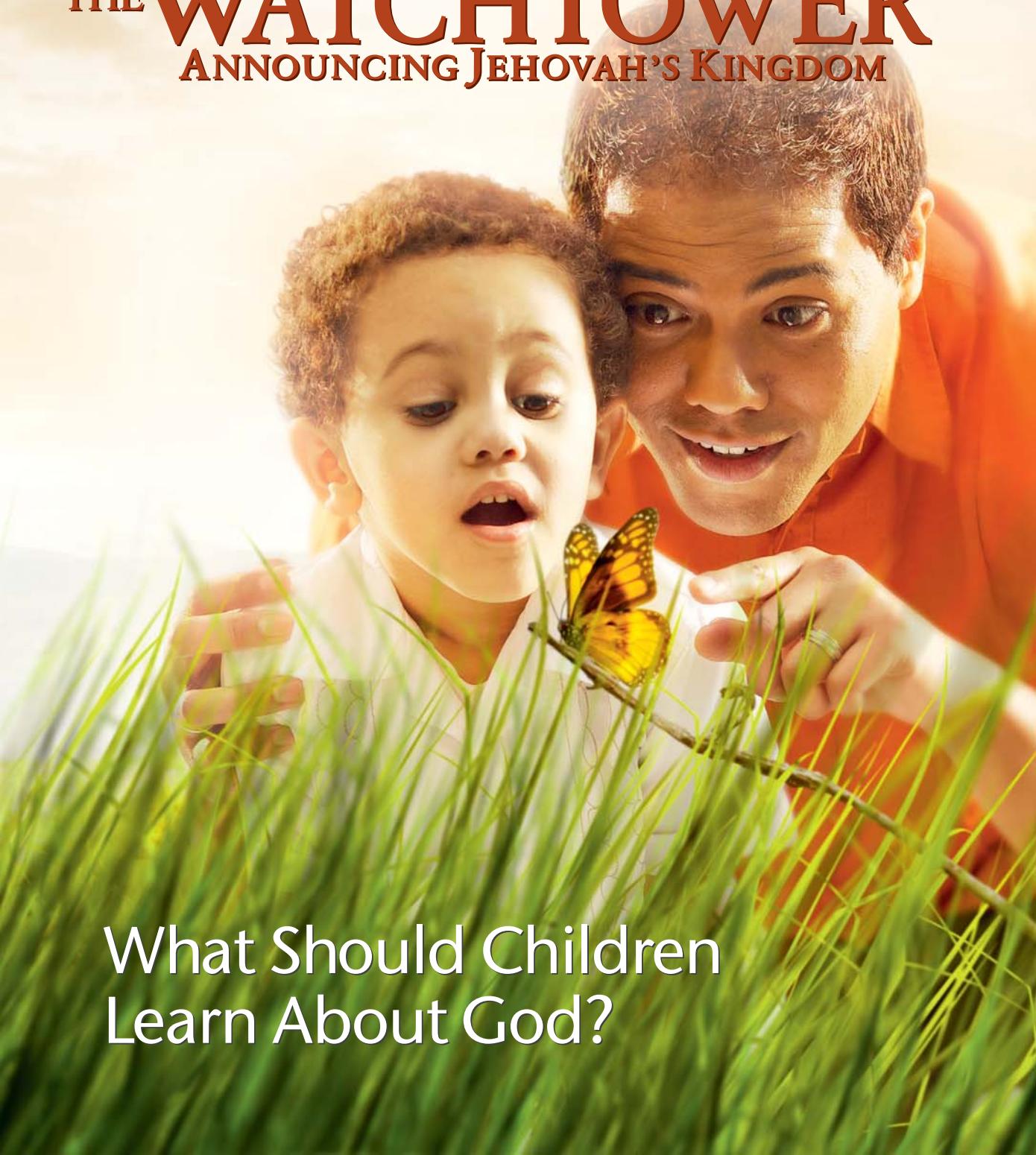


THE WATCHTOWER

AUGUST 1, 2011

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



What Should Children
Learn About God?

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

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Should Children Learn About God?

"We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another." —JONATHAN SWIFT, ENGLISH AUTHOR.

SWIFT expressed that thought in the 18th century, but many today would agree with him. In fact, some believe that parents should not have the right to teach their children about God. They feel that children raised in a religious household are somehow disadvantaged.

What do you think? Which of the following statements is most reasonable?

- Parents should not be allowed to teach their children about God.
- Parents should wait until their children grow up before they discuss religious matters with them.
- While the children are young, parents should pass on their own beliefs about God. But as their young ones mature, parents should encourage them to reason on the matter for themselves.
- Children must adopt their parents' beliefs about God without question.

Does Religion Harm Children?

No caring parent wants to harm a child. But do the facts support the claims of those who would prevent children from learning about God? For decades now, researchers have intensely studied the effect that a parent's religious beliefs have on children. With what conclusion?

Researchers have found that rather than being a harmful influence, religion can have a positive effect on a child's development. In 2008 a report published

in the journal *Social Science Research** stated: "Religion has been shown to enhance the parent-child bond for both mothers and fathers." This report also said: "Religion and spirituality appear to be an important part of many children's lives and are vital to family relationships." Notice how similar that finding is to what Jesus Christ said: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need."

—Matthew 5:3.

What about the idea that children should grow up before learning about God and religion? That view ignores this fact: A child's mind is like an empty bucket waiting to be filled. Really, parents face a choice; either fill that "bucket" at home with the moral principles and beliefs that they feel are appropriate or allow the rainstorm of ideas outside the home to fill the child's mind and heart.

What Is the Secret?

History proves that religion has the potential to fuel bigotry and hatred. So how can parents avoid the outcome described by Jonathan Swift? How can they teach their children beliefs that help them to love others?

The secret lies in finding the answer to three questions: (1) What should children learn? (2) Who should teach them? (3) What methods of teaching work best?

* This study was based on information gathered from over 21,000 children living in the United States, as well as from their parents and teachers.

What Should Children Learn?

"All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness."

—2 TIMOTHY 3:16.

CHILDREN need to be taught the truth about God. Where can they learn that truth? From the most widely respected religious book in the world, the Bible.

The Bible is like a letter from God. In that letter, God reveals his personality and provides moral guidance for all of his children, both young and old. Notice just some of the teachings contained in the Bible and the lessons that even young children can learn from them.



THE WATCHTOWER
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Jehovah's Witnesses, using one of these addresses. For a complete list of addresses, see www.watchtower.org/address.

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What does God want us to know about him?

■ **What the Bible teaches:** "You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth."—Psalm 83:18.

Lesson: God is not an impersonal force, but he is a real Person who has a distinctive personal name.

■ **What the Bible teaches:** "All hearts Jehovah is searching, and every inclination of the thoughts he is discerning. If you search for him, he will let himself be found by you."—1 Chronicles 28:9.

Lesson: Jehovah God cares about all of us, including small children. (Psalm 10:14; 146:9) He wants us to learn about him.

■ **What the Bible teaches:** "You people must not afflict any . . . fatherless boy. If you should afflict him at all, then if he cries out to me at all, I shall unfailingly hear his outcry."—Exodus 22:22-24.

Lesson: Jehovah listens to the prayers of even small children. We can talk to God regularly and express our innermost thoughts and feelings to him.

■ **What the Bible teaches:** "Again and again they would put God to the test, and they pained even the Holy One of Israel."—Psalm 78:41.

Lesson: Our speech and actions affect Jehovah's feelings, so we should think before we speak and act.

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How should we treat those who are different from us?

■ **What the Bible teaches:** “God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.”—Acts 10:34, 35.

Lesson: If God accepts people from all backgrounds, we should not discriminate against others just because their skin color or their facial features differ from ours.

■ **What the Bible teaches:** “Always [be] ready to make a defense before everyone that demands of you a reason for the hope in you, but doing so together with a mild temper and deep respect.”—1 Peter 3:15.

Lesson: When discussing religion, we should express our views with conviction but without aggression. We should also show respect to those whose religious beliefs differ from ours.



How should we treat family members?

■ **What the Bible teaches:** “Children, be obedient to your parents in everything, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord.”—Colossians 3:20.

Lesson: Obedient children prove not only that they love their parents but also that they want to please God.

■ **What the Bible teaches:** “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.

Lesson: Other people, including our family members, will disappoint us at times. But if we want God to forgive us, we must learn to forgive others.—Matthew 6:14, 15.

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⁺ CD also available.

⁺ MP3 CD-ROM also available.

⁺ Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

Why be honest and kind?

■ **What the Bible teaches:** “Put away falsehood, [and] speak truth each one of you with his neighbor.”—Ephesians 4:25.

Lesson: When we tell the truth, we imitate God and make him happy. If we develop the habit of telling lies, we become like God’s enemy, the Devil, who is “the father of the lie.”—John 8:44; Titus 1:2.

■ **What the Bible teaches:** “Treat others as you want them to treat you.”—Matthew 7:12, “Contemporary English Version.”

Lesson: We should be considerate of the feelings, thoughts, and needs of our family members and others in our community. When we show “fellow feeling,” others are more likely to treat us in a kind way.—1 Peter 3:8; Luke 6:38.



As these examples show, the lessons contained in the Bible can help children to become appreciative, respectful, empathetic adults. But who should teach these lessons to children?

Who Should Teach Children About God?

“A pupil is not above his teacher, but everyone that is perfectly instructed will be like his teacher.”—LUKE 6:40.

SOME parents feel unqualified to teach their children about God. They may think that they do not have enough education or do not know enough about religion to be good teachers. As a result, they may be inclined to leave this vital task to a relative or to a religious leader.

Who, though, is really in the best position to teach children religious truths and moral principles? Consider what the Bible says on this subject, and compare those statements with what researchers have discovered.

What Is a Father’s Role?

What the Bible teaches: “Fathers, don’t stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”—Ephesians 6:4, “Holman Christian Standard Bible.”

What researchers have discovered: How do fathers benefit if they develop strong religious convictions? The article *Fathers’ Religious Involvement and Early Childhood Behavior*, published in 2009, stated: “Involvement in a religious community may help men become better fathers. Religion provides



individuals with social support and control as well as a set of teachings and guidelines for how to live one's life."

The Bible places great emphasis on the importance of a father's role in raising and training children. (Proverbs 4:1; Colossians 3:21; Hebrews 12:9) But is that counsel relevant today? In 2009 the University of Florida published an article that discussed the impact that fathers had on their children. The researchers found that children with fathers who were actively involved in their upbringing were more likely to be empathetic and to have a better sense of self-worth. Boys were less likely to misbehave, and girls were more likely to have better mental health. Certainly, the Bible's advice is still relevant.

How Important Is a Mother's Role?

What the Bible teaches: "*Do not forsake the law of your mother.*"—Proverbs 1:8.

What researchers have discovered: In 2006 the *Handbook of Child Psychology* stated: "On average, mothers spend between 65%

and 80% more time than fathers do in direct one-to-one interaction with their young children, and such ratios hold in many different lands." With that amount of contact, a mother's speech, actions, and attitudes have a profound effect on a child's development.

When a mother and father work together to teach their children the truth about God, they give them at least two precious gifts. First, the children gain the opportunity to form a friendship with their heavenly Father, a friendship that can benefit them throughout life. Second, the children learn by example how a husband and wife should cooperate to reach important goals. (Colossians 3:18-20) While others may be able to assist a father and mother, it is the parents who have the responsibility to teach their children about God and about how God wants a family to function.

How, though, should parents teach their children? What methods are likely to work best?



How to Teach Children About God

WHAT METHODS WORK BEST?

"These words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart; and you must inculcate them in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up."—DEUTERONOMY 6:6, 7.

PARENTS may at times feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of training their children. When they seek advice, however, the sheer volume of counsel on the subject may swamp them further. Relatives and friends are often keen to pass on their suggestions. And books, magazine articles, and Internet sites offer parents a constant stream of sometimes conflicting advice.

The Bible, on the other hand, provides parents not only reliable counsel on *what* to teach their children but also practical direction on *how* to teach them. As the Bible verses quoted above indicate, parents need to find some way each day to talk about God to their children. Discussed below are just four Bible-based suggestions that have helped thousands of parents to teach their children about God.

1. Draw lessons from creation. The apostle Paul wrote: "[God's] invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the

things made, even his eternal power and Godship." (Romans 1:20) Parents can do much to help their children see God as a real Person by drawing attention to God's creative works and then helping their children discern what qualities of God those creations reveal.

Jesus used this technique when teaching his disciples. For example, he said: "Observe intently the birds of heaven, because they do not sow seed or reap or gather into storehouses; still your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they are?" (Matthew 6:26) Jesus here highlighted Jehovah's qualities of love and compassion. But he did more. He helped his disciples reason on how God expressed those qualities toward his children.

Wise King Solomon pointed to the instinctive wisdom God gave to ants, and he used these little creatures to emphasize a valuable lesson. "Go to the ant, you lazy one," he wrote, "see its ways and become wise. Al-

though it has no commander, officer or ruler, it prepares its food even in the summer; it has gathered its food supplies even in the harvest." (Proverbs 6:6-8) What a powerful way to teach the value of setting worthwhile goals and then using our God-given strength to achieve them!

Parents can imitate the effective teaching of Jesus and Solomon by doing the following: (1) Ask their children which plants and animals interest them. (2) Learn more about those plants and animals. (3) Draw lessons about God from such creations.

2. Imitate Jesus' attitude toward those whom he taught. Of all the people who ever lived, Jesus had the most important things to say. Yet, he spent much of his time asking questions. He was keenly interested in the thoughts and feelings of those whom he taught. (Matthew 17:24, 25; Mark 8:27-29) Similarly, parents have many important lessons to teach their children. To be effective, though, they need to imitate Jesus and encourage their children to state freely how they feel.

What if children display a bad attitude or are slow to learn some valuable lesson? Consider the way Jesus dealt with the apostles. They at times argued bitterly among themselves and were slow to learn the benefits of being humble. Yet, Jesus remained patient and repeatedly spoke about the need for humility. (Mark 9:33, 34; Luke 9:46-48; 22:24, 25) Parents who imitate Jesus will patiently correct their children and, if needed, will repeat the same lesson until the children fully grasp its importance.*

3. Teach by example. Parents do well to listen to the counsel the apostle Paul gave to Christians living in Rome. To them he wrote: "Do you, however, the one teaching some-

* The Hebrew word translated "inculcate" at Deuteronomy 6:7 carries the thought of repeating a point often.

one else, not teach yourself? You, the one preaching 'Do not steal,' do you steal?"—Romans 2:21.

That advice is relevant because children are far more impressed by what parents do than by what they say. In fact, parents who practice what they preach are more likely to have children who listen to what their parents teach.

4. Start while the child is young. The apostle Paul's missionary companion Timothy had an excellent reputation in his community. (Acts 16:1, 2) One reason was that "from infancy" he had been taught "the holy writings." Timothy's mother and grandmother not only read the Scriptures to him but also helped him to reason on the truths those writings contain.—2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14, 15.

Where You Can Find Help

Jehovah's Witnesses produce a number of publications specifically designed to help parents teach their children the truth about God. Some are written with young children in mind. Others can help parents and their teenage children keep the lines of communication open.*

Of course, before parents can teach their children about God, they need to know the answers to some of the difficult questions that children may raise. For example, how would you answer such questions as the following: Why does God allow suffering? What is God's purpose for the earth? Where are the dead? Jehovah's Witnesses would be happy to help you learn the answers to those and other questions so that you and your family can draw close to God.—James 4:8.

* For younger children, parents can use the book *Learn From the Great Teacher*, which highlights the teachings of Jesus Christ, or *My Book of Bible Stories*, which relates in simple language key lessons from the Bible. For youths, parents can use the books *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volumes 1 and 2.



KEYS TO FAMILY HAPPINESS

Treating Your Mate With Respect

Will* says: "When Rachel is upset, she cries for a long time. If we sit down to talk, she gets irritable or even gives me the silent treatment. Nothing seems to work. I feel like giving up."

Rachel says: "When Will came home, I was crying. I tried to explain why I was upset, but he cut me off. He told me that it wasn't that serious, and I should just get over it. That made me even more upset."

CAN you relate to Will or Rachel? Both of them want to communicate, but they often get frustrated. Why?

Men and women communicate differently, and they have unique needs. A woman may long to share her feelings openly and often. Many men, on the other hand, try to preserve peace by solving problems quickly and avoiding thorny issues. How, then, can you bridge these differences and communicate with your husband or wife? By treating your mate with respect.

A respectful person values others and seeks to understand their feelings. Since childhood, you may have learned to respect people who have more authority or experience than you have. In marriage, however, the challenge is to show respect for someone with whom you are on more of an equal footing—your mate. "I knew that Phil would listen with patience and understand-



ing to anyone else who spoke to him," says Linda, who has been married for eight years. "I wanted him to be just as empathetic with me." Likely, you listen patiently and speak respectfully to friends and even strangers. Yet, are you just as considerate to your mate?

Disrespect creates tension in the home and leads to bitter conflict. A wise ruler stated: "A dry crust of bread eaten in peace and quiet is better than a feast eaten where everyone argues." (Proverbs 17:1, *Contemporary English Version*) The Bible tells a husband to treat his wife with honor, or respect. (1 Peter 3:7)

* Names have been changed.

"The wife" too "should have deep respect for her husband."—Ephesians 5:33.

How can you communicate respectfully? Consider some practical advice found in the Bible.

When Your Mate Has Something to Say

The Challenge: Many people like to talk more than they like to listen. Are you one of them? The Bible describes as foolish anyone who is "replying to a matter before he hears it." (Proverbs 18:13) So before you talk, listen. Why? "I prefer it when my husband doesn't try to fix my problems right away," says Kara, who has been married for 26 years. "He doesn't even have to agree or figure out why the problem arose. I just want him to listen to me and validate my feelings."

On the other hand, some men and women hesitate to express themselves and feel uncomfortable if their mate pressures them to talk about their feelings. Lorrie, who was recently married, discovered that her husband takes a long time to share his feelings. "I have to be patient," she says, "and wait for him to open up."

A Solution: If you and your mate need to talk about something potentially divisive, raise the matter when both of you are calm and relaxed. What if your spouse is reluctant to speak up? Recognize that "a person's thoughts are like water in a deep well, but someone with insight can draw them out." (Proverbs 20:5, *Today's English Version*) If you draw a bucket out of a well too quickly, you will lose a lot of water. Similarly, if you confront your mate too forcefully, your mate may become defensive and the opportunity to draw him or her out may be lost. Instead, ask questions gently and respectfully, and be patient if your mate does not articulate feelings as quickly as you would like.

When your spouse does speak, "be swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath." (James 1:19) A good listener listens not only with the ears but also with the heart. When your mate speaks, try to understand his or her feelings. Your mate will sense your level of respect—or disrespect—by the way you listen.

Jesus taught us *how* to listen. For example, when a sick man approached him for help, Jesus did not immediately solve the problem. First, he listened to the man's entreaty. Then he allowed what he heard to move him deeply. Finally, he healed the man. (Mark 1:40-42) When your mate speaks, follow the same pattern. Remember, he or she is likely seeking heartfelt empathy, not a quick solution. So listen closely. Allow your emotions to be touched. Then, and only then, respond to your mate's needs. By doing so, you will show that you respect your mate.

TRY THIS: The next time your mate begins speaking to you, resist the urge to respond immediately. Wait until your spouse has finished talking and you understand what was expressed. Later, approach your mate and ask, "Did you feel that I was really listening to you?"

When You Have Something to Say

The Challenge: "Sitcoms make it appear normal to speak badly about one's mate and to be insulting and sarcastic," observes Linda, quoted earlier. Some grow up in homes where disrespectful speech is typical. Later, when they marry, they find it difficult to avoid this pattern in their own family. Ivy, who lives in Canada, relates: "I grew up in an environment where sarcasm, screaming, and name-calling were the norm."

A Solution: When you talk to others about your mate, share "whatever saying is good

for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to the hearers.” (Ephesians 4:29) Impart a favorable impression of your spouse by the way you speak about him or her.

Even when you are alone with your mate, resist the urge to use sarcasm and name-calling. In ancient Israel, Michal got angry with her husband, King David. She spoke sarcastically and said that he acted “just as one of the empty-headed men.” Her words offended David, but they also displeased God. (2 Samuel 6:20-23) The lesson? When you speak with your mate, choose your words carefully. (Colossians 4:6; footnote) Phil, married for eight years, admits that he and his wife still have disagreements. He has noticed that, at times, what he says makes the situation worse. “I have come to realize that ‘winning’ an argument is actually a loss. I find that it is much more satisfying and beneficial to build up our relationship.”

An elderly widow in ancient times encouraged her daughters-in-law to “find a resting-place each one in the house of her husband.” (Ruth 1:9) When both husband and wife dignify each other, they make their home “a resting-place.”

TRY THIS: With your mate, set aside time to discuss the suggestions under this sub-heading. Ask your spouse: “When I talk about you in public, do you feel honored or put down? What adjustments can I make to improve?” Really listen as your spouse shares his or her feelings. Try to apply the suggestions you hear.

Accept Your Mate’s Differences

The Challenge: Some newlyweds have mistakenly concluded that what the Bible calls being “one flesh” means that the couple must have one opinion or personality.

(Matthew 19:5) However, they quickly discover that such thinking is idealistic. Once they are married, their differences often lead to arguments. Linda says: “One major difference between us is that Phil worries less than I do. Sometimes he is able to relax when I’m worried, so I end up feeling angry because it appears that he doesn’t care about something as much as I do.”

A Solution: Accept each other as you are, and respect what is different about your mate. To illustrate: Your eyes work differently than your ears; yet they cooperate so you can cross the road safely. Adrienne, who has been married for nearly three decades, says: “As long as our viewpoints don’t violate God’s Word, my husband and I allow each other to have differing opinions. After all, we are married, not cloned.”

When your mate has a different opinion or reaction than you do, focus not just on your own interests. Consider your mate’s feelings. (Philippians 2:4) Adrienne’s husband, Kyle, admits: “I don’t always understand or agree with my wife’s opinions on matters. But I remind myself that I love *her* much more than I love my opinion. When she is happy, I really am too.”

TRY THIS: Make a list of ways that your mate’s viewpoint or way of handling things is superior to yours.—Philippians 2:3.

Respect is one of the keys to a happy and lasting marriage. “Respect brings contentment and security to a marriage,” says Linda. “It is definitely worth cultivating.”

ASK YOURSELF . . .

- How have my mate’s differences enriched our family?
- Why is it good to yield to my mate’s preference whenever Bible principles are not at issue?



DRAW CLOSE TO GOD

He Remembers That “We Are Dust”

“I HAD not believed that Jehovah could fully forgive me, and I thought that I would carry this burden for the rest of my life.” So wrote one Christian woman regarding her past mistakes. Truly, a guilty conscience is a heavy burden to carry. The Bible, however, offers comfort that can ease the pain of repentant sinners. Consider the words of the psalmist David found at Psalm 103:8-14.

David knew that “Jehovah is merciful” and does not “keep finding fault” with us. (Verses 8-10) When God finds a basis to show mercy, he does so completely and unstintingly. David, an eloquent poet, uses three similes to illustrate God’s far-reaching mercy toward us.

“As the heavens are higher than the earth, his loving-kindness is superior toward those fearing him.” (Verse 11) When we look up at the night sky, we cannot fathom the great distance between the starry heavens and the earth. David thus impresses upon us the magnitude of Jehovah’s mercy, a facet of his loyal love. This mercy is for “those fearing” God—those who have “a humble, hearty reverence of his authority,” says one scholar.

“As far off as the sunrise is from the sunset, so far off from us he has put our transgressions.” (Verse 12) Other translations say, “as far as the east is from the west.” How far is that? As far as we can imagine. One Bible reference work says: “Fly as far as the wing of imagination can bear you, and if you journey through space eastward, you are further from the west at every beat of your wing.” David here tells us that when God forgives our sins, he puts them as far away from us as we can possibly imagine.

“As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him.” (Verse 13) David, a father himself, knew what a

loving father feels in his heart. Such a father is moved to show compassion to his children, especially when they are in pain. David assures us that our loving heavenly Father shows mercy to his earthly children, especially when their repentant hearts are “broken and crushed” because of their sins.—Psalm 51:17.

Following the three similes, David reveals what moves Jehovah to show mercy to imperfect humans: *“He himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust.”* (Verse 14) Jehovah knows that we are creatures made of

“I am starting to feel that I really can draw closer to Jehovah, and I feel that a weight has been lifted off me”

dust, having frailties and limitations. Taking into consideration our sinful nature, Jehovah is “ready to forgive”—as long as we show heartfelt repentance.—Psalm 86:5.

Is your heart touched by David’s words about Jehovah’s mercy? The woman quoted at the outset made a study of what the Bible says about God’s readiness to forgive, and she was moved to say: “I am starting to feel that I really can draw closer to Jehovah, and I feel that a weight has been lifted off me.”* Why not learn more about God’s mercy and how you can receive it? Perhaps you too will feel that a weight is being lifted off you.

* See chapter 26, “A God Who Is ‘Ready to Forgive,’” of the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR AUGUST:
■ Psalms 87-118



TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

Why Dorcas Was Loved



WE ALL want people to love us. *Do you feel that way?** The Bible tells about Dorcas, a woman whom many loved very much.

Dorcas lived in Joppa, a city next to the Mediterranean Sea. Jerusalem was only about 35 miles (56 km) inland from Joppa. Dorcas was one of Jesus' early disciples.

Why, do you think, was Dorcas loved so much?— Well, the Bible says that she did many good things and gave fine gifts. She apparently made nice clothes for widows, that is, women whose husbands had died. She also spoke to many about the true God, Jehovah, just as Jesus had done.

Do you know what bad thing happens to Dorcas now?— She becomes very sick and dies. Her friends are all sad. So they

* If you are reading with a child, the dash provides a reminder to pause and encourage the child to express himself.



send some people to where the apostle Peter is staying, about ten miles (16 km) away. These people ask him to come quickly. When Peter arrives, he goes upstairs to where Dorcas is. The women are all crying, and they show him the clothes that Dorcas made for them.

Peter then tells everyone to leave the room. Peter and other apostles have performed miracles before, but never has any one of them brought a dead person back to life. *What do you think Peter does now?*—

Peter kneels down next to the dead body and prays to Jehovah. Then he tells Dorcas to rise. And Dorcas does! Peter gives her his hand and helps her up. Then he calls in the widows and the others and shows her to them. *Can you imagine how happy they all are?*—

Let us think now what you can learn from this story about the resurrection of Dorcas. One thing it shows is that if you help others, you will be loved in return by many of them. But more important, you will be remembered and loved by God. He will never forget the good things you do for other people. And he will reward you with everlasting life in happiness in his righteous new world.



READ IN YOUR BIBLE
Acts 9:36-43
Revelation 21:3-5



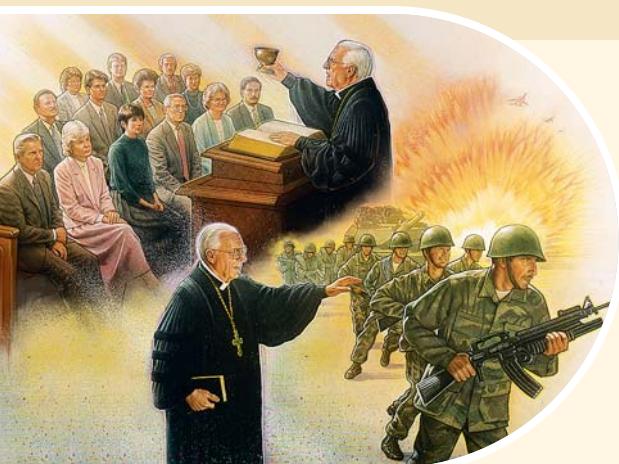
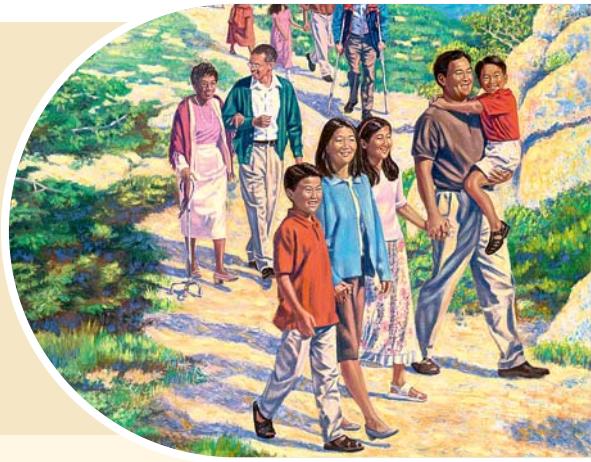
LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

How Can You Recognize True Worship?

This article raises questions you may have asked and shows where you can read the answers in your Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses would be pleased to discuss these answers with you.

1. Is there only one true religion?

Jesus taught his followers only one religion, the true religion. It is like a road leading to life. Regarding that road, Jesus said: "Few are the ones finding it." (Matthew 7:14) God accepts only worship based on his Word of truth. All true worshippers are united in one faith.—Read John 4:23, 24; 14:6; Ephesians 4:4, 5.



2. Why do so many different religions claim to be Christian?

False prophets have corrupted Christianity and have used it to further their own interests. As Jesus foretold, they present themselves as his "sheep" but act like hungry wolves. (Matthew 7:13-15, 21, 23) False Christianity developed especially after Jesus' apostles died.—Read Acts 20:29, 30.

"They publicly declare they know God, but they disown him by their works."—Titus 1:16

3. What are some features that distinguish true worship?

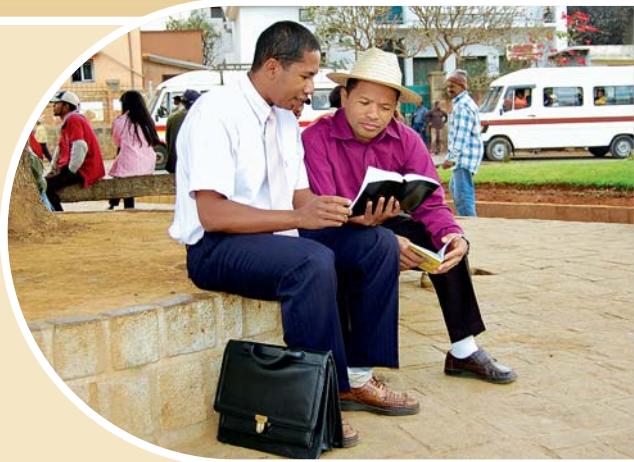
True worshippers respect the Bible as God's Word. They strive to live by its principles. So true religion differs from religion based on men's ideas. (Matthew 15:7-9) True worshippers do not preach one thing and practice another.—Read John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

The true religion honors God's name, Jehovah. Jesus made God's name known. He helped people to know God and taught them to pray that God's name be sanctified. (Matthew 6:9) Where you live, which religion promotes the use of God's name?—Read John 17:26; Romans 10:13, 14.

4. How can you recognize true worshippers?

True Christians preach about God's Kingdom. God sent Jesus to preach about the Kingdom. God's Kingdom is the only hope for mankind. Jesus continued speaking about it until his dying day. (Luke 4: 43; 8:1; 23:42, 43) He told his followers to preach about God's Kingdom. If someone approaches you to speak about God's Kingdom, to which religion does he likely belong?—Read Matthew 10:7; 24:14.

Jesus' followers are no part of this wicked world. They take no part in political affairs or social conflicts. (John 17:16) Also, they do not imitate the world's harmful practices and attitudes.—Read James 1:27; 4:4.

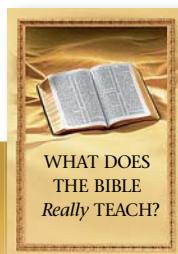


5. What is the primary mark of true Christianity?

True Christians have outstanding love for one another. From God's Word, they learn to respect members of all ethnic groups. Although false religion has often strongly supported the wars of the nations, true worshippers refuse to do so. (Micah 4:1-4) Rather, members of the true religion unselfishly use their time and resources to help and encourage others.—Read John 13:34, 35; 1 John 4:20, 21.

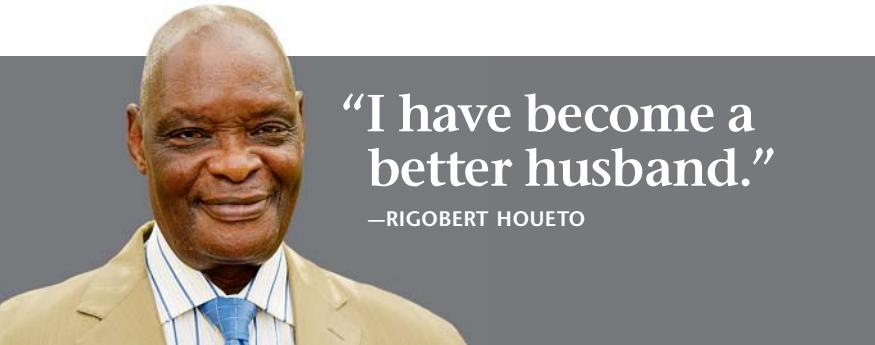
Which group bases all its teachings on God's Word, honors God's name, and proclaims God's Kingdom as mankind's only hope? Which group practices love and does not support war? The facts point to Jehovah's Witnesses.—1 John 3:10-12.

For more information, see chapter 15 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



THE BIBLE CHANGES LIVES

WHY did a former polygamist and opposer of Jehovah's Witnesses decide to become a Witness? What moved a pastor of the Pentecostal Church to change his beliefs? What helped a woman with a tragic upbringing overcome her self-loathing and draw close to God? Why did a heavy-metal enthusiast become a minister of religion? Read these accounts to find the answers.



"I have become a better husband."

—RIGOBERT HOUETO

YEAR BORN: 1941

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: BENIN
HISTORY: POLYGAMIST, OPPoser OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES



MY PAST: I am from Cotonou, a large city in Benin. I was raised a Catholic but did not attend church regularly. Many Catholics where I lived had multiple wives, as polygamy was legally recognized back then. I eventually married four women.

When a revolution broke out in the 1970's, I thought that it would benefit my country. I gave the revolution my full support and became involved in politics. The revolutionaries did not like Jehovah's Witnesses because the Witnesses remained politically neutral. I was among those who persecuted the Witnesses. When Witness missionaries were expelled from the country in 1976, I was certain that they would never return.

Jehovah, so I accepted the offer of a Bible study.

Soon I began attending the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. I was impressed by the genuine love that I saw—there were no distinctions of race or social class. The more I associated with the Witnesses, the more obvious it became that these were Jesus' true followers.—John 13:35.

I decided that if I wanted to serve Jehovah, I would need to leave the Catholic Church. That was not an easy step to take, as I was afraid of what others would think. After a long time and with Jehovah's help, I mus-

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED

MY LIFE: The revolution ended in 1990. To my surprise, Witness missionaries soon appeared. I began to think that perhaps God was with these people. About that time, I changed my place of work. One of my new coworkers was a Witness, and he wasted no time in sharing his beliefs. He showed me Bible verses that describe Jehovah as a God of love and justice. (Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 John 4:8) Those qualities appealed to me. I wanted to learn more about

tered up the courage and withdrew from the church.

There was yet another big change that I needed to make. My study of the Bible taught me that God does not approve of polygamy. (Genesis 2:18-24; Matthew 19:4-6) In his eyes, only my first marriage was valid. So I legally registered this marriage and dismissed my other wives, arranging for their material needs to be met. In time, two of my former wives became Jehovah's Witnesses.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: Although my wife remains a Catholic, she respects my decision to serve Jehovah. We both feel that I have become a better husband.

I used to think that I could improve my community through politics, but those efforts proved futile. Now I see that God's Kingdom is the only solution to mankind's problems. (Matthew 6:9, 10) I am grateful to Jehovah for showing me how to lead a truly happy life.



"It was not easy to make the needed changes."

—ALEX LEMOS SILVA

YEAR BORN: 1977

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: BRAZIL

HISTORY: PENTECOSTAL PASTOR



MY PAST: I was raised on the outskirts of Itu, in São Paulo State. This part of town was known for its high crime rate.

I was extremely violent and immoral. Moreover, I was involved in drug trafficking. In time, I came to realize that such a life would lead me either to jail or to the cemetery, so I quit. I then joined the Pentecostal Church, and I eventually became a pastor.

I felt that I could really help people through my ministry with the church. I even broadcast a religious program over the community radio and thus became well-

known in the area. Yet, I gradually came to believe that the church, as a whole, was not concerned about the welfare of its members—it was even less concerned about honoring God. I felt that the church's only aim was to raise money. I decided to resign from the church.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: When I started to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, I could see right away that they are different from other religions.

To me, two things stood out. First, Jehovah's Witnesses do not simply *talk* about love of God and neighbor; they *show* it. Second, they do not become involved in politics or warfare. (Isaiah 2:4) Those two facts convinced me that I had found the true religion—the cramped road that leads to everlasting life.—Matthew 7:13, 14.

I realized that if I wanted to be pleasing to God, I would have to make some big changes. I needed to give more attention to my family. I also needed to become more humble. It was not easy to make the needed

changes, but with Jehovah's help, I succeeded. My wife was impressed by these changes. She had begun to study the Bible before me, but now she progressed more quickly in her studies. Soon we both knew that we wanted to become Jehovah's Witnesses. We were baptized on the same day.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: My wife and I have the joy of helping our three children to develop a close friendship with Jehovah. We are a happy family. I thank Jehovah for having drawn me to the truth found in his Word, the Bible. It really does change people's lives! I am living proof.



"I feel clean, alive, and whole."

—VICTORIA TONG

YEAR BORN: 1957

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: AUSTRALIA
HISTORY: TRAGIC CHILDHOOD



MY PAST: I grew up in Newcastle, New South Wales. I am the eldest of seven children born to a violent, alcoholic father and a violent mother. My mother abused me both physically and verbally. She repeatedly told me that I was bad and that I would be tormented in hellfire. Such threats terrified me.

The physical injuries my mother inflicted on me often caused me to miss school. At age 11, I was taken from my parents and placed first in a government institution and later in a convent. When I turned 14, I ran away from the convent. I did not want to go back home, so I lived on the streets of Kings Cross, a Sydney suburb.

While living on the streets, I became involved with drugs, alcohol, pornography,

, and prostitution. One experience really frightened me. I had been staying in the flat of a nightclub owner. One evening, two men came to see him. He sent me to the bedroom, but I could overhear their conversation. The club owner was making arrangements to sell me to these men. They were going to hide me aboard a cargo ship and take me to Japan to work in a bar. I panicked, jumped from the balcony, and ran for help.

I found a man who was visiting Sydney, and I explained my situation, hoping he would give me some money. Instead, he invited me to the place where he was staying so that I could take a shower and eat something. As things turned out, I never left. One year later, we were married.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: When I began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, I experienced a range of emotions. I felt angry when I learned that Satan is the cause of evil; I had always been taught that it is God who makes us suffer. I felt great relief when I learned that he does not punish people in hellfire, a teaching that had terrified me for as long as I could remember.

I was impressed by how the Witnesses let the Bible affect their every decision. They live their faith. I was a difficult person, but no matter what I said or did, the Witnesses treated me with love and respect.

My greatest struggle has been with feelings of worthlessness. I had a real self-loathing, and these feelings persisted long after I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I knew that I loved Jehovah, but I was convinced that he could never love someone like me.

A turning point came about 15 years after I was baptized. During a talk at a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, the speaker referred to James 1:23, 24. Those verses liken God's Word to a mirror in which we can see ourselves the way Jehovah sees us. I began to wonder if what I saw in myself was different from what Jehovah saw. At first, I resisted this new idea. I still felt that loving me was too much to expect of Jehovah.

A few days later, I read a scripture that changed my life. The verse was Isaiah 1:18, where Jehovah is quoted as saying: "Come,

now, you people, and let us set matters straight between us. . . . Though the sins of you people should prove to be as scarlet, they will be made white just like snow." I felt as if Jehovah were speaking to me, saying: "Come on, Vicky, let's set matters straight between us. I know you, I know your sins, I know your heart—and I love you."

I was unable to sleep that night. I still doubted that Jehovah could love me, but I began thinking about Jesus' ransom sacrifice. All of a sudden, it dawned on me that Jehovah had been patient with me for so long, showing me that he loved me in so many ways. Yet, I was, in effect, saying to him: "Your love is not great enough to reach me. Your Son's sacrifice is not enough to cover me." It was as if I had been throwing the ransom back at Jehovah. But now, at last, by meditating on this gift of the ransom, I began to feel loved by Jehovah.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I feel clean, alive, and whole. My marriage has improved, and I am happy that I can use my experiences to help others. I am coming to feel ever closer to Jehovah.



"This was the answer to my prayer." —SERGEY BOTANKIN

YEAR BORN: 1974

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: RUSSIA

HISTORY: HEAVY-METAL ENTHUSIAST



MY PAST: I was born in Votkinsk, the birthplace of the famous composer Pyotr Illich Tchaikovsky. Our family was poor. My father had many good qualities, but he was an alcoholic, so there was always a tense atmosphere in the household.

I was not a very good student, and as the years went by, I developed an inferiority complex. I became withdrawn and distrustful of others. Attending school was

very stressful. When I had to deliver a report, for example, I was often unable to explain even basic concepts that I could express at other times. When I graduated from the eighth grade, my report card read: "Limited vocabulary, unable to express his thoughts." Those words crushed me and left me feeling even more worthless. I began to wonder about the purpose of my life.

During my teenage years, I started drinking alcoholic beverages. At first, drinking made me feel good. But when I drank too much, my conscience bothered me. My life seemed meaningless. I began to feel more depressed, sometimes not leaving my house for days. I started thinking about suicide.

When I reached the age of 20, a new but temporary respite came. I discovered heavy-metal music. I felt energized by the music and sought out others who listened to it. I let my hair grow long, had my ears pierced, and dressed like the musicians whom I admired. Gradually, I became reckless and aggressive, often arguing with my family.

I thought that listening to heavy-metal music would make me happy, but just the opposite was happening. I was becoming a different person! And when I learned some bad things about the music stars whom I had looked up to, I felt betrayed.

Once again, I began to think about suicide –this time seriously. The only thing that stopped me was the thought of how my mother would be affected. She loved me very much, and she had done so much for me. The situation was torturous. I did not want to continue living, but I could not end my life.

To distract myself, I started reading classic Russian literature. One story involved a hero who served in a church. Suddenly I felt a burning desire to do something for God and for other people. I poured out my heart to God in prayer, something that I had never

done before. I asked God to show me how I could live a purposeful life. During that prayer, I felt an amazing sense of relief. Even more amazing, though, was what happened next. Just two hours later, one of Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on my door and offered me a Bible study. I believe that this was the answer to my prayer. That was the first day of a new, happy life for me.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: Although it was very difficult, I threw away everything I owned that was associated with heavy-metal music. Yet, the music stayed in my mind for a long time. Whenever I happened to walk by a place where that music was playing, I immediately thought of my past. I did not want to mix those unpleasant memories with everything good that was now taking root in my mind and heart. So I intentionally avoided such places. And whenever I was tempted to dwell on the past, I prayed fervently. Doing so helped me to experience "the peace of God that excels all thought."—Philippians 4:7.

As I studied the Bible, I learned that Christians have an obligation to share their faith with others. (Matthew 28:19, 20) I sincerely believed that I could never do that. At the same time, the new things I was learning brought me great happiness and inner peace. I knew that others needed to learn these truths too. Despite my fear, I began to talk to others about what I was learning. To my great surprise, telling others about the Bible actually boosted my self-confidence. It also strengthened these new beliefs in my own heart.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I am now happily married and have had the joy of helping a number of people learn about the Bible, including my sister and my mother. Serving God and helping others to learn about him have given my life true meaning.



DID YOU KNOW?

What did Jesus mean when he said to Saul: “To keep kicking against the goads makes it hard for you”?—Acts 26:14.



■ In Bible times, farmers used goads to guide their draft animals while plowing. The goad was a pointed stick, perhaps eight feet (2.5 m) long. One end of the stick contained a sharp metal spike. If the animal pushed against the goad, it would injure itself. The other end often held a chiselike blade that could be used to remove dirt, clay, or vegetation from the plowshare.

At times, goads served as weapons. The Israelite judge and warrior Shamgar slew 600 Philistines “with a cattle goad.”—Judges 3:31.

The Scriptures also mention this instrument in a metaphoric sense. For example, King Solomon wrote that the words of a wise person can be “like

oxgoads,” prodding a companion to make the right decision.—Ecclesiastes 12:11.

The resurrected Jesus painted a similar word picture. He advised Saul, a persecutor of Christians, to stop “kicking against the goads.” That expression evokes the image of a stubborn animal that resists the proddings of its owner. Wisely, Saul responded to Jesus’ counsel and changed his course of life, becoming the apostle Paul.

How did first-century Jews keep time at night?

■ Jews living in the first century C.E. could use a sundial to track the passing of time on a clear day. However, when clouds blocked the sun or when night fell, they used a clepsydra, or water clock. Besides the Jews, the ancient Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans also used this device.

According to *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, both the Mishnah and the Talmud mention the clepsydra “under various names, perhaps to distinguish different forms and designs, all, however, signifying one thing; namely, the slow escape—literally the stealing away—of the water, drop by drop, which is the meaning of ‘clepsydra’ in Greek.”

How did a clepsydra work? Water flowed out of one vessel through a small hole at the bottom and into another. An observer could measure the passing of time by noting the water level in either the upper or the lower vessel, both of which could be marked with degrees of measurement.

Roman military camps used such clocks to determine the night watches. The changing of the watch was indicated by a trumpet blast. Anyone within earshot would have been aware of when each of the four night watches began and ended.—Mark 13:35.

Is the Pope “Saint Peter’s Successor”?

In 2002, Pope John Paul II wrote a letter to the bishop of Limburg, Germany, overruling a decision by the bishop in connection with abortion. The pope introduced his directive by stating that he was responsible for “the well-being and unity of all individual churches according to the will of Jesus Christ.” He claimed authority to overrule the bishop’s decision because as pope, he is said to be “Saint Peter’s successor.”

According to a Roman Catholic definition, “Christ constituted St. Peter chief of all the apostles.” The Catholic Church further asserts that “Christ established that Peter should have perpetual successors in this primacy; and that the Roman bishops are these successors.”—*New Catholic Encyclopedia* (2003), Volume 11, pages 495-496.

Those are important claims. Have you examined their validity for yourself? Consider the answers to three questions: (1) Does the Bible support the claim that Peter was the first pope? (2) What does history teach about the origin of the succession of popes? (3) Do the conduct and teachings of the popes support their claim to be Peter’s successor?

Was Peter the First Pope?

To prove that the church is founded on Peter, Catholics have long pointed to Jesus’ words recorded at Matthew 16:18: “You are Peter, and on this rock-mass I will build my congregation.” In fact, those words are inscribed in Latin under the dome of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

Augustine, a revered Church Father, at one time held that the congregation was built on Peter. However, toward the end of his life, he changed his view of what Jesus’ words meant. In a work known as *Retractations*, Augustine argued that it was Jesus on whom the church,

that is the Christian congregation, was built, not Peter.*

True, the apostle Peter features prominently in the Gospels. Jesus singled out three of his apostles—John, James, and Peter—to be present with him on a few special occasions. (Mark 5:37, 38; 9:2; 14:33) Jesus entrusted Peter with “the keys of the kingdom of the heavens,” which Peter used to open up the way to the Kingdom—first to the Jews and proselytes, then to the Samaritans, and finally to the Gentiles. (Matthew 16:19; Acts 2:5, 41; 8:14-17; 10:45) In accord with his outgoing personality, Peter at times served as spokesman for the apostles as a whole. (Acts 1:15; 2:14) But do these facts make Peter head of the early congregation?

The apostle Paul did write that Peter was entrusted with an “apostleship to those who are circumcised.” (Galatians 2:8) However, the context of Paul’s words shows that he was not saying that Peter directed the congregation. Paul’s comments were about Peter’s role in preaching to the Jews.

Although Peter was given great responsibil-

* Jesus’ discussion with Peter centered on identifying the Christ and his role, not on the role that Peter would play. (Matthew 16:13-17) Peter himself later stated that Jesus was the rock upon which the congregation was built. (1 Peter 2:4-8) The apostle Paul confirmed that Jesus, not Peter, was “the foundation cornerstone” of the Christian congregation.—Ephesians 2:20.



ity, nowhere in the Bible do we find him claiming to be the head of the congregation and, as such, making decisions for the disciples as a group. In his letter, he called himself "an apostle" and "an older man"—nothing more.—1 Peter 1:1; 5:1.

What Does History Teach About the Origin of the Papacy?

When and how, then, did the concept of a papacy come about? The idea that it was acceptable for one man to seek prominence over his fellow believers began to take root while the apostles were still alive. How did the apostles view such thinking?

The apostle Peter himself told the men who were taking the lead in the congregation not to be "lording it over those who are God's inheritance"; they were to gird themselves with lowliness of mind toward one another. (1 Peter 5:1-5) The apostle Paul warned that from within the congregation, men would rise who would "speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Acts 20:30) Toward the end of the first century C.E., the apostle John wrote a letter in which he strongly denounced a disciple by the name of Diotrephes. Why the reprimand? One reason was that this man 'liked to have the first place' in the congregation. (3 John 9) Such counsel from the apostles acted as a restraint,

Does the evidence indicate that the popes have followed Peter's example?

thwarting for a time the ambitions of those who were seeking prominence.—2 Thessalonians 2:3-8.

Shortly after the last of the apostles died, individuals began to gain more prominence. *The Cambridge History of Christianity* says: "Probably there was no single 'monarchical' bishop in Rome before the middle of the second century." By the third century, the bishop of Rome established himself as the highest authority, at least for parts of the church.* To add weight to the claim that the bishop of Rome has superior authority, some have compiled a list of Peter's successors.

However, this list provides little support for the claim. Why? First, some names on the list cannot be verified. More important, the foundation of the list is flawed. How so? Even if Peter did preach in Rome, as some secular literature from the first and second centuries implies, there is no proof that he was head of the congregation there.

One evidence that Peter was not head of the congregation in Rome is that when the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Romans,

* Both Jesus and the apostles warned that the Christian congregation would be overrun by men who taught apostate doctrine. (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; 2 Timothy 4:3; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:18) Those statements came true when the church, or congregation, of the second century began adopting pagan customs and blending Biblical doctrine with Greek philosophy.

he included an extensive list of Christians there. Yet, he did not mention Peter at all. (Romans 16:1-23) If Peter were head of the congregation, could we imagine that Paul overlooked Peter or snubbed him?

Note, too, that about the time that Peter wrote his first inspired letter, Paul wrote a second letter to Timothy. In that letter, Paul did not hesitate to mention Rome. Actually, Paul wrote six letters from Rome, all without any mention of Peter.

Some 30 years after Paul wrote his letters, the apostle John wrote three letters and the book of Revelation. Nowhere in these writings did John mention that the congregation in Rome was the most prominent one, nor did he refer to a leader of the church who held the supreme office of an alleged successor of Peter. Neither the Bible nor the evidence from history supports the claim that Peter established himself as the first bishop of the congregation in Rome.

Do the Conduct and Teachings of the Popes Support Their Claim?

We would rightly expect someone who claims to be “Saint Peter’s successor” and “the Vicar of Christ” to follow the conduct and teachings of both Peter and Christ. For example, did Peter accept special treatment from his fellow believers? No. He refused to allow any special expressions of reverence to be bestowed on him. (Acts 10:25, 26) What about Jesus? He said that he came to serve others, not to be served. (Matthew 20:28) By contrast, what record do the popes have? Do they shun prominence, refuse grand titles, and avoid ostentatious displays of wealth and power?

Both Peter and Christ were morally upright men who promoted peace. Compare their record with what the Catholic encyclopedia *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Lexicon for Theology and Church) says about

Pope Leo X: “Involved in political and often nepotistic transactions and devoted to lavish worldly pleasures, Leo X neglected the urgent tasks of a spiritual nature.” Karl Amon, Catholic priest and professor of church history, says that verified reports regarding Pope Alexander VI betray “a terrific amount of unscrupulousness, abuse of authority, simony, and immorality.”

What about the teachings of the popes? How do they compare with the teachings of Peter and Christ? Peter did not believe that all good people go to heaven. With reference to good King David, he plainly said: “David did not ascend to the heavens.” (Acts 2:34) Nor did Peter teach that infants should be baptized. Rather, he taught that baptism is a step that a believer takes conscientiously.—1 Peter 3:21.

Jesus taught that none of his disciples should try to be more prominent than any other. “If anyone wants to be first,” Jesus said, “he must be last of all and minister of all.” (Mark 9:35) Shortly before his death, Jesus gave this clear directive to his followers: “Do not you be called Rabbi, for one is your teacher, whereas all you are brothers. Moreover, do not call anyone your father on earth, for one is your Father, the heavenly One. Neither be called ‘leaders,’ for your Leader is one, the Christ.” (Matthew 23:1, 8-10) Do you feel that the popes have upheld the teachings of Peter and Christ?

Some say that the succession of popes is maintained even if the officeholder does not lead a Christian life. Do you think that argument is reasonable? Jesus said: “Every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit; a good tree cannot bear worthless fruit, neither can a rotten tree produce fine fruit.” Based on the evidence, do you think that Peter or Christ would want to be associated with the fruits that the popes have produced?—Matthew 7:17, 18, 21-23.



OUR READERS ASK . . .

Does God dwell in one place?

■ Various religions describe God as omnipresent, a term suggesting that God dwells in all places simultaneously. For example, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* refers to God as the one "who is actually present in all existing places and things." Likewise, John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, wrote a sermon entitled "On the Omnipresence of God" in which he stated that "there is no point of space, whether within or without the bounds of creation, where God is not."

What does the Bible teach? Is God omnipresent, existing in all places in heaven, on earth, and even in humankind at the same time?

Actually, the Bible speaks of God as having a specific place of dwelling—the heavens. It records a prayer of King Solomon in which he called upon God: "May you yourself listen from the heavens, your established place of dwelling." (1 Kings 8:43) When teaching his disciples how to pray, Jesus Christ told them to address their prayers to "Our Father *in the heavens*." (Matthew 6:9) After his resurrection, Christ entered "into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God," states the Bible.—Hebrews 9:24.

These verses clearly indicate that Jehovah God dwells, not everywhere, but only in heaven. Of course, "the heavens" mentioned in these passages does not refer to the atmosphere surrounding the earth nor to the vast expanse of outer space. The physical heavens cannot contain the Creator of the universe. (1 Kings 8:27) The Bible tells us that "God is a Spirit." (John 4:24) He resides in the spiritual heavens, a

realm independent of the physical universe.
—1 Corinthians 15:44.

What, though, of Bible passages that seem to suggest that God is present everywhere? For example, as recorded at Psalm 139:7-10, David said regarding God: "Where can I go from your spirit, and where can I run away from your face? If I should ascend to heaven, there you would be; and if I should spread out my couch in Sheol, look! you would be there. Were I to take the wings of the dawn, that I might reside in the most remote sea, there, also, your own hand would lead me." Do these verses indicate that God is, in fact, omnipresent, dwelling in each of the places mentioned?

Note that David first asked: "Where can I go from your spirit?"* By means of his holy spirit, God can see anything and exert his power anywhere, without literally going there or dwelling there. To illustrate: In recent years scientists have been able to examine soil on the planet Mars, millions of miles (kilometers) from Earth. How? Not by traveling there personally, but by studying detailed photos and other information transmitted back to Earth by probes sent to Mars' surface.

Likewise, Jehovah God does not have to be present everywhere, or omnipresent, in order to perceive what is happening at any point in the universe. God's Word says: "There is not a creation that is not manifest to his sight." (Hebrews 4:13) Yes, Jehovah's powerful active force, or holy spirit, can extend anywhere, allowing him to be all-seeing and to accomplish his purpose from a fixed location, his "holy dwelling" in the heavens.—Deuteronomy 26:15.

* The Hebrew word here translated "spirit" refers to God's active force, the power God uses to accomplish his will.



A Day of High Hopes and Happy Expectations

WITHOUT a doubt, the graduation of the 130th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead inspired hopes and expectations. On Saturday, March 12, 2011, an audience of over 8,500 gathered to attend the graduation, including the students along with their families and friends. Anticipation was keen—not only for the day but also for the future of the well-trained missionaries, who were soon to be sent all over the world to teach people the truths of the Bible.

"Happy Are All Those Keeping in Expectation of" Jehovah

That comforting thought, taken from Isaiah 30:18, was the theme of the talk delivered by Geoffrey Jackson, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses and chairman of the program. With warmth and a touch of humor, he congratulated the students on surviving the rigors of the Gilead course and reassured them of the likelihood of surviving this exciting day. What realistic expectations could the students hold about the future? He developed three practical thoughts from Isaiah 30:18-21.

First, Brother Jackson said, "You can expect that Jehovah will hear your prayers." He pointed out the assurance found in verse 19: "[God] will without fail show you favor at the sound of your outcry." Noting that in the original Hebrew, the pronoun "you" in this sentence is singular, not plural, Brother Jackson said that Jehovah treats our prayers individually. "As a Father, Jehovah doesn't ask, 'Why can't you be strong like that other person?' Instead, he listens attentively to each one. And he answers."

Second, the speaker acknowledged that we can expect problems. "Jehovah doesn't promise that life will be easy, but he will help us." As verse 20 shows, God foretold that when Israel came under siege, distress and oppression would become as familiar as bread and water. Still, Jehovah would always be ready to come to the people's rescue. The Gilead students too will face problems and challenges, though not necessarily the ones they expect! Brother Jackson added, "But you *can* expect that Jehovah will be there for you to help you handle each challenge."

Third, Brother Jackson reminded the students that as verses 20 and 21 show, "you can expect direction—so look for it!" Today, he noted, each Christian needs to listen carefully as Jehovah speaks through the pages of the Bible and through Bible-based publications. The speaker warmly urged the students to keep applying themselves to daily Bible reading, for it means life.

"Let the Dread of Jehovah Be Upon You"

Anthony Morris of the Governing Body explained the meaning of the Scriptural phrase "the dread of Jehovah." (2 Chronicles 19:7) Those words do not refer to any kind of morbid terror but, rather, to an intense desire to do what is right, a respect so intense and sincere as to be characterized by nervous trembling. "Take that kind of dread with you to your missionary assignment," Brother Morris exhorted the students. How can they show such reverence for Jehovah? The speaker focused on two practical ways.

First, Brother Morris urged the students to apply the counsel found at James 1:19: "Be swift about hearing, slow about speaking." He noted that the students had learned a great deal during the five-month course, but they had to be careful not to go to their assignment and show off all that they had learned. "You need to listen first," he said. "Listen to your local congregation and to those taking the lead in the land where you serve; listen to what they say about the country and its culture. Do not hesitate to say, 'I don't know.' If your education has been effective, then the more you learn, the more you realize how little you really know."

Second, Brother Morris read Proverbs 27: 21: "The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace is for gold; and an individual is according to his praise." He explained that as gold and silver need to be refined, or purified, we may be refined by praise. How so? Praise can be a test of character. It may lead to pride and a spiritual downfall, or it may move us to acknowledge that we are indebted to Jehovah and to become more determined never to fall short of his standards. Thus, Brother Morris urged the students to take any praise they might receive in the right way—as an opportunity to prove that they have the proper "dread of Jehovah."

"Cherish Your Mission"

Guy Pierce of the Governing Body gave the main talk of the program. He discussed the above theme, explaining that the word "missionary" means "one who is sent on a mission." Little wonder, he noted, that there are many different kinds of missionaries with a wide variety of missions. Many focus on physical healing and seek political solutions to the world's problems. "You're different," he said. How so?

In their study of the Bible, the students had learned a great deal about physical heal-

ing. When Jesus resurrected a young girl, the parents were "beside themselves with great ecstasy." (Mark 5:42) Likewise, when blind people were healed miraculously, their joy was intense. One of the reasons for such miracles was to show us today what Christ will accomplish in the coming new world, at which time the "great crowd" of righteous humans, who survive the end of the present wicked system of things, will be healed of any physical ailments. (Revelation 7:9, 14) Their loved ones, whom they will welcome back in the resurrection, will likewise be healthy in a physical sense. Imagine the joy!

However, as Brother Pierce explained, physical healing will never be the most important kind of healing. The sick whom Jesus cured eventually got sick again. The dead he resurrected died again. Even the blind he healed ultimately became blind again, at least at death. Far more important was the spiritual healing that Jesus accomplished. Gilead missionaries also have a mission of spiritual healing. They help people become reconciled to our heavenly Father so that they come to life spiritually. Only those who are spiritually healed will reach the goal of everlasting life. "That spiritual healing," Brother Pierce stated, "is what praises God. It makes you a success in your ministry."

Three More Highlights of the Day

"Will This Be a Good Day?" Robert Rains of the United States Branch Committee addressed that timely question. He encouraged the students to make sure that each day in their missionary assignment is a good day by using their time wisely, by looking to God's Word when facing anxieties, and by relying on Jehovah through prayer.

"Will You Make the Old New?" Gilead instructor Mark Noumair posed that question in his talk. He discussed 1 John 2:7, 8,

wherein the apostle John mentioned “an old commandment” that was also “a new commandment.” Both referred to the same commandment—that Christ’s followers love one another unselfishly, with a self-sacrificing spirit. (John 13:34, 35) The command was old in that it had been laid upon Jesus’ followers decades earlier by Christ himself; it was also new, though, in that Christians were facing new challenges and needed to show love in new and fuller ways. Missionaries too face a new set of circumstances and need to learn to show love in new ways. What is the key to doing so?

“Don’t become the thing you hate,” exhorted Brother Noumair. He warned that if we see behavior we hate yet respond in kind, we become what we hate, which is a self-destructive course. On the other hand, if we respond to such challenges by finding new ways to show love, we shine “the true light” and dispel spiritual darkness.

“Tote the Load.” Another Gilead instructor, Michael Burnett, developed this practical theme. He told of people in African lands who tote heavy loads on their heads. They use a *kata*, a small rolled-up cloth placed atop the head to help provide comfort and balance, leading to a graceful walk. The Gilead missionaries will have a heavy load of responsibilities to carry in their foreign assignments, but they have been given something that can be likened to the *kata*: extensive Bible-based training. As they apply what they learned, they will be able to balance their load and carry it effectively.

Experiences and Interviews

Gilead School training includes time spent in the ministry with local congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses. William Samuelson, overseer of the Theocratic Schools Department, reviewed some of the students’ experi-

ences, using as his theme “Do Not Let Your Hand Rest.” (Ecclesiastes 11:6) By means of lively reenactments, the students showed how they had been industrious in the ministry, finding occasions to preach the good news on airplanes, in restaurants, and at gas stations. They witnessed from door to door, in informal conversations, and by letter. They certainly did not let their hands rest, and the results were excellent.

Gilead staff member Kenneth Stovall next interviewed three men with extensive missionary experience—Barry Hill served in Ecuador and the Dominican Republic, Eddie Mobley in Côte d’Ivoire, and Tab Honsberger in Senegal, Benin, and Haiti. Together, they beautifully developed the theme “Test Jehovah and Reap Blessings.” (Malachi 3:10) For example, Brother Hill related how he and his wife faced the challenge of adapting to an Ecuadorian climate that ranged from hot and dusty to hot and muddy. For two and a half years, he recalled, they had to take baths using buckets. But they never considered leaving; they felt that their assignment was a blessing from Jehovah. “It was our life,” he said.

At the program’s end, one of the students read a touching letter from the graduating class expressing heartfelt appreciation for the school. “Our faith has been elevated to new heights,” the letter said, “and yet we know we are only a work in progress.” All the students received their diplomas, and the class was assigned to a wide variety of countries. Brother Jackson concluded the program by reassuring the students that they could expect to see Jehovah’s help in their lives ahead, especially when they face challenges. All in attendance left with higher hopes and brighter expectations. Without question, Jehovah will use these new missionaries to accomplish great good.



130th Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back, and names are listed from left to right in each row.

- (1) Molina, Z.; Bassolino, S.; Alatsis, C.; Arroyo, A.; Niño, L.; Merkling, S.; Clark, M.
- (2) Little, C.; Tibaudo, S.; Jakobsson, S.; Moreno, J.; Rodriguez, A.; Lee, K.; Cárdenas, H.; Aguilar, L.
- (3) Clairbush, A.; Polley, A.; Caldwell, S.; Adame, J.; Hildebrandt, S.; Shoemaker, I.; Grohman, N.; Galvez, G.
- (4) Clark, J.; Bassolino, A.; Packham, K.; Adame, J.; Knaus, M.; Niño, M.; Moreno, R.; Galvez, J.
- (5) Rodriguez, D.; Geynes, M.; Molina, J.; Aguilar, A.; Alatsis, I.; Manno, A.; Grohman, R.; Packham, J.
- (6) Geynes, S.; Cárdenas, M.; Arroyo, C.; Manno, C.; Merkling, J.; Lee, H.; Clairbush, X.; Jakobsson, P.
- (7) Little, J.; Hildebrandt, B.; Shoemaker, M.; Knaus, K.; Caldwell, J.; Tibaudo, F.; Polley, C.

Class assigned to the countries shown below





How can children benefit if they are taught about God? SEE PAGES 4-6.



What can a married couple do to increase the amount of respect that they give to each other? SEE PAGES 11-12.



Why do so many religions claim to be Christian? SEE PAGE 16.



What helped one woman to overcome a tragic childhood and draw close to God? SEE PAGES 20-21.



Was Peter the first pope? SEE PAGES 24-25.

Would you welcome a visit?