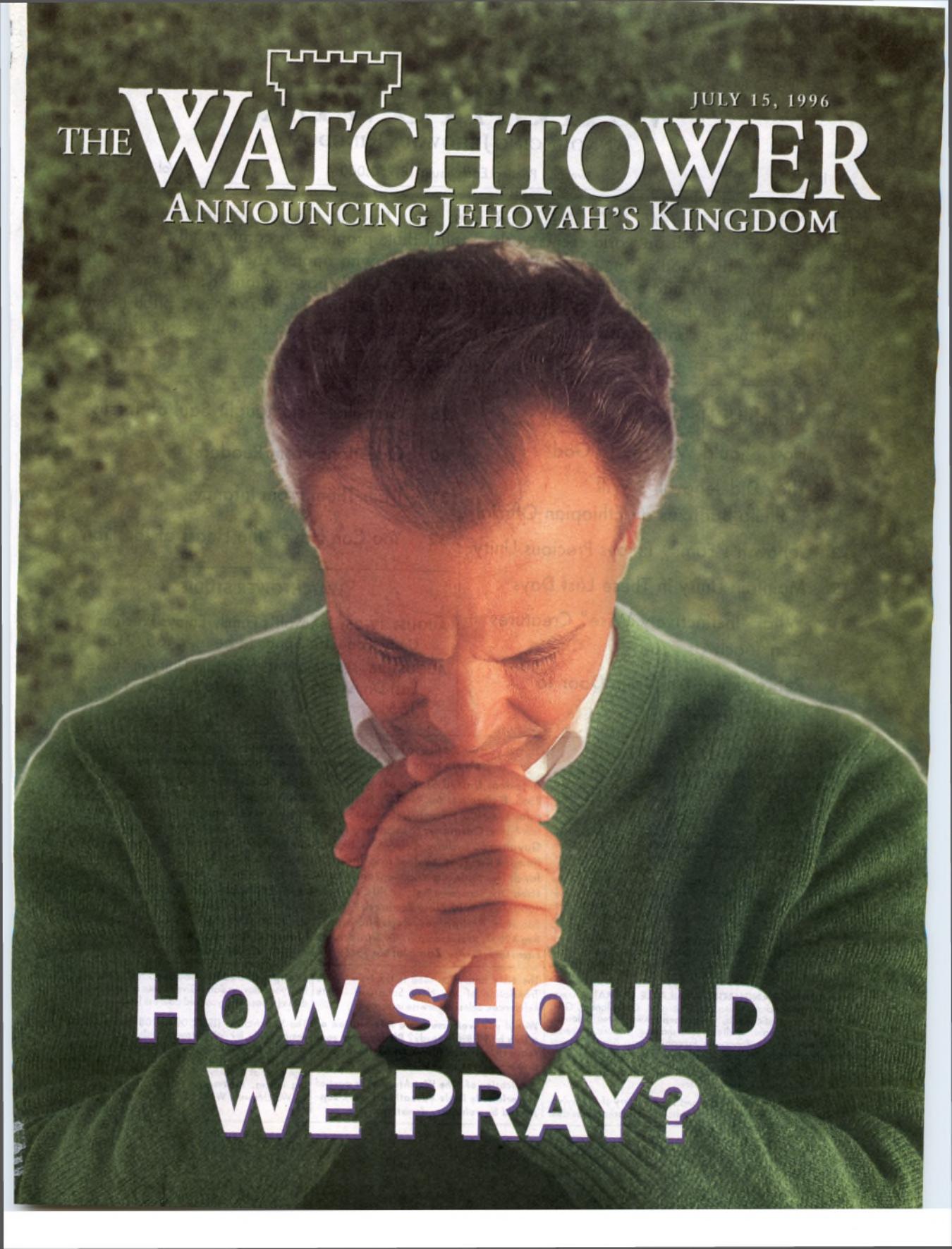


JULY 15, 1996

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**HOW SHOULD
WE PRAY?**

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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“Teach Us How to Pray”

LORD, teach us how to pray.” That request was made by one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. (Luke 11:1) The unnamed disciple was obviously a man with deep appreciation for prayer. True worshipers today similarly recognize its importance. After all, prayer is the means by which we gain audience with the Highest Personage in the universe! And just think! The “Hearer of prayer” gives personal attention to our concerns and anxieties. (Psalm 65:2) More important, by means of prayer, we render thanks and praise to God.

—Philippians 4:6.

Nevertheless, the words “teach us how to pray” raise some serious questions. Throughout the world many methods of approaching God are used by different religions. But is there a right and a wrong way to pray? In answer, let us first take a look at some of the popular religious customs that involve prayer. We will focus on those practiced in Latin America.



Catholics commonly use rosary beads. What is their origin?

Images and “Patron Saints”

Generally, Latin-American countries are deeply religious. For example, throughout Mexico one can observe the popular practice of praying to “patron saints.” Indeed, it is customary for Mexican towns to have “patron saints” for whom festivals are held on certain days.

Mexican Catholics also pray to a great variety of images. Which "saint" is invoked, however, depends upon what type of request the worshiper desires to make. If someone is looking for a person to marry, he might light a candle to "Saint" Anthony. Someone about to embark on an automobile trip might commend himself to "Saint" Christopher, patron of travelers, particularly of motorists.

Where, though, did such customs originate? History shows that when the Spaniards arrived in Mexico, they found a populace devoted to the worship of pagan gods. In his book *Los Aztecas, Hombre y Tribu* (Aztecs, the Man and the Tribe), Victor Wolfgang von Hagen says: "There were personal gods, each plant had its god, each function its god or goddess, even suicides had one. Yacatecuhtli was the businessmen's deity. In this polytheistic world, all the gods had clearly defined tendencies and functions."

The resemblance of these gods to Catholic "saints" was so striking that when the Spanish conquerors tried to "Christianize" the natives, these simply switched allegiance from their idols to church "saints." An article in *The Wall Street Journal* acknowledged the heathen roots of the Catholicism practiced in some parts of Mexico. It noted that in one area, most of the 64 "saints" venerated by the populace corresponded to "specific Mayan gods."

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* argues that "between saint and those on earth there is established a bond of confident intimacy, . . . a bond that, far from detracting from the relationship with Christ and with God, enriches and deepens it." But how could a bond that is clearly a vestige of paganism deepen one's relationship with the true God? Could prayers that are offered to such "saints" really please God?

The Origin of the Rosary

Another popular custom involves the use of the rosary. *Diccionario Encyclopédico Hispano-American* (Hispanic-American Encyclopedic Dictionary) describes the rosary as a "string of fifty or one hundred and fifty beads separated into tens by others of larger size and joined at the ends by a crucifix, presently preceded by three beads."

Explaining how the rosary is used, one Catholic publication says: "The Holy Rosary is a form of vocal and mental prayer about the Mysteries of our redemption. It is made up of fifteen decades. Each decade consists of reciting the *Lord's Prayer*, ten *Hail Marys*, and a *Gloria Patri*. A mystery is meditated upon during each decade." The mysteries are doctrines, or teachings, that Catholics should know, in this case referring to the life, suffering, and death of Christ Jesus.

The World Book Encyclopedia says: "Early forms of praying with a rosary began in Christianity during the Middle Ages, but became widespread only in the 1400's and 1500's." Is the use of the rosary exclusive to Catholicism? No. *Diccionario Encyclopédico Hispano-American* states: "Similar beads are in use in Islamic, Lamaist and Buddhist worship." Indeed, the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Religions* notes: "It has been suggested that the Mohammedans derived the Rosary from the Buddhists, and the Christians from the Mohammedans at the time of the Crusades."

Some argue that the rosary merely serves as a memory aid when the repetition of a number of prayers is required. But is God pleased with its use?

We do not need to speculate about or debate the appropriateness or validity of such customs. Jesus gave an authoritative response to the request to teach his followers how to pray. What he said will enlighten and perhaps surprise some readers.



How Should We Pray to God?

WHEN a disciple asked for instruction regarding prayer, Jesus did not refuse to give it to him. According to Luke 11:2-4, he replied: "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation." (Catholic Douay Version) This is commonly known as the Lord's Prayer. It conveys a world of information.

For one thing, the very first word tells us to whom our prayers must be addressed—to our Father. Notice that Jesus made no room whatsoever for praying to some other person, image, "saint," or even to him. After all, God had declared: "I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to graven things." (Isaiah 42:8, Dy) Prayers directed to any-

thing or anyone other than our heavenly Father are therefore not heard by him, no matter how sincere the worshiper may be. In the Bible, only Jehovah God is called the "Hearer of prayer."—Psalm 65:2.

Some may say that "saints" act merely as intercessors with God. But Jesus himself instructed: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Also, whatever it is that you ask in my name, I will do this, in order that the Father may be glorified in connection with the Son." (John 14:6, 13) Jesus thus ruled out the idea that anyone called a saint could serve in the role of intercessor. Observe also what the apostle Paul said regarding Christ: "He not only died for us—he rose from the dead, and there at God's right hand he stands and pleads for us." "He is

living for ever to intercede for all who come to God through him.”—Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25, Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*.

The Name That Must Be Hallowed

The next words of Jesus’ prayer were: “Hallowed be thy name.” How could one hallow, that is, sanctify, or set apart, the name of God unless one knew it and *used* it? Over 6,000 times in the “Old Testament,” God is identified by the personal name Jehovah.

A footnote on Exodus 6:3 in the Catholic *Douay Version* says regarding God’s name: “Some moderns have framed the name of Jehovah . . . , for the true pronunciation of the name [of God], which is in the Hebrew text, by long disuse is now quite lost.” The Catholic *New Jerusalem Bible* therefore uses the name Yahweh. Although some scholars favor that pronunciation, “Jehovah” is a legitimate and long-established way of pronouncing the divine name in English. Other languages have their own ways of pronouncing the divine name. The main thing is that we use the name so as to hallow it. Has your church taught you to use the name Jehovah in prayer?

Proper Subjects for Prayer

Jesus next taught his disciples to pray: “Thy kingdom come.” The Gospel of Matthew adds the words: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10, *Dy*) God’s Kingdom is a government in the hands of Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 9:6, 7) According to Bible prophecy, it will soon displace all human governments and bring in an era of global peace. (Psalm 72:1-7; Daniel 2:44; Revelation 21:3-5) True Christians therefore make the coming of the Kingdom a recurring theme in their prayers. Has your church taught you to do so?

Interestingly, Jesus also showed that our prayers may include personal matters that

concern us. He said: “Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.” (Luke 11:3, 4, *Dy*) Jesus’ words imply that we can seek God’s will in everyday matters, that we can approach Jehovah about *anything* that might worry us or disturb our peace of mind. Regularly petitioning God in this way helps us to appreciate our dependence upon him. We thus become more aware of his influence in our lives. Daily asking God to forgive us for our offenses is likewise beneficial. We thereby become more aware of our weaknesses—and more tolerant of the shortcomings of others. Jesus’ exhortation that we pray for deliverance from temptation is also appropriate, especially in view of the declining morals of this world. In harmony with that prayer, we are careful to avoid circumstances and situations that could lead us into wrongdoing.

There is no question, then, that the Lord’s Prayer tells us much about offering prayers that please God. But did Jesus intend that we take this prayer and simply recite it regularly?

Further Counsel on Prayer

Jesus gave further instructions on prayer. At Matthew 6:5, 6, we read: “When you pray, you must not be as the hypocrites; because they like to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the broad ways to be visible to men. . . . You, however, when you pray, go into your private room and, after shutting your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; then your Father who looks on in secret will repay you.” These words teach us that prayer should not be offered in a showy, ostentatious way so as to impress someone. Do you pour out your heart to Jehovah privately, as the Bible urges? —Psalm 62:8.

Jesus gave this caution: "In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard." (Matthew 6:7, JB) Clearly, Jesus did not approve of memorizing prayers—much less of reading them from some book. His words also rule out the use of the rosary.

A Catholic missal makes this admission: "Our best prayer may be our own spontaneous thoughts when we turn to him in gratitude or in need, at times of sorrow, or in our regular daily adoration of him." Jesus' own prayers were spontaneous, not memorized. For example, read the prayer of Jesus recorded in John chapter 17. It adheres to the model prayer, emphasizing Jesus' desire to see Jehovah's name sanctified. Jesus' prayer was spontaneous and profoundly heartfelt.

Prayers That God Hears

If you have been taught to offer memorized prayers, to pray to "saints" or to images, or to use religious items, such as the rosary, the idea of praying in the manner that Jesus outlined may at first seem intimidating. Yet, the key is coming to know God—his name, his purposes, his personality. You can accomplish this through a thorough study of the Bible. (John 17:3) Jehovah's Witnesses are ready and willing to help you in this regard. Why, they have helped millions around the world to "taste and see that Jehovah is good"! (Psalm 34:8) The more

you come to know God, the more you will be moved to praise him in prayer. And the more you draw near to Jehovah in reverential prayer, the closer your relationship with him will become.

All true worshipers of God are therefore urged to "pray incessantly." (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Be sure that your prayers are truly in harmony with the Bible, including the instructions of Jesus Christ. In this way you can be certain that your prayers will have God's approval.



The more we learn about Jehovah, the more we are moved to pray to him from the heart

Philip Baptizes an Ethiopian Official

WHILE riding in his chariot, an Ethiopian was using his time wisely. He was reading aloud—a common practice among first-century travelers. This particular man was an official "in power under Candace queen of the Ethiopians."* He was "over all her treasure"—in effect, he was a minister of finance. This official was reading from God's Word in order to acquire knowledge.—Acts 8:27, 28.

Nearby was the evangelizer Philip. An angel had directed him to this location, and now he was told: "Approach and join yourself to this chariot." (Acts 8:26, 29) We can imagine Philip asking himself, 'Who is this man? What is he reading? Why have I been directed to him?'

As Philip ran alongside the chariot, he overheard the Ethiopian reading these words: "As a sheep he was brought to the slaughter, and as a lamb that is voiceless before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. During his humiliation the judgment was taken away from him. Who will tell the details of his generation? Because his life is taken away from the earth."—Acts 8:32, 33.

Philip immediately recognized the passage. It was from the writing of Isaiah. (Isaiah 53:7, 8) The Ethiopian was puzzled by what he was reading. Philip struck up a conversation by asking: "Do you actually know what you

* "Candace" is not a name but a title (similar to "Pharaoh" and "Caesar") that applied to a succession of Ethiopian queens.

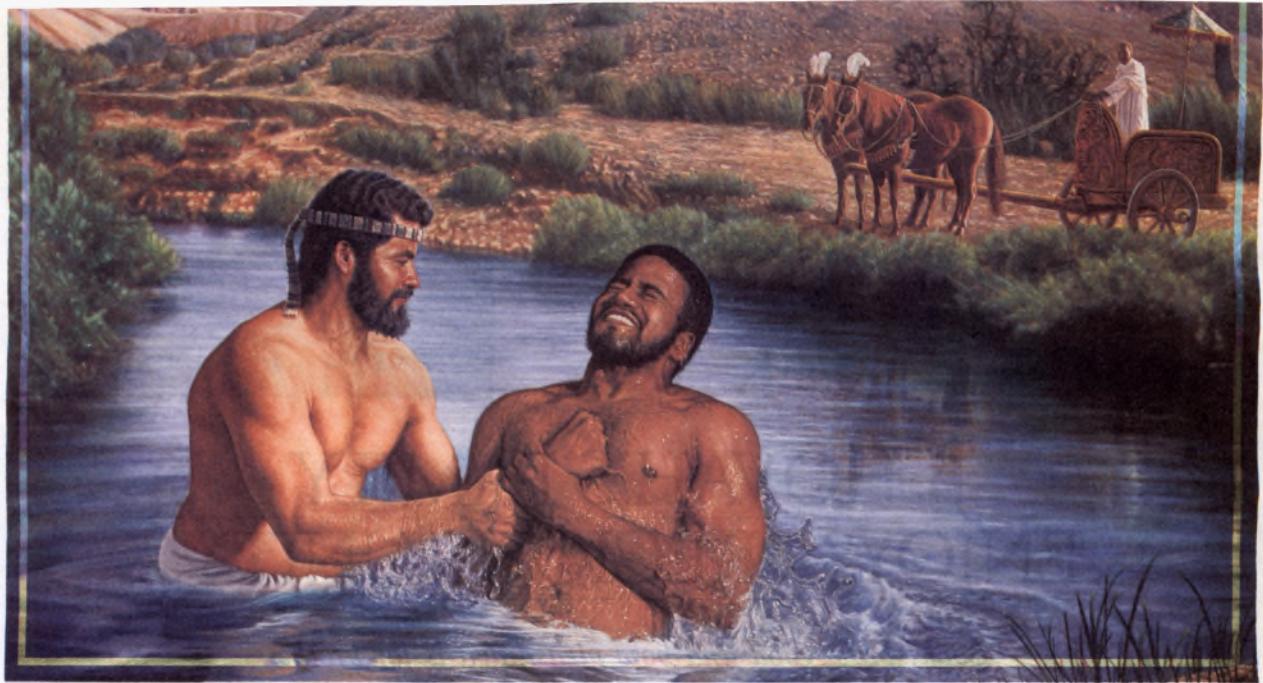
are reading?" The Ethiopian replied: "Really, how could I ever do so, unless someone guided me?" He then entreated Philip to join him in his chariot.—Acts 8:30, 31.

"What Prevents Me From Getting Baptized?"

"I beg you," the Ethiopian said to Philip, "about whom does the prophet say this? About himself or about some other man?" (Acts 8:34) The Ethiopian's confusion was not surprising, for the identity of the "sheep," or "servant," of Isaiah's prophecy had long been a mystery. (Isaiah 53:11) How clear this must have been when Philip declared to the Ethiopian "the good news about Jesus"! After a while the Ethiopian said: "Look! A body of water; what prevents me from getting baptized?" So Philip baptized him right then and there.—Acts 8:35-38.

Why Called a Eunuch?

Throughout the account in Acts chapter 8, the Ethiopian is referred to as a "eunuch." However, since the Mosaic Law did not admit a castrated male into the congregation, this man was evidently not a eunuch in the literal sense. (Deuteronomy 23:1) The Greek word for "eunuch" can refer to a person in high office. Thus, the Ethiopian was an official under the queen of Ethiopia.



Was this a hasty act? Not at all! The Ethiopian was a Jewish proselyte.* So he was already a worshiper of Jehovah with a knowledge of the Scriptures, including the Messianic prophecies. However, his knowledge was incomplete. Now that he had received this vital information regarding the role of Jesus Christ, the Ethiopian understood what God required of him and was ready to comply. Baptism was appropriate.—Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 3:21.

Afterward, "Jehovah's spirit quickly led Philip away." He went on to another assignment. The Ethiopian "kept going on his way rejoicing."—Acts 8:39, 40.

Lesson for Us

As Jehovah's present-day servants, we have an obligation to help honesthearted individuals to learn the truth of God's Word. Many have had success presenting the good news to others while traveling or

in other informal circumstances. As a result of the Kingdom-preaching work, each year hundreds of thousands symbolize their dedication to Jehovah God by getting baptized.

Of course, newer ones should not be rushed into baptism. First they must acquire accurate knowledge of Jehovah God and of his Son, Jesus Christ. (John 17:3) Then they must repent, abandoning wrong conduct and turning around so as to conform to God's standards. (Acts 3:19) This takes time, especially if wrong thinking and conduct have been deeply ingrained. While new ones should count the cost of Christian discipleship, great blessings result from entering into a dedicated relationship with Jehovah God. (Compare Luke 9:23; 14:25-33.) Those who are Witnesses of Jehovah enthusiastically direct such new ones to the organization that God is using to accomplish his will. (Matthew 24:45-47) Like the Ethiopian, these will rejoice in learning about and conforming to what God requires of them.

* Proselytes were non-Israelites who chose to adhere to the Mosaic Law.—Leviticus 24:22.



JEHOVAH'S FAMILY ENJOYS PRECIOUS UNITY

"Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!"—PSALM 133:1.

THE family is in crisis today. In many families, marriage ties are at the breaking point. Divorce is becoming increasingly common, and many children of divorced couples are experiencing great sadness. Millions of families are unhappy and disunited. Yet, there is one family that knows true joy and genuine unity. It is the universal family of Jehovah God. In it, myriads of invisible angels carry out their assigned tasks in harmony with the divine will. (Psalm 103:20, 21) But is there a family on earth that enjoys such unity?

² The apostle Paul wrote: "I bend my knees to the Father, to whom every family in heaven and on earth owes its name." (Ephesians 3:14, 15) Every family line on earth owes its name to God because he is the Creator. Though there are no hu-

man families in heaven, figuratively speaking God is married to his heavenly organization, and Jesus will have a spiritual bride united with him in the heavens. (Isaiah 54:5; Luke 20:34, 35; 1 Corinthians 15:50; 2 Corinthians 11:2) Faithful anointed ones on earth are now part of God's universal family, and Jesus' "other sheep," with earthly hopes, are its prospective members. (John 10:16; Romans 8:14-17; *The Watchtower*, January 15, 1996, page 31) However, all of Jehovah's Witnesses today can be likened to a united worldwide family.

³ Are you part of the wonderful international family of God's servants? If you are, you enjoy one of the greatest blessings anyone could have. Millions will attest that Jehovah's global family—his visible organization—is an oasis of peace and unity in a worldly desert of strife and disunity. How might the unity of Jehovah's worldwide family be described? And what factors promote such unity?

1. What is the state of many families today?
- 2, 3. (a) Who are now part of God's universal family, and to what might we liken all of Jehovah's Witnesses today? (b) What questions will we discuss?

How Good and How Pleasant!

⁴ The psalmist David deeply appreciated brotherly unity. He was even inspired to sing about it! Imagine him with his harp as he sang: “Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the good oil upon the head, that is running down upon the beard, Aaron’s beard, that is running down to the collar of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon that is descending upon the mountains of Zion. For there Jehovah commanded the blessing to be, even life to time indefinite.”—Psalm 133:1-3.

⁵ Those words applied to the brotherly unity enjoyed by God’s ancient people, the Israelites. When in Jerusalem for their three annual festivals, they did dwell together in unity. Though they came from various tribes, they were one family. Being together had a wholesome effect on them, like refreshing anointing oil with a pleasing aroma. When such oil was poured on Aaron’s head, it flowed down his beard and ran to the collar of his garment. For the Israelites, being together had a good influence that worked its way through the assembled people as a whole. Misunderstandings were cleared up, and unity was promoted. Similar unity exists in Jehovah’s global family today. Regularly associating has a wholesome spiritual effect on its members. Any misunderstandings or difficulties are removed as the counsel of God’s Word is applied. (Matthew 5:23, 24; 18:15-17) Jehovah’s people greatly appreciate the mutual encouragement that results from their brotherly unity.

4. In your own words, how would you express what Psalm 133 says about brotherly unity?
5. On the basis of Psalm 133:1, 2, what comparison can be drawn between the Israelites and God’s present-day servants?

⁶ How was Israel’s dwelling together in unity also like the dew of Mount Hermon? Well, since this mountain’s peak is over 9,000 feet above sea level, it is snowcapped nearly all year. Hermon’s snowy top causes the condensation of the night vapors and thus produces the abundant dew that preserves vegetation during the long dry season. Cold air currents from the Hermon range can carry such vapors as far south as the Jerusalem area, where they condense as dew. So the psalmist correctly spoke of ‘the dew of Hermon descending upon Mount Zion.’ What a fine reminder of the refreshing influence that promotes the unity of Jehovah’s family of worshipers!

⁷ Before the Christian congregation was established, Zion, or Jerusalem, was the center of true worship. Hence, it was there that God commanded the blessing to be. Since the Source of all blessings resided representatively at the sanctuary in Jerusalem, blessings would emanate from there. Because true worship is no longer dependent upon any one location, however, the blessing, love, and unity of God’s servants can be found throughout the earth today. (John 13:34, 35) What are some factors that promote this unity?

Factors That Promote Unity

⁸ The unity of Jehovah’s worshipers is based on compliance with the correctly understood Word of God, including the teachings of Jesus Christ. By Jehovah’s sending his Son into the world to bear witness to the truth and to die a sacrificial death, the way was opened for the formation of the united Christian congregation. (John 3:16; 18:37)

- 6, 7. How was Israel’s unity like the dew of Mount Hermon, and where can God’s blessing be found today?
8. What do we learn about unity at John 17:20, 21?

That there was to be genuine unity among its members was made clear when Jesus prayed: "I make request, not concerning these only, but also concerning those putting faith in me through their word; in order that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in union with me and I am in union with you, that they also may be in union with us, in order that the world may believe that you sent me forth." (John 17:20, 21) Jesus' followers did attain a unity similar to that existing between God and his Son. This happened because they complied with God's Word and with Jesus' teachings. The same attitude is a major factor in the unity of Jehovah's worldwide family today.

⁹ Another factor that unifies Jehovah's people is that we have God's holy spirit, or active force. It enables us to understand the revealed truth of Jehovah's Word and thus to serve him unitedly. (John 16:12, 13) The spirit helps us to avoid such disunifying fleshly works as strife, jealousy, fits of anger, and contentions. Instead, God's spirit brings forth in us the unifying fruitage of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, and self-control. —Galatians 5:19-23.

¹⁰ Members of a united family love one another and are happy to be together. Comparably, those in the unified family of Jehovah's worshipers love him, his Son, and fellow believers. (Mark 12:30; John 21:15-17; 1 John 4:21) Just as a loving natural family enjoys having meals together, those devoted to God are delighted to be present

9. What role does the holy spirit play in the unity of Jehovah's people?

10. (a) What parallel can be drawn between the love existing in a united human family and the love that is evident among those devoted to Jehovah? (b) How did one member of the Governing Body express his feelings about meeting with his spiritual brothers?

at Christian meetings, assemblies, and conventions to benefit from fine association and excellent spiritual food. (Matthew 24:45-47; Hebrews 10:24, 25) A member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses once put matters this way: "To me, meeting with the brothers is one of life's greatest pleasures and a source of encouragement. I love to be at the Kingdom Hall among the first, and leave among the last, if possible. I feel an inward joy when talking with God's people. When I am among them I feel at home with my family." Is that how you feel? —Psalm 27:4.

¹¹ A united family finds happiness in doing things together. Similarly, those in the family of Jehovah's worshipers find joy in unitedly doing their Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) Regular participation in it draws us closer to other Witnesses of Jehovah. Making God's service the focal point of our lives and supporting all the activities of his people also furthers the family spirit among us.

Theocratic Order Is Essential

¹² A family that has strong but loving leadership and that is orderly is likely to be united and happy. (Ephesians 5:22, 33; 6:1) Jehovah is a God of peaceful order, and all those in his family regard him as "the Supreme One." (Daniel 7:18, 22, 25, 27; 1 Corinthians 14:33) They also recognize that he has appointed his Son, Jesus Christ, the heir of all things and has delegated to him all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18; Hebrews 1:1, 2) With Christ as

11. In what work do Jehovah's Witnesses especially find happiness, and what results from making God's service the focal point of our lives?

12. What are the characteristics of a happy and united family, and what arrangement promoted unity in first-century Christian congregations?

The governing body acted to preserve unity

its Head, the Christian congregation is an orderly, united organization. (Ephesians 5:23) To supervise the activities of the first-century congregations, there was a governing body made up of the apostles and other spiritually mature “older men.” Individual congregations had appointed overseers, or elders, and ministerial servants. (Acts 15:6; Philippians 1:1) Obeying those taking the lead promoted unity.—Hebrews 13:17.

¹³ But does all this order suggest that the unity of Jehovah’s worshipers can be attributed to strong, impersonal leadership? No indeed! There is nothing unloving about God or his organization. Jehovah draws people by showing love, and each year hundreds of thousands voluntarily and joyfully become part of Jehovah’s organization by getting baptized in symbol of their whole-hearted dedication to God. Their spirit is like that of Joshua, who urged fellow Israelites: “Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my household, we shall serve Jehovah.”—Joshua 24:15.

¹⁴ As part of Jehovah’s family, we are not only joyful but also secure. This is so because his organization is theocratic. God’s Kingdom is a theocracy (from Greek *theos’*, god, and *kra’tos*, a rule). It is a rule by God, ordained and established by him. Jehovah’s anointed “holy nation” is in submission to his rule and therefore is also theocratic. (1 Peter 2:9) With the Great Theocrat, Jehovah, as our Judge, Statute-Giver, and King, we have every reason to feel secure. (Isaiah 33:22) Yet, what if some

13. How does Jehovah draw people, and what results from this?

14. Why can we say that Jehovah’s organization is theocratic?



dispute were to arise and threaten our joy, security, and unity?

Governing Body Takes Action

¹⁵ To preserve the unity of a family, occasionally a dispute may have to be settled. Suppose, then, that a spiritual problem had to be solved to preserve the unity of God’s family of worshipers in the first century C.E. What then? The governing body took action, making decisions on spiritual matters. We have a Scriptural record of such action.

¹⁶ In about 49 C.E., the governing body met in Jerusalem to resolve a serious problem and thereby preserve the unity of “the household of God.” (Ephesians 2:19) Some 13 years earlier, the apostle Peter had preached to Cornelius, and the first Gentiles, or people of the nations, became baptized believers. (Acts, chapter 10) During Paul’s first missionary trip, many Gentiles embraced Christianity. (Acts 13:1–14:28) In fact, a congregation of Gentile Christians had been established in Antioch, Syria. Some Christian Jews felt that Gentile converts should get circumcised and keep the

15, 16. What dispute arose in the first century, and why?

Mosaic Law, but others disagreed. (Acts 15:1-5) This dispute could have led to complete disunity, even to the formation of separate Jewish and Gentile congregations. The governing body therefore took prompt action to preserve Christian unity.

¹⁷ According to Acts 15:6-22, “the apostles and the older men gathered together to see about this affair.” Also present were others, including a delegation from Antioch. Peter first explained that ‘through his mouth people of the nations heard the good news and believed.’ Then “the entire multitude” listened as Barnabas and Paul related “the many signs and portents that God did through them among the nations,” or Gentiles. James next suggested how the question might be resolved. After the governing body made a decision, we are told: “The apostles and the older men together with the whole congregation favored sending chosen men from among them to Antioch along with Paul and Barnabas.” Those “chosen men”—Judas and Silas—carried an encouraging letter to fellow believers.

17. What harmonious theocratic procedure is described in Acts chapter 15?

How Would You Answer?

- How can our Christian unity be related to Psalm 133?
- What are some factors that promote unity?
- Why is theocratic order essential to the unity of God’s people?
- How did the first-century governing body act to preserve unity?
- What does serving in theocratic unity mean to you?

¹⁸ The letter announcing the governing body’s decision began with the words: “The apostles and the older men, brothers, to those brothers in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the nations: Greetings!” Others attended this historic meeting, but apparently the governing body consisted of “the apostles and the older men.” God’s spirit guided them, for the letter states: “The *holy spirit* and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden to you, except these necessary things, to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication.” (Acts 15:23-29) Christians were not required to get circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law. This decision helped Jewish and Gentile Christians to act and speak in unity. The congregations rejoiced, and precious unity continued, even as it does in God’s earth-wide family today under the spiritual guidance of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses.—Acts 15:30-35.

Serve in Theocratic Unity

¹⁹ Unity flourishes when members of a family cooperate with one another. The same is true in the family of Jehovah’s worshipers. Being theocratic, the elders and others in the first-century congregation served God in full cooperation with the governing body and accepted its decisions. With the help of the governing body, the elders ‘preached the word’ and members of the congregations in general ‘spoke in agreement.’ (2 Timothy 4:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 1:10) So the same Scriptural truths were presented in the ministry and at

18. The governing body made what decision involving the Mosaic Law, and how did this affect Jewish and Gentile Christians?

19. Why has unity flourished in the family of Jehovah’s worshipers?

Christian meetings, whether in Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Corinth, or anywhere else. Such theocratic unity exists today.

²⁰ To preserve our unity, all of us who are part of Jehovah's global family should work to display theocratic love. (1 John 4:16) We need to submit to God's will and show deep respect for 'the faithful slave' and the Governing Body. Like our dedication to God, our obedience is, of course, voluntary and joyful. (1 John 5:3) How well the psalmist linked joy and obedience! He sang: "Praise

20. To preserve our Christian unity, what must we do?

Jah, you people! Happy is the man in fear of Jehovah, in whose commandments he has taken very much delight."—Psalm 112:1.

²¹ Jesus, the Head of the congregation, is fully theocratic and always does his Father's will. (John 5:30) Let us, therefore, follow our Exemplar by theocratically and unitedly doing Jehovah's will in full co-operation with His organization. Then with heartfelt joy and gratitude, we can echo the psalmist's song: "Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!"

21. How can we prove ourselves to be theocratic?

MAINTAIN UNITY IN THESE LAST DAYS

"Behave in a manner worthy of the good news . . . , standing firm in one spirit, with one soul striving side by side for the faith of the good news."

—PHILIPPIANS 1:27.

THESE are "the last days." Without question, "critical times hard to deal with" are here. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) In this "time of the end," with its unrest in human society, Jehovah's Witnesses stand out in sharp contrast because of their peace and unity. (Daniel 12:4) But each individual belonging to the global family of Jehovah's worshipers is called upon to work hard to maintain this unity.

² The apostle Paul admonished fellow Christians to maintain unity. He wrote:

1. What contrast is there between Jehovah's Witnesses and the world?
2. What did Paul say about maintaining unity, and what question will we consider?

"Behave in a manner worthy of the good news about the Christ, in order that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear about the things which concern you, that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one soul striving side by side for the faith of the good news, and in no respect being frightened by your opponents. This very thing is a proof of destruction for them, but of salvation for you; and this indication is from God." (Philippians 1:27, 28) Paul's words clearly show that we must work together as Christians. So, then, what will help us to maintain our Christian unity in these trying times?



Just as this shepherd keeps his flock together, so Jehovah keeps his people united

us [Jews] who have believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I should be able to hinder God?" (Acts 11:1-17) This posed a test for Jewish followers of Jesus Christ. Would they submit to God's will and accept believing Gentiles as their fellow worshipers? Or would the unity of Jehovah's earthly servants be imperiled?

⁵ The account says: "Now when they [the apostles and other brothers] heard these things, they acquiesced, and they glorified God, saying: 'Well, then, God has granted repentance for the purpose of life to people of the nations also.'" (Acts 11:18) That attitude preserved and promoted the unity of Jesus' followers. In only a short time, the preaching work went forward among the Gentiles, or people of the nations, and Jehovah's blessing was upon such activities. We ourselves should acquiesce when our co-operation is requested in connection with the formation of a new congregation or when some theocratic adjustment is made under the guidance of God's holy spirit. Our wholehearted cooperation will please Jehovah and will help us to maintain our unity in these last days.

Submit to the Divine Will

³ One way to maintain our unity is to submit to the divine will at all times. This may call for an adjustment in our thinking. Consider the early Jewish disciples of Jesus Christ. When the apostle Peter first preached to uncircumcised Gentiles in 36 C.E., God bestowed holy spirit upon these people of the nations, and they were baptized. (Acts, chapter 10) Until then, only Jews, proselytes to Judaism, and Samaritans had become followers of Jesus Christ.—Acts 8:4-8, 26-38.

⁴ When the apostles and other brothers in Jerusalem learned about the conversion of Cornelius and other Gentiles, they were interested in hearing Peter's report. After explaining what had taken place in connection with Cornelius and the other believing Gentiles, the apostle concluded with the words: "If, therefore, God gave the same free gift [of holy spirit] to them [those believing Gentiles] as he also did to

3. When and how did the first uncircumcised Gentiles become followers of Christ?
4. After explaining what had taken place in connection with Cornelius, what did Peter say, and what test did this pose for Jesus' Jewish disciples?

Cling to the Truth

⁶ As part of Jehovah's family of worshippers, we maintain unity because all of us are "taught by Jehovah" and hold firmly to his revealed truth. (John 6:45; Psalm 43:3) Since our teachings are based on God's Word, all of us speak in agreement. We gladly accept the spiritual food made

5. How did the apostles and other brothers respond to the fact that God had granted repentance to Gentiles, and what can we learn from this attitude?
6. What bearing does the truth have on the unity of Jehovah's worshipers?

available by Jehovah through "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47) Such uniform teaching assists us to maintain our unity worldwide.

⁷ What if we individually have difficulty understanding or accepting a certain point? We should pray for wisdom and undertake research in the Scriptures and Christian publications. (Proverbs 2:4, 5; James 1:5-8) Discussion with an elder may help. If the point still cannot be understood, it may be best to let the matter rest. Perhaps more information on the subject will be published, and then our understanding will be broadened. It would be wrong, however, to try to convince others in the congregation to accept our own divergent opinion. This would be sowing discord, not working to preserve unity. How much better it is to "go on walking in the truth" and encourage others to do so!—3 John 4.

⁸ In the first century, Paul said: "At present we see in hazy outline by means of a metal mirror, but then it will be face to face. At present I know partially, but then I shall know accurately even as I am accurately known." (1 Corinthians 13:12) Although the early Christians did not see all the details, they remained unified. We now have a much clearer understanding of Jehovah's purpose and his Word of truth. Let us therefore be grateful for the truth we have received through the 'faithful slave.' And let us be thankful that Jehovah has led us by means of his organization. While we have not always had the same degree of knowledge, we have not been starving or thirsting spiritually. Instead, our Shep-

7. If we individually have difficulty understanding a certain point, what should we do, and what should we not do?

8. What attitude toward the truth is appropriate?

herd, Jehovah, has kept us unified and has taken good care of us.—Psalm 23:1-3.

Use the Tongue Aright!

⁹ Using the tongue to encourage others is an important way to promote unity and a spirit of brotherhood. The letter that resolved a question on circumcision, as sent out by the first-century governing body, was a source of encouragement. After reading it, the Gentile disciples in Antioch "rejoiced over the encouragement." Judas and Silas, who had been sent from Jerusalem with the letter, "encouraged the brothers with many a discourse and strengthened them." Doubtless, the presence of Paul and Barnabas also encouraged and strengthened fellow believers in Antioch. (Acts 15:1-3, 23-32) We can do much the same when we gather for Christian meetings and 'encourage one another' through our presence and upbuilding comments.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

¹⁰ However, the wrong use of the tongue can threaten our unity. "The tongue is a little member and yet makes great brags," wrote the disciple James. "Look! How little a fire it takes to set so great a woodland on fire!" (James 3:5) Jehovah hates those causing contention. (Proverbs 6:16-19) Such talk can cause disunity. So, then, what if there is reviling, that is, the heaping of abuse upon someone or subjecting him or her to insulting speech? The elders will try to help the wrongdoer. However, an unrepentant reviler should be disfellowshipped so that the congregation's peace, order, and unity can be maintained. After all, Paul wrote: "Quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is . . . a

9. How can the tongue be used to promote unity?

10. To maintain unity, what may have to be done if reviling should occur?



By humbly apologizing when we cause offense, we help to promote unity

reviler . . . , not even eating with such a man.”—1 Corinthians 5:11.

¹¹ Bridling the tongue helps us to maintain unity. (James 3:10-18) But suppose something we have said has caused tension between us and a fellow Christian. Would it not be appropriate to take the initiative in making peace with our brother, apologizing if necessary? (Matthew 5:23, 24) True, this requires humility, or lowness of mind, but Peter wrote: “Gird yourselves with lowness of mind toward one another, because God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones.” (1 Peter 5:5) Humility will move us to ‘pursue peace’ with our brothers, admitting our mistakes and making appropriate apology. This helps to maintain the unity of Jehovah’s family.—1 Peter 3:10, 11.

¹² We can further the family spirit among

11. Why is humility important if we have said something that has caused tension between us and a fellow believer?
12. How can we use the tongue to promote and maintain the unity of Jehovah’s people?

those in Jehovah’s organization if we use our tongue aright. Since that is what Paul did, he could remind the Thessalonians: “You well know how, as a father does his children, we kept exhorting each one of you, and consoling and bearing witness to you, to the end that you should go on walking worthily of God.” (1 Thessalonians 2:11, 12) Having set a fine example in this regard, Paul could urge fellow Christians to “speak consolingly to the depressed souls.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Think of how much good we can do by using the tongue to console, encourage, and buildup others. Yes, “a word at its right time is O how good!” (Proverbs 15:23) Moreover, such speech helps to promote and maintain the unity of Jehovah’s people.

Be Forgiving!

¹³ Forgiving an offender who has apologized is essential if we are to maintain Christian unity. And how often should we forgive? Jesus told Peter: “Not, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy-seven times.” (Matthew 18:22) If we are unforgiving,

13. Why should we be forgiving?

we are working against our own interests. How so? Well, animosity and nursing a grudge will rob us of peace of mind. And if we become known for cruel and unforgiving ways, we may bring ostracism upon ourselves. (Proverbs 11:17) Holding a grudge is displeasing to God and can lead to grave sin. (Leviticus 19:18) Remember that John the Baptizer was beheaded in a scheme contrived by wicked Herodias, who was "nursing a grudge" against him.

—Mark 6:19-28.

¹⁴ Jesus' model prayer includes these words: "Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone that is in debt to us." (Luke 11:4) If we are unforgiving, we run the risk that some day Jehovah God will no longer forgive our sins, for Jesus said: "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; whereas if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6: 14, 15) So if we really want to do our part in maintaining unity in Jehovah's family of worshipers, we will be forgiving, perhaps just forgetting an offense that may have been due to thoughtlessness and lacked any evil intent. Paul said: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also." (Colossians 3:13) When we are forgiving, we help to maintain the precious unity of Jehovah's organization.

Unity and Personal Decisions

¹⁵ God made us free moral agents with

14. (a) What does Matthew 6:14, 15 teach us about forgiveness? (b) Must we always wait for an apology before forgiving someone?

15. What helps Jehovah's people to maintain unity when making personal decisions?

the privilege and responsibility to make personal decisions. (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20; Galatians 6:5) Yet, we are able to maintain our unity because we comply with Bible laws and principles. We take them into account when making personal decisions. (Acts 5:29; 1 John 5:3) Suppose a question arises concerning neutrality. We can make an informed personal decision by remembering that we are "no part of the world" and that we have 'beaten our swords into plowshares.' (John 17:16; Isaiah 2:2-4) Similarly, when we must make a personal decision regarding our relationship to the State, we consider what the Bible says about paying back "God's things to God," while subjecting ourselves to "the superior authorities" in secular matters. (Luke 20:25; Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1, 2) Yes, taking Bible laws and principles into account when making personal decisions helps maintain our Christian unity.

¹⁶ We can help to maintain Christian unity even when making a decision that is totally personal and neither right nor wrong Scripturally. How so? By showing loving concern for others who may be affected by our decision. To illustrate: In the congregation in ancient Corinth, a question arose regarding meat sacrificed to idols. Of course, a Christian would not participate in an idolatrous ceremony. However, it was not sinful to eat properly bled leftover meat of this kind that was sold in a public market. (Acts 15:28, 29; 1 Corinthians 10:25) Nevertheless, the consciences of some Christians were troubled over the eating of this meat. Paul therefore urged other Christians to avoid stumbling them. In fact, he wrote: "If food makes my brother stumble, I will

16. How can we help to maintain unity when making decisions that are neither right nor wrong Scripturally? Illustrate.

never again eat flesh at all, that I may not make my brother stumble." (1 Corinthians 8:13) So even if no Bible law or principle is involved, how loving it is to consider others when making personal decisions that could affect the unity of God's family!

¹⁷ If we are not sure what course to take, it is wise to decide in a way that leaves us with a clean conscience, and others should respect our decision. (Romans 14:10-12) Of course, when we must make a personal decision, we should seek Jehovah's guidance in prayer. Like the psalmist, we can confidently pray: "Incline to me your ear. . . . For you are my crag and my stronghold; and for the sake of your name you will lead me and conduct me."—Psalm 31:2, 3.

Always Maintain Christian Unity

¹⁸ In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul used the human body to illustrate the unity of the Christian congregation. He stressed interdependency and the importance of each member. "If they were all one member, where would the body be?" asked Paul.

17. What is it advisable to do when we must make personal decisions?

18. How did Paul illustrate the unity of the Christian congregation?

How Would You Answer?

- Why can doing God's will and clinging to the truth help us to maintain unity?
- How is unity related to proper use of the tongue?
- What is involved in being forgiving?
- How can we maintain unity when making personal decisions?
- Why maintain Christian unity?

"But now they are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand: 'I have no need of you'; or, again, the head cannot say to the feet: 'I have no need of you.'" (1 Corinthians 12:19-21) Similarly, not all of us in the family of Jehovah's worshipers perform the same function. Yet, we are united, and we need one another.

¹⁹ As the body needs food, care, and direction, we need the spiritual provisions that God gives us through his Word, spirit, and organization. To benefit from these provisions, we must be part of Jehovah's earthly family. After many years in God's service, one brother wrote: "I am so thankful that I have lived in the knowledge of Jehovah's purposes from those early days just prior to 1914 when all was not so clear . . . to this day when the truth shines like the noonday sun. If one thing has been most important to me, it has been the matter of keeping close to Jehovah's visible organization. My early experience taught me how unsound it is to rely on human reasoning. Once my mind had been resolved on that point, I determined to stay by the faithful organization. How else can one get Jehovah's favor and blessing?"

²⁰ Jehovah has called his people out of worldly darkness and disunity. (1 Peter 2:9) He has brought us into blessed unity with himself and with our fellow believers. This unity will exist in the new system of things now so near. In these critical last days, therefore, let us continue to 'clothe ourselves with love' and do everything we can to promote and maintain our precious unity.—Colossians 3:14.

19. How can we benefit from God's spiritual provisions, and what did one older brother say in this regard?

20. What should we be determined to do about our unity as Jehovah's people?

What “Instinctively Wise” Creatures Can Teach Us

AIR-CONDITIONING, antifreeze, desalination, and sonar are inventions that have become widely known to mankind in the 20th century. Yet, they existed in the animal world thousands of years earlier. Yes, mankind benefits by studying such “instinctively wise” creatures. (Proverbs 30:24-28; Job 12:7-9)

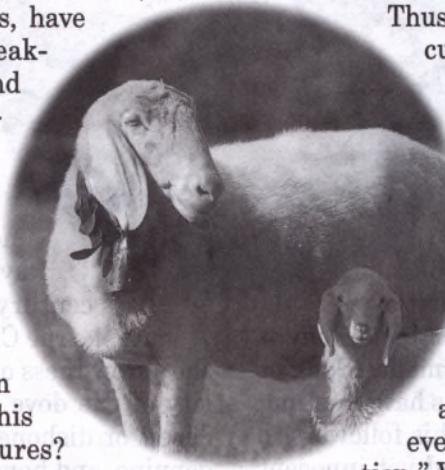
Certain animals, it seems, have become mankind’s nonspeaking tutors, and we can find great interest in examining them.

Can we benefit from considering the traits of certain animals? Well, Jesus Christ likened his followers to sheep, serpents, doves, and even locusts. What did he have in mind when he compared his followers to these creatures? Let us see.

“My Sheep Listen to My Voice”

Sheep are mentioned in the Bible over 200 times. As *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* explains, “the sheep is an emblem of meekness, patience, and submission.” In Isaiah chapter 53, Jesus himself was prophetically likened to a sheep. How fitting that he should compare his followers to the same animal! But which particular characteristics of sheep did Jesus have in mind?

“My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,” said Jesus. (John 10:27) He thus highlighted the meek-



ness of his disciples and their eagerness to follow him. Literal sheep listen to their shepherd and willingly follow him. The shepherd also has a close attachment to the flock.

A flock may be scattered across a meadow when grazing, but each sheep keeps in contact with the group as a whole.

Thus, when the animals feel insecure or frightened, “they can hurriedly gather together,” states the book *Alles für das Schaf* (Everything for the Sheep). If sheep run away to escape danger, they do so as a flock, stopping at times to reassess the situation. “Fleeing in stages allows lambs and weaker animals to keep up. The herd even offers them special protection.” What can we learn from this behavior?

True Christians today are not scattered among the denominations and sects of Christendom. Instead, they are gathered into one flock. Each Christian feels a personal attachment to this flock of God, and this contributes to the unity of the organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Whenever a crisis occurs—whether it is serious illness, warfare, or natural disaster—where does each worshiper seek guidance and protection? In Jehovah’s organization, which offers spiritual security.

How is Bible counsel made available?

Through publications such as *The Watchtower* and its companion journal, *Awake!* These magazines and Christian meetings even offer special help to those who need extra care, like the lambs and weaker sheep in a flock. For instance, attention is given to single parents and to those suffering from depression. How wise it is, therefore, to read each magazine, to attend every meeting of the congregation, and to apply what we learn! We thereby exhibit meekness and a strong attachment to the flock of God.—1 Peter 5:2.

"Cautious as Serpents and yet Innocent as Doves"

Smith's Bible Dictionary states: "Throughout the East the serpent was used as an emblem of the evil principle, of the spirit of disobedience." On the other hand, "my dove" was a term of endearment. (Song of Solomon 5:2) What did Jesus have in mind, then, when he encouraged his followers to be "cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves"?—Matthew 10:16.

Jesus was giving instructions for preaching and teaching. His disciples could expect a mixed reception. A few would show interest, whereas others would reject the good news. Some would even persecute these true servants of God. (Matthew 10:17-23) How were the disciples to react to persecution?

In *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (The Gospel of Matthew), Fritz Rienecker says regarding Matthew 10:16: "Shrewdness . . . must be coupled with integrity, sincerity, and straightforwardness, lest any-



thing should happen to give enemies valid grounds for complaint. The ambassadors of Jesus are among ruthless opponents, who show no consideration and who set upon the apostles without mercy and at the slightest opportunity. Hence, it is necessary—just like a serpent—to keep a watchful eye on opponents, and to take stock of the situation with eyes and senses alert; to stay master of the situation without trickery or deceit, to be pure and true in word and deed and thus prove themselves dovelike."

What can God's modern-day servants learn from Jesus' words found at Matthew 10:16? Today, people react to the good news in much the same way that they did in the first century. When faced with perse-

cution, true Christians need to combine the shrewdness of the serpent with the purity of the dove. Christians never employ deceit or dishonesty but are uncorrupted, genuine, and honest in declaring the Kingdom message to others.

To illustrate: Colleagues at work, youths in school, or even members of your own family may make caustic remarks about your beliefs as a Witness of Jehovah. The immediate reaction might be to respond in kind by being equally scathing about their faith. But is that innocent? Hardly. If you show your critics that their comments have no effect on your pleasant demeanor, they just might change for the better. You would then be both shrewd and blameless—"cautious as a serpent, yet innocent as a dove."

"The Locusts Resembled Horses Prepared for Battle"

The magazine *GEO* reports that in 1784, South Africa was hit by "the largest swarm [of locusts] ever registered in recorded history." The swarm covered an area of two thousand square miles, which is about five times the size of Hong Kong. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* says that the locust "commits terrible ravages on vegetation in the countries which it visits."

In his God-given revelation of things that would take place during "the Lord's day," Jesus used a vision of a swarm of locusts. Concerning them it was said: "The locusts resembled horses prepared for battle." (Revelation 1:1, 10; 9:3-7) What was the significance of this symbolism?

Jehovah's Witnesses have long understood that the locusts of Revelation chapter 9 portray the anointed servants of God on earth in this century.* These Christians have been assigned a particular job—to preach the Kingdom message earth wide and make disciples. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) This calls upon them to overcome obstacles and to stick to their work. What could better illustrate this than the indomitable locust?

Though little more than two inches in length, the locust commonly travels between 60 and 120 miles per day. The desert locust may even stretch this to 600 miles.

* See *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., chapter 22.

GEO explains that "its wings wave 18 times per second and for up to 17 hours a day—something that no other insect manages to do." What an immense task for such a tiny creature!

As a group, Jehovah's Witnesses are steadfast in spreading the good news of the Kingdom. They now preach in over 230 lands. These servants of God overcome many difficulties in order to have a share in carrying out the work. What sort of problems do they face? Prejudice, legal restrictions, illness, discouragement, and opposition from relatives are just a few. But nothing has managed to stem their advance. They stick to their God-given work.

Continue to Exhibit Christian Qualities

Yes, Jesus likened his followers to sheep, serpents, doves, and locusts. This is truly fitting for our day. Why? Because the end of this system of things is imminent, and problems are more pressing than ever.

Bearing in mind Jesus' illustrative words, true Christians stick closely to the flock of God and meekly accept counsel from Jehovah's organization. They keep on guard and are alert to situations that could hamper their Christian activities, while they remain irreproachable in all things. Moreover, they persevere in doing God's will in the face of obstacles. And they continue to learn from some "instinctively wise" creatures.



RETIREMENT

An Open Door to Theocratic Activity?

RETIREMENT—for many it closes the door on a long period of stress and aggravation. After being locked into a tedious or frenzied routine, many look forward to having retirement open a door to years of ease and personal freedom. All too often, though, that door leads to boredom and listlessness. Recreation and hobbies simply do not provide the sense of worth that work does.

For Jehovah's Witnesses, retirement can open "a large door that leads to activity." (1 Corinthians 16:9) Although advancing age does have its problems and limitations, some older ones have found that with Jehovah's help they can increase their service to him. Consider the experiences of some older Christians in the Netherlands. During the 1995 service year, 269 of the more than 1,223 pioneers (full-time Kingdom proclaimers) were 50 years old or older. Of these, 81 were 65 years of age or more.

Some are able to pioneer simply by continuing the busy pace they established while in the work force. (Compare Philippians 3:16.) One retired Christian named Karel recalls: "When I worked at my secular job, I used to start work at 7:30 a.m. When I began receiving my pension, I decided to keep the same routine. I would start the day off by doing magazine street witnessing in front of the railroad station each morning at seven o'clock."

Careful planning is also a key to success. (Proverbs 21:5) For example, some have been able to set aside sufficient funds to support themselves in their ministry. Oth-

ers have decided to cut back on personal expenses and obtain part-time employment. Consider Theodore and Ann. They started out married life as pioneers until family obligations required that they stop pioneering. But their pioneer spirit stayed alive! As their daughters grew up, they were constantly encouraged to pioneer. More important, Theodore and Ann set a good example, often serving as auxiliary pioneers. As the girls got older, Theodore and Ann began cutting back on secular work so as to have more time for field service.

After their daughters entered the full-time ministry and left home, Ann began pioneering. One day she encouraged Theodore to quit his job. "Both of us can pioneer," she suggested. Theodore informed his employer of his intentions. To his surprise his boss offered to help by giving him part-time work, saying: "I guess you want to work full-time for your boss up there [in heaven]." Theodore and Ann now enjoy pioneering together.

Some began to pioneer in response to circumstances that developed in their lives. The tragic death of their daughter and granddaughter made one older couple seriously contemplate the way they were using their remaining years. (Ecclesiastes 7:2) Instead of being swallowed up by grief, they took up the full-time service, which they have now enjoyed for over eight years!

Admittedly, it takes real determination to stay in the full-time ministry. For instance, Ernst and his wife, Riek, began pioneering as soon as their children left home.



Retirement can lead to increased activity in the ministry

Shortly thereafter a former business associate offered Ernst a lucrative job. Ernst replied: "We have the best employer ever, and we are not willing to quit on him!" Because Ernst and his wife remained in the "employ" of Jehovah, other privileges of service opened up for them. They served in the circuit work for over 20 years and continue as pioneers to this day. Do they regret their self-sacrificing course? Some time ago the couple wrote: "If it be Jehovah's will, in three months we expect to celebrate our 50 years of marriage, which is often called the golden anniversary. But with full conviction we say that our real golden years began when we started pioneering."

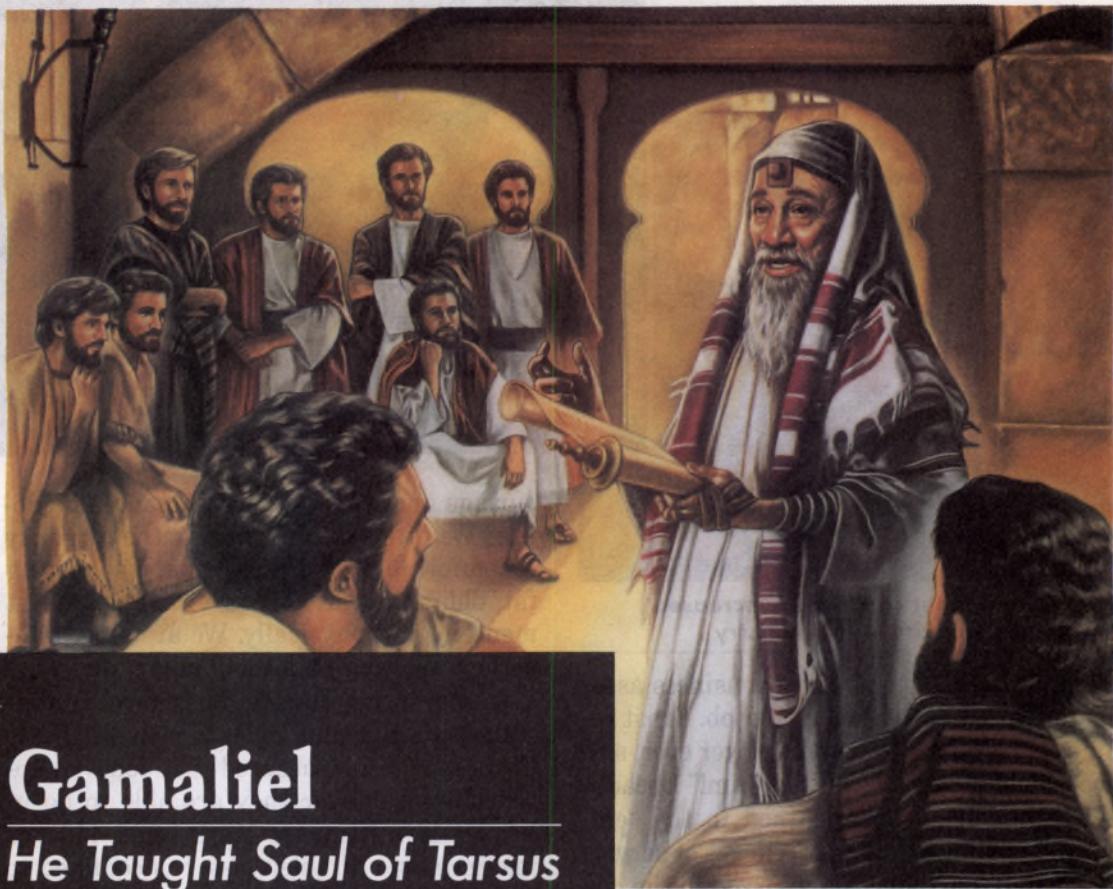
Many find that the door leading to increased activity also leads to increased joy! One brother who began pioneering two weeks after reaching the age of 65 says: "I must say that I have never experienced a period in my life so richly filled with blessings as the past ten years of pioneering." A married couple who have pioneered for over seven years say: "What else should a couple



our age and with our circumstances be doing? We often see our kind in the territory—comfortably settled at home, just getting fat, old, and stiff. The service keeps us fit mentally and physically. We are always together. We laugh a lot and enjoy life."

Of course, not all older ones have circumstances that permit them to pioneer. These Christians can be assured that Jehovah appreciates whatever they are able to do in his service. (Compare Mark 12:41-44.) For instance, one disabled sister is confined to a nursing home. However, a door of activity is still open for her! A doctor asked her how she manages to pass her time. She relates: "I told him that I always run short of time. He could not comprehend this. I told him that this is because my days are filled with satisfying activities. I am not lonesome, but I look up others who are lonesome and try to tell them what God has in store for mankind." She sums matters up by saying: "From someone who is almost 80, one cannot expect too much. Pray for me so that I can still lead many to Jehovah."

Are you of retirement age? The door to ease may be very tempting, but it is not the door to a spiritual blessing. Give your circumstances prayerful thought. It may be that you can go through the door leading to greater activity in Jehovah's service.



Gamaliel

He Taught Saul of Tarsus

THE crowd stood in hushed silence. Just moments earlier, they had almost killed the apostle Paul. Also known as Saul of Tarsus, he had been rescued by Roman troops and now faced the people from a stairway near the temple in Jerusalem.

Motioning with his hand for silence, Paul began to speak in Hebrew, saying: "Men, brothers and fathers, hear my defense to you now. . . . I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but educated in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strictness of the ancestral Law, being zealous for God just as all of you are this day."—Acts 22:1-3.

With his life in danger, why did Paul

open his defense by saying that he had been educated by Gamaliel? Who was Gamaliel, and what was involved in being taught by him? Did this training influence Saul even after he became the Christian apostle Paul?

Who Was Gamaliel?

Gamaliel was a well-known Pharisee. He was the grandson of Hillel the Elder, who had founded one of the two great schools of thought within Pharisaic Judaism.* Hillel's approach was considered more tolerant than that of his rival, Shammai. After the destruction of Jerusalem's temple in 70 C.E., Bet Hillel (the House of Hillel)

* Some sources say that Gamaliel was the son of Hillel. The Talmud is unclear on this matter.

lel) was preferred to Bet Shammai (the House of Shammai). The House of Hillel became the official expression of Judaism, since all other sects disappeared with the temple's destruction. The decisions of Bet Hillel are often the basis for Jewish law in the Mishnah, which became the foundation of the Talmud, and Gamaliel's influence apparently was a major factor in its dominance.

Gamaliel was so esteemed that he was the first to be called rabban, a title higher than that of rabbi. In fact, Gamaliel became such a highly respected individual that the Mishnah says of him: "When Rabban Gamaliel the elder died the glory of the Torah ceased, and purity and saintliness [lit. "separation"] perished."—Sotah 9:15.

Taught by Gamaliel—How?

When the apostle Paul told the crowd in Jerusalem that he was 'educated at the feet of Gamaliel,' what did he mean? What was involved in being a disciple of a teacher like Gamaliel?

Regarding such training, Professor Dov Zlotnick of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America writes: "The accuracy of the oral law, hence its reliability, depends almost entirely on the master-disciple relationship: the care taken by the master in teaching the law and the intentness of the disciple in learning it. . . . Disciples were, therefore, urged to sit at the feet of the scholars . . . 'and drink their words with thirst.'"—Avot 1:4, the Mishnah.

In his book *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, Emil Schürer sheds light on the methods of first-century rabbinic teachers. He writes: "The more famous Rabbis often assembled about them in great numbers, youths desirous of instruction, for the purpose of making them thoroughly acquainted with the much

ramified and copious 'oral law.' . . . The instruction consisted of an indefatigable continuous exercise of the memory. . . . The teacher brought before his pupils several legal questions for their decision and let them answer them or answered them himself. The pupils were also allowed to propose questions to the teacher."

In the view of the rabbis, the stakes for the pupils were much higher than merely receiving a passing grade. Those studying under such teachers were warned: "Whoever forgets a single thing from what he has learned—Scripture reckons it to him as if he has become liable for his life." (Avot 3:8) The greatest praise was bestowed upon a student who was like "a plastered well, which does not lose a drop of water." (Avot 2:8) Such was the sort of training that Paul, then known by his Hebrew name, Saul of Tarsus, received from Gamaliel.

The Spirit of Gamaliel's Teachings

In keeping with Pharisaic teaching, Gamaliel promoted belief in the oral law. He thus placed greater emphasis on the traditions of the rabbis than on inspired Scripture. (Matthew 15:3-9) The Mishnah quotes Gamaliel as saying: "Provide yourself with a teacher [a rabbi] and free yourself of doubt, for you must not give an excess tithe through guesswork." (Avot 1:16) This meant that when the Hebrew Scriptures did not explicitly say what to do, a person was not to use his own reasoning or follow his conscience to make a decision. Instead, he was to find a qualified rabbi who would make the decision for him. According to Gamaliel, only in this way would an individual avoid sinning.—Compare Romans 14:1-12.

However, Gamaliel was generally noted for a more tolerant, liberal attitude in

his religious legal rulings. For example, he showed consideration for women when he ruled that he would "permit a wife to remarry on the testimony of a single witness [to her husband's death]." (Yevamot 16:7, the Mishnah) Additionally, to protect a divorcee, Gamaliel introduced a number of restrictions into the issue of a letter of divorce.

This spirit is also seen in Gamaliel's dealings with the early followers of Jesus Christ. The book of Acts relates that when other Jewish leaders sought to kill Jesus' apostles whom they had arrested for preaching, "a certain man rose in the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a Law teacher esteemed by all the people, and gave the command to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them: 'Men of Israel, pay attention to yourselves as to what you intend to do respecting these men. . . . I say to you, Do not meddle with these men, but let them alone; . . . otherwise, you may perhaps be found fighters actually against God.'" Gamaliel's advice was heeded, and the apostles were released.—Acts 5:34-40.

What Did It Mean for Paul?

Paul had been trained and educated by one of the greatest rabbinic teachers of the first century C.E. No doubt the apostle's



As the apostle Paul, Saul of Tarsus proclaimed the good news to people of the nations

reference to Gamaliel caused the crowd in Jerusalem to pay special attention to his speech. But he spoke to them about a Teacher far superior to Gamaliel—Jesus, the Messiah. It was now as a disciple of Jesus, not of Gamaliel, that Paul addressed the crowd.—Acts 22:4-21.

Did training by Gamaliel influence Paul's teaching as a Christian? Likely, the stringent instruction in Scripture and Jewish law proved useful to Paul as a Christian teacher. Yet, Paul's divinely inspired letters found in the Bible clearly show that he rejected the essence of Gamaliel's Pharisaic belief. Paul directed his fellow Jews and all others, not to the rabbis of Judaism or to man-made traditions, but to Jesus Christ.

—Romans 10:1-4.

If Paul had continued to be a disciple of Gamaliel, he would have enjoyed great prestige. Others from Gamaliel's circle helped to shape the future of Judaism. For instance, Gamaliel's son Simeon, perhaps a fellow student of Paul, played a major role in the Jewish revolt against Rome. After the destruction of the temple, Gamaliel's grandson Gamaliel II restored the authority of the Sanhedrin, moving it to Yav-

In Our Next Issue

A Better Hope for the Soul

"Become Holy Yourselves
in All Your Conduct"

Michael Faraday—Scientist
and Man of Faith

neh. Gamaliel II's grandson Judah Ha-Nasi was the compiler of the Mishnah, which has become the foundation stone of Jewish thought until our day.

As a student of Gamaliel, Saul of Tarsus might have become very prominent in Judaism. Yet, concerning such a career, Paul wrote: "What things were gains to me, these I have considered loss on account of the Christ. Why, for that matter, I do indeed also consider all things to be loss on account of the excelling value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. On account of him I have taken the loss of all things and I consider them as a lot of refuse, that I may gain Christ."—Philippians 3:7, 8.

By putting his career as a Pharisee behind him and becoming a follower of Jesus Christ, Paul was making practical ap-

plication of his former teacher's advice to guard against being "found fighters actually against God." By ceasing his persecution of Jesus' disciples, Paul stopped fighting against God. Instead, by becoming a follower of Christ, he became one of "God's fellow workers."—1 Corinthians 3:9.

The message of true Christianity continues to be proclaimed by zealous Witnesses of Jehovah in our day. Like Paul, many of these have made dramatic changes in their lives. Some have even given up promising careers in order to have a greater share in the Kingdom-preaching activity, truly a work "from God." (Acts 5:39) How happy they are that they have followed Paul's example rather than that of his former teacher, Gamaliel!

ANNUAL MEETING

O C T O B E R 5 , 1 9 9 6

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the members of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania will be held on October 5, 1996, at the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, New Jersey. A preliminary meeting of the members only will convene at 9:15 a.m., followed by the general annual meeting at 10:00 a.m.

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

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

are to be returned so as to reach the Office of the Secretary of the Society not later than August 1. Each member should complete and return his proxy promptly, stating whether he is going to be at the meeting personally or not. The information given on each proxy should be definite on this point, since it will be relied upon in determining who will be personally present.

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



QUESTIONS FROM READERS

I understand that the Greek word "to'te" (then) is used to introduce what follows. So why does Matthew 24:9 read: "Then [to'te] people will deliver you up to tribulation," whereas the parallel account at Luke 21:12 says: "But before all these things people will lay their hands upon you and persecute you"?

It is correct that to'te can be used to introduce something that follows, something in sequence, so to speak. But we need not understand that this is the only Biblical use of the word.

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, by Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, shows that the word to'te is used in two basic senses in the Scriptures.

One is "at that time." This can be "of the past then." An example given is Matthew 2:17: "Then that was fulfilled which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet." This is not referring to something in a series but indicates a particular point in the past, at that time. Similarly, to'te can be used "of the fut[ure] then." One instance is found at 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For at present we see in hazy outline by means of a metal mirror, but then it will be face to face. At present I know partially, but then I shall know accurately even as I am accurately known." Paul here used to'te in the sense of 'at that future point.'

According to this lexicon, the other usage of to'te is "to introduce that which follows in time." This lexicon gives many examples found in the three accounts of Jesus' answer to the apostles' question about the sign of his presence.* As ex-

amples of the use of to'te "to introduce that which follows in time," the lexicon cited Matthew 24:10, 14, 16, 30; Mark 13:14, 21; and Luke 21:20, 27. Considering the context shows why something subsequent in time is rightly understood. And this is helpful in getting the sense of Jesus' prophecy that contained the development of future events.

However, we need not conclude that every instance of to'te in these accounts must strictly introduce what follows in time. For instance, at Matthew 24:7, 8, we read that Jesus foretold that nation would rise against nation and that there would be food shortages and earthquakes. Verse 9 continues: "Then people will deliver you up to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name." Would it be reasonable to understand that the foretold wars, food shortages, and earthquakes must all occur, and perhaps cease, before the persecution could begin?

That is not logical, nor is it borne out by what we know of the first-century fulfillment. The account in the book of Acts reveals that almost immediately after members of the new Christian congregation began preaching, they experienced serious opposition. (Acts 4:5-21; 5:17-40) We certainly cannot say that all the wars, famines, and earthquakes that Jesus spoke of happened prior to that early persecution. On the contrary, that opposition came "before" many of the other things foretold, which is in accord with the way Luke phrased matters: "But before all these things people will lay their hands upon you and persecute you." (Luke 21:12) That would suggest that at Matthew 24:9, to'te is used more in the sense of "at that time." During the period of the wars, famines, and earthquakes, or at that time, the followers of Jesus would be persecuted.

* These parallel accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke were set out in columns on pages 14 and 15 of *The Watchtower* of February 15, 1994. The instances of to'te, rendered "then," were in bold type.

TRAIN THEM FROM INFANCY

MODERN research indicates that "features have physiological reactions to voices." University of North Carolina researchers "found that after mothers read to their children in utero, the newborns reacted when the passages were read again," says the Winnipeg Free Press. When women read aloud while pregnant, this may well contribute to instilling good moral values in the child. The Bible says that Timothy 'knew the holy writings from infancy.' (2 Timothy 3:14, 15) Evidently, his mother and his grandmother appreciated the value of training him from infancy, which very likely included reading aloud.

Reading is "the most powerful life skill that we have in our society today," says author Jim Trelease. Language and vocabulary skills are enhanced by reading aloud.

It is wise to begin reading aloud at least as soon as you start to talk to your infant. Even though your unborn or newborn child will not

initially understand what you are saying, the potential long-term benefits are worth it. Proverbs 22:6 says: "Train up a boy according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it."

What can you read that is both practical and beneficial? Read the Bible aloud to your child each day. Also read other worthwhile publications, such as *Listening to the Great Teacher*, *My Book of Bible Stories*, *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*, and articles in the Watchtower and Awake! magazines.

True, giving of yourself in this way involves time, but it is time well spent. It is a tangible way to show that you care about and love your child.



You Can Have "the Heart of the Lion"

THE Bible sometimes uses the lion as a symbol of courage and confidence. Valiant or courageous men are described as having "the heart of the lion," and the righteous are said to be "like a young lion that is confident." (2 Samuel 17:10; Proverbs 28:1) Especially when challenged, the lion shows it deserves its reputation as "the mightiest among the beasts."—Proverbs 30:30.

It is to the lion's fearlessness that Jehovah God likens his determination to protect his people. Isaiah 31:4, 5 states: "Just as the lion growls, even the maned young lion, over its prey, when there is called out against it a full number of shepherds, and in spite of their voice he will not be terrified and in spite of their commotion he will not stoop; in the same way Jehovah of armies will come down to wage war over Mount Zion . . . Defending her, he will also certainly deliver her. Sparing her, he must also cause her to escape." Jehovah thus assures his servants of his active care, particularly in the face of adversity.

The Bible compares mankind's greatest adversary, Satan the Devil, to a roaring, ravenous lion. To avoid becoming his prey, we are told in the Scriptures: "Keep your senses, be watchful." (1 Peter 5:8) One way to do this is to avoid fatal spiritual drowsiness. In this regard Jesus said: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life." (Luke 21:34-36) Yes, being spiritually awake in these "last days" can give us "the heart of the lion," one that is 'steadfast, reliant on Jehovah.'—2 Timothy 3:1; Psalm 112:7, 8.

