the theme of this symposium, which focused attention on the family. Following is a sample of the Scriptural—and practical—advice offered.

□ *For husbands:* Godly fear should move a man to love his wife as his own body. (Ephesians 5:28, 29) A man does not intentionally injure his own body, humiliate himself before his friends, or gossip about his own shortcomings. So, then, he should treat his wife with the dignity and respect that he accords himself.

□ *For wives:* Jesus' godly fear moved him 'always to please God.' (John 8:29) This is a fine spirit for wives to imitate in dealing with their husbands.

□ *For parents:* Christian parents can show godly fear by taking parental responsibilities seriously, viewing their children as an inheritance from Jehovah. (Psalm 127:3) The primary goal of parents should be to raise their children to become genuine Christians.

□ *For children:* Jehovah instructs children to obey their "parents in union with the Lord." (Ephesians 6:1) Hence, to obey their parents is to obey God.

The closing talk of the day struck a chord, for it discussed the deep feelings all of us experience when we lose a loved one in death. About halfway through the talk, however, there was a surprise. The speaker delighted the audience by announcing the release of the new brochure *When Someone You Love Dies*. This 32-page, full-color publication says much that can help those who are grieving to understand and deal with the feelings and emotions that surface following the death of a loved one. Have you ever been at a loss as to what to say to a bereaved person? A section of this brochure discusses how we can help those who are grieving. While listening to the speaker, many in the audience were thinking of

someone who could benefit from this new brochure.

'Render Sacred Service With Godly Fear and Awe'

That was the theme of the second day, based on Hebrews 12:28. During the morning program came the second symposium, "Congregations Walking in the Fear of Jehovah." The first segment dealt with attending meetings. Our presence at meetings demonstrates our respect for God and his spiritual provisions. By attending, we show that we fear his name and are eager to comply with his will. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) The second speaker explained that for the congregation as a whole to walk in the fear of Jehovah, each individual must do his part in maintaining fine conduct. The final speaker talked about a privilege and duty that all Christians have—to declare the good news without letup. How long will we continue to preach? Until Jehovah says it is enough.—Isaiah 6:11.

"The Joy of Jehovah Is Your Stronghold" was the theme of the next talk, as covered now in the study articles in this magazine. (Nehemiah 8:10) Why are Jehovah's people joyful? The speaker outlined a number of reasons. A very significant one is that a close relationship with God makes us the most joyful people on earth. Just think, the speaker reminded the conventioners, we have the privilege of being among the people that Jehovah has drawn to Jesus Christ. (John 6:44) What a powerful reason for joy!

A highlight of every convention is the baptism, and the "Godly Fear" Conventions were no exception. In the talk "Dedication and Baptism in the Fear of Jehovah," the speaker explained that the personal obligations of all baptized persons are fourfold: (1) We must study God's Word with the aid of publications that help us to understand and apply it; (2) we must pray; (3) we must

associate with fellow believers at congregation meetings; and (4) we must bear witness to Jehovah's name and Kingdom.

The Saturday afternoon program began with the reassuring subject "A People Not Forsaken by Jehovah." Thirty-five centuries ago, when the nation of Israel faced difficult times, Jehovah gave a guarantee through Moses, saying: "Jehovah your God . . . will neither desert you nor leave you entirely." (Deuteronomy 31:6) Jehovah proved true to that guarantee by protecting the Israelites when they entered the Promised Land and took possession of it. Today, when facing difficult trials, we too can have full confidence that Jehovah will not forsake us, provided we stick close to him and heed the advice of his Word.

How can you find delight in reading the Bible? In the talk "Read God's Word, the Holy Bible, Daily," the speaker suggested reading with an inquisitive mind and asking such questions as these: What does this account teach me about Jehovah's qualities and ways? How can I be more like Jehovah in these respects? Reading the Bible in this way is a delightful and rewarding experience.

Attention was next focused on the third symposium of the program, "Provisions to Help Those Who Fear Jehovah." Although

In Our Next Issue

Why Is It Time to Decide?

A Great Crowd Rendering
Sacred Service

Whose Fault Is It?

Jehovah may not perform miracles in behalf of his servants today, he certainly comes to the aid of those in fear of him. (2 Peter 2:9) This symposium considered four provisions from Jehovah to help us in these critical times: (1) By means of his *spirit*, Jehovah empowers us to accomplish works far beyond our own strength. (2) By means of his *Word*, he provides counsel and guidance for us. (3) By means of the *ransom*, he grants us a clean conscience. (4) By means of his *organization*, including the elders, he provides us with direction and protection. (Luke 11:13; Ephesians 1:7; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 13:17) By taking full advantage of these provisions, we will be able to endure and thus gain Jehovah's approval.

The final talk on Saturday afternoon was entitled "Jehovah's Fear-Inspiring Day Is Near," based on Malachi's prophecy. There have been fear-inspiring days in past history, as when judgment was executed upon Jerusalem in 70 C.E. But the most fear-inspiring day in all human experience will be Jehovah's coming day when 'vengeance is brought upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.' (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8) How soon will that be? The speaker stated: "The end is close! Jehovah knows that day and hour. He will not change his timetable. We are called upon to endure patiently."

It was hard to believe that two days had already passed. What would the final day bring?

"Fear God and Give Him Glory"

The theme of the third day was based on Revelation 14:7. During the morning program, a series of talks highlighted some of the doctrinal teachings that set Jehovah's Witnesses apart from all other religious organizations.

In the talk "There Will Be a Resurrection

of the Righteous," the speaker raised an interesting question: "During that thousand-year Judgment Day, when will those who died faithful in these final years of Satan's system of things be resurrected?" The answer? "The Bible does not say," the speaker explained. "However, is it not logical that those who die in our day would be resurrected early in order to share with the great crowd of Armageddon survivors in the immense educational work that is to take place throughout Judgment Day? Yes, indeed!" Will there be survivors? There certainly will be. Bible teachings and examples that assure us of this were clearly explained in the next talk, "Saved Alive Through the Great Tribulation."

Jehovah's Witnesses have long understood that the Bible holds out two destinies—everlasting life on a paradise earth for countless millions and immortal heavenly life for a limited number who will rule with Christ in his Kingdom. The heavenly hope was discussed in the talk "Have No Fear, Little Flock." (Luke 12:32) In view of the present world situation, the little flock must be fearless; each one of them must endure right down to the end. (Luke 21:19) "Their fearlessness," the speaker said, "serves to encourage those of the great crowd. They too should cultivate an attitude of fearlessness as they anticipate deliverance during the greatest time of trouble the earth has ever known."

At the conclusion of the morning program, the audience watched with delight the Bible drama *The Choices You Face*. In the days of Joshua, and also of the prophet Elijah, the Israelites were at a crossroads. A choice had to be made. Elijah said: "How long will you be limping upon two different opinions? If Jehovah is the true God, go following him; but if Baal is, go following him." (1 Kings 18:21) Today, too, mankind is at a crossroads. This is no time to be limp-

ing upon two different opinions. What is the right choice? The same one that Joshua of old made. He said: "As for me and my household, we shall serve Jehovah."—Joshua 24:15.

Suddenly, it seemed, it was Sunday afternoon and time for the public discourse entitled "Why Fear the True God Now." At Revelation 14:6, 7, all mankind is urged: "Fear God and give him glory." Why is it urgent to fear God now? Because, as the scripture goes on to say, "the hour of the judgment by him has arrived." By means of his Son, now enthroned as King of God's heavenly Kingdom, Jehovah will bring to a conclusion the present unclean, rebellious system of things. The speaker explained that this is the only way to bring relief to those who fear God as well as to rescue and preserve our earthly home. Since these are the closing days of this system of things, it is urgent that we fear the true God now!

Following a summary of the *Watchtower* lesson for that week, the final speaker took

the stage. As a result of the convention program, godly fear had taken on greater meaning for the conventioners, he explained. He stressed the many benefits that come to those who fear God. The speaker announced the release of a new video—*United by Divine Teaching*. It highlights the unique aspects of the "Divine Teaching" International Conventions held in 1993-94. As the talk was concluding, many wondered, 'What can we look forward to next year?' Three-day district conventions in many places.

In conclusion, the speaker referred to Malachi 3:16, which says: "At that time those in fear of Jehovah spoke with one another, each one with his companion, and Jehovah kept paying attention and listening. And a book of remembrance began to be written up before him for those in fear of Jehovah and for those thinking upon his name." The conventioners left with a clear determination to think on Jehovah's name and serve him with godly fear. *st amon aid*

He Accepted Divine Direction

SUPPOSE a perfect child was placed in your care and you were expected to rear him properly. What a challenge! How could any imperfect human do so? Only by accepting divine direction and applying it in everyday life.

That very thing was done by Joseph, the adoptive father of Jesus. In contrast with detailed apocryphal lore about Joseph, the Bible says little concerning his humble role in Jesus' early life. We know that Joseph and his wife, Mary, reared Jesus, four other sons, and daughters too.—Mark 6:3.

Joseph was a descendant of Israel's King David through the line of Solomon. He was the son of Jacob and the son-in-law of Heli. (Matthew 1:16; Luke 3:23) As a carpenter in the city of Nazareth in Galilee, Joseph had limited financial resources. (Matthew 13:55; Luke 2:4, 24; compare Leviticus 12:8.) But he was rich spiritually. (Proverbs 10:22) This certainly was because he accepted divine direction.

Without doubt, Joseph was a meek and humble Jew who had faith in God and desired to do what was right. The few

incidents of his life recorded in the Scriptures show that he was ever obedient to Jehovah's commands. This was so whether these were contained in the Law or were directly received by Joseph through angels.

A Righteous Man With Problems

What should a godly person do when confronted with a major problem? Why, he should 'throw his burden on Jehovah' and follow divine direction! (Psalm 55:22) That is what Joseph did. While he was engaged to Mary, "she was found to be pregnant by holy spirit before they were united." Because Joseph 'was righteous and did not want to make her a public spectacle, he intended to divorce her secretly.' After Joseph thought matters over, Jehovah's angel appeared to him in a dream and said: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife home, for that which has been begotten in her is by holy spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you must call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Upon awakening, Joseph "did as the angel of Jehovah had directed him, and he took his wife home. But he had no intercourse with her until she gave birth to a son; and he called his name Jesus." (Matthew 1:18-25) Joseph accepted divine direction.

Augustus Caesar decreed that people register in their own cities. In obedience, Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem in Judea. There Mary gave birth to Jesus and had to lay him in a manger because no other accommodations were available. That night shepherds who had heard an angelic announcement of this special birth came to see the infant. About 40 days later, Joseph and Mary complied with the Law by presenting Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem along with an offering. Both of them wondered as they heard aged Simeon's pro-

phetic words about the great things Jesus would do.—Luke 2:1-33; compare Leviticus 12:2-4, 6-8.

Though Luke 2:39 may seem to indicate that Joseph and Mary went to Nazareth right after presenting Jesus at the temple, this text is part of a condensed account. It appears that quite some time after the presentation at the temple, Oriental astrologers (Magi) visited Mary and Jesus in a house at Bethlehem. Divine intervention prevented this visit from bringing death to Jesus. After the Magi withdrew, Jehovah's angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him: "Herod is about to search for the young child to destroy it." As usual, Joseph heeded divine direction and took his family to Egypt.—Matthew 2:1-14.

Upon the death of Herod, an angel appeared to Joseph in Egypt in a dream, saying: "Get up, take the young child and its mother and be on your way into the land of Israel." Hearing that Herod's son Archelaus was reigning in his father's stead, Joseph was afraid to return to Judea. Heeding divine warning given in a dream, he went into the territory of Galilee and settled in the city of Nazareth.—Matthew 2:15-23.

A Spiritual Man

Joseph saw to it that his family complied with divine law and were spiritually nourished. Each year he took his entire family with him to the Passover celebration in Jerusalem. On one of these occasions, Joseph and Mary were returning to Nazareth and had covered a day's distance from Jerusalem when they discovered that 12-year-old Jesus was missing. Going back to Jerusalem, they searched diligently and finally found him at the temple, listening to and questioning the teachers there.—Luke 2:41-50.

Joseph gave Jesus spiritual instruction and also taught him carpentry

"the carpenter the son of Mary." (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3) Godly parents today should take full advantage of similar opportunities to instruct their children, especially giving them spiritual training.—Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-16.

Joseph's Prospects

The Scriptures are silent about the death of Joseph. But it is noteworthy that Mark 6:3 called Jesus "the son of Mary," not Joseph. This indicates that Joseph was then dead. Moreover, if Joseph had lived until 33 C.E., it is unlikely that the impaled Jesus would have entrusted Mary to the care of the apostle John.—John 19:26, 27.

Joseph, then, will be among the dead who will hear the voice of the Son of man and come forth in a resurrection. (John 5:28, 29) Learning of Jehovah's provision for eternal life, undoubtedly Joseph will gladly avail himself of it and will be an obedient subject of the great heavenly King, Jesus Christ, even as he heeded divine direction over 1,900 years ago.



It seems that Joseph let his wife take the initiative in some things. For instance, when they returned to Jerusalem and found Jesus in the temple, it was Mary who spoke to her young son about the matter. (Luke 2:48, 49) While growing up as "the carpenter's son," Jesus received spiritual instruction. Joseph also taught him carpentry, for Jesus was called

Small but Powerful

ROBERT, a young man from Canada, wandered through Europe in search of his place in life. He saw many things that left him feeling despondent about the future.

While sitting in a café in Seville, Spain, Robert was handed a tract published by Jehovah's Witnesses. At first, Robert was skeptical. "Nevertheless, I did read it," he said. "I cannot explain it, but I felt something snap into place. During my travels, I had seen many forms of human depres-

sion and downfall, and I was frustrated at my inability to change things. After reading the tract, I wondered, 'Does this "new world" have a chance for existence?' Then, I thought, 'Yes, maybe it does.'"

With renewed hope, Robert wrote to the office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada, requesting that someone visit him upon his return home and help him to understand the Bible.

Without doubt, the spoken word is powerful. However, never underestimate the power of the printed message. No matter how small, Bible-based publications have dynamic appeal. They touch

the mind and heart,
giving a sure hope
for the future.—He-
brews 4:12.



Robert gives his tract to a passerby. Jehovah's Witnesses have over 1,800 tracts available.