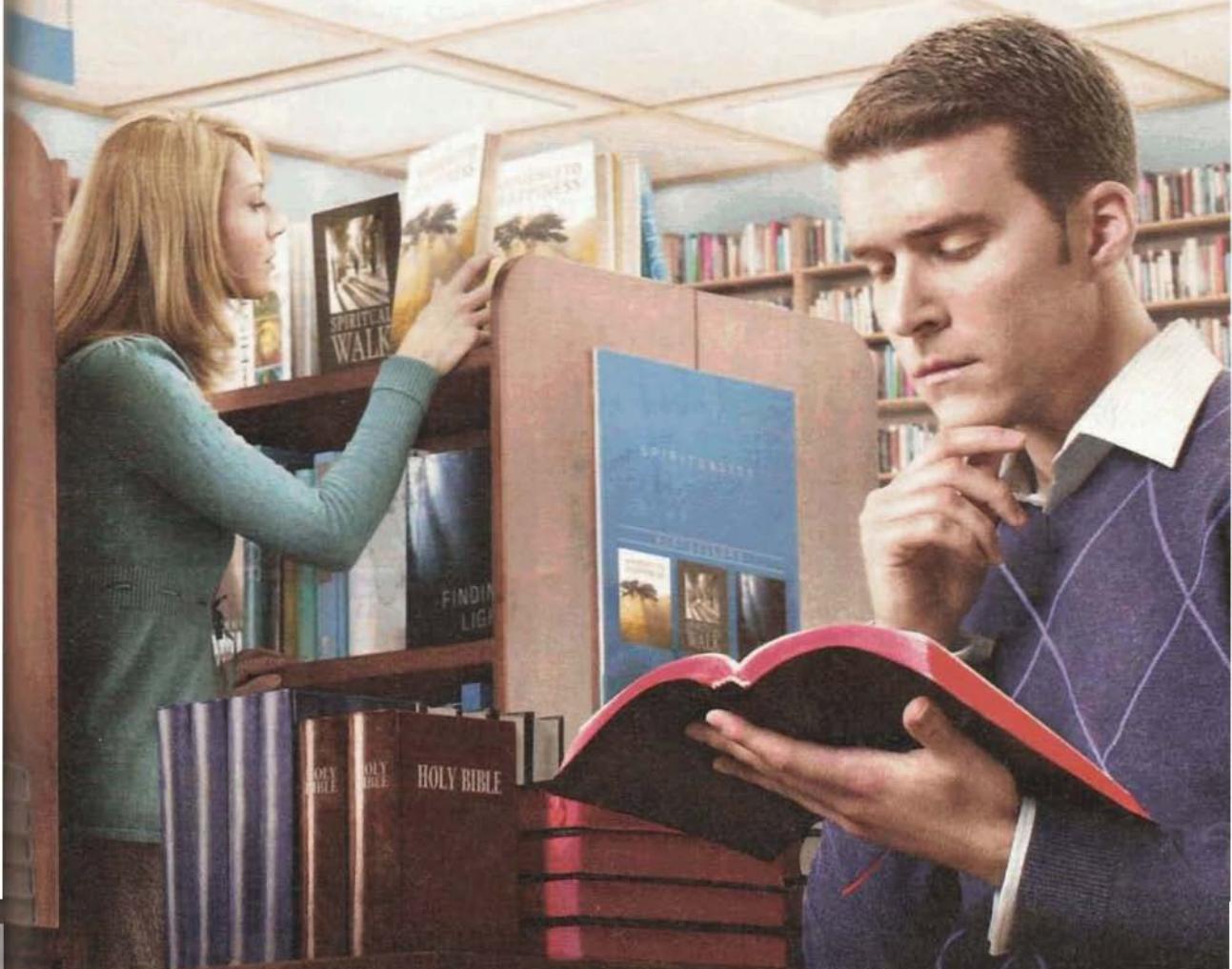


THE WATCHTOWER

JUNE 1, 2009

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



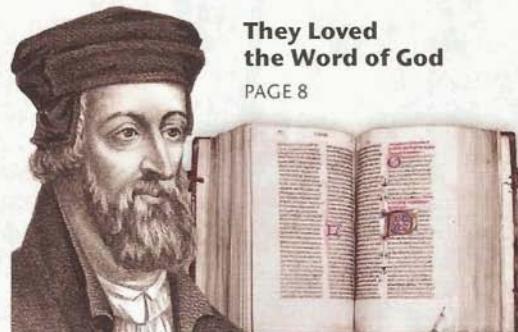
Is the Bible Practical
for Our Day?

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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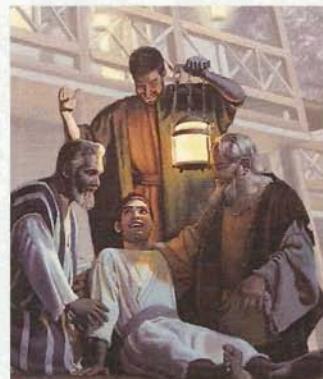
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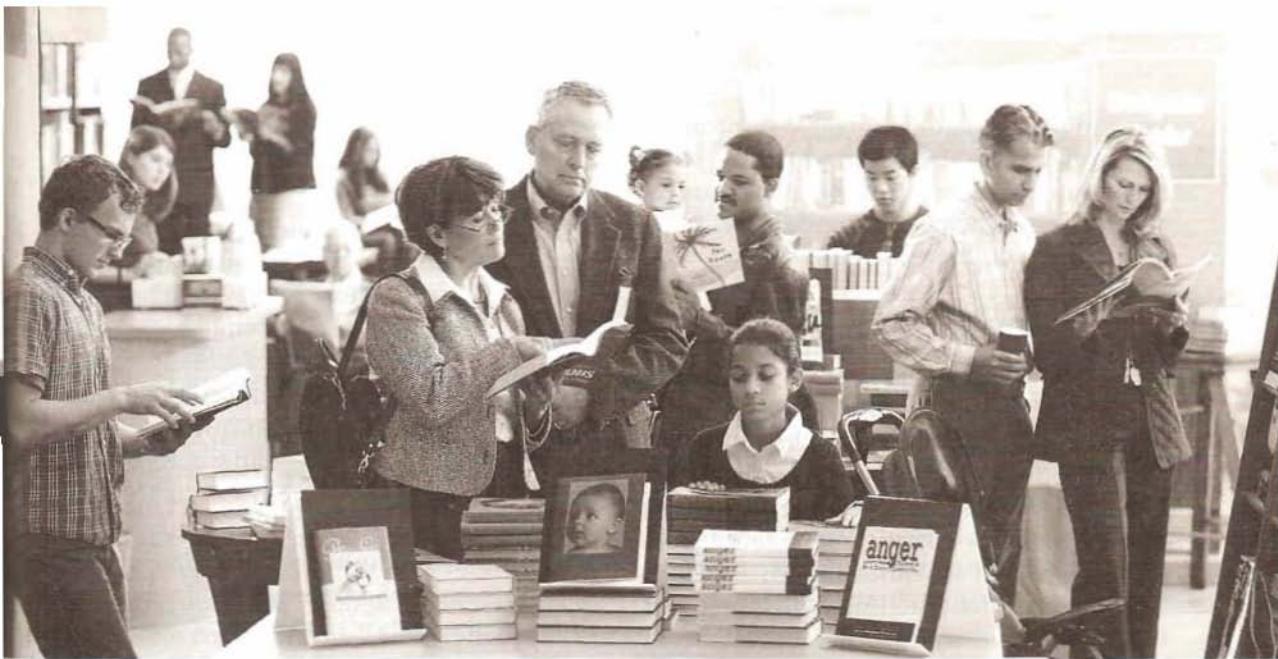
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Wycliffe: From the book *The History of Protestantism* (Vol. I);
Bible: Courtesy of the American Bible Society Library, New York

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The Search for a Practical Guide

IF YOU are looking for advice, there is plenty available. The self-help business is one of the world's fastest-growing enterprises. In places as diverse as Britain, Latin America, Japan, and the United States, books on self-improvement are best sellers. Videos, seminars, and TV programs dealing with self-help are also gaining in popularity. Their appeal lies in the notion that you can tackle your problems yourself, without having to consult a psychologist, a marriage counselor, or a minister. What fields do these guides cover?

Personal fulfillment, satisfaction in love, and the raising of children are among the most popular themes. Coping with depression, grief, and the effects of a divorce are other common subjects. Also in big demand is advice on combating overeating, smoking, and heavy drinking. Is the coun-

sel practical? Sometimes it is, but often it is not. Thus, it is wise to consider the Bible's caution: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps."—Proverbs 14:15.

Self-improvement guides are very different from instruction manuals that teach skills like photography, accounting, or language. Such manuals can be effective and inexpensive alternatives to taking a special course. Self-help books—whether on business, marriage, parenting, or mental health—are different. They usually recommend a way of life or advocate certain philosophies. So it is wise to ask: 'Who is offering the advice? What is the source of his information?'

Experts may not always base their opinions on carefully collected evidence. Some may provide the advice that sells best,

knowing that there is a great deal of money to be made by telling people what they want to hear. Why, in one country alone, the self-help industry brings in over eight billion dollars each year!

How Practical Are Self-Help Guides?

When you turn to self-help guides, you expect to find practical advice. Sometimes, though, what you find is superficial or abstract in nature. Typically, such guides tell you: 'If you just think positively, you are bound to succeed. Whatever you want, be it money, health, or a satisfying relationship, you will have it if you think positively.' Is that sort of advice practical? Will it help you to face the realities and disappointments of life?

Take, for example, books about relationships and marriage, which are among the most popular. Do they help people to build happy, stable families? Not always. According to one reviewer, the author of self-help books on love that were an instant success in Latin America "coaches readers on how to create healthy relationships and build self-esteem." The author claims that staying in a relationship that doesn't work is a type of betrayal of oneself. The underlying message is that the important thing is to do

what makes one feel good rather than recognize one's problems and try to solve them.

Granted, self-help guides may contain some good advice. Yet, they can also give harmful advice. An expert may give helpful suggestions on one subject while his advice on a different subject may actually make things worse. It would be impossible to sort through the many, and often contradictory, opinions offered by these guides. Whose advice can you trust? Ask yourself: 'Is the advice carefully researched, or is it the arbitrary opinion of the author? To what extent has the pursuit of riches or prominence influenced the author's integrity?'

One guide that has stood the test of time is the Bible. It offers practical advice on many of the subjects self-help guides deal with and more. It has moved millions to act on the counsel: "Be made new in the force actuating your mind . . . Put on the new personality." (Ephesians 4:23, 24) The Bible provides wise insight into what causes our problems and teaches us how to cope with them. Most important, it provides powerful and practical motivation for doing what is right. The next article will explain how this is so.



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

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¹ Audiocassettes also available.

² CD also available.

³ MP3 CD-ROM also available.

⁴ Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

Why the Bible Is Practical for Our Day

"All scripture is inspired by God and can profitably be used . . . for guiding people's lives."—2 TIMOTHY 3:16, *The Jerusalem Bible*.

THROUGHOUT the centuries, the Bible has moved people of many cultures to change their way of life for the better. The scripture quoted above explains why the Bible is effective in this way—its wisdom comes from God. Though written by men, the Bible communicates God's thoughts to us. The Bible explains: "Men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit."—2 Peter 1:21.

The Bible is a practical guide in at least two ways. First, it offers a realistic view of what constitutes a better way of life. Second, it has the power to motivate people to make the necessary changes to attain that better way of life. Let us consider these two aspects.

Insight Into Practical Goals

In the Bible, God made this promise: "I shall make you have insight and instruct you in the way you should go. I will give advice with my eye upon you." (Psalm 32:8) Note that God offers not only advice but also insight, which is the ability to see into or below the surface of a situation. Having insight to discern what goals are truly beneficial can protect us from wasting our life on worthless pursuits.



For example, many people make prominence or prosperity their goal in life. Self-help books abound on how to outsmart others to gain prestige or to become rich. The Bible, on the other hand, tells us: "The rivalry of one toward another . . . is vanity and a striving after the wind." "A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver." (Ecclesiastes 4:4; 5:10) Is that practical advice for us today?

To illustrate how practical the counsel from the Bible is, let us consider the case of Akinori, in Japan. Overcoming fierce competition, Akinori achieved his goal of graduating from a leading university and landing a job with a prestigious firm. Everything seemed to be going his way. Yet, his success did not lead to the happiness he had hoped for. Instead, stress and fatigue ruined his health. His friends at work were of little comfort to him. Depressed, he became an

Akinori when he was a businessman (left) and with his wife happily sharing Bible truth today



alcoholic and even considered taking his own life. Then he began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. What he learned changed his view of what is important in life. Soon, his stress-induced ailments began to disappear. Rather than being driven by pride and ambition, Akinori came to experience firsthand what the Bible proverb says: "A heart at peace gives life to the body." —Proverbs 14:30, *The Holy Bible—New International Version*.

What do you consider to be the most practical goal in life? What achievement would make you genuinely happy? Would it be having a successful marriage? Or giving your children a fine start in life? Making many friends? Finding joy in living? All of these are worthwhile goals. In fact, the Bible encourages them, though not as our main purpose in life. With practical insight, the Bible points to a fundamental requirement for a satisfying way of life when it says: "Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) When we neglect to carry out this obligation, life becomes aimless, frustrating, and ultimately disappointing. On the other hand, the Bible assures us: "Happy is he that is trusting in Jehovah." —Proverbs 16:20.

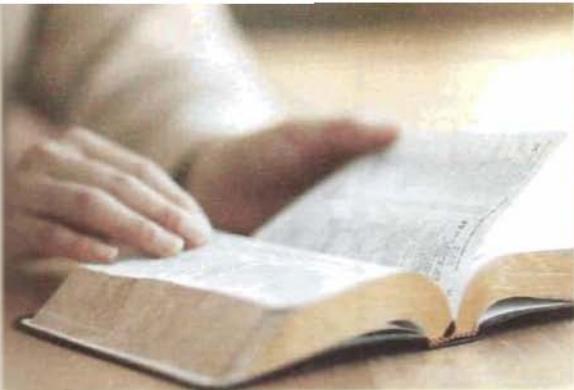
How the Bible Moves People to Change

"The word of God is alive and exerts power," wrote the apostle Paul. Like a sharp, two-edged sword, it can penetrate a person's deepest thoughts and intentions. (Hebrews 4:12) The Bible has the power to change the way people live because it helps them to see themselves as they really are and not just as they think they are. Those with the right heart condition, then, will come to realize that they may need to make changes. For ex-

ample, concerning those in the Christian congregation in ancient Corinth who had once been thieves, drunkards, adulterers, and the like, Paul said: "That is what some of you were. But you have been washed clean . . . with the spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) Jehovah's holy spirit is just as active and powerful today, and it can move people to make the necessary changes.

Mario, who lives in Europe, was a violent man who smoked and sold marijuana. On one occasion, when a policeman confiscated his drugs, he became so enraged that he assaulted the officer and destroyed his car. In addition, Mario was unemployed and deep in debt. Realizing that he could not solve his problems himself, he agreed to have a Bible study. As he made progress, Mario cleaned up his appearance, quit using and selling drugs, and stopped resorting to violence. Many who knew his former ways were astonished. They stopped him and asked, "Mario, is it really you?"

What motivates individuals like Akinori and Mario to turn their life around and find true satisfaction and joy in living? Clearly, it is their newfound knowledge of God acquired through a study of the Bible. Only God can provide the practical instruction that we need to make a success of life now and to have the prospect of everlasting life in the future. Like a Father, Jehovah God speaks to us through the Bible: "Hear, my son, and accept my sayings. Then for you the years of life will become many. . . . When you walk, your pace will not be cramped; and if you run, you will not stumble. Take hold on discipline; do not let go. Safeguard it, for it itself is your life." (Proverbs 4:10-13) What advice could be more practical than for us to seek the guidance of our Creator?



Practical Advice for Today

The Bible provides basic but practical principles that can guide us in every aspect of modern life. Here are some examples:

• Enjoying good relationships with others

"All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them."—Matthew 7:12.

"He that conducts himself as a lesser one among all of you is the one that is great."—Luke 9:48.

"Follow the course of hospitality."—Romans 12:13.

• Overcoming destructive habits

"He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly."—Proverbs 13:20.

"Do not come to be among heavy drinkers of wine."—Proverbs 23:20.

"Do not have companionship with anyone given to anger."—Proverbs 22:24.

• Building a stable marriage

"Let each one of you individually so love his wife as he does himself; on the other hand, the wife should have deep respect for her husband."—Ephesians 5:33.

"Clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, and long-suffering. Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely."—Colossians 3:12, 13.

• Helping children

"Train up a boy according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it."—Proverbs 22:6.

"You, fathers, do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah."—Ephesians 6:4.

• Avoiding quarrels

"An answer, when mild, turns away rage, but a word causing pain makes anger to come up."—Proverbs 15:1.

"In showing honor to one another take the lead."—Romans 12:10.

Even among friends, business disputes are often avoided by making written agreements. Thus, God's servant Jeremiah wrote: "I wrote in a deed and affixed the seal and took witnesses as I went weighing the money in the scales."—Jeremiah 32:10.

• Cultivating a positive attitude

"Whatever things are true, . . . lovable, . . . well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things."—Philippians 4:8.

The Bible discourages dwelling on negative thoughts and censures "complainers about their lot in life." It says: "Rejoice in the hope."—Jude 4, 16; Romans 12:12.

Applying these fine principles will not only enable us to enjoy peace and contentment now but also help us to measure up to God's requirements and receive his blessing. The Bible says: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Psalm 37:29.

THEY LOVED THE WORD OF GOD

IMPORTANT messages are often translated into many languages to make sure that they can be understood by as many people as possible. The Bible, which is the Word of God, contains an important message. Although recorded long ago, the things found in the Bible "were written for our instruction" and provide us with comfort and hope for the future.—Romans 15:4.

It stands to reason, then, that the Bible, which contains the most important message ever written, would be made available in

many languages. Throughout history, men have struggled to translate the Bible in spite of serious illness, government ban, or even the threat of execution. Why? Because they loved the Word of God. The following account is a glimpse of the remarkable history of the translation of the Bible.

"Englishmen Learn Christ's Law Best in English"

When John Wycliffe was born about 1330, church services in England were conducted in Latin. The common people, on the other hand, used English as their everyday language. They talked to their neighbors in English and even prayed to God in English.

Wycliffe, a Catholic priest, was fluent in Latin. Yet, he felt that it was wrong to use Latin, which he considered to be an elitist language, to teach the Scriptures. "Knowledge of God's law," he wrote, "should be taught in the language which is easiest to understand, because what is being taught is the word of God." Thus, Wycliffe and his associates assembled a team to translate the Bible into English. It took some 20 years.

Wycliffe. From the book *The History of Protestantism* (Vol. I).
Bible: Courtesy of the American Bible Society Library, New York



"Englishmen learn Christ's law best in English."—JOHN WYCLIFFE





William Tyndale and
a page from the Tyndale Bible

The prospect of a new translation was not welcomed by the Catholic Church. *The Mysteries of the Vatican* explains why the church was opposed: "The laity were thus enabled to compare the simplicity of primitive Christianity with contemporary Catholicism . . . How great the divergence between the teaching of the Founder of Christianity, and his self-styled vicegerent [the pope] really was, became first glaringly evident."

Pope Gregory XI issued five edicts condemning Wycliffe. But the translator was undeterred. He replied: "Englishmen learn Christ's law best in English. Moses heard God's law in his own tongue, so did Christ's apostles." About the year 1382, shortly before Wycliffe died, the first English version of the entire Bible was released by Wycliffe's team. About ten years later, one of his associates released a revised and easier-to-read version.

Since printing presses had not yet been invented, each manuscript had to be painstakingly copied by hand, a task that could take

ten months! Yet, the prospect of the Bible's being circulated so worried the church that an archbishop threatened to excommunicate anyone who read it. Over 40 years after Wycliffe's death, by order of a papal council, the clergy exhumed his body, burned his bones, and threw his ashes into the river Swift. Still, sincere seekers of the truth sought out Wycliffe's Bible. Professor William M. Blackburn related: "Numberless copies of Wyclif's Bible were made, widely circulated, and handed down."

A Bible for the Plowboy

Within 200 years, the English used by Wycliffe was virtually obsolete. A young preacher near Bristol was frustrated that so few could understand the Bible. On one occasion, the preacher, William Tyndale, heard an educated man say that it would be better to be without God's law than without the pope's. Tyndale responded by stating that if God allowed him, before long he would make sure that even a plowboy would have more knowledge of the Bible than the educated man.

Wycliffe had translated from the Latin *Vulgate* and manually copied the Scriptures. In 1524, Tyndale, having left England for Germany, began translating directly from the original Hebrew and Greek and then employed a press in Cologne to print copies. Soon, Tyndale's enemies learned of the translation and persuaded the Senate of Cologne to order all copies confiscated.

Tyndale fled to the city of Worms, Germany, and resumed his work. Not long thereafter, copies of Tyndale's Greek Scriptures in English were secretly shipped to England. Within six months, so many copies had been sold that an emergency meeting of

bishops was called and Bible burnings were ordered.

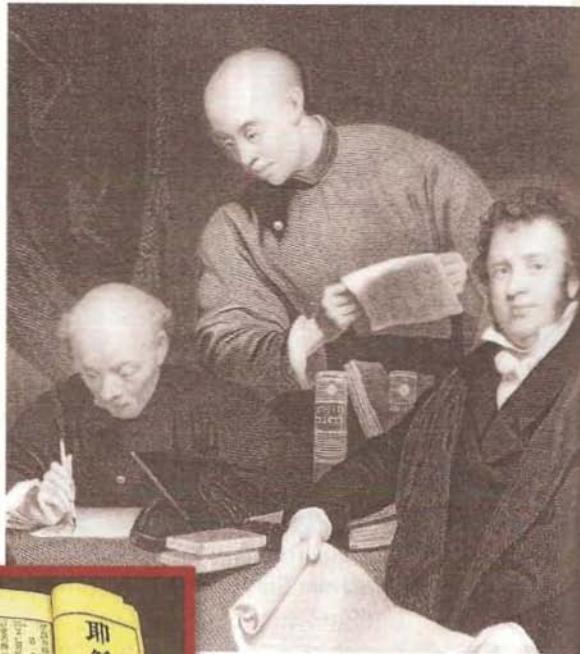
To stem the tide of Bible reading and Tyndale's alleged heresy, the bishop of London commissioned Sir Thomas More to attack Tyndale in writing. More was particularly upset at Tyndale's use of the word "congregation" instead of "church," and "senior" or "elder" rather than "priest." These words challenged the authority of the pope and the distinction between clergy and laity. Thomas More also condemned Tyndale's translation of the Greek word *a·ga'pe* as "love" rather than "charity." "This, too, was a notion dangerous to the Church," says the book *If God Spare My Life*, "for the apparent downgrading of charity might undermine the lucrative donations, indulgences and bequests with which the faithful were persuaded to pave their way to heaven."

Thomas More promoted the burning of "heretics," which led to Tyndale's being strangled and his body burned at the stake in October 1536. Thomas More, for his part, was beheaded after running afoul of the king. However, he was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church in 1935, and in the year 2000, Pope John Paul II honored More as the patron saint of politicians.

Tyndale received no such recognition. However, before his death, his friend Miles Coverdale integrated Tyndale's translation into a complete Bible—the first English translation from the original languages! Every plowboy could now read God's Word. What about the Bible in languages other than English?

"A Practical Impossibility"

Over the objections of family and friends, British missionary Robert Morrison, single-



Robert Morrison and his translation of the Bible in Chinese



In the custody of the Asian Division of the Library of Congress

minded in his desire to publish the complete Bible in Chinese, set sail for China in 1807. His task of translating was not easy. "The undertaking was a practical impossibility," asserted Charles Grant, a director of the East India Company at the time.

Upon arrival, Morrison learned that under penalty of death, the Chinese were prohibited from teaching their language to foreigners. To protect himself and those who agreed to tutor him in the language, Morrison remained indoors for a while. One report says that "after two years' study he could speak Mandarin and more than one dialect as well as read and write" the language. In the meantime, the emperor issued an edict making the printing of Christian books a crime punishable by death. Despite

the threat, on November 25, 1819, Morrison completed his translation of the entire Bible into Chinese.

By 1836, about 2,000 complete Bibles, 10,000 copies of the Greek Scriptures, and 31,000 separate portions of Scripture in Chinese had been printed. Love for God's Word had made "a practical impossibility" possible.

A Bible in a Pillow

Two weeks after their marriage in February 1812, American missionary Adoniram Judson and his wife, Ann, embarked on a long journey, eventually settling in Burma in 1813.* They immediately applied themselves to learning Burmese, one of the world's most difficult languages. After a few years of study, Judson wrote: "We take up a language spoken by a people on the other side of the earth, whose very thoughts run in channels diverse from ours . . . We have no dictionary, and no interpreter to explain a single word."

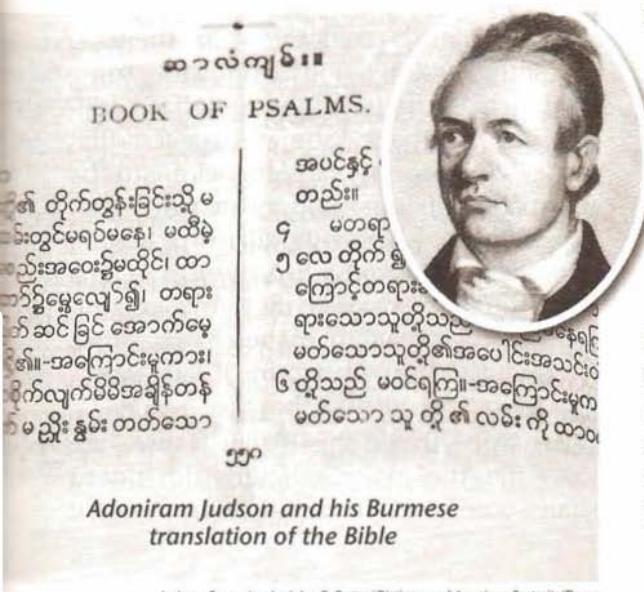
* Burma and the Burmese language are now known as Myanmar.

The linguistic challenges did not cause Judson to give up. He completed his Burmese translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures in June 1823. Later, Burma was plunged into war. As a suspected spy, Judson was thrown into prison, confined with three pairs of iron fetters, and fastened to a long pole to prevent him from moving. "One of the first things Mr. Judson inquired after, as soon as he and Mrs. Judson were allowed to meet and speak together in English, was the manuscript translation of the New Testament," wrote Francis Wayland in an 1853 book on Judson's life. Fearing that buried under the house the manuscript might be destroyed by humidity and mildew, Ann sewed it inside a pillow and brought it to her husband in prison. In spite of very difficult circumstances, the manuscript survived.

After many months in prison, Judson was released. But his joy was short-lived. Later that same year, a violent fever seized Ann, and within a few weeks, she died. Only six months later, his daughter Maria, barely two years old, also succumbed to an incurable disease. Judson, though heartbroken, resumed his work. The entire Bible was finally completed in 1835.

Do You Love God's Word?

The love for God's Word demonstrated by these translators is nothing new. In ancient Israel, the psalmist sang to Jehovah God: "How I do love your law! All day long it is my concern." (Psalm 119:97) The Bible is more than an impressive work of literature. It contains an important message. Do you make God's Word your concern by reading it regularly? You can be assured that if you do and you endeavor to apply what you learn, you 'will be happy in your doing it.'—James 1:25.



Judson: Engraving by John C. Buttre/Dictionary of American Portraits/Dover



DO ALL RELIGIONS LEAD TO THE SAME GOD?

"I have my own beliefs, and I am not going to change them. Anyway, it does not matter which faith you belong to because all religions lead to the same God."

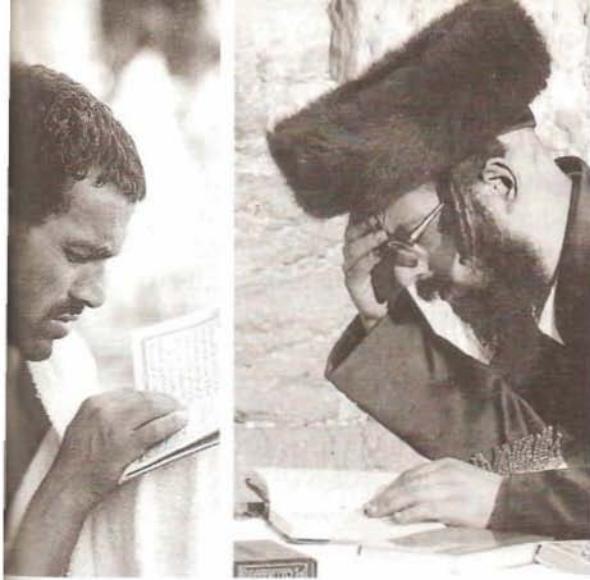
HAVE you ever heard someone express that opinion? Many people hold the view that all religions offer equally valid ways of finding God and understanding the meaning of life. Similarly widespread is the belief that there is good and bad in every religion and that no single faith has a monopoly on truth or can make the claim that it is the only way to God.

Such ideas are popular in today's so-called tolerant or pluralistic society. In fact, those who think otherwise are often viewed as narrow-minded, even bigoted. What is your opinion? Do you feel that all religions ultimately lead to the same God? Does it matter which faith a person belongs to?

Are There Real Differences?

According to one encyclopedia, there are currently 9,900 religions worldwide, some of which span the globe and have millions of members. Estimates suggest that some 70 percent of mankind belong to the five major religions—Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. If all religions lead to the same God, these five faiths surely ought to have many things in common in their teachings, their portrayal of God, and their explanation of God's purpose. What do the facts show?

Roman Catholic theologian Hans Küng says that the major religions do indeed share some basic tenets within the realm of



Do They Unite or Divide?

If all faiths lead to the same God, surely we would see each one of them exerting its influence to unite mankind in peace. Do the facts confirm that they do this? History indicates that religion instead of unifying mankind is a source of division and strife. Let us consider a few examples.

From the 11th to the 13th century, Christendom, that is, nations professing to be Christian, went to war with Islamic powers in a series of Crusades. In 17th-century Europe, Catholics and Protestants locked horns in the Thirty Years' War. In 1947, as soon as independence from Great Britain was declared on the Indian subcontinent, Hindus and Muslims were at one another's throat. More recently Catholics and Protestants spent years in conflict in Northern Ireland. In the Middle East, Jews and Muslims still find no peace with one another. And at the top of the list must be put World War II, which engulfed members of all five major religions, even involving members of the same faith on opposite sides of the conflict.

The conclusion is inevitable. The world's religions have not brought peace and unity, nor have they led to the same God. On the contrary, they have divided mankind and painted a confusing picture of who God is and how to worship him. Hence, anyone wanting to come to the true God must carefully choose the path he takes. This is in harmony with what is encouraged by the Bible, one of the oldest religious books known to mankind.

Choose for Yourselves Whom You Will Serve

The Bible clearly shows that finding the way that leads to the true God requires careful thought and deliberate choice. Joshua, a servant of Jehovah God, said to the ancient

human relations. Most, for instance, are in favor of not to murder, not to lie, not to steal, not to commit incest, and they teach respect for parents as well as love for children. In other matters, however, and especially in their portrayal of God, these major religions differ drastically.

For example, Hindus worship a multitude of deities, whereas Buddhists are said to be unsure about a personal God. Islam teaches that there is one God. So do the churches that claim to be Christian, but most of them also claim that God is a Trinity. Even among the churches, there is a wide range of dogma. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the object of devotion for Catholics but not for Protestants. Birth control is generally prohibited for Catholics but not for most Protestants. And Protestants cannot agree among themselves on the subject of homosexuality.

Is it logical to think that religions that embrace such a wide range of beliefs can all be worshipping the same God? Hardly. On the contrary, the result can be only confusion as to who God is and what he expects of those who worship him.

nation of Israel: "Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve, whether the gods that your forefathers who were on the other side of the River served or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are dwelling. But as for me and my household, we shall serve Jehovah." Years later, the prophet Elijah urged the people to make a similar choice: "How long will you be limping upon two different opinions? If Jehovah is the true God, go following him; but if Baal [a Canaanite god] is, go following him."—Joshua 24:15, 16; 1 Kings 18:21.

These and other Bible texts emphatically show that those who wanted to serve the true God had to make a conscientious choice. The situation is the same today. If we want to worship and serve the true God, we too must make the right choice. But what can help us make that choice in matters of worship? How can we identify the true worshippers?

True Worshippers Recognized by Their Fruits

Regarding true and false worshippers, Jesus Christ told his followers: "Never do people gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles, do they? Likewise 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. . . . Really, then, by their fruits you will recognize those men." Accordingly, true worshippers would be recognized by their fruits, or works. What are these fruits?—Matthew 7:16-20.

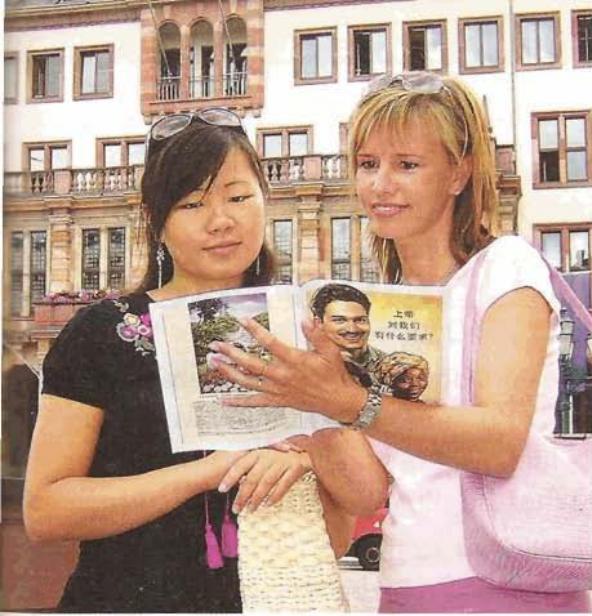
First, true worship unites believers in love. Jesus explained to his disciples: "I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." True followers of Christ must display love for one another that is so outstanding as to characterize them as true worshippers in the eyes of observers.—John 13:34, 35.

For this reason it would be unthinkable for true Christians to take up arms against one another in war. Do church members keep to this standard? In World War II, the only major religious group that consistently and steadfastly refused to support the war effort in any way were Jehovah's Witnesses. Dr. Hanns Lilje, former bishop of the Protestant Church in Hannover, Germany, wrote about the Witnesses: "They can rightfully

Orthodox priest blessing new troops in Ukraine in 2004



GENYA SAVILOV/AFP/Getty Images



Jehovah's Witnesses help people everywhere to learn about God and his Kingdom

claim to be the only major conscientious objectors in the Third Reich.” During that conflict, Witnesses in many lands chose to suffer reprisals rather than to promote or support the war.

What other fruits did Jesus have in mind that would identify genuine disciples? In what is commonly known as the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus started by saying: “Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.” Jesus assigned priority to the sanctification of God’s personal name, Jehovah. He expressed the wish that through God’s Kingdom, Jehovah’s will should be done on earth. Which religion is known for publicizing the name Jehovah and for proclaiming that God’s Kingdom is mankind’s only hope for peace on earth? Jehovah’s Witnesses publish the good news of the Kingdom in 236 countries and territories, disseminating literature in over 470 languages.—Matthew 6:9, 10.

Moreover, Jehovah’s Witnesses follow Jesus’ example in staying clear of political and social controversies. “They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world,” Jesus said of his disciples. In addition, the Witnesses accept the Bible as God’s Word and are convinced that “all Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work.”—John 17:14, 17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

True Religion Is Set Apart

These fruits—self-sacrificing love, the desire to sanctify Jehovah’s name, the proclamation of God’s Kingdom, separateness from the world, and faith in the Bible—all characterize true worshippers. Such fruits also set genuine worshippers apart from other religions. One lady who had enjoyed several conversations with Jehovah’s Witnesses drew her own conclusions and said: “I know many religions, and they are all similar to one another. You are the only ones who are completely different from the others.”

Clearly, all religions do not lead to the same God. But there is one group that stands apart from all others—Jehovah’s Witnesses, now numbering over seven million around the world. By advocating and adhering to God’s Word, the Bible, they have done what no other group or organization has been able to do, namely, unite people of diverse nationalities, languages, ethnic backgrounds, and races in worship of the one true God, Jehovah. They will be happy to help you learn about the true God, find out what he requires of you, and enjoy the peace and security that come from worshiping God in the way that he approves. Is that not a worthwhile goal?

Paul's Nephew —He Saved His Uncle's Life

DID you know that the apostle Paul had relatives who were followers of Jesus?*—A sister of his and her son apparently were. And that nephew saved Paul's life! We know neither his name nor that of his mother, but we know what he did. Would you like to hear about it?—

Paul has just returned from his third missionary trip and is in Jerusalem. It is apparently the year 56 C.E. Paul has been arrested and is to be tried. But Paul's enemies do not want him to face a trial. They want him dead! So they plan for some 40 men to lie in wait along the way to kill Paul.

Somehow, Paul's nephew learns about the plan. Do you know what he does?—He goes to Paul and tells him about it. Right away, Paul tells an army officer: "Lead this young man off to the military commander, for he has something to report." The officer takes him to the commander, Claudius Lysias, and explains that the young man has important information. Claudius takes Paul's nephew aside, and the youth tells him everything.

Claudius warns Paul's nephew: "Do not blab to anyone that you have made these things clear to me." Then he calls two army officers and tells them to get 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen ready to march to Caesarea. At nine o'clock that night, the 470 men leave and deliver Paul safely to Roman Governor Felix in Caesarea. In a letter to Felix, Claudius tells about the plans to kill Paul.

So the Jews are forced to meet Paul in a court of law in Caesarea to make their accusations. But, of course, they have no proof that Paul has done anything wrong. Even so, Paul is unjustly held in a prison for two

* If you are reading with children, the dash provides a reminder to stop and direct the question to them.

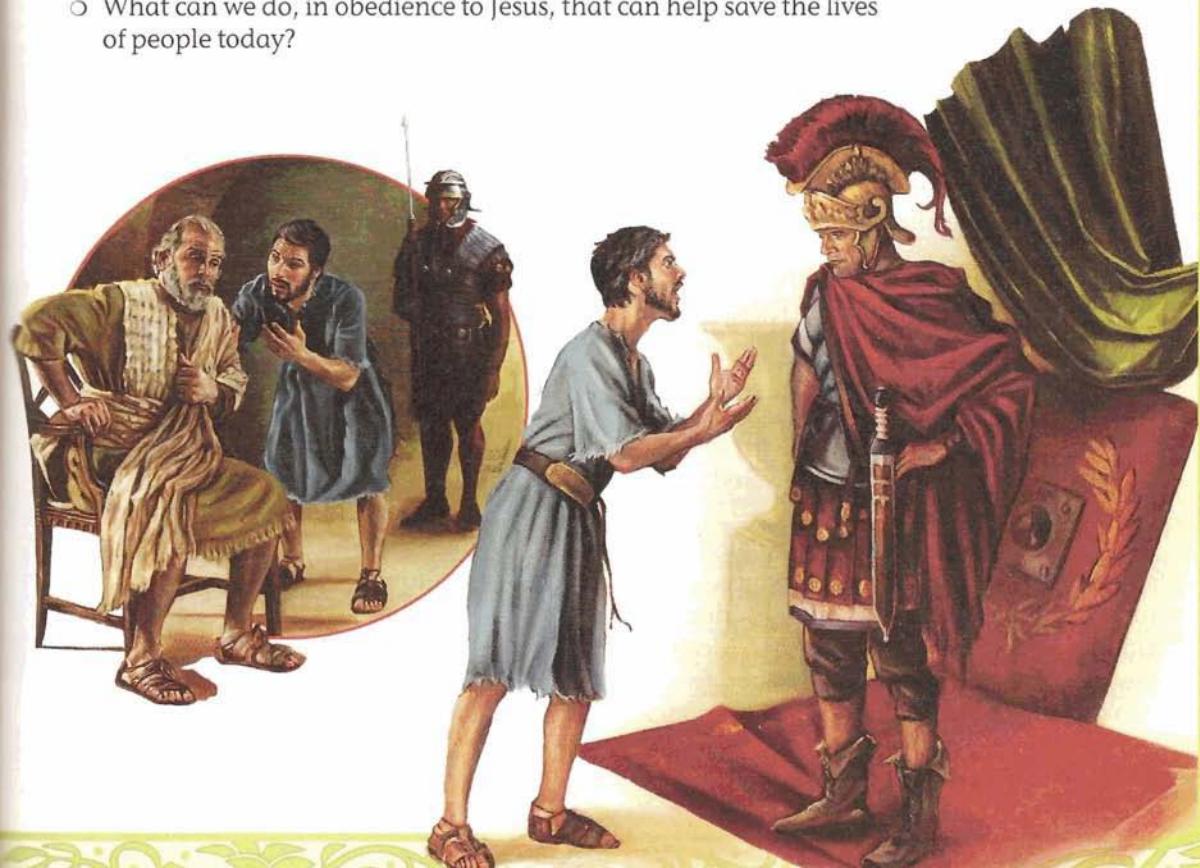
years. Hence, he appeals to have a trial in Rome, and he is sent there.
—Acts 23:16-24:27; 25:8-12.

What can we learn from this account about Paul's nephew?— That it takes courage to speak up for the right things and that if we do, we can save lives. Even when Jesus knew that enemies “were seeking to kill him,” he kept telling people about God’s Kingdom. Jesus told us to do the same. Will we do so? We will if we have courage like that of Paul’s nephew.
—John 7:1; 15:13; Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20.

Paul urged his young friend Timothy: “Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.” (1 Timothy 4:16) Surely, Paul’s nephew applied such encouragement from his uncle. Will you?

Questions:

- Who were some of Paul’s relatives, and what have we learned about them?
- What did Paul’s nephew do to save Paul’s life?
- What can we do, in obedience to Jesus, that can help save the lives of people today?





GRATEFUL DESPITE TRAGEDIES

How the Bible Helped Me to Cope

AS TOLD BY
ENRIQUE CARAVACA ACOSTA

It was April 15, 1971. I was on my way to visit my family at our family farm.

Having been away from home for some time, I was very much looking forward to seeing everyone. I wondered if they would all be at home and whom I would see first. Upon my arrival, I was horrified to find four people—including my mother—murdered!

I WAS shocked beyond words. What had happened? What would I do? There was no one around, and I felt confused and helpless. Before I continue with the story, let me tell you a little about my background. Then you will better understand how I felt about this and other tragedies in my life.

We Found the Truth

I was born in Quirimán, near Nicoya, Costa Rica. In 1953, when I was 37 years of age, I was living with my parents on our family farm. Though we were brought up as Catholics, we were not happy with certain doctrines and had many unanswered questions.

One morning, a man named Anatolio Alfaró came to our home and encouraged us to study the Bible. He shared many scriptures and Bible teachings with us. Father, Mother, one of my brothers, my sister, her friend who was staying with us, and I all sat and lis-

tened. The discussion lasted through the day and long into the night. We had many questions.

Anatolio stayed overnight and spent the next day with us. We were thrilled with what we heard and were even more excited when our questions were answered directly from the Bible. That discussion had a profound effect on us. We thought about what we had learned, and we knew that we had found the truth. Anatolio left some Bible magazines and books with us. In the evenings, we read and studied these publications together as a family. This was quite a challenge, since we had no electricity. Before sitting down to study, each of us took a large potato sack and covered our feet and legs to protect them from the mosquitoes.

Six months later, five members of my family, including my parents and me, got baptized. Excitedly, we started to go from house to house to share with others what we

had learned. We traveled about two hours on foot and sometimes on horseback to a town called Carrillo to meet with a group of Jehovah's Witnesses there. Anatolio continued to come to our home to study the Bible with us. Then a meeting was arranged at our home, with about eight people attending. All of them eventually got baptized. That group soon grew to be a small congregation of about 20.

Doing God's Work Full-Time

In time, the Costa Rica branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses invited those who could to take up the evangelizing work full-time. In 1957, I accepted this invitation and entered the full-time ministry. The work was exciting, to say the least. I often walked alone for hours to reach people in rural areas. Sometimes people did not welcome me. I recall at

least three times being threatened by men with machetes, demanding to know who I was and what I was doing.

Back in the 1950's, most roads were just trails through the wilderness, and we had a difficult time reaching people. To get to certain areas, we had to go on horseback. We waded through rivers and occasionally spent nights sleeping under the stars. Clouds of mosquitoes made life miserable. We also had to be on the lookout for snakes and crocodiles. Through it all, I thoroughly enjoyed helping people to learn about Jehovah God. When I got home, I felt happy and content because of being able to share Bible truth with others. As I did my work and studied the Bible each day, my love for Jehovah God continued to grow, and I felt much closer to him.

In time, additional privileges were extended to me. For more than ten years, I served as a traveling overseer, visiting and strengthening congregations, a different one each week, in a certain area. Though health problems made it necessary for me to relinquish this privilege of service, I continued to enjoy the ministry, serving God full-time.

Tragedy Strikes

Then, while I was in Nicoya in 1971, I returned to visit my family. As I entered our home, I found my 80-year-old mother lying on the floor. She had been shot and stabbed. When I bent down to hold her, she was still breathing. Moments later, she died in my arms. I looked around, and there on the kitchen floor lay the cook, who was eight months pregnant. She too was dead. As if that was not enough, I also found a member of the local congregation lying dead in the corridor, and the young son of the cook lay dead in the bathroom. All had been brutally stabbed and shot. Who could have done such a horrible thing, and why?



My early effort to give a Bible talk

When I went outside, I found my father. He had been shot in the head but was still alive! I hurried to my brother's house, which was about 15 minutes away, only to learn that another woman and her son had also been killed. How shocked I was to learn that the killer was my 17-year-old nephew, who was not one of Jehovah's Witnesses and was mentally ill! He had fled the area. The largest manhunt in the history of Costa Rica was on.

The story made national news. After seven days, the police found the killer, who was armed with a large knife and a .22 caliber

Reading the Bible daily is a source of great comfort and has given me the strength to endure

pistol that someone had sold to him despite knowing that he was mentally and emotionally disturbed. My nephew was shot and killed as he was being apprehended.

During the manhunt, many advised me to flee from the area for fear that my nephew might return to harm me. I prayed about it because I felt that I needed to be with the surviving members of my family and with those in the congregation. So I stayed.

Beset by One Tragedy After Another

Sadly, Father lived for only one year. The next year, my sister, a faithful servant of Jehovah God, was murdered in a separate, unrelated incident. Again, all my relatives were shocked to lose another family member. Words cannot describe the feelings of loss and sadness that we and our friends experienced. Throughout the ordeal, I relied heavily on Jehovah and continually begged him for strength.

In 1985, I attended a three-day training class for Christian elders in the capital city,

San José. At the end of the class, I felt spiritually uplifted. Early Monday morning, I left to take the bus home. As I was walking to the bus terminal, I was attacked by thugs, who choked and robbed me. It all happened so fast that I was not able to see their faces. This has left me unable to communicate in the customary Costa Rican manner. Here in the province of Guanacaste, men yell or shout as they meet and greet one another or just to make their presence known. I had been good at shouting, but after the attack, I could no longer do so.

In 1979, I married Celia, a fellow Witness from a neighboring congregation. Celia loved the Bible. We read and studied the Bible together every day. Sadly, I lost her to cancer in July 2001. At times, I feel lonely, but the hope of the resurrection strengthens me.—John 5:28, 29.

Joyful Despite Trials

Though I may have experienced more tragic events in my life than many people have, I view these trials as opportunities to prove my faith and loyalty before Jehovah. (James 1:13) To help me maintain a balanced view of my experiences, I keep reminding myself that “time and unforeseen occurrence” befall us all. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) I also remember that these are “critical times hard to deal with,” for people are fierce, violent, and without self-control. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) I bear in mind, too, the example of Job. In spite of all his suffer-

In the field ministry in my younger years



ing—losing his family, health, and livelihood—Job steadfastly said: “Let the name of Jehovah continue to be blessed.” And Jehovah richly rewarded Job for his integrity. (Job 1:13-22; 42:12-15) All these thoughts from the Bible help me to remain joyful despite my many trials.

Jehovah has always helped me to continue putting him first in my life. Reading the Bible daily is a source of great comfort and has given me the strength to endure. By turning to Jehovah in prayer, I am able to enjoy “the peace of God that excels all thought.” (Philippians 4:6, 7) This brings

me peace of mind. Attending and participating in Christian meetings likewise is faith-strengthening for me.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

Though advanced in years, I am grateful to Jehovah that I still have the strength to work with my fellow Christians, to study the Bible with others, and to share in the ministry. Serving others in these ways gives me the power to cope with despair. From the bottom of my heart, I am truly grateful to Jehovah despite the many tragedies in my life.*

* Two years after submitting the above account, Enrique Caravaca Acosta passed away at the age of 90.

DOES GOD CHANGE HIS MIND?

REGARDING God, the Bible says: “With him there is not a variation of the turning of the shadow.” And reassuringly, God himself said: “I am Jehovah; I have not changed.” (James 1:17; Malachi 3:6) How Jehovah God differs from those who are hard to please and cannot be trusted because they constantly change their mind!

Some Bible readers wonder, however, if God *has* changed his mind. For example, at one time Jehovah God gave Christians the power to perform miracles, but now he does not. In ancient times, God tolerated polygamy, but he no longer does. Under the Mosaic Law, Jehovah required Sabbath-keeping, but now he does not. Do these instances not show that God has changed?

First of all, we can be sure that God never changes his standards of love and justice.

Also, his “eternal purpose” to bless mankind by means of his Kingdom has never changed. (Ephesians 3:11) Nonetheless, just as you might change your mind about a person whose behavior consistently disappoints you, Jehovah does change in response to changing circumstances.

God never changes his standards of love and justice

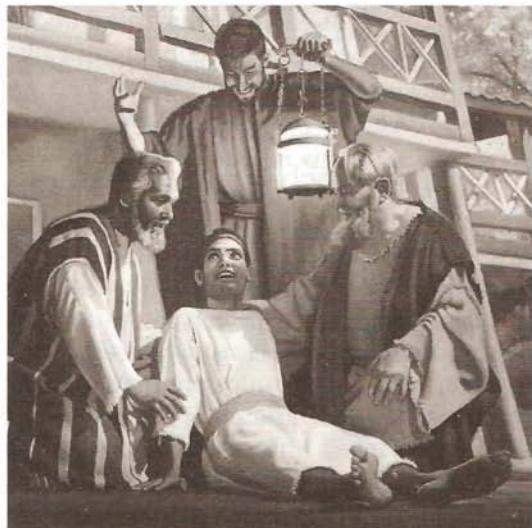
God also changes his instructions to his people according to their situation and needs. This should not surprise us. Consider what a competent tour guide would do when he sees danger ahead. He would tell his group to take a different road, away from the danger. That, however, does not mean that he has changed his mind about the

destination, does it? Let us, therefore, examine the aforementioned three examples, which some find puzzling.

Why Did Miracles Cease?

Why did God give miraculous powers to some of the first-century Christians? You may be aware that when Israel was God's chosen nation, God often demonstrated by miracles that he was with them. Through Moses, God exercised his awesome power in delivering Israel from Egypt and guiding them through the wilderness into the Promised Land. Regrettably, time and again the Israelites did not respond with faith. When Jehovah finally rejected Israel and established the Christian congregation, he gave miraculous powers to the apostles and others. For example, the apostles Peter and John cured a man lame from birth, and Paul restored a dead man to life. (Acts 3:2-8; 20:9-11) Miracles they performed helped to es-

Paul explained that, in time, miraculous gifts would "be done away with"



tablish Christianity in many lands. Why, then, did miracles cease?

The apostle Paul explained by means of an illustration: "When I was a babe, I used to speak as a babe, to think as a babe, to reason as a babe; but now that I have become a man, I have done away with the traits of a babe." (1 Corinthians 13:11) Just as parents treat a small child differently from an adult son, so Jehovah's way of dealing with the Christian congregation changed when it was no longer "a babe." The apostle Paul explained that such miraculous gifts as the ability to speak in foreign languages or to prophesy would "be done away with."—1 Corinthians 13:8.

Why Was Polygamy Allowed?

Jesus showed that God set the standard for marriage when He told the first human pair: "A man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife, and the *two* will be one flesh." (Matthew 19:5) Marriage was to be a lasting bond between two persons. However, by the time God organized the Israelites into a nation and gave them the Law, polygamy had become a common practice. Thus, though God did not originate or encourage polygamy, he provided laws to regulate it. When the Christian congregation was formed, God's Word clearly prohibited polygamy.—1 Timothy 3:2.

Jehovah God tolerates certain things until his time to correct them. (Romans 9:22-24) Jesus showed that Jehovah had temporarily tolerated improper marriage customs as a "concession" made out of regard for Israel's "hardheartedness."—Matthew 19:8; Proverbs 4:18.

Why Was Sabbath-Keeping Temporary?

God instituted the observance of a weekly Sabbath after he delivered the Israelites

Marriage was to be a lasting bond between two persons

from Egypt. He later made it part of their national Law. (Exodus 16:22-30; 20:8-10) The apostle Paul explained that Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice and “abolished . . . the Law of commandments consisting in decrees” and “blotted out the handwritten document.” (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14) What was “abolished” and “blotted out” included the Sabbath law, for the Bible goes on to say: “Therefore let no man judge you in eating and drinking or in respect of a festival or of an observance of the new moon or of a sabbath.” (Colossians 2:16) Why did God give the Law, including the Sabbath, in the first place?

The apostle Paul wrote: “The Law has become our tutor leading to Christ.” Then he added: “Now that the faith has arrived, we are no longer under a tutor.” (Galatians 3:24, 25) Rather than changing his mind, God

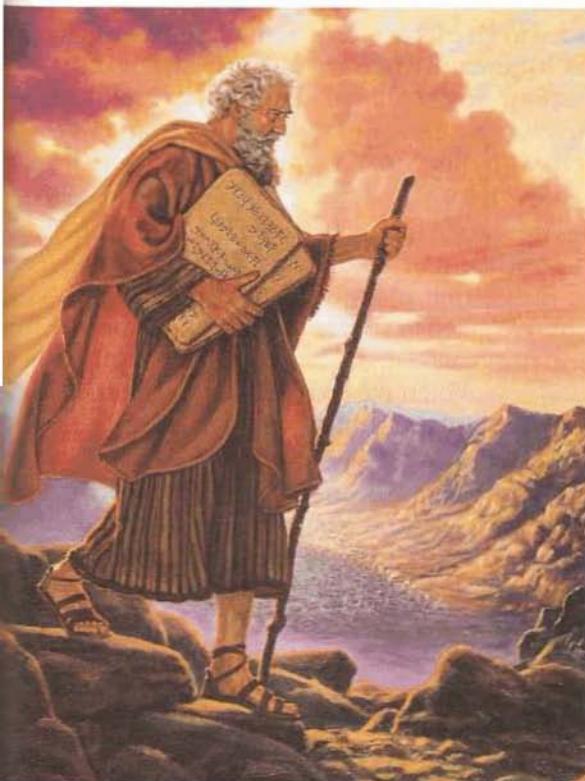


used the Sabbath as a temporary arrangement to teach people that they should regularly take time to meditate on spiritual matters. Although the Sabbath law was temporary, it pointed forward to the time when mankind would find lasting rest from physical and spiritual afflictions.—Hebrews 4:10; Revelation 21:1-4.

A Trustworthy and Loving God

The Biblical examples considered above show that Jehovah God did give different directions and instructions at different times. But that does not mean that he changed his mind. Rather, he responded to the needs of his people under varying circumstances, and he did so for their benefit. The same is true today.

Because Jehovah does not change his standards, we can always know what we must do to please him. Furthermore, we can be certain that everything God has promised will come true. Jehovah says: “Everything that is my delight I shall do . . . I have formed it, I shall also do it.”—Isaiah 46:10, 11.



Journey to “the Edge of the Earth”



OUR small plane took off from Yakutsk and gradually gained altitude over the Tuymaada Valley. Leaving behind a multitude of frozen lakes of various shapes and sizes, we flew over the Verkhoyanskiy, a series of snow-covered peaks bathed in sunlight. After traveling 550 miles, we finally touched down in the village of Deputatskiy.

This was the beginning of my travels in the Sakha Republic, also known as Yakutia, a beautiful but harsh land, larger than all of Western Europe. It is a place where temperatures can range from 105 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer to -95 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter and where the ground yields fossil remains of enormous, long-extinct animals. Although several years have passed since my last visit, I remember as if it were yesterday the small towns wrapped in thick fog, the shimmering northern lights, and the cheerful, hardy Yakut people.

The village of Deputatskiy was not our final destination. My traveling companion and I were to visit some other villages. The first one was Khayyr, 200 miles farther to the north, near the Laptev Sea, in northern Siberia. Why did we decide to make the trip? Ear-

lier, one of Jehovah's Witnesses had come to these villages and had found many people who wanted to learn more about the Bible. It turned out that we in Yakutsk, about 600 miles away, are the nearest to them! We felt that these people needed encouragement and help.

When we arrived in Deputatskiy, we found a man who was driving to Khayyr, and he offered to give us a ride for a small fee. We were a bit hesitant when we saw his car—an old, beat-up Soviet model reeking of gasoline. Anyway, we decided to take a chance, and we left with him that evening. Little did we know what awaited us.

The seats in the car felt as frozen as the tundra outside, and it didn't take very long for us to realize that they were not going to thaw out. We asked to stop at the first opportunity and rummaged in our bags for warm woolen clothing, which we layered over the clothes we wore. But the cold bore into us relentlessly all the same.

Our driver, a seasoned man of the North, was as cheerful as could be. Suddenly he asked, “Have you ever seen the northern lights?” I never had, so he stopped the car,

and we crawled out. For a moment, all was forgotten. I stood transfixed, marveling at the shimmering, multicolored curtains of light that furled and unfurled above us—a miraculous sight that seemed just an arm's length overhead.

Somewhere out on the frozen tundra in the early morning darkness, we got stuck in a snowdrift. We helped the driver get his car out of that trouble—and several times thereafter—as we progressed toward Khayyr along roads that had been plowed through the deep snow. It was only after daybreak that I realized that the "roads" were actually frozen rivers! Finally, around noon, 16 hours after we had left Deputatskiy, we reached Khayyr. Although expecting to fall ill after such prolonged exposure to the cold, we got up the next morning as fresh as ever. Only my toes felt a little numb, possibly from frostbite. The villagers gave me some bear grease to rub on them.

Normally, we would call on people at their homes to talk about the good news. Here in Khayyr, however, as soon as the villagers learned of our arrival, they came looking for us! Every day for two and a half weeks, we studied the Bible with the local people, sometimes from early morning to late night. It was thrilling to meet so many warm, hospitable people who were interested in spiritual matters. Several elderly Yakut women told us: "We believe in God. The fact that you have come here, to the edge of the earth, shows that there is a God!"

We were intrigued by the local customs. For example, people stack blocks of ice like firewood next to their houses. Whenever they need water, they simply pick up one of the blocks and stand it in a large kettle over the fire to melt. The villagers treated us to a wonderful Arctic fish called *chir*, delicious when enjoyed as *stroganina*, a local delicacy. The fish is frozen as soon as it is caught, then cut into thin strips, dipped into



We found the Yakut people to be warm and hospitable

a mixture of salt and pepper, and eaten at once. The villagers also enjoyed telling us about fossilized remains, such as mammoth tusks, and fossilized trees, which they often find in this area.

From Khayyr, I traveled hundreds of miles, mostly by plane, to visit those interested in the Bible in other villages in Yakutia. How warm and loving the people here are! Once I met a small boy who somehow found out that flying made me nervous. To encourage me, he made me a card. He drew a pair of sparrows and a small plane and wrote: "Sasha, when you fly on a plane, don't be afraid of falling. Matthew 10: 29." How touched I was when I looked up the scripture! There, I read Jesus' words about the sparrows: "Not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge."

I have recounted just a few of my many impressions of Yakutia. That cold, harsh land will ever remind me of those warm, wonderful people who truly live at "the edge of the earth."



He Is Considerate of Our Limitations

Leviticus 5:2-11

"I TRIED really hard, but I never felt that it was enough." So said one woman about her efforts to please God. Does Jehovah God accept the best efforts of his worshippers? Does he take into account their abilities and circumstances? To answer these questions, it is helpful to consider what is said in the Mosaic Law about certain offerings, as found at Leviticus 5:2-11.

Under the Law, God required various sacrifices, or offerings, to atone for sins. In the cases mentioned in this passage, the individual had sinned unintentionally or thoughtlessly. (Verses 2-4) When the matter came to his attention, he was to confess his sin and present a guilt offering—"a female lamb or a female kid of the goats." (Verses 5, 6) But what if he was poor and did not have a lamb or a goat to offer? Did the Law demand that he borrow such an animal, thus falling into debt? Did he have to work until he could afford one, thereby delaying atonement for his sins?

Reflecting Jehovah's tender consideration, the Law said: "If, though, he cannot afford enough for a sheep, then he must bring as his guilt offering for the sin that he has committed two turtledoves or two young pigeons to Jehovah." (Verse 7) The phrase "if . . . he cannot afford" may also be rendered "if . . . his hand cannot reach." If an Israelite was too poor to afford a sheep, then God was pleased to accept some-



thing that was within the offerer's reach—two turtledoves or two pigeons. What if the individual did not have the means even for the two birds? "Then he must bring as his offering for the sin he has committed the tenth of an ephah [eight or nine cups] of fine flour for a sin offering," the Law stated. (Verse 11) For the very poor, Jehovah chose to make an exception and allow a sin offering without blood.* In Israel, poverty denied no one the blessing of atonement or the privilege of making peace with God.

What do we learn about Jehovah from the law regarding guilt offerings? He is a compassionate, understanding God who takes into account the limitations of his worshippers. (Psalm 103:14) He wants us to draw close to him and cultivate a good relationship with him even if we have challenging circumstances, such as advancing age, poor health, family or other obligations. We can find comfort in knowing that Jehovah God is pleased when we do all that is within our reach.

* The atoning value of a sacrificial animal was in its blood, which God viewed as sacred. (Leviticus 17:11) Does that mean that the flour offerings of the poor were worthless? No. Jehovah surely valued the humble, willing spirit behind such offerings. Furthermore, the sins of the entire nation—including the poor—were covered by the blood of the animals offered to God on the annual Day of Atonement.—Leviticus 16:29, 30.

Did You Know?

Why do people say “amen” at the end of a prayer?

The word “amen,” in both English and Greek, is a transliteration of the Hebrew ‘amen’. The expression, usually uttered in unison by listeners to a prayer, oath, blessing, or curse, basically means “so be it,” or “surely.” Saying it serves to indicate agreement with the sentiments just expressed. According to one reference work, “the word connotes certainty, truthfulness, faithfulness, and absence of doubt.” In Bible times, the expression also legally obliged its user with regard to an oath or covenant and its consequences.—Deuteronomy 27:15-26.

In his preaching and teaching, Jesus introduced some of his statements with the word “amen.” By so doing, he underlined the absolute reliability of what he was about to say. In these cases, the Greek word ‘amen’ is translated “truly” or “verily.” (Matthew 5:18; 6:2, 5; *King James Version*) When doubled, as is the case throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus’ expression is translated “most truly.” (John 1:51) Jesus’ use of amen in



“AMEN,” REVELATION 3:14.
THE CODEX ALEXANDRINUS,
5TH CENTURY C.E.

this way is said to be unique in sacred literature.

In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the title “Amen” is applied to Jesus to indicate that his witness is “faithful and true.”—Revelation 3:14.

What were the Urim and the Thummim?

It appears that the Urim and the Thummim were used in ancient Israel to discern Jehovah’s will in matters that concerned the nation or its leaders. These objects were entrusted to the high priest and were kept in the pouch of the “breastpiece of judgment.” (Exodus 28:15, 16, 30) Although the Scriptures never describe these objects or their exact method of use, different passages seem to im-

ply that they were employed as lots that would result in either a “yes” answer, a “no” answer, or no answer at all from God.

One example of such use was when David had Abiathar bring to him what was apparently the high priest’s ephod containing the Urim and the Thummim. David addressed two questions to Jehovah: ‘Will Saul chase after me?’ and ‘Will the landowners of Keilah surrender me into his hand?’ To both inquiries the answer was yes, enabling David to make appropriate decisions.—1 Samuel 23:6-12.

Earlier, King Saul used the Urim and the Thummim to determine first, whether guilt lay with the people or with him and Jonathan and second, whether he or his son was the offender. (1 Samuel 14:40-42) Later when Saul had lost divine favor, God no longer gave him guidance “either by dreams or by the Urim or by the prophets.”—1 Samuel 28:6.

According to Jewish tradition, use of the Urim and the Thummim ceased when Jehovah’s temple was destroyed in 607 B.C.E.

Does Anyone Really Care?

Did you ever feel alone and helpless, as if no one really understood the problems you were facing? And even if they knew about them, you felt that they did not really care.

WHEN problems arise, our life can seem like a storm that will not let up. At times, we might even conclude that what we are experiencing is so devastating and so unjust that we simply cannot bear it any longer. That is often the case when we suffer from emotional traumas, depression, debilitating accidents, chronic diseases, or something similar. We may feel so helpless and hopeless that we wonder where we can turn for comfort. Does anyone really care?

"The God of All Comfort" Cares

God is described in the Bible as "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort." (2 Corinthians 1:3) God, whose name is Jehovah, knows we need comfort. The Bible uses "comfort" in various forms over a hundred times, assuring us that God not only understands what we face but also desires to comfort us. This knowledge convinces us that even when others do not seem to notice, understand, or care about our plight, Jehovah God does.

The fact that Jehovah cares for people as individuals is clearly seen from the Scriptures. "The eyes of Jehovah are in every

place," says the Bible, "keeping watch upon the bad ones and the good ones." (Proverbs 15:3) Similarly, at Job 34:21, we read: "His eyes are upon the ways of man, and all his steps he sees." Jehovah sees what we do—good or bad—and he is aware of our circumstances, so that he can respond in ways he sees fit. This is confirmed in the words of Hanani the seer, or prophet, to King Asa of Judah: "As regards Jehovah, his eyes are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him."—2 Chronicles 16:7, 9.

Jehovah keeps watch over us for another reason. Jesus explains: "No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him." (John 6:44) Jehovah cares enough to search a person's heart to see if it is inclined toward him. If it is, he can respond in ways truly amazing. For example, in the Dominican Republic, a woman was in the hospital for cancer surgery. She beseeched God to help her to find the true religion. Just then, her husband brought her a brochure entitled *What Does God Require of Us?** which he had received that morning from one of Jehovah's Witnesses who called at his home. The woman read the brochure and realized that this was God's answer to her prayer. She accepted a Bible study with the Witness, and in less than six months, she dedicated her life to God and was baptized.

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



In the Bible book of Psalms, we find many heartwarming expressions by ancient Hebrew psalmists, such as King David, that describe Jehovah's loving care for his servants. At Psalm 56:8, we find King David pleading to God: "Do put my tears in your skin bottle. Are they not in your book?" As shown by this analogy, David knew that Jehovah was aware not only of his suffering but also of its emotional impact. Jehovah was aware of David's pain and remembered what David went through emotionally that caused his tears. Truly, our Creator watches over all those who endeavor to do his will, "those whose heart is complete toward him."

Another Bible passage that describes God's loving care is the famous 23rd Psalm. The opening words liken God to a loving shepherd: "Jehovah is my Shepherd. I shall lack nothing." A Middle Eastern shepherd cares for each of his sheep, even naming each one. Daily he calls each sheep to him and lovingly strokes it and looks for injuries. If he finds any, he applies oil or ointment to hasten the healing process. If the sheep is sick, the shepherd might have to force medicine down its throat and literally hold it up so that it will not lie down and die. Surely that is a fine word picture of how Jehovah cares for those who turn to him.

Prayer and the Resurrection —Proof That God Cares

These and other beautiful psalms are not recorded in the Bible for us just to read and

Scriptures to Strengthen Your Faith in God's Loving Care for You

"As regards Jehovah, his eyes are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him."

—2 CHRONICLES 16:9

"Do put my tears in your skin bottle. Are they not in your book?"—PSALM 56:8

"Jehovah is my Shepherd. I shall lack nothing."—PSALM 23:1

"O Hearer of prayer, even to you people of all flesh will come."

—PSALM 65:2

"You will call, and I myself shall answer you. For the work of your hands you will have a yearning."

—JOB 14:15

"He that approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him."—HEBREWS 11:6

"Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter."—PSALM 55:22

enjoy. They show us how faithful servants of God in the past have poured out their hearts to Jehovah to express their need for God's help as well as their gratitude for the guidance and blessings from him. Such expressions demonstrate clearly that those ancient servants of God firmly believed that God cared for them. Reading and meditating on these heartfelt words can help us to feel the same about God. The provision of prayer is a powerful evidence that God cares.

Sometimes, however, we are so overwhelmed by a problem that we do not even know how to pray about it. Does that prevent Jehovah from knowing our distress? Romans 8:26 answers: "The spirit also joins in with help for our weakness; for the problem of what we should pray for as we need to we do not know, but the spirit itself pleads for us with groanings unuttered." This scripture tells us that the inspired prayers of God's servants in the past may reflect our feelings and thus find a hearing ear from Jehovah, the "Hearer of prayer." —Psalm 65:2.

The resurrection hope is another convincing proof of God's interest in each individual. Jesus Christ said: "The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his [Jesus'] voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) The Greek term used here is properly translated "memorial tombs" and not simply "graves." It conveys the thought that the life record of the person who has died is remembered by God.

Just think, to bring someone back to life, God has to know everything about that one, including what he looked like, his inherited and acquired traits, and his complete memory! (Mark 10:27) God's memory of that one does not fade even after thousands of years. (Job 14:13-15; Luke

20:38) Thus, billions who have died are in Jehovah God's memory in full detail—convincing proof that God cares about us individually!

Jehovah Is a Rewarder

What must we do to receive God's loving concern and care? Primarily, we must show that we trust and obey him, that we have faith in him. The apostle Paul points out the relationship between having faith and enjoying God's care. He wrote: "Without faith it is impossible to please him well, for he that approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him."—Hebrews 11:6.

Note that the kind of faith that pleases God involves two aspects. First, we must "believe that he is," that is, we must believe that God exists and that he is our Supreme Ruler, deserving of our obedience and worship. Second, we must believe that he is "the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." True faith includes believing that God is interested in the welfare of all who earnestly seek to do his will and that he rewards them. By studying God's Word and associating with those who obey him, you too can come to have the kind of faith that merits God's reward and loving care.

Many people today believe that God takes no interest in human affairs. But as we have seen, the Bible clearly shows that God very much cares for those who demonstrate true faith in him. Even though life today is often filled with distress, worries, disappointments, and hurt, we need not despair. Jehovah God does care. In fact, he lovingly invites us to turn to him for support. "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you," says the psalmist. "Never will he allow the righteous one to totter."—Psalm 55:22.

Our Readers Ask

ARE LIFE'S ADVERSITIES PUNISHMENT FROM GOD?

Has a traumatic event in your life caused you to ask if God intends for you to suffer adversity? A sudden illness, a crippling accident, or an untimely death in the family may make us feel that we are being singled out by God for punishment.

Contrary to such thoughts, you should feel comforted that God wants people to be happy and free from harm. This is seen in the fact that when God created the first humans, he put them in "the garden of Eden," a parklike paradise, where life would be free of all adversity.—Genesis 2:15.

Regrettably, the first human pair chose to turn their back on this wonderful prospect and willfully disobeyed God. The result was calamitous not only for them but also for all their offspring, including us. Why? The situation can be likened to what results when a family head reneges on his agreement to pay rent—the entire family get evicted from their home and are exposed to hardship and deprivation. Similarly, adversity has become the lot of all humankind since the first rebellion. (Romans 5:12) Many years later, the righteous man Job lamented that if his pain and suffering could be "put on scales," they would be "heavier even than the sands of the seas."—Job 6:2, 3.

Another cause for adversity is our limited foresight. For example, imagine that a housing developer built and sold homes in a fire-prone area. Unaware of these facts, you

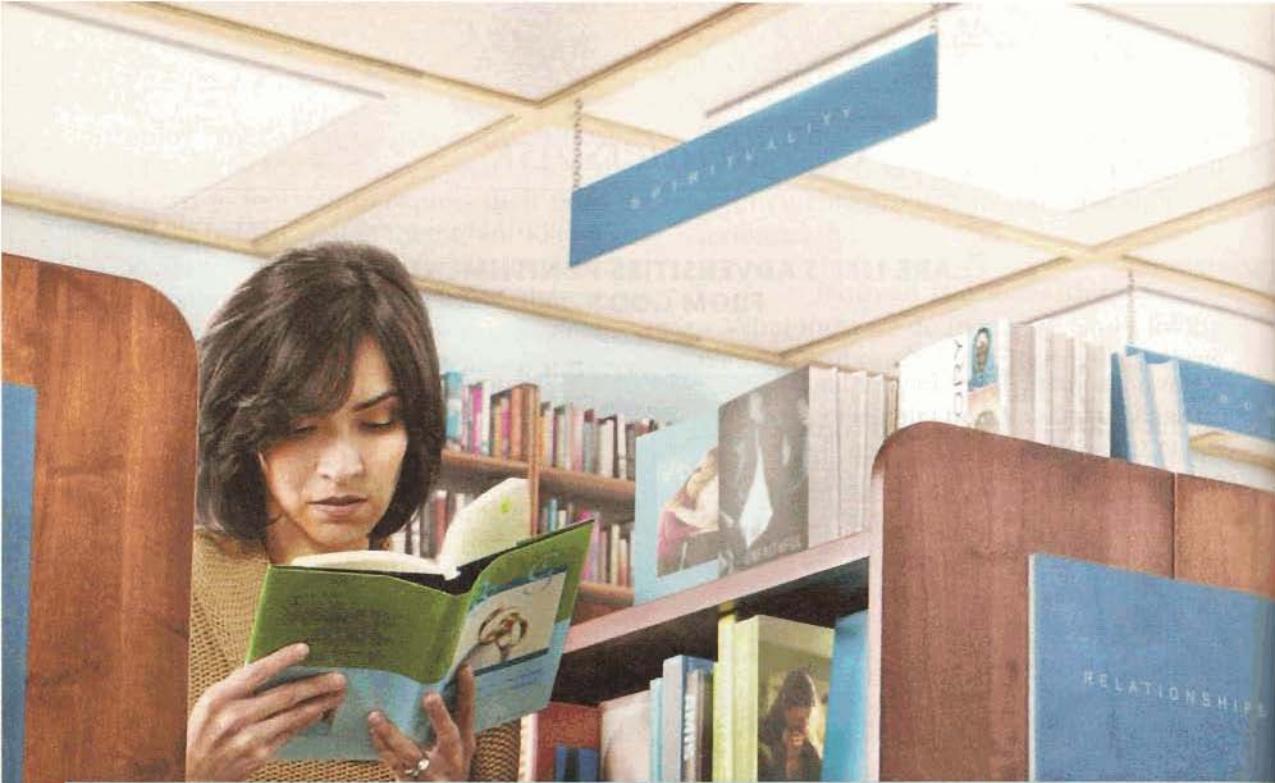


bought one of these homes and lived in it. Would you not be making yourself and your family vulnerable to grave adversities? Any hardship that developed could hardly be viewed as punishment from God, could it? The reality is set out in the Bible: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps."—Proverbs 14:15.

It is comforting to know, however, that although we are all subject to adversity, God has purposed that very soon mankind will be liberated from it. When the time comes, you will never again experience, see, or

even hear about adversities. Tears of sadness, pain, death, and mourning will have "passed away." (Revelation 21:4) Also heartwarming is the promise that never again will people build houses and plant crops only to have them destroyed by wars or disasters. Rather, the work of their hands they will "use to the full."—Isaiah 65:21-25.

While you wait for God to eliminate adversity completely, what can you do now to minimize its effect? First and foremost, "do not lean upon your own understanding," the Bible admonishes us, but "trust in Jehovah with all your heart." (Proverbs 3:5) Look to him for guidance and comfort. Pay attention to the godly wisdom found in the Bible. It will help you to make wise decisions and protect you from those adversities that can be avoided.—Proverbs 22:3.



- In what ways is the Bible different from the many popular self-help guides? See page 4.
- Learn about the struggles and intrigues behind the translation of the Bible into modern languages. See page 8.
- Is it true that all religions lead to the same God? See page 12.
- What is it like to preach the good news in northern Siberia, far above the Arctic Circle? See page 24.
- Where can you turn for comfort and support when you feel hopeless and helpless? See page 28.