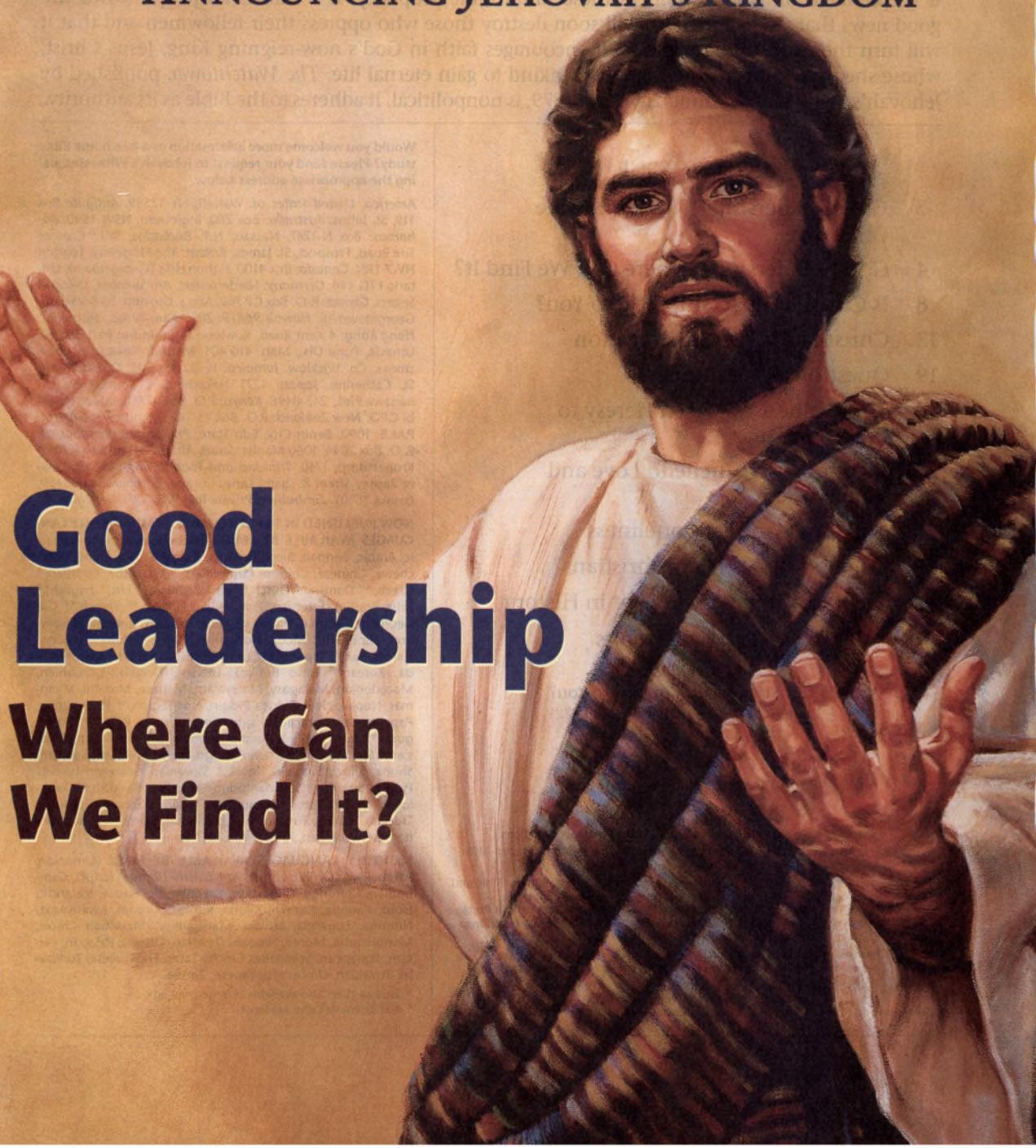


MARCH 15, 2002

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Good Leadership

Where Can We Find It?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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Good Leadership The Worldwide Challenge

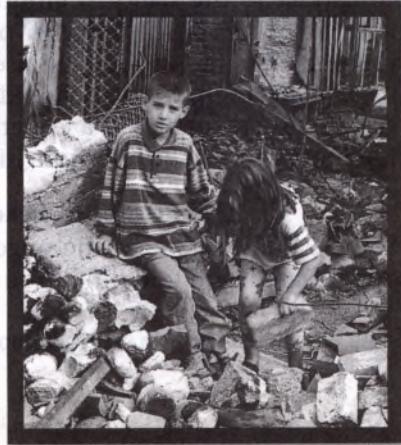
The man was a writer and a poet. His heart was full of hope for the future. Some 90 years ago, he imagined a place "where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free; where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls; where words come out from the depth of truth; [and] where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection."

THIS writer then expressed the hope that one day his country as well as the rest of the world would awaken to such a place. If this Nobel Prize-winning poet were alive today, he would indeed be greatly disappointed. Despite all its advances and breakthroughs, the world is more fragmented than ever. And the overall outlook for man's future remains bleak.

When asked why violence suddenly erupted between certain factions in his country, a farmer pointed to what he considered to be one reason. "It is because of bad leaders," he said. In his book *Humanity—A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*, historian Jonathan Glover expresses a similar view, saying: "The genocide [in the same land] was not a spontaneous eruption of tribal hatred, it was planned by people wanting to keep power."



▼ Fatmir Bošnjaković



When war erupted between two republics of the former Yugoslavia in the early part of the 1990's, a journalist wrote: "We lived happily together for many years and now it has come to killing each other's babies. What is happening to us?"

Thousands of miles from Europe is the country of India, the birthplace of the poet mentioned at the outset. In a lecture entitled "Can India Survive as One Nation?", author Pranay Gupte noted: 'Some 70 percent of India's large population is under the age of 30, yet there are no leaders to provide them a role model.'

In certain countries, leaders have had to re-

sign from their position because of charges of corruption. For various reasons, then, the world is evidently experiencing a leadership crisis. Conditions testify to the truthfulness of the words of one prophet who lived some 2,600 years ago. He said: "To earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step."—Jeremiah 10:23.

Is there a way out of current world distress? Who can lead mankind into a world where human society is neither strife-torn nor fear-laden, where true knowledge is free and abundant, and where mankind is moving toward perfection?

Good Leadership Where Can We Find It?

"EVERY house is constructed by someone," states the Bible, "but he that constructed all things is God." (Hebrews 3:4; Revelation 4:11) Since the true God, Jehovah, is our Creator, he "well knows the formation of us." (Psalm 103:14) He has full knowledge of our limitations and needs. And because he is a loving God, he wants to satisfy those needs. (Psalm 145:16; 1 John 4:8) Our need for good leadership is no exception.

Through the prophet Isaiah, Jehovah declared: "Look! As a witness to the national groups I have given him, as a leader and commander to the national groups." (Isaiah 55:4) The solution to today's leadership crisis involves identifying this Leader—appointed by the Almighty himself—and accepting his leadership. Who, then, is this foretold Leader and Commander? What are his credentials as a leader? Where would he lead us? What must we do to benefit from his leadership?

The Promised Leader Arrives

Some 2,500 years ago, the angel Gabriel appeared to the prophet Daniel and told him: "You should know and have the



Daniel foretold the coming of God's chosen Leader

insight that from the going forth of the word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Leader, there will be seven weeks, also sixty-two weeks. She will return and be actually rebuilt, with a public square and moat, but in the straits of the times.”—Daniel 9:25.

Clearly, the angel was informing Daniel of the specific time for the coming of Jehovah’s chosen Leader. “Messiah the Leader” would appear at the end of 69 weeks, or 483 years, counting from 455 B.C.E., when the word went out to rebuild Jerusalem.* (Nehemiah 2:1-8) What happened at the end of that period? The Gospel writer Luke relates: “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was district ruler of Galilee [29 C.E.], . . . God’s declaration came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. So he came into all the country around the Jordan, preaching baptism in symbol of repentance for forgiveness of sins.” At that time, “the people were in expectation” of Messiah the Leader. (Luke 3:1-3, 15) Although crowds came to John, he was not that Leader.

Then in about October of 29 C.E., Jesus of Nazareth came to John to be baptized. And John bore witness, saying: “I viewed the spirit coming down as a dove out of heaven, and it remained upon him. Even I did not know him, but the very One who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘Whoever it is upon whom you see the spirit coming down and remaining, this is the one that baptizes in holy spirit.’ And I have seen it, and I have borne witness that this one is the Son of God.” (John 1:32-34) At his baptism, Jesus became the anointed Leader—the Messiah, or Christ.

Yes, the promised “leader and commander to the national groups” proved to be Jesus

* See pages 186-92 of the book *Pay Attention to Daniel’s Prophecy!*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Christ. And when we examine his qualities as a leader, we readily discern that his leadership greatly exceeds the modern-day requirements of an ideal leader.

The Messiah—An Ideal Leader

A good leader gives clear direction and helps people under his care to gain personal strength and resources so that they can solve problems successfully. ‘This is a requisite for the successful 21st century leader,’ says the book *21st Century Leadership: Dialogues With 100 Top Leaders*. How well Jesus prepared his listeners to handle day-to-day situations! Just consider his most famous discourse—the Sermon on the Mount. Rich in practical advice are the words recorded in Matthew chapters 5 through 7.

Consider, for example, Jesus’ advice on settling personal differences. He said: “If, then, you are bringing your gift to the altar and you there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away; first make your peace with your brother, and then, when you have come back, offer up your gift.” (Matthew 5:23, 24) Taking the initiative in making peace with others takes first priority—even over performing a religious duty, such as presenting gifts on the temple altar in Jerusalem as required by the Mosaic Law. Otherwise, acts of worship are unacceptable to God. Jesus’ advice is as practical today as it was centuries ago.

Jesus also helped his listeners to avoid the snare of immorality. He admonished them: “You heard that it was said, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27, 28) What a fitting warning! Why should we start down the road toward committing adultery by entertaining thoughts

about it? Out of the heart come fornication and adultery, said Jesus. (Matthew 15:18, 19) We are wise to safeguard our heart.—Proverbs 4:23.

The Sermon on the Mount also contains excellent advice on loving one's enemies, on displaying generosity, on having the proper view of material and spiritual things, and the like. (Matthew 5:43-47; 6:1-4, 19-21, 24-34) Jesus even showed his audience how to seek God's help by teaching them how to pray. (Matthew 6:9-13) Messiah the Leader strengthens and prepares his followers to deal with problems common to mankind.

Six times in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus introduces his statements with the expression "you heard that it was said" or "moreover it was said," but he then presents another idea, saying "however, I say to you." (Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28, 31-34, 38, 39, 43, 44) That indicates that his listeners were accustomed to acting in a certain way, according to the oral Pharisaic traditions. But Jesus was now showing them a different way—one that reflected the true spirit of the Mosaic Law. Jesus was thus introducing a change, and he did this in a way that made it easy for his followers to accept. Yes, Jesus moved people to make dramatic changes in their lives, spiritually and morally. This is a mark of a true leader.

A management textbook points out how difficult it is to bring about such a change. It says: "The change agent [leader] needs the sensitivity of a social worker, the insights of a psychologist, the stamina of a marathon runner, the persistence of a bulldog, the self-reliance of a hermit, and the patience of a saint. And even with all those qualities, there is no guarantee of success."

"Leaders must behave the way they wish their followers would behave," noted an article entitled "Leadership: Do Traits Mat-

ter?" Indeed, a good leader practices what he preaches. How true that was of Jesus Christ! Yes, he taught those with him to be humble, but he also provided an object lesson for them by washing their feet. (John 13:5-15) He did not just send out his disciples to preach the good news of God's Kingdom, but he exerted himself vigorously in that work. (Matthew 4:18-25; Luke 8:1-3; 9:1-6; 10:1-24; John 10:40-42) And in the matter of responding to leadership, Jesus set an example. "The Son cannot do a single thing of his own initiative," he said about himself, "but only what he beholds the Father doing."—John 5:19.

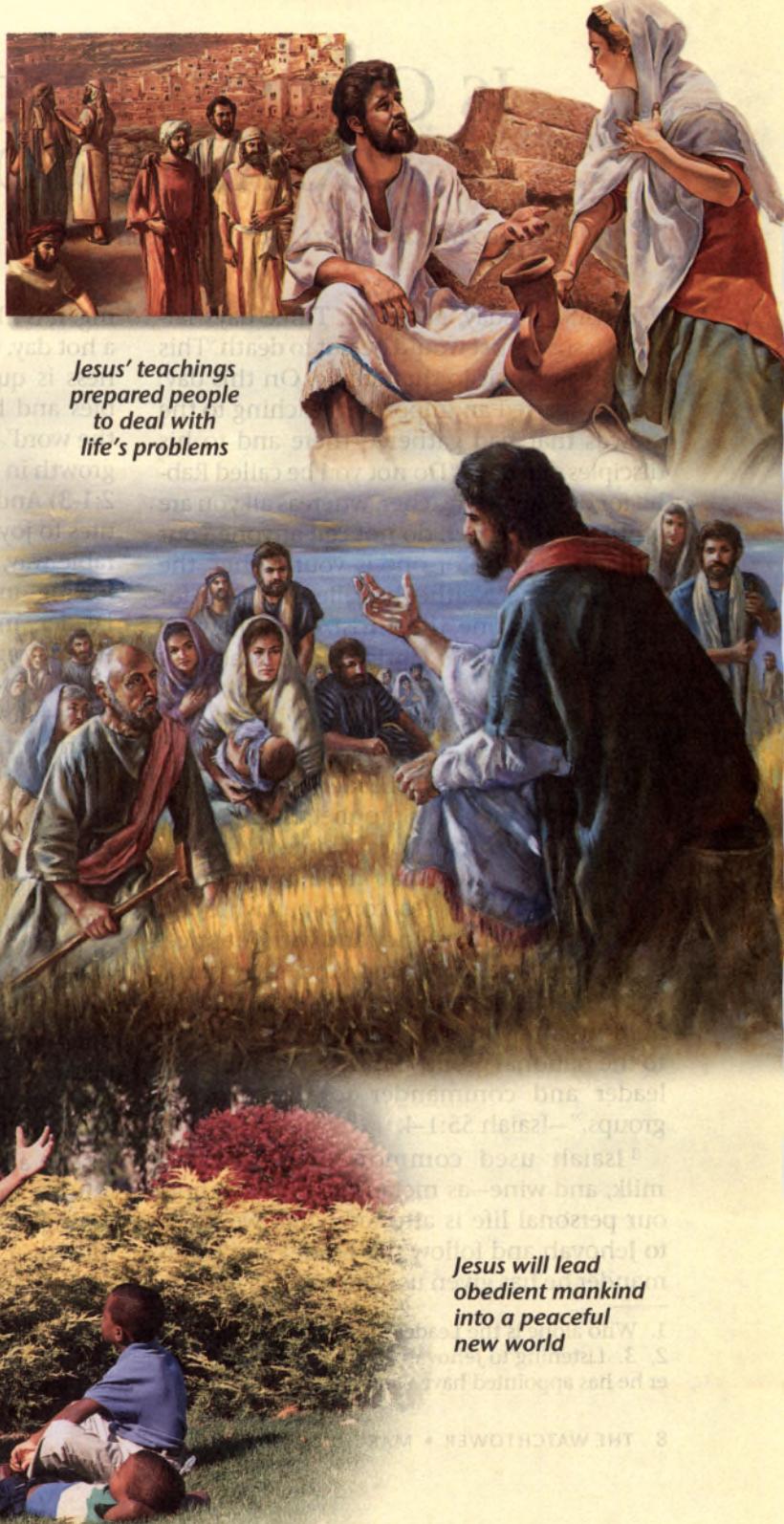
The foregoing consideration of what Jesus said and did clearly shows that he is the ideal Leader. In fact, he exceeds all human standards for good leadership. Jesus is perfect. Having received immortality following his death and resurrection, he lives forever. (1 Peter 3:18; Revelation 1:13-18) What human leader can match these qualifications?

What Must We Do?

As the reigning King of God's Kingdom, "Messiah the Leader" will shower blessings upon obedient mankind. In this regard the Scriptures promise: "The earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea." (Isaiah 11:9) "The meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:11) "They will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble." (Micah 4:4) "God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:3, 4.

The world today is experiencing a leadership crisis. Jesus Christ, though, is leading meek ones into a peaceful new world, where obedient mankind will be united in the worship of Jehovah God and will press forward toward perfection. How vital it is that we take time to gain knowledge of the true God and his appointed Leader and act in harmony with that knowledge!—John 17:3.

One of the finest compliments we can pay a person is to imitate him. Should we not then try to imitate the greatest Leader in human history—Jesus Christ? How may we do so? What impact will accepting his leadership have on our lives? These questions and others will be discussed in the following two articles.



IS CHRIST'S LEADERSHIP REAL TO YOU?

"Neither be called 'leaders,' for your Leader is one, the Christ."—MATTHEW 23:10.

IT WAS Tuesday, Nisan 11. Three days later, Jesus Christ would be put to death. This was his last visit to the temple. On this day, Jesus imparted an important teaching to the crowds that had gathered there and to his disciples. He said: "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: 8-10) Clearly, Jesus Christ is the Leader of true Christians.

² What beneficial effects Jesus' leadership has on our lives when we accept it! Foretelling the coming of this Leader, Jehovah God declared through the prophet Isaiah: "Hey there, all you thirsty ones! Come to the water. And the ones that have no money! Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk even without money and without price. . . . Listen intently to me, and eat what is good, and let your soul find its exquisite delight in fatness itself. . . . Look! As a witness to the national groups I have given him, as a leader and commander to the national groups."—Isaiah 55:1-4.

³ Isaiah used common liquids—water, milk, and wine—as metaphors to show how our personal life is affected when we listen to Jehovah and follow the Leader and Commander he has given us. The result is refresh-

ing. It is like drinking a cold glass of water on a hot day. Our thirst for truth and righteousness is quenched. As milk strengthens babies and helps them to grow, 'the milk of the word' fortifies us and promotes spiritual growth in our relationship with God. (1 Peter 2:1-3) And who can deny that wine contributes to joy on festive occasions? In a comparable way, worshiping the true God and following in the footsteps of his appointed Leader makes life "nothing but joyful." (Deuteronomy 16:15) It is vital, then, that all of us—young and old, male and female—show that Christ's leadership is real to us. How, though, may we demonstrate in our daily life that the Messiah is our Leader?

Youths—Go On "Progressing in Wisdom"

⁴ Consider the example that our Leader set for young ones. Although little is known of Jesus' childhood, one incident is quite revealing. When Jesus was 12 years old, his parents took him on their annual visit to Jerusalem for the Passover. On this occasion he became engrossed in a Scriptural discussion, and his family inadvertently left without him. Three days later his worried parents, Joseph and Mary, found him in the temple, "sitting in the midst of the teachers and listening to them and questioning them." Moreover, "all those listening to him were in constant amazement at his understanding

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1. Who alone is the Leader of true Christians?
 - 2, 3. Listening to Jehovah and accepting the Leader he has appointed have what effect on our lives?

-
4. (a) What took place when 12-year-old Jesus visited Jerusalem at the time of the Passover? (b) How well-informed was Jesus at only 12 years of age?

and his answers." Imagine, at only 12 years of age, Jesus could not only ask thought-provoking, spiritually oriented questions but also give intelligent answers! Doubtless, he had been aided by parental training.—Luke 2: 41-50.

5 Perhaps you are a young person. If your parents are devoted servants of God, likely there is a regular program of family Bible study in your home. What is your attitude toward the family study? Why not reflect upon such questions as: 'Am I wholeheartedly supporting the arrangement for Bible study in my family? Do I cooperate with it, not doing anything to upset the routine?' (Philippians 3:16) 'Am I an active participant in the study? When appropriate, do I ask questions regarding the study material and comment on its application? As I progress spiritually, am I cultivating a taste for "solid food [that] belongs to mature people"?'—Hebrews 5:13, 14.

⁶ A program of daily Bible reading is also valuable. The psalmist sang: "Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones, . . . but his delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night." (Psalm 1:1, 2) Moses' successor, Joshua, 'read in the book of the law in an undertone day and night.'

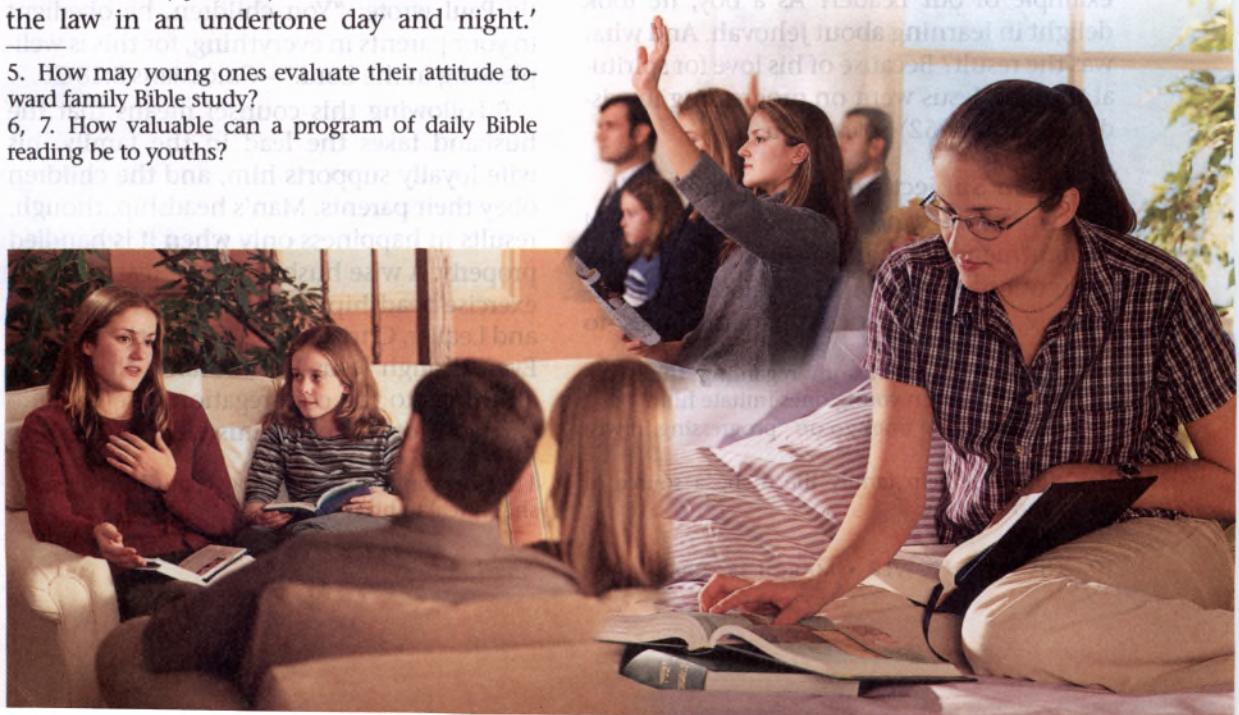
5. How may young ones evaluate their attitude toward family Bible study?

6, 7. How valuable can a program of daily Bible reading be to youths?

This enabled him to act wisely and have success in carrying out his God-given assignment. (Joshua 1:8) Our Leader, Jesus Christ, said: "It is written, 'Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth.' " (Matthew 4:4) If we need physical food every day, how much more so do we need spiritual food on a regular basis!

Realizing her spiritual need, 13-year-old Nicole started to read the Bible every day.* Now, at age 16, she has read the entire Bible once and is about halfway through it a second time. Her method is simple. "I make it a point to read at least one chapter a day," she says. How has her daily Bible reading helped her? She answers: "Bad influences today are plentiful. I daily meet pressures at school and elsewhere that challenge my faith. Reading the Bible every day helps me quickly to recall Bible commands and principles that encourage me to resist these pressures. As a result, I feel closer to Jehovah and Jesus."

* Some names have been changed.



⁸ Jesus had the custom of listening to and participating in Scripture reading in the synagogue. (Luke 4:16; Acts 15:21) How good it is for young ones to follow that example by regularly attending Christian meetings, where the Bible is read and studied! Expressing appreciation for such meetings, 14-year-old Richard says: "The meetings are valuable to me. I am constantly reminded there of what is good and bad, what is moral and immoral, what is Christlike and what is not. I do not have to find that out the hard way—by experience." Yes, "the reminder of Jehovah is trustworthy, making the inexperienced one wise." (Psalm 19:7) Nicole too makes it a point to attend all five congregation meetings every week. She also spends from two to three hours preparing for them.—Ephesians 5:15, 16.

⁹ Youth is a good time to acquire 'knowledge of the only true God, and of the one whom he sent forth, Jesus Christ.' (John 17:3) You may know young people who spend a lot of time reading comic books, watching television, playing video games, or surfing the Internet. Why should you imitate them when you can follow the perfect example of our Leader? As a boy, he took delight in learning about Jehovah. And what was the result? Because of his love for spiritual things, "Jesus went on progressing in wisdom." (Luke 2:52) So can you.

"Be in Subjection to One Another"

¹⁰ The home can be a haven of peace and contentment or a battleground of strife and contention. (Proverbs 21:19; 26:21) Our accepting Christ's leadership contributes to

8. What was Jesus' custom regarding the synagogue, and how can young ones imitate him?

9. How can young ones go on "progressing in wisdom"?

10. What will help family life to be a source of peace and happiness?



Submission to Christ's leadership promotes family happiness

peace and happiness in the family. Jesus' example, in fact, is the model for family relations. The Scriptures state: "Be in subjection to one another in fear of Christ. Let wives be in subjection to their husbands as to the Lord, because a husband is head of his wife as the Christ also is head of the congregation, he being a savior of this body. . . . Husbands, continue loving your wives, just as the Christ also loved the congregation and delivered up himself for it." (Ephesians 5:21-25) To the congregation in Colossae, the apostle Paul wrote: "You children, be obedient to your parents in everything, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord."—Colossians 3:18-20.

¹¹ Following this counsel means that the husband takes the lead in the family, his wife loyally supports him, and the children obey their parents. Man's headship, though, results in happiness only when it is handled properly. A wise husband must learn how to exercise headship by imitating his own Head and Leader, Christ Jesus. (1 Corinthians 11:3) Even though Jesus later became "head over all things to the congregation," he came to earth, "not to be ministered to, but to

11. How can a husband show that Christ's leadership is real to him?

minister." (Ephesians 1:22; Matthew 20:28) In a similar way, a Christian husband exercises his headship, not for selfish advantage, but to care for the interests of his wife and children—yes, the entire family. (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5) He seeks to imitate the godly qualities of his head, Jesus Christ. Like Jesus, he is mild-tempered and lowly in heart. (Matthew 11:28-30) Such words as "I am sorry" or "you are right" are not difficult for him to say when he is wrong. His fine example makes it easier for a wife to be a "helper," a "complement," and a "partner" to such a man, learning from him and working side by side with him.—Genesis 2:20; Malachi 2:14.

¹² The wife, for her part, is to be in subjection to her husband. However, if she is affected by the spirit of the world, this may begin to undermine her view of the headship principle, and the idea of being in subjection to a man would not appeal to her. The Scriptures do not suggest that the man should be domineering, but they do require that wives be in subjection to their husbands. (Ephesians 5:24) The Bible also holds the husband or father accountable, and when its counsel is applied, this contributes to peace and order in the family.—Philippians 2:5.

¹³ Children are to be obedient to their parents. In this regard, Jesus set an excellent example. Following the temple incident when 12-year-old Jesus was left behind for three days, "he went down with [his parents] and came to Nazareth, and he continued subject to them." (Luke 2:51) Children's subjection to their parents contributes to peace and harmony in the family. When everyone in the family submits to Christ's leadership, the result is a happy family.

12. What will help a wife abide by the headship principle?

13. What example of subjection has Jesus provided for children?

¹⁴ Even when challenging situations arise in the home, the key to success is imitating Jesus and accepting his guidance. For example, the marriage of 35-year-old Jerry to Lana, the mother of a teenage daughter, brought on a challenge that neither of them had imagined. Jerry explains: "I knew that to be a good head, I needed to apply the same Bible principles that bring success in other families. But I soon discovered that I had to apply them with greater wisdom and discernment." His stepdaughter viewed him as someone who had come between her and her mother and resented him immensely. Jerry needed discernment to see that this attitude affected what the girl said and did. How did he handle the situation? Jerry answers: "Lana and I agreed that at least for the time being, Lana would take care of the disciplining aspect of parenting while I focused on building a good relationship with my stepdaughter. In time, this approach did bring good results."

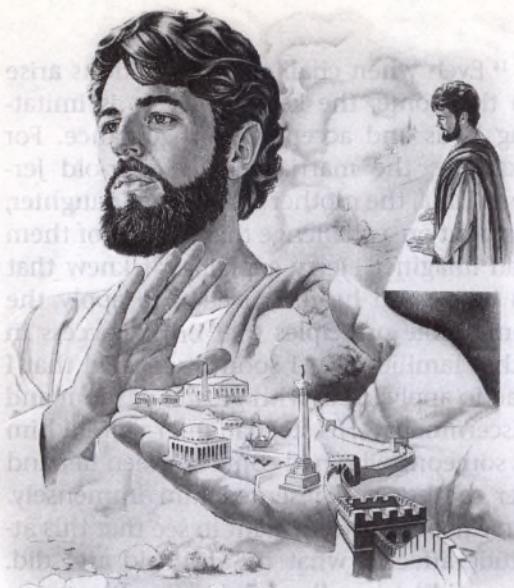
¹⁵ When faced with difficult situations at home, we need discernment to find out why family members talk and act the way they do. We also need wisdom to apply godly principles properly. Jesus, for example, clearly discerned why the woman suffering from a flow of blood had touched him, and he dealt with her wisely and compassionately. (Leviticus 15:25-27; Mark 5:30-34) Wisdom and discernment are characteristics of our Leader. (Proverbs 8:12) We are happy if we act the way he would.

'Keep On Seeking First the Kingdom'

¹⁶ Jesus left no doubt as to what should occupy the central place in the lives of those who accept his leadership. He said: "Keep

14, 15. What will help us succeed when facing a challenging situation at home? Give an example.

16. What should occupy the central place in our lives, and how did Jesus show this by his example?



Jesus sought first the Kingdom. Do you?

on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his [God's] righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) And by his example, he showed us how to do this. At the end of the 40-day period of fasting, meditating, and praying that followed his baptism, Jesus encountered a temptation. Satan the Devil offered him rulership over "all the kingdoms of the world." Imagine the life Jesus could have had if he had accepted the Devil's offer! Christ, however, was focused on doing his Father's will. He realized, too, that such a life in Satan's world would be short. He immediately rejected the Devil's offer, stating: "It is written, 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.'" Soon thereafter, Jesus "commenced preaching and saying: 'Repent, you people, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" (Matthew 4:2, 8-10, 17) For the rest of his earthly life, Christ was a full-time proclaimer of God's Kingdom.

- 17 We do well to imitate our Leader and not
17. How can we show that Kingdom interests have the first place in our lives?

allow Satan's world to lure us into making a high-paying job and career our main goal in life. (Mark 1:17-21) How foolish it would be for us to become so entangled in a web of worldly pursuits that Kingdom interests become only secondary! Jesus has entrusted us with the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) Yes, we may have a family or other responsibilities to care for, but are we not glad to use evenings and weekends to carry out our Christian responsibility to preach and to teach? And how encouraging it is that during the 2001 service year, some 780,000 were able to serve as full-time ministers, or pioneers!

18 The Gospel accounts portray Jesus as a man of action as well as a person having tender feelings. Upon seeing the spiritual needs of those around him, he felt pity for them and eagerly offered them help. (Mark 6: 31-34) Our ministry becomes joyful when we share in it out of love for others and a sincere desire to help them. But how may we acquire such a desire? "When I was in my teens," says a young man named Jayson, "I did not particularly enjoy the ministry." What helped him cultivate love for this work? Jayson answers: "In my family, Saturday mornings

18. What helps us find joy in the ministry?

Do You Remember?

- How does following our God-appointed Leader benefit us?
- How can youths show that they want to follow Jesus' leadership?
- What effect does Christ's leadership have on the family life of those who submit to it?
- How can our ministry show that Christ's leadership is real to us?

were always devoted to field service. This was good for me because the more I went out in the ministry, the more I saw the good it accomplishes and the more I enjoyed it." We too should regularly and diligently share in the ministry.

¹⁹ It is indeed refreshing and rewarding to accept Christ's leadership. When we do, youth becomes a time for progressing in

19. What should be our determination with regard to Christ's leadership?

knowledge and wisdom. Family life proves to be a source of peace and happiness, and the ministry is an activity that brings joy and satisfaction. By all means, then, let us be determined to show in our daily life and in the decisions we make that the leadership of the Christ is real to us. (Colossians 3:23, 24) Jesus Christ, though, has provided leadership through yet another avenue—the Christian congregation. The next article will discuss how we can benefit from this provision.

CHRIST LEADS HIS CONGREGATION

"Look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things."

—MATTHEW 28:20.

BEFORE ascending to heaven, Jesus Christ, our resurrected Leader, appeared to his disciples and said: "All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth. Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things."—Matthew 23:10; 28:18-20.

² Jesus not only assigned his disciples the life-saving work of making more disciples but also promised to be with them. The history of early Christianity, as recorded in the Bible book of Acts, shows beyond a doubt that Christ used the authority given him to lead the newly formed congregation. He

1, 2. (a) When giving the command to make disciples, what did the resurrected Jesus promise his followers? (b) How did Jesus actively lead the early Christian congregation?

sent the promised "helper"—the holy spirit—to strengthen his followers and to guide their efforts. (John 16:7; Acts 2:4, 33; 13:2-4; 16:6-10) The resurrected Jesus employed angels at his command to support his disciples. (Acts 5:19; 8:26; 10:3-8, 22; 12:7-11; 27:23, 24; 1 Peter 3:22) Moreover, our Leader provided direction to the congregation by arranging for qualified men to serve as a governing body.—Acts 1:20, 24-26; 6:1-6; 8:5, 14-17.

³ What, though, about our time, "the conclusion of the system of things"? How is Jesus Christ leading the Christian congregation today? And how can we show that we accept this leadership?

The Master Has a Faithful Slave

⁴ When giving the prophecy about the sign

3. What questions will be discussed in this article?
4. (a) Who make up "the faithful and discreet slave"? (b) What has the Master committed to the care of the slave?

of his presence, Jesus said: "Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so. Truly I say to you, He will appoint him over all his belongings." (Matthew 24:45-47) The "master" is our Leader, Jesus Christ, and he has appointed "the faithful and discreet slave"—the body of anointed Christians on earth—over all his earthly interests.

⁵ The Bible book of Revelation shows that the faithful and discreet slave is directly under the control of Jesus Christ. In a vision of "the Lord's day," the apostle John saw "seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands someone like a son of man" who "had in his right hand seven stars." Explaining the vision to John, Jesus said: "As for the sacred secret of the seven stars that you saw upon my right hand, and of the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars mean the angels of the seven congregations, and the seven lampstands mean seven congregations." —Revelation 1:1, 10-20.

⁶ "The seven golden lampstands" picture all the true Christian congregations existing in "the Lord's day," which began in 1914. But what about "the seven stars"? In the first place, they symbolized all the spirit-begotten, anointed overseers caring for the first-century congregations.* The overseers were in Jesus' right hand—under his control and direction. Yes, Christ Jesus led the composite slave class. Now, however,

* The "stars" here do not symbolize literal angels. Jesus would hardly use a human to record information for invisible spirit creatures. The "stars" must therefore represent the human overseers, or elders, in the congregations, viewed as Jesus' messengers. Their number being seven signifies divinely determined completeness.

5, 6. (a) In a vision that the apostle John received, what do "the seven golden lampstands" and "the seven stars" picture? (b) What is indicated by the fact that "the seven stars" are in Jesus' right hand?

anointed overseers are few in number. How does Christ's leadership reach out to over 93,000 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses around the globe?

⁷ As in the first century, a small group of qualified men from among the anointed overseers now serve as the Governing Body, representing the composite faithful and discreet slave. Our Leader uses this Governing Body to appoint qualified men—whether spirit-anointed or not—as elders in the local congregations. In this regard, the holy spirit, which Jehovah has given Jesus authority to employ, plays a pivotal role. (Acts 2:32, 33) First of all, these overseers must meet the requirements set out in God's Word, which was inspired by holy spirit. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 2 Peter 1:20, 21) The recommendations and appointments are made after prayer and under the guidance of the holy spirit. Additionally, the individuals appointed give evidence of producing the fruitage of that spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Paul's counsel, then, applies with equal force to all elders, whether anointed or not: "Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers." (Acts 20:28) These appointed men receive direction from the Governing Body and willingly shepherd the congregation. In this way, Christ is with us now and is actively leading the congregation.

⁸ Jesus also uses actual angels to lead his followers today. According to the illustration of the wheat and the weeds, harvesttime would come at "the conclusion of the system of things." Whom would the Master use to do the harvesting? "The reapers are angels," said Christ. He added: "The Son of man will

7. (a) How does Jesus use the Governing Body to provide leadership in the congregations throughout the earth? (b) Why can it be said that Christian overseers are appointed by holy spirit?
8. How does Christ use angels to lead his followers?

send forth his angels, and they will collect out from his kingdom all things that cause stumbling and persons who are doing lawlessness." (Matthew 13:37-41) Moreover, just as an angel directed the steps of Philip to find the Ethiopian eunuch, so there is abundant evidence today that Christ uses his angels to direct the work of true Christians in locating honesthearted ones.—Acts 8:26, 27; Revelation 14:6.

⁹ How reassuring to know that Jesus Christ provides leadership to his disciples today through the Governing Body, the holy spirit, and the angels! Even if some of Jehovah's worshipers were to become temporarily isolated from the Governing Body because of persecution or the like, Christ would still provide leadership by means of the holy spirit and angelic support. However, we benefit from his leadership only when we accept it. How may we show that we do accept Christ's leadership?

"Be Obedient . . . Be Submissive"

¹⁰ Our Leader has given the congregations "gifts in men"—"some as evangelizers, some as shepherds and teachers." (Ephesians 4:8, 11, 12) Our attitude and actions toward them speak volumes as to whether we accept Christ's leadership. It is only right that we 'show ourselves thankful' for the spiritually qualified men that Christ has given. (Colossians 3:15) They also deserve our respect. "Let the older men who preside in a fine way be reckoned worthy of double honor," wrote the apostle Paul. (1 Timothy 5:17) How can we display our gratitude and esteem for the old-

9. (a) Through what means does Christ lead the Christian congregation today? (b) What question should we consider if we want to benefit from Christ's leadership?

10. How can we show regard for the appointed elders in the congregation?



Christ leads his congregation and holds overseers in his right hand

er men—elders, or overseers—in the congregation? Paul answers: "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive." (Hebrews 13:17) Yes, we are to obey them and be submissive, to yield, to them.

¹¹ Our Leader is perfect. The men he has given as gifts are not. So they may err at times. Yet, it is vital that we remain loyal to Christ's arrangement. In fact, living up to our dedication and baptism means that we recognize the legitimacy of spirit-appointed authority in the congregation and willingly submit to it. Our baptism 'in the name of the holy spirit' is a public declaration that we recognize the holy spirit and acknowledge the role it plays in Jehovah's purposes. (Matthew 28:19) Such a baptism implies that we co-operate with the spirit and do nothing to hinder its operation among Christ's followers. Since the holy spirit plays a vital role in the recommendation and appointment of elders, can we really be faithful to our dedication if we fail to co-operate with the elder arrangement in the congregation?

11. Why is respect for the elder arrangement a matter of living up to our baptism?

¹² The Scriptures contain examples that teach us the value of obedience and submission. Referring to those who spoke abusively of the appointed men in the congregation, the disciple Jude pointed to three warning examples, saying: "Too bad for them, because they have gone in the path of Cain, and have rushed into the erroneous course of Balaam for reward, and have perished in the rebellious talk of Korah!" (Jude 11) Cain ignored Jehovah's loving counsel and willfully pursued a course of murderous hatred. (Genesis 4:4-8) Despite receiving repeated divine warnings, Balaam tried to curse God's people for a financial reward. (Numbers 22:5-28, 32-34; Deuteronomy 23:5) Korah had his own fine responsibility in Israel, but it was not enough for him. He fomented rebellion against God's servant Moses, the meekest man on earth. (Numbers 12:3; 16:1-3, 32, 33) Calamity befell Cain, Balaam, and Korah.

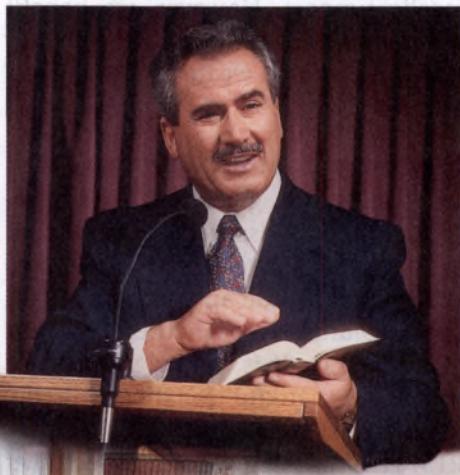
12. What examples regarding disrespect for authority does Jude cite, and what do they teach us?

"Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive"

How vividly these examples teach us to listen to the counsel of those whom Jehovah uses in positions of responsibility and to respect them!

¹³ Who would not want to benefit from the grand arrangement of oversight that our Leader has instituted in the Christian congregation? The prophet Isaiah foretold its blessings, saying: "Look! A king will reign for righteousness itself; and as respects princes, they will rule as princes for justice itself. And each one must prove to be like a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rainstorm, like streams of water in a waterless country, like the shadow of a heavy crag in an exhausted land." (Isaiah 32:1, 2)

13. What blessings did the prophet Isaiah foretell for those who submit to the elder arrangement?



Each one of the elders is to be such "a place" of protection and safety. Even if submitting to authority is difficult for us, let us prayerfully apply ourselves to being obedient and submissive to the divinely constituted authority within the congregation.

How Elders Submit to Christ's Leadership

¹⁴ Every Christian—particularly the elders—must follow Christ's leadership. The overseers, or elders, have a measure of authority in the congregation. But they do not seek to be 'the masters over the faith of their fellow believers' by trying to control their lives. (2 Corinthians 1:24) The elders take to heart Jesus' words: "You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them and the great men wield authority over them. This is not the way among you." (Matthew 20:25-27) As elders fulfill their responsibility, they sincerely try to serve others.

¹⁵ Christians are urged: "Remember those who are taking the lead among you, . . . and as you contemplate how their conduct turns out imitate their faith." (Hebrews 13:7) This is not required because elders are leaders. Jesus said: "Your Leader is one, the Christ." (Matthew 23:10) It is the faith of the elders that is to be imitated because they are imitators of our real Leader, Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1) Consider some ways in which elders strive to be Christlike in their relationship with others in the congregation.

¹⁶ Even though Jesus was superior to imperfect humans in every way and possessed unmatched authority from his Father, he was modest in his dealings with his disciples. He did not overwhelm his listeners with an impressive display of knowledge. Jesus showed

14, 15. How do those taking the lead in the congregation show that they submit to Christ's leadership? 16. Despite the authority he possessed, how did Jesus treat his followers?

sensitivity and compassion toward his followers, taking their human needs into consideration. (Matthew 15:32; 26:40, 41; Mark 6:31) He never demanded more of his disciples than they could give, and he never put upon them more than they could bear. (John 16:12) Jesus was "mild-tempered and lowly in heart." Not surprisingly, therefore, many found him to be refreshing.—Matthew 11:28-30.

¹⁷ If Christ the Leader displayed modesty, how much more so should those taking the lead in the congregation! Yes, they are careful not to abuse any authority entrusted to them. And they do "not come with an extravagance of speech," trying to impress others. (1 Corinthians 2:1, 2) Rather, they endeavor to speak words of Scriptural truth with simplicity and sincerity. Moreover, elders strive to be reasonable in their expectations of others and to be considerate of their needs. (Philippians 4:5) Being aware that everyone has limitations, they lovingly make allowances for these in their brothers. (1 Peter 4:8) And are not elders who are humble and mild-tempered truly refreshing? They are indeed.

¹⁸ Jesus was approachable and accessible,

17. How should elders show Christlike modesty in their relationship with others in the congregation?

18. What can elders learn from the way Jesus treated children?

Do You Remember?

- How did Christ lead the early congregation?
- How does Christ lead his congregation today?
- Why should we be submissive to those taking the lead in the congregation?
- In what ways can elders demonstrate that Christ is their Leader?



Jesus was warm and approachable. Christian elders endeavor to be like him

even to lesser ones. Consider his response when his disciples reprimanded people for "bringing him young children." "Let the young children come to me," said Jesus, "do not try to stop them." Then "he took the children into his arms and began blessing them, laying his hands upon them." (Mark 10:13-16) Jesus was warm and kind, and others were attracted to him. People were not afraid of Jesus. Even children were at ease in his presence. Elders too are approachable, and as they show warm affection and kindness, others—even children—feel at ease with them.

¹⁹ The extent to which elders can imitate Christ Jesus depends upon how well they know him. "Who has come to know the mind of Jehovah, that he may instruct him?" asked Paul. Then he added: "But we do have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16) Having the mind of Christ entails knowing

19. What is involved in having "the mind of Christ," and what effort does this require?

the pattern of his thinking and the full range of his personality so that we know what he might do in a particular situation. Imagine getting to know our Leader that well! Yes, this requires paying close attention to the Gospel accounts and regularly filling our minds with understanding of Jesus' life and example. When elders put forth effort to follow Christ's leadership to that degree, those in the congregation are more inclined to imitate their faith. And the elders have the satisfaction of seeing others joyfully follow the footsteps of the Leader.

Continue Under Christ's Leadership

²⁰ It is vital that all of us remain under Christ's leadership. As we approach the end of this system of things, our position is comparable to that of the Israelites on the Plains of Moab in 1473 B.C.E. They were at the threshold of the Promised Land, and through the prophet Moses, God declared: "You [Joshua] will bring this people into the land that Jehovah swore to their forefathers to give to them." (Deuteronomy 31:7, 8) Joshua was the appointed leader. To enter into the Promised Land, the Israelites had to submit to Joshua's leadership.

²¹ To us the Bible says: "Your Leader is one, the Christ." Only Christ will lead us into the promised new world in which righteousness is to dwell. (2 Peter 3:13) Let us therefore be determined to submit to his leadership in all areas of life.

20, 21. As we look ahead to the promised new world, what should be our determination?

Questions From Readers

Did the imperfection of the virgin girl Mary have a negative effect on the conception of Jesus?

Concerning "the birth of Jesus," the inspired record says: "During the time his mother Mary was promised in marriage to Joseph, she was found to be pregnant by holy spirit before they were united." (Matthew 1:18) Indeed, God's holy spirit played a pivotal role in Mary's pregnancy.

What, though, about Mary? Did her egg cell, or ovum, contribute at all toward her pregnancy? In view of God's promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and King David—Mary's forefathers—the child born would have to be their genuine descendant. (Genesis 22:18; 26:24; 28:10-14; 49:10; 2 Samuel 7:16) How else could the child born to Mary be a rightful heir of those divine promises? He would have to be her actual son.—Luke 3:23-34.

Jehovah's angel had appeared to the virgin girl Mary, saying: "Have no fear, Mary, for you have found favor with God; and, look! you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call his name Jesus." (Luke 1:30, 31) Conception requires that an egg become fertile. Apparently, Jehovah God caused an ovum in Mary's womb to become fertile, accomplishing this by the transferal of the life



"You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son"

of his only-begotten Son from the spirit realm to earth.—Galatians 4:4.

Could a child conceived in this way by an imperfect woman be perfect and free from sin in his physical organism? How do the laws of heredity work when there is a union of perfection with imperfection? Remember that holy spirit was employed in transferring the perfect life force of God's Son and causing the conception. This canceled out any imperfection existing in Mary's ovum, thereby producing a genetic pattern that was perfect from its start.

In any case, we can be certain that the operation of God's holy spirit at that time guaranteed the success of God's purpose. The angel Gabriel had explained to Mary: "Holy spirit will come upon you, and power of the Most High will overshadow you. For that reason also what is born will be called holy, God's Son."

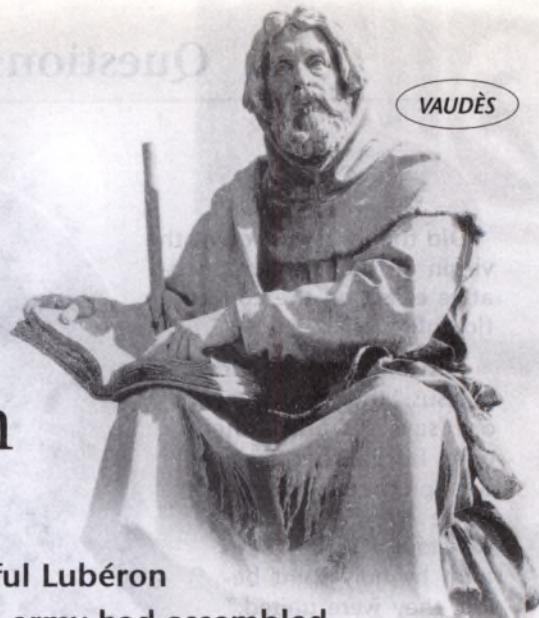
(Luke 1:35) Yes, God's holy spirit formed, as it were, a protective wall so that no imperfection or hurtful force could blemish the developing embryo from conception on.

Clearly, Jesus owed his perfect human life to his heavenly Father, not to any man. Jehovah "prepared a body" for him, and Jesus—from conception onward—was truly "undefiled, separated from the sinners."—Hebrews 7:26; 10:5.

THE WALDENSES

From Heresy to Protestantism

VAUDÈS



PAGES 20 AND 21: © Landesbildstelle Baden, Karlsruhe

It was the year 1545 in the beautiful Lubéron region of Provence, southern France. An army had assembled to carry out a terrible mission inspired by religious intolerance. A week of bloodshed ensued.

VILLAGES were razed, and inhabitants were imprisoned or killed. Cruel atrocities were perpetrated by brutal soldiers in a massacre that caused Europe to shudder. Some 2,700 men met death, and 600 were sent to work on the galleys, not to speak of the suffering experienced by women and children. The military commander who carried out this sanguinary campaign was lauded by the French king and by the pope.

The Reformation had already torn Germany apart when Catholic King Francis I of France, concerned about the spread of Protestantism, made inquiries about so-called heretics in his kingdom. Instead of finding a few isolated cases of heresy, authorities in Provence discovered whole villages of religious dissidents. The edict to wipe out this heresy was passed and was eventually carried out in the massacre of 1545.

Who were these heretics? And why were they objects of violent religious intolerance?

From Riches to Rags

Those killed in the massacre belonged to a religious movement dating back to the 12th century and covering a wide area of Europe. The way it spread and survived for several centuries makes it unique in the annals of religious dissidence. Most historians agree that the movement had its start about the year 1170. In the French city of Lyons, a wealthy merchant named Vaudès became deeply interested in learning how to please God. Apparently moved by Jesus Christ's admonition that a certain rich man sell his belongings and give to the poor, Vaudès made financial provision for his family and then gave up his riches to preach the Gospel. (Mat-

thew 19:16-22) He soon had followers who later became known as the Waldenses.*

Poverty, preaching, and the Bible were at the heart of Vaudès' life. Protest against clerical opulence was not new. For some time, a number of clerical dissenters had denounced the church's corrupt practices and abuses. But Vaudès was a layman, as were the majority of his followers. This no doubt explains why he felt it necessary to have the Bible in the vernacular, the language of the people. Since the church's Latin version of the Bible was accessible only to the clergy, Vaudès commissioned a translation of the Gospels and other Bible books into Franco-Provençal, the language understood by the common people in eastern central France.[#] Acting on Jesus' command to preach, the Poor of Lyons took to the streets with their message. (Mat-

* Vaudès is variously referred to as Valdès, Valdesius, or Waldo. The latter name accounts for the origin of the term "Waldenses." The Waldenses, or Waldensians, were also known as the Poor of Lyons.

[#] As early as 1199, the bishop of Metz, in northeastern France, complained to Pope Innocent III that individuals were reading and discussing the Bible in the vernacular. It is most likely that the bishop was referring to the Waldenses.

The burning of two elderly Waldensian women



thew 28:19, 20) Historian Gabriel Audisio explains that their insistence on public preaching became the decisive issue in the church's attitude toward the Waldenses.

From Catholics to Heretics

In those days, preaching was restricted to the clergy, and the church assumed the right to grant authority to preach. The clergy considered the Waldenses ignorant and illiterate, but in 1179, Vaudès sought official authorization for his preaching from Pope Alexander III. Permission was given—but on the condition that the local priests approve. Historian Malcolm Lambert notes that this "was the near-equivalent of total refusal." Indeed, Archbishop Jean Bellesmains of Lyons formally forbade lay preaching. Vaudès responded by quoting Acts 5:29: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." Failing to comply with the ban, Vaudès was excommunicated from the church in 1184.

Although the Waldenses were banished from the diocese of Lyons and hounded out of the city, it seems that the initial condemnation was to some extent theoretical. Many ordinary people admired the Waldenses for their sincerity and way of life, and even bishops continued to speak with them.

According to historian Euan Cameron, it appears that the Waldensian preachers did not "oppose the Roman Church simply for the sake of it." They merely "wished to preach and teach." Historians say that the movement was virtually driven into heresy by a series of decrees that progressively and lastingly marginalized them. Church condemnations culminated in the anathema that the Fourth Lateran Council issued against the Waldenses in 1215. How did this affect their preaching?

They Go Underground

Vaudès died in the year 1217, and persecution dispersed his followers into the French

Alpine valleys, Germany, northern Italy, and Central and Eastern Europe. Persecution also caused the Waldenses to settle in the rurals, and this limited their preaching activities in many areas.

In 1229 the Catholic Church completed its Crusade against the Cathari, or Albigenses, in the south of France.* The Waldenses next became objects of such efforts. The Inquisition would soon be turned mercilessly against all the church's opponents. Fear caused the Waldenses to go underground. By 1230 they no longer preached in public. Audisio explains: "Rather than going to seek new sheep . . . , they devoted themselves to looking after the converted, maintaining them in their faith in the face of outside pressure and persecution." He adds that "preaching remained essential but had completely changed in practice."

Their Beliefs and Practices

Instead of having both men and women engage in preaching activities, by the 14th century, the Waldenses had developed a distinction between preachers and believers. Only well-trained men were then engaging in pastoral work. These itinerant ministers later came to be known as *barbes* (uncles).

The *barbes*, who visited Waldensian families in their homes, worked to keep the movement alive rather than to spread it. All the *barbes* were able to read and write, and their training, which took up to six years, was Bible-oriented. Using the Bible in the vernacular helped them to explain it to their flocks. Even opponents admitted that Waldenses, including their children, had a strong Bible culture and could quote large portions of the Scriptures.

Among other things, the early Waldenses rejected lying, purgatory, Masses for the

dead, papal pardons and indulgences, and the worship of Mary and the "saints." They also held annual observances of the Lord's Evening Meal, or Last Supper. According to Lambert, their form of worship "was, in effect, the religion of the ordinary layman."

"A Double Life"

Communities of the Waldenses were close-knit. Individuals married within the movement, and over the centuries, this created Waldensian surnames. In their fight to survive, however, the Waldenses tried to conceal their views. The secrecy attached to their religious beliefs and practices made it easy for opponents to make outrageous accusations against them, saying for instance that they engaged in Devil worship.*

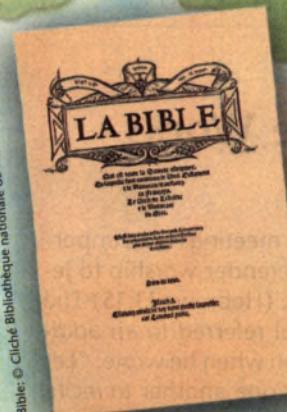
One way that the Waldenses countered such accusations was by compromising and practicing what historian Cameron calls "minimal conformity" with Catholic worship. Many Waldenses confessed to Catholic priests, attended Mass, used holy water, and even went on pilgrimages. Lambert notes: "In many things they did as their Catholic neighbours did." Audisio bluntly states that in time, Waldenses "lived a double life." He adds: "On the one hand, they behaved to all appearances like Catholics to safeguard their relative tranquillity; on the other, they observed a certain number of rites and habits among themselves which ensured that the community continued to exist."

From Heresy to Protestantism

In the 16th century, the Reformation radically changed the European religious scene. Victims of intolerance could either seek legal recognition in their own country or emigrate in search of more favorable conditions. The

* See "The Cathari—Were They Christian Martyrs?" in *The Watchtower*, September 1, 1995, pages 27-30.

* Persistent defamation of the Waldenses led to the term *vauderie* (from the French word *vaugeois*). It is used to describe suspected heretics or Devil worshipers.



Waldenses sponsored the translation of the 1535 Olivétan Bible

FRANCE

Strasbourg Prague Vienna

Lyons

Milan

Luberon
PROVENCE

Rome

Areas influenced by the Waldenses

idea of heresy also became less crucial, since so many people had begun to question established religious orthodoxy.

As early as 1523, the well-known Reformer Martin Luther mentioned the Waldenses. In 1526 one of the Waldensian *barbes* brought back to the Alps news of religious developments in Europe. This was followed by a period of exchange whereby Protestant communities shared ideas with the Waldenses. Protestants encouraged the Waldenses to sponsor the first translation of the Bible from the original languages into French. Printed in 1535, it was later known as the Olivétan Bible. Ironically, though, most Waldenses could not understand French.

As persecution by the Catholic Church continued, large numbers of Waldenses settled in the safer Provence region of southern France, as did Protestant immigrants. Authorities were soon alerted to this immigration. Despite many positive reports about the lifestyle and morals of the Waldenses, some people questioned their loyalty and accused them of being a threat to good order. The Mérindol edict was issued, resulting in the horrible bloodshed mentioned at the beginning of this article.

Relations between the Catholics and the Waldenses continued to deteriorate. In response to attacks launched against them, the Waldenses even resorted to armed force to defend themselves. This conflict pushed them into the Protestant fold. Thus the Waldenses allied themselves with mainstream Protestantism.

Over the centuries, Waldensian churches have been established in countries as far away from France as Uruguay and the United States. However, most historians agree with Audisio, who says that "Waldensianism came to an end at the time of the Reformation," when it was "swallowed up" by Protestantism. In fact, the Waldensian movement had lost much of its initial zeal centuries earlier. That occurred when its members fearfully abandoned Bible-oriented preaching and teaching.

Meetings That Incite to Love and Fine Works

FROM Toronto to Tokyo, from Moscow to Montevideo—several times each week, millions of Jehovah's Witnesses and their friends stream to their places of worship. These individuals include hardworking family men, exhausted after a long day on the job; industrious wives and mothers accompanied by small children; energetic youths who have spent a day in school; frail older ones whose steps are shortened by aches and pains; courageous widows and orphans; and depressed souls in need of comfort.

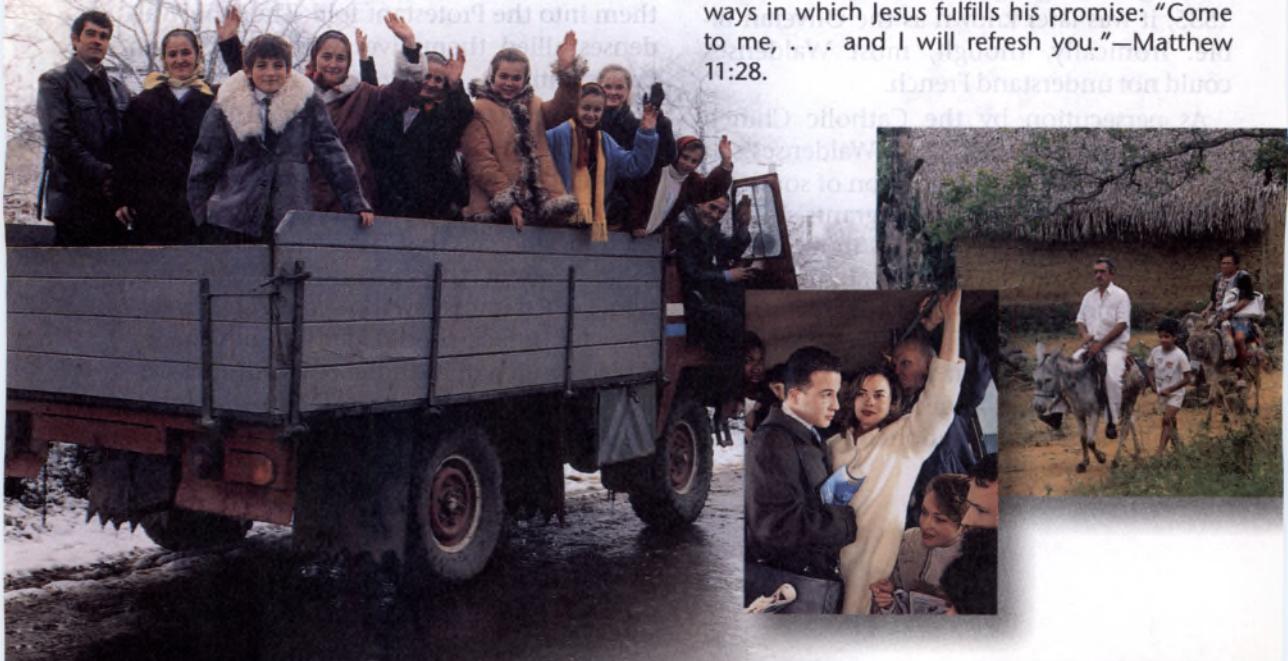
These Witnesses of Jehovah use many means of transport—from high-speed bullet trains to donkeys, from cramped subway cars to trucks. Some have to cross crocodile-infested rivers, while others have to put up with the nerve-racking traffic of large cities. Why do all these people put forth so much effort?

Primarily because attending and participating



in Christian meetings is an important way to render worship to Jehovah God. (Hebrews 13:15) The apostle Paul referred to an additional reason when he wrote: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, . . . but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Paul here echoed the feelings of the psalmist David, who sang: "I rejoiced when they were saying to me: 'To the house of Jehovah let us go.'"—Psalm 122:1.

Why do Christians rejoice over being present at their meetings? Because those in attendance are not mere observers. Rather, the meetings afford them opportunities to get to know one another. Especially do these gatherings provide occasions to give, not just receive, and to incite one another to show love and engage in fine works. This helps to make meetings uplifting occasions. Moreover, Christian meetings are one of the ways in which Jesus fulfills his promise: "Come to me, . . . and I will refresh you."—Matthew 11:28.



An Oasis of Comfort and Concern

Jehovah's Witnesses have good reasons to view their meetings as refreshing. For one thing, at meetings spiritual food is served at the proper time by "the faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45) Meetings also play an important role in making Jehovah's servants skillful and zealous teachers of God's Word. Additionally, at the Kingdom Hall, one can find a group of loving, concerned, and caring friends who are ready and willing to help and comfort others in times of distress.—2 Corinthians 7:5-7.

This was the experience of Phillis, a widow who lost her husband when her children were five and eight years old. Describing the refreshing effect that Christian meetings had on her and her young ones, she said: "It was a comfort to go to the Kingdom Hall because fellow believers always showed their love and concern with a hug, a Scriptural thought, or a squeeze of the hand. It was a place I always wanted to be."—1 Thessalonians 5:14.

After Marie had undergone major surgery, her doctor said that it would take at least six weeks for her to heal. During the initial weeks of her recuperation, Marie could not attend meetings. Her doctor noticed that she was not as jovial as before. When he realized that she was not attending meetings, he encouraged her to do so.

Marie replied that her husband, who did not share her faith, would not be willing to let her go to the meetings out of concern for her health. The doctor therefore wrote an official prescription "ordering" Marie to go to the Kingdom Hall for encouragement and upbuilding association. Marie concludes: "After attending one meeting, I felt so much better. I began to eat, I slept the whole night, I didn't have to take pain medication so often, and I was smiling again!"—Proverbs 16:24.

The loving setting of Christian meetings does not go unnoticed by outsiders. A certain college student chose to observe Jehovah's Witnesses in order to write a paper for her ethnology class. Regarding the atmosphere at the meetings, she wrote in her paper: "The warm welcome I received . . . [was] very impressive. . . . The amiability of Jehovah's Witnesses was a very prominent quality and what I feel is the most significant part of the setting."—1 Corinthians 14:25.

In this troubled world, the Christian congregation is a spiritual oasis. It is a haven of peace and love. By being present at the meetings, you can experience for yourself the truth of the psalmist's words: "Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!"—Psalm 133:1.

FILLING A SPECIAL NEED

How can those unable to hear benefit from Christian meetings? Around the world, Jehovah's Witnesses are forming sign-language congregations. During the last 13 years,

27 sign-language congregations and 43 sign-language groups have

been formed in the United States. In at least 40 other countries, there are now about 140 sign-language congregations. Christian publications have been prepared on video in 13 sign languages.

The Christian congregation offers the deaf the opportunity to praise Jehovah. Odile, a former

Catholic in France who suffered from bouts of severe depression and had suicidal thoughts, is deeply grateful for the Bible education she has received at Christian meetings. "I regained my health and joy of life," she says. "But above all, I found the truth. Life now has a purpose for me."





You Can Conquer Loneliness

WHOMO can claim never to have experienced the pain that loneliness brings? Many factors can make us feel lonely. Particularly acute, though, can be the loneliness of women who have never married or of those who are widowed or divorced.

For example, a young Christian woman named Frances relates: "By the time I reached the age of 23, it seemed that all my friends had got married, and I was left alone."* The feeling of isolation may increase as the years go by and marriage prospects become more limited. "I never intended to remain single, and I would still like to get married if the opportunity arises," admits Sandra, now in her late 40's. Angela, in her 50's, points out: "I didn't make a conscious decision to stay single, but that is the way things have worked out. There were very few single brothers in the area to which I was assigned as a special pioneer."

commendably, many Christian women choose not to get married because they loyally heed Jehovah's counsel to marry "only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39) Some adapt well to singleness, but others find

* The names of the women quoted have been changed.

that the desire to marry and have children increases over the years. "An emotional vacuum, caused by not having a marriage mate, is my constant companion," confesses Sandra.

Other factors, such as caring for aged parents, may accentuate the feeling of loneliness. "Since I am not married, the family expected me to look after our aged parents," says Sandra. "For 20 years I shouldered the bulk of this responsibility, even though I am one of six siblings. Life would have been much easier with a husband who could have supported my interests."

Frances mentions another element that heightens her loneliness. She relates: "Sometimes people ask me directly, 'Why haven't you got married?' Such a remark makes me feel that my single state is somehow my fault. At almost every wedding I attend, someone asks me the dreaded question, 'So when will you be getting married?' And I begin to think, 'If spiritually-minded brothers are not interested in me, perhaps I don't have the necessary Christian qualities or maybe I am just unattractive.' "

How can feelings of isolation and loneliness be overcome? What, if anything, can others do to help?

Rely Upon Jehovah

The psalmist sang: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter." (Psalm 55:22) The word "burden" in the Hebrew text literally means "lot," and it refers to the cares and anxieties that we might suffer because of our lot in life. Jehovah is more aware of these burdens than anyone else and can give us the strength to deal with them. Reliance on Jehovah God is what has helped Angela to cope with the feeling of loneliness. Referring to her full-time ministry, she recalls: "When I began pioneering, my partner and I lived a long way from the nearest congregation. We learned to rely completely on Jehovah, and this dependence has helped me all my life. When I have negative thoughts, I talk to Jehovah and he helps me. Psalm 23 has always been a great comfort, and I read it frequently."

The apostle Paul had a noteworthy burden to bear. On at least three occasions, he 'entreated the Lord that his thorn in the flesh might depart from him.' Paul was not helped miraculously, but he did receive a promise that God's undeserved kindness would sustain him. (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) Paul also discovered the secret of contentment. He later wrote: "In everything and in all circumstances I have learned the secret of both how to be full and how to hunger, both how to have an abundance and how to suffer want. For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me."—Philippians 4:12, 13.

How can one draw on God's strength when feeling discouraged or lonely? Paul wrote: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Je-

sus." (Philippians 4:6, 7) Sandra puts this advice into practice. She explains: "Being single, I spend a lot of time alone. This gives me ample opportunity to pray to Jehovah. I feel very close to him and can talk to him freely about my problems and joys." And Frances says: "Fighting negative thoughts on my own is an uphill battle. But sharing my feelings frankly with Jehovah helps enormously. I am convinced that Jehovah is interested in anything that might affect my spiritual and emotional welfare."—1 Timothy 5:5.

"Go On Carrying the Burdens of One Another"

Within the Christian brotherhood, burdens do not have to be borne alone. "Go on carrying the burdens of one another, and thus fulfill the law of the Christ," exhorted the apostle Paul. (Galatians 6:2) Through our association with fellow Christians, we can get "the good word" of encouragement that can lighten the load of loneliness.—Proverbs 12:25.

Consider, too, what the Scriptures say about the daughter of Israel's Judge Jephthah. Before his victory over the enemy forces of Ammon, Jephthah vowed to give to Jehovah the first one of his household who came out to congratulate him. That turned out to be his daughter. (Judges 11:30, 31, 34-36) Even though it meant that she would remain single and forgo her normal intent to have a family, Jephthah's daughter willingly submitted to this vow and served at the sanctuary in Shiloh for the rest of her life. Did her sacrifice go unnoticed? On the contrary: "From year to year the daughters of Israel would go to give commendation to the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite, four days in the year." (Judges 11:40) Yes, commendation can encourage those receiving it. Therefore, let us not fail to commend deserving ones.

We do well also to consider Jesus' example. Although it was not the Jewish custom for men to converse with women, Jesus spent time with Mary and Martha. Likely, they were either widows or women who were not married. Jesus wanted both of them to enjoy the spiritual benefits of his friendship. (Luke 10:38-42) We can imitate Jesus' example by including our unmarried spiritual sisters in social occasions and by making arrangements to engage in the preaching work with them. (Romans 12:13) Do they appreciate such attention? One sister said: "I know the brothers love and appreciate me, but I am grateful when they take a more personal interest in me."

"Since we don't have someone that belongs to us," explains Sandra, "we have a greater need to be loved, to feel a part of the

Loneliness can be conquered by giving and sharing



family of spiritual brothers and sisters." Obviously, Jehovah cares for such ones, and we cooperate with him when we make them feel wanted and loved. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) Such concern will not go unnoticed, for "he that is showing favor to the lowly one is lending to Jehovah, and his treatment He [Jehovah God] will repay to him."—Proverbs 19:17.

"Each One Will Carry His Own Load"

Although others can help, and their support can be very encouraging, "each one will carry his own load." (Galatians 6:5) In carrying the load of loneliness, though, we need to beware of certain dangers. For instance, loneliness might conquer us if we withdraw into an emotional shell. On the other hand, we can conquer loneliness with love. (1 Corinthians 13:7, 8) Giving and sharing is the best way to find happiness—regardless of our circumstances. (Acts 20:35) "I don't have too much time to think about being lonely," says one hardworking pioneer sister. "When I feel useful and occupied, I don't feel lonely."

We must also be careful that loneliness does not push us into an unwise relationship. For example, how sad it would be to allow the desire for marriage to blind us to the many problems that stem from marrying an unbeliever and especially to the Scriptural counsel to avoid such a yoke! (2 Corinthians 6:14) A divorced Christian woman said: "There is one thing much worse than being single. It is being married to the wrong person."

A problem that cannot be resolved may have to be endured, at least for the time being. With God's help, the feeling of loneliness can be endured. As we continue to serve Jehovah, may we be confident that one day all our needs will be satisfied in the best possible way.—Psalm 145:16.



EMBALMING Is It for Christians?

As his life drew to a close, the faithful patriarch Jacob made this last request: "Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah that is in front of Mamre in the land of Canaan."

—Genesis 49:29-31.

JOSEPH honored his father's request by taking advantage of a custom that prevailed in Egypt at the time. He commanded "his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father." According to the account found in Genesis chapter 50, the physicians took the customary 40 days to prepare the corpse. The embalming of Jacob allowed for the large, slow-moving caravan of family members and Egyptian dignitaries to travel about 250 miles to take Jacob's remains to Hebron for burial.—Genesis 50:1-14.

Is it possible that Jacob's embalmed body will be found one day? The chances are, at best, remote. Israel was a well-watered region, which limits the type of archaeological artifacts discovered there. (Exodus 3:8) Ancient metal and stone objects abound, but most of the more fragile items, such as cloth, leather, and embalmed bodies, have not withstood moisture and the vicissitudes of time.



Just what is embalming? Why has it been practiced? Is it for Christians?

Where Did the Custom Begin?

Embalming can best be described as the preserving of a human or animal corpse. Historians tend to agree that embalming began in Egypt but was also practiced by the ancient Assyrians, Persians, and Scythians. Perhaps early interest in and experimentation with embalming was sparked by the discovery of bodies that had been buried in desert sand and were naturally preserved. Such a burial would have kept moisture and air from reaching the corpse, thus limiting its decay. Some theorize that embalming got its start when bodies were found preserved in natron (sodium carbonate), an alkali that is abundant in and around Egypt.

The goal of the embalmer is simply to interrupt the natural bacteriologic action that starts within hours of death, causing the

corpse to deteriorate. If this process can be averted, decay will stop or will at least be slowed down considerably. Three things are desired: preserving the remains in a life-like state, preventing putrefaction, and rendering the corpse resistant to the ravages of insects.

The ancient Egyptians embalmed their dead mainly for religious reasons. Their concept of an afterlife was linked with a desire to stay in touch with the physical world. They believed that their bodies would be used throughout eternity and would be reinvigorated with life. As common as embalming was, to date no Egyptian account of how it was done has been found. The best record is that of the Greek historian Herodotus in the fifth century B.C.E. It has been reported, however, that trying to recreate the results by using the directions provided by Herodotus has not been very successful.

Is It for Christians?

Jacob was embalmed by those whose religious beliefs were not the same as his. Yet, we can hardly imagine that when Joseph handed his father's body over to the physicians, he requested the prayers and ritual that may well have accompanied most embalming done in Egypt at that time. Both Jacob and Joseph were men of faith. (Hebrews 11:21, 22) Although apparently not com-

mended by Jehovah, the preserving of Jacob's remains is not spoken of with disapproval in the Scriptures. The embalming of Jacob was not meant as a precedent for the nation of Israel or for the Christian congregation. In fact, there are no specific instructions on the subject in God's Word. After Joseph himself was embalmed in Egypt, there is no further Scriptural mention of the practice.—Genesis 50:26.

The poor condition of human remains found in tombs in Palestine indicates that it was not a Hebrew custom to embalm the dead, at least not for long preservation. Lazarus, for instance, was not embalmed. Although he was wrapped in cloth, concern was shown when the stone closing his tomb was to be rolled away. Since Lazarus had died four days earlier, his sister was sure that there would be an odor when the tomb was opened.—John 11:38-44.

Was Jesus Christ embalmed? The Gospel accounts do not support this conclusion. At that time, it was the Jewish custom to prepare the body with spices and perfumed oils before laying it to rest. In order to treat Jesus' body, for instance, Nicodemus provided a large quantity of spices for this purpose. (John 19:38-42) Why so many spices? Heartfelt love and respect for Jesus may have moved him to such generosity. We need not conclude that such a use of spices was intended to preserve the body.

Would a Christian object to the custom of embalming? From a realistic point of view, embalming is merely delaying the inevitable. From dust we came, and to dust we return at death. (Genesis 3:19) But how long will it be from the time of death until the funeral? If family members and friends are coming from a distance and there is a desire to view the body, no doubt the remains will have to be embalmed to some degree.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Should Faith Be Based on Reason?

Why Be Baptized?

God Welcomes All the Nations

Scripturally, then, there is no need for concern if local requirements mandate that the body be embalmed or family members desire that this take place. The dead are

"conscious of nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) If they are in God's memory, they will be raised to life in his promised new world.—Job 14:13-15; Acts 24:15; 2 Peter 3:13.

EMBALMING—THEN AND NOW

In ancient Egypt, the type of embalming a corpse might receive depended on a family's status. A prosperous family would likely have chosen the following procedure:

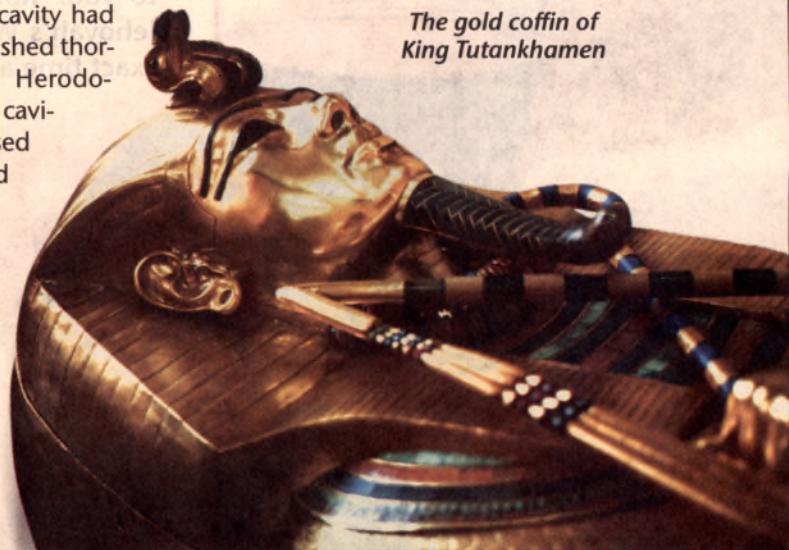
The brain would be drawn out through the nostrils by means of a metal instrument. Thereafter, the skull would receive treatment with appropriate drugs. The next step involved the removal of all the internal organs except the heart and the kidneys. To gain access to the abdomen, an incision had to be made in the body, but this was considered sinful. To get around this thorny issue, Egyptian embalmers designated a person called a cutter to make the incision. He fled as soon as this was done, for curses and pelting with stones were the punishment for this so-called crime.

After the abdominal cavity had been emptied, it was washed thoroughly. The historian Herodotus wrote: "They fill the cavity with the purest bruised myrrh, with cassia, and every other sort of spicery except frankincense, and sew up the opening."

Next, the body was dehydrated by soaking it in natron for 70 days. Thereafter, the corpse was washed and skillfully wrapped in linen. The linen was then coated with a resin or some type of gummy substance that served as glue, and the mummy was placed in a lavishly decorated wooden box that had a human form.

Today, embalming can be accomplished in a matter of hours. It is usually done by placing an appropriate amount of embalming fluid in the veins and arteries as well as in abdominal and thoracic cavities. Over the years, a variety of solutions have been developed and used. However, because of cost and safety, formaldehyde is the embalming solution most often used.

The gold coffin of King Tutankhamen



The Most Important Event in History



TIT WAS the death of Jesus Christ. Why was it so important? For a number of reasons.

Jesus' faithfulness unto death proved that a human could maintain integrity to God.

Christ's death provided an opportunity for some to become co-rulers with him in heaven. It also opened the way for many more to enjoy everlasting life in an earthly paradise.

On the evening before he died, Jesus used unleavened bread and red wine as symbols of his loving human sacrifice. And he told his disciples: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19) Will you remember this important event?

Jehovah's Witnesses warmly invite you to join them in observing the Memorial of Jesus' death. This year the date for this observance is Thursday, March 28, after sundown. You may attend at the Kingdom Hall nearest to your home. Please check with Jehovah's Witnesses locally for the exact time and place.

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