

APRIL 15, 2007

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

WILL  
CRUELTY  
EVER  
END?



# 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 fellow men 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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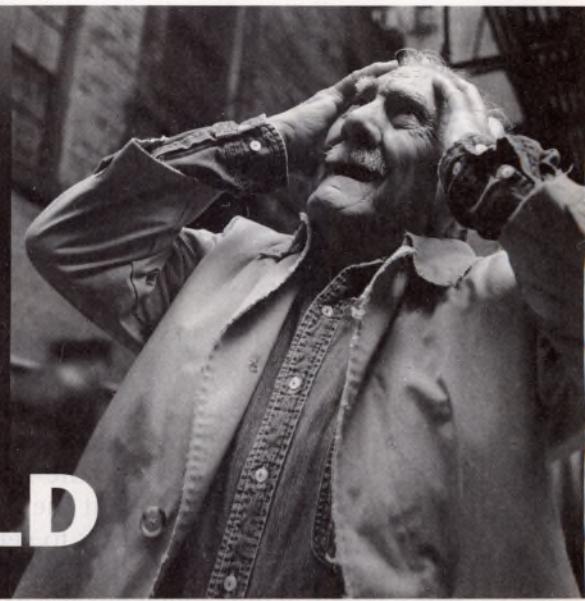
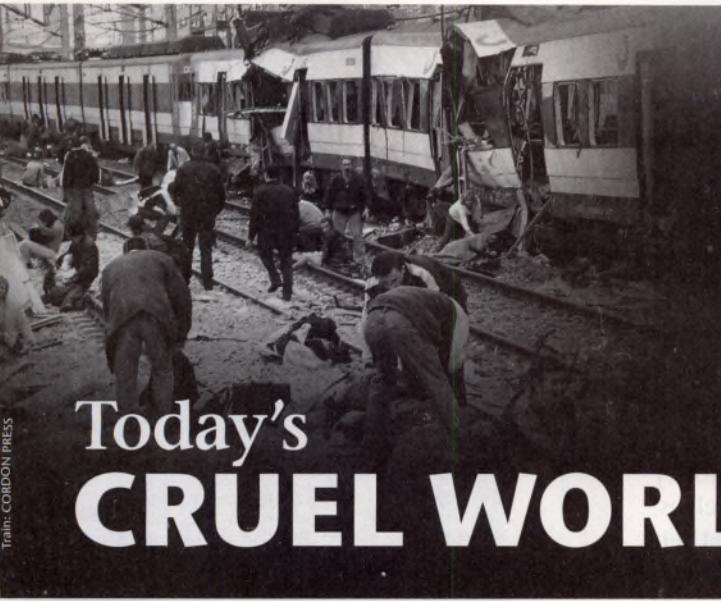
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# Today's CRUEL WORLD

MARÍA was 64 years of age and lived on her own. She was found dead in her home, beaten and strangled with a wire cable.

An angry mob beat three policemen, accusing them of kidnapping two minors. The mob poured gasoline over two of the policemen and set them on fire, the flames consuming them. The third managed to get away.

An anonymous phone call led to a shocking discovery. The remains of four vacationing men were unearthed in a garden. They had been blindfolded, and their hands had been bound. An autopsy revealed that they had been buried alive.

These atrocities are not scenes from cruel and violent horror movies. These reports are all true stories that not long ago made headlines in one Latin-American country. Yet, that country is by no means an exception in today's world.

Cruel acts have become daily occurrences. Bombings, terrorist attacks, murders, assaults, shootings, and rapes make up but a fraction of such incidents. Over and over,

the news media present graphic reports of atrocities, and many people are no longer shocked to see or hear of such cruelty.

You may well wonder: 'What is happening to the world today? Has all consideration for the feelings of others and respect for life been lost?' Why must we live in a world like this?

Now consider Harry, a 69-year-old man who has had cancer. His wife suffers from multiple sclerosis, but his neighbors and friends pitch in to help. "I do not know what we would do without all these people helping us out," says Harry. In Canada, where he lives, a study reveals that more than 50 percent of senior caregivers are helping someone who is not related to them. No doubt, you know of ordinary people who from day to day show kindness and neighborliness. Yes, humans have the potential for being compassionate and kind instead of being cruel.

Then why the atrocities? What makes people act cruelly? Can those who treat others with cruelty change? Will cruelty ever end? And if so, how and when?

# Will Cruelty EVER END?

MANY would readily agree that selfishness is a key factor in the cruelty in the world today. The seeds sown decades ago by the so-called me generation have produced a society in which the majority are concerned primarily about themselves. Many will do whatever it takes to get their own way, often resulting in cruel acts. This is true not only of individuals but also of entire nations.

The lives of fellow humans no longer seem to matter. Some people even enjoy being cruel. They find it entertaining, much like criminals who confess that they harm others just for the thrill of it. And what about the millions whose preference for films featuring violence and cruelty encourages the motion picture industry to cash in on such themes? Constant exposure to brutal acts through entertainment and the news media desensitizes many.

Cruelty often does psychological harm and sets in motion a vicious cycle. Referring to the violence engendered by cruelty, Noemí Díaz Marroquín, who teaches at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, says: "Violence is learned, it's cultural . . . We learn how to act out in violent ways when our environment allows and encourages it." Thus, those who have been victims of abuse may well end up abusing others, perhaps even in the same ways that they were abused.

In other cases, those who misuse such substances as alcohol and drugs may end up be-



having cruelly. Not to be overlooked are individuals who are dissatisfied with their government for not meeting the needs of the people. Some of them, being determined to make their views known, resort to cruel acts and foster terrorism, often at the expense of the innocent.

You might wonder though: 'Have men learned to act cruelly on their own? What is behind the present situation?'

## Who Really Is Behind Cruelty?

The Bible tells us that Satan the Devil wields a strong influence over this world, calling him "the god of this system of things." (2 Corinthians 4:4) He is the most selfish and cruel person in the universe. Jesus well described him as "a manslayer" and "the father of the lie."—John 8:44.

Ever since the disobedience of Adam and Eve, mankind has been under the powerful

influence of Satan. (Genesis 3:1-7, 16-19) Some 15 centuries after the first human pair turned their backs on Jehovah, rebellious angels materialized, had relations with women, and produced a hybrid race called the Nephilim. What was their distinctive characteristic? Their name provides the answer. It means "the Fellers," or "those who cause others to fall down." Evidently, they were violent individuals who brought cruelty and immorality that only a flood of divine origin could bring to an end. (Genesis 6:4, 5, 17, footnote) Although the Nephilim were annihilated in the Flood, their fathers went back to the spirit realm as invisible demons.

—1 Peter 3:19, 20.

The cruel disposition of the rebellious angels is evident in the case of a demon-possessed boy in Jesus' day. The demon repeatedly caused the child to have convulsions, throwing him into fire and into water in an effort to destroy him. (Mark 9:17-22) Clearly, such "wicked spirit forces" reflect the pitiless personality of their cruel commander in chief, Satan the Devil.—Ephesians 6:12.

Today, demonic influence continues to promote human cruelty, as was foretold in the Bible: "In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, . . . self-assuming, haughty, . . . unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power."—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Bible prophecies reveal that our times are particularly critical because after God's Kingdom by Christ Jesus was established in 1914, Satan and his demon hordes were ousted

from the heavens. The Bible declares: "Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time."—Revelation 12:5-9, 12.

Does this mean that the situation cannot improve? Díaz Marroquín, quoted earlier, states that "people are capable of unlearning" undesirable behavior. However, with Satan's influence permeating the earth today, a person is unlikely to unlearn it unless he allows a different, superior force to influence his way of thinking and acting. What is this force?

### Changes Possible—How?

Happily, God's holy spirit is the most powerful force that exists, and it can overcome any demonic influence. It promotes love and the well-being of humans. To be filled with God's spirit, everyone who wishes to please Jehovah must avoid conduct even bordering on cruelty. This requires transforming one's personality to conform to the divine will. And what is that will? It is for us to imitate God's way to the extent possible. This involves viewing others as God does.

—Ephesians 5:1, 2; Colossians 3:7-10.

A study of God's way of handling things will convince you that Jehovah has never shown a lack of interest in others. He has never treated unjustly any human or for that matter any animal.\* (Deuteronomy 22:10; Psalm 36:7; Proverbs 12:10) He repudiates cruelty and all who practice it. (Proverbs 3:31, 32) The new personality that Jehovah requires Christians to cultivate helps them to consider others as superior and to respect them. (Philippians 2:2-4) That new Christian personality includes "the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of

\*For an in-depth consideration of God's qualities and personality, see the book *Draw Close to Jehovah*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

mind, mildness, and long-suffering." Not to be ignored is love, "for it is a perfect bond of union." (Colossians 3:12-14) Do you not agree that the world would be a different place if such qualities abounded?

However, you may wonder if lasting personality changes are really possible. Well, consider a real-life example. Martín\* used to yell at his wife right in front of their children and severely beat her. On one occasion, the situation became so bad that the children had to run to the neighbors for help. After a number of years, the family began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Martín learned what kind of person he should be and how he should treat others. Was he able to change? His wife answers: "In the past, *my husband* was a different person when he lost his temper. Because of this, our life was in a shambles for a long time. I don't have enough words to thank Jehovah for helping

\* Some names have been changed.

Martín to change. Now he is a good father and an excellent husband."

That is but one case. Around the globe, millions who have studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses have put cruelty behind them. Yes, it is possible to change.

### The End of All Cruelty Draws Near

In the near future, God's Kingdom—a government now established in the heavens with a compassionate Ruler, Christ Jesus—will exercise full authority over the earth. It has already cleansed the heavens of Satan, the source of all cruelty, and his demons. Soon, God's Kingdom will satisfy the needs of its peace-loving subjects on earth. (Psalm 37:10, 11; Isaiah 11:2-5) That is the only real solution to the world's problems. But what if while waiting for this Kingdom, you become a victim of cruelty?

Responding in kind to cruelty would not help. That would only result in more of the

## How to React to Cruelty

God's Word offers practical counsel about how to deal with cruelty. Consider how you can apply the following words of wisdom:

"Do not say: 'I will pay back evil!' Hope in Jehovah, and he will save you."—Proverbs 20:22.

"If you see any oppression of the one of little means and the violent taking away of judgment and of righteousness . . . , do not be amazed over the affair, for one that is higher than the high one is watching."—Ecclesiastes 5:8.

"Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth."—Matthew 5:5.

"All things, therefore, that you want men to

do to you, you also must likewise do to them."—Matthew 7:12.

"Return evil for evil to no one. Provide fine things in the sight of all men. If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men. Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay,' says Jehovah.'"—Romans 12:17-19.

"Even Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely. . . . When he was being reviled, he did not go reviling in return. When he was suffering, he did not go threatening, but kept on committing himself to the one who judges righteousness."—1 Peter 2:21-23.

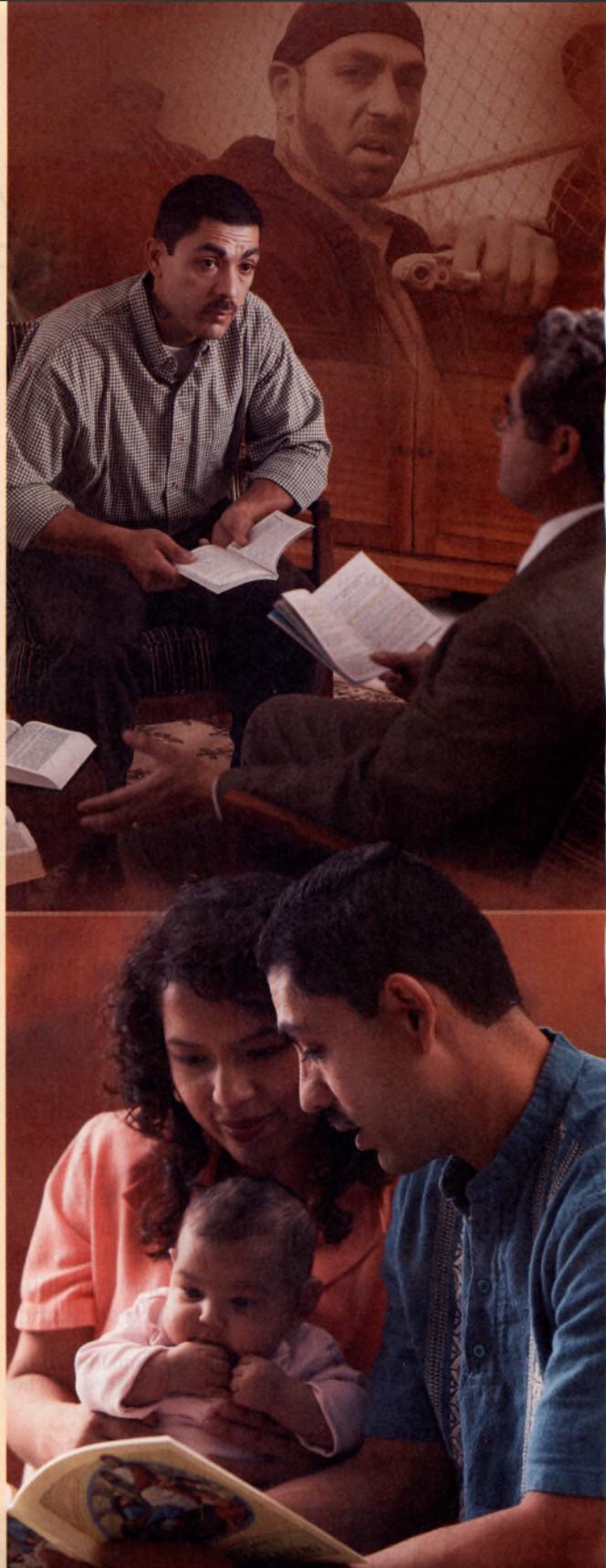
same. The Bible invites us to trust in Jehovah, who in his own due time will "give to each one according to his ways, according to the fruitage of his dealings." (Jeremiah 17:10) (See the accompanying box, "How to React to Cruelty.") True, you may suffer because of being the victim of a cruel crime. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) Yet, God can undo the results of any cruelty, even death. According to his promise, those in his memory who have lost their lives to cruel acts will return to life.

—John 5:28, 29.

Although the possibility of becoming a victim of cruelty still exists, we can find comfort in having a close relationship with God and firm faith in his promises. Consider Sara who without the help of a husband raised her two sons and made sure that they received a good education. In her old age, her sons abandoned her, giving neither material support nor medical attention. However, Sara, now a Christian, says: "Although I can't help feeling sad, Jehovah has not abandoned me. I feel his support through my spiritual brothers and sisters, who are always looking out for me. I firmly believe that soon he will solve not only my problems but those of all who trust in his power and do what he commands."

Who are the spiritual brothers and sisters to whom Sara referred? They are her Christian associates, who are Jehovah's Witnesses. They form a worldwide brotherhood of compassionate people who are convinced that very soon cruelty will end. (1 Peter 2:17) Neither the one principally responsible for the cruelty, Satan the Devil, nor anyone who acts like him will remain. This "era of brutality," as one writer calls it, will be a thing of the past. Why not learn about this hope by getting in touch with one of Jehovah's Witnesses?

*Jehovah has taught many to put cruelty behind them*





# WHEN EXPECTATIONS ARE *Unfulfilled*

**D**ISILLUSIONMENT can grow in any marriage, even if during courtship a man and a woman seemed to be well matched. But how can two people who appeared to be made for each other before exchanging marriage vows turn out to be so different afterward?

The Bible says that those who marry will have "pain and grief." (1 Corinthians 7:28, *The New English Bible*) Often, a degree of such tribulation is the result of human imperfection. (Romans 3:23) In addition, one or both partners may be failing to apply Bible principles. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) At times, though, a man or a woman enters the marriage with unrealistic expectations. When this happens, misunderstandings can lead to serious problems.

### Unrealistic Expectations

If you are a husband or a wife, you likely entered marriage with a number of expectations; most people do. Take a moment to reflect on the kind of life that you hoped for. Does your marriage fall short of what you envisioned? If so, do not conclude that problems cannot be worked out. Applying Bible principles can help you to set things straight.\*

\* Much good advice for couples is contained in the book *The Secret of Family Happiness*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

(2 Timothy 3:16) Meanwhile, you would do well to examine some of the expectations that you might have had about marriage.

For example, some have thought that married life would be filled with romance, such as that described in fairy tales. Or perhaps you thought that you and your mate would spend most of your time together or that the two of you would work out every disagreement in a smooth, mature manner. Many have believed that marriage would eliminate the need for self-control in sexual matters. Because all these common expectations are somewhat unrealistic, they are sure to lead to disappointment for some.—Genesis 3:16.

Another unrealistic expectation is that marriage itself will make a person happy. Of course, having a partner in life can be a source of great joy. (Proverbs 18:22; 31:10; Ecclesiastes 4:9) But can marriage be expected to be a miraculous cure for all disagreements? Those who think so usually have a rude awakening!

### Unspoken Expectations

Not all expectations are unrealistic. On the contrary, some involve desires that are valid. Problems can arise, though, because of certain expectations. "I see spouses get angry with each other because one member of the couple is waiting for a certain desire to be ful-

filled, while the mate was never clearly aware of that desire in the first place," observes one marriage counselor. To understand how this can occur, consider the following scenario.

Mary marries David, who lives hundreds of miles from her hometown. Before getting married, Mary realized that moving to a new area would present challenges—especially since she is timid by nature. Yet, she was confident that David would help her to adjust. Mary expected, for example, that David would stay by her side and help her to get acquainted with his friends. However, this is not happening. David becomes engrossed in conversation with his many friends—leaving Mary, the newcomer, alone. Mary feels neglected, even somewhat abandoned. 'How can David be so insensitive?' she wonders.

Is Mary's expectation unrealistic? Not really. She simply wants her husband to help her

adjust to her new surroundings. Mary is timid, and she feels overwhelmed at meeting so many new people. The fact is, though, that Mary has never disclosed her feelings to David. Thus, David has little idea of what Mary is going through. What will happen if the situation persists? Mary's resentment could build, and with the passage of time, she might think that her husband is totally callous to her feelings.

Perhaps you too have felt disappointment and frustration when your spouse seems to be unresponsive to your needs. If that is the case, what can you do?

### Talk It Out

Unfulfilled expectations can indeed be distressing. (Proverbs 13:12) Still, there is something that you can do about the situation. "You can persuade others if you are wise and

*Be "swift about hearing"  
the concerns of your spouse*



speak sensibly," states a Bible proverb. (Proverbs 16:23, *Contemporary English Version*) Hence, if you feel that you have a reasonable expectation that is not being met, discuss the matter with your mate.

Try to choose the right time, the right setting, and the right words to state your concerns. (Proverbs 25:11) Speak calmly and respectfully. Remember your objective—not to accuse your spouse but to inform him or her of your expectations and feelings.—Proverbs 15:1.

Why should you have to do this at all? Would not a considerate spouse be able to perceive your needs? Well, your spouse may simply be looking at matters from a different

point of view but would gladly consider your needs if you explained them. It is not a sign of a weak marriage for you to express what you want or need, nor is it evidence of an insensitive mate.

So do not hesitate to discuss matters with your spouse. For example, in the situation described earlier, Mary could say to David: "I have to admit that I find meeting so many new people to be somewhat challenging. Until I feel more at home, could you help me to get acquainted with everybody?"

### "Swift About Hearing"

Now consider the matter from another angle. Suppose *you* are approached by your



## SAME LANDSCAPE, DIFFERENT VIEWS

"Imagine a crowd of tourists viewing a picturesque landscape. Although the entire group beholds the same scene, each person sees it differently. Why? Because each individual has a different vantage point. No two persons are standing pre-

cisely at the same location. Furthermore, not everyone focuses on the same portion of the scene. Each person finds a different aspect to be particularly intriguing. The same is true within marriage. Even when they are highly compatible, no

two partners share precisely the same outlook on matters. . . . Communication includes the effort to blend [the] differences into a one-flesh relationship. This requires making time to talk."  
—*The Watchtower*, August 1, 1993, page 4.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

- Reexamine your expectations. Are they realistic? Are you expecting more of your spouse than is reasonable?—**Philippians 2:4; 4:5.**
- Try to adjust any unrealistic expectations. For example, instead of saying, “We will never disagree,” resolve that you will work at settling differences peacefully.—**Ephesians 4:32.**
- Discuss your expectations. Talking matters over is a key step to learning how to display love and respect for each other.—**Ephesians 5:33.**

mate, and he or she is distressed because you are not fulfilling a reasonable expectation. If this happens, *listen* to your spouse! Try not to become defensive. Instead, “be swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath.” (James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13) The apostle Paul urged Christians: “Let each one keep seeking, not his own advantage, but that of the other person.”—1 Corinthians 10:24.

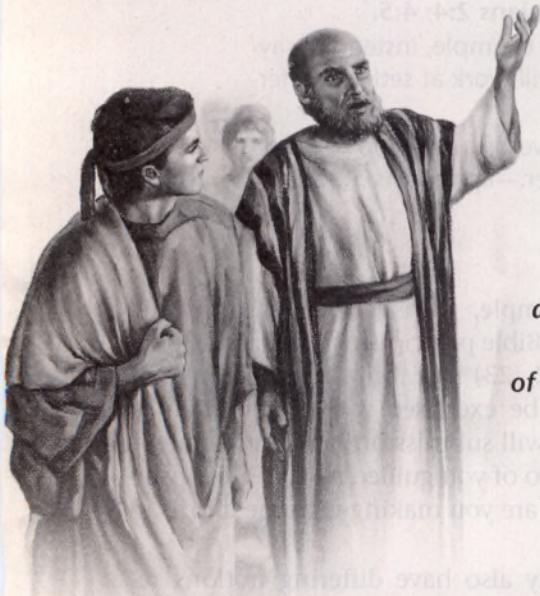
You can do this by putting yourself in your mate’s position. The Bible states: “You husbands, continue dwelling in like manner with [your wives] according to knowledge,” or, as rendered in J. B. Phillips’ translation, “you husbands should try to understand the wives you live with.” (1 Peter 3:7) Of course, wives would do well to make the same effort with regard to their husbands.

Remember, no matter how compatible you and your spouse may be, you do not share the same outlook on all matters. (See the box “Same Landscape, Different Views.”) Really, this is a blessing, for it is good to consider matters from another’s perspective. You and your spouse each brought to your marriage unique expectations based on such things as family background and culture. As a result, you can be deeply in love and yet not have the same expectations.

For example, Christian mates may well know the Bible principle of headship. (Ephesians 5:22, 23) But how, specifically, will headship be exercised within your family, and how will submission be demonstrated? Are the two of you guided by this Bible principle, and are you making genuine efforts to follow it?

You may also have differing notions regarding other issues of everyday life. Who will take care of certain household chores? When will you spend time with relatives, and how much? How will Christian mates show that they are putting Kingdom interests first in their life? (Matthew 6:33) When it comes to finances, it is easy to go into debt, so it pays to be thrifty and resourceful. Yet, precisely what does it mean to be thrifty and resourceful? Matters like these need to be discussed openly and respectfully, with great benefit.

Such discussions can help you achieve greater peace in your marriage, even if until now some expectations have gone unfulfilled. Indeed, you will be better able to apply the apostle Paul’s admonition: “Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another.”—Colossians 3:13.



# Follow Paul's Steps to BEROEA

*The work of the two missionaries was very successful, and a great multitude became believers. Then a mob rose up against them. So a decision was made. For the sake of the fledgling congregation and for the missionaries' own safety, the two would leave immediately, in the middle of the night. Thus, Paul and Silas fled the Macedonian seaport of Thessalonica in about 50 C.E. They made a journey to their next preaching destination—Beroea.*

FROM a distance, the modern-day visitor, like the ancient traveler, can see Beroea (Véroia) lying at the eastern foot of verdant Mount Bermios. Beroea is about 40 miles southwest of Thessalonica and some 25 miles inland from the Aegean Sea. Mount Olympus, the mythical abode of the principal gods of the ancient Hellenic pantheon, lies to the south.

Beroea is of interest to Bible students as a place where Paul preached and converted many to Christianity. (Acts 17:10-15) Let us retrace Paul's steps and delve into the city's past.

## Early History

No one is sure when Beroea was founded. Its first inhabitants, probably Phrygian tribes, were driven out by the Macedonians about the seventh century B.C.E. Three centuries later, Macedonia was enriched, fol-

lowing conquests by Alexander the Great. Imposing buildings and walls were constructed, as were sanctuaries of Zeus, Artemis, Apollo, Athena, and other Greek deities.

One history book notes that over the centuries, Beroea "played an important role both in its immediate vital area and in the rest of northern Greece." The city reached particular prominence during the reign of the last Macedonian dynasty, the Antigonids (306-168 B.C.E.), who were eventually overthrown by Rome.

When the Romans defeated King Philip V in 197 B.C.E., "the old balance of power was upset and Rome became the decisive power in the eastern Mediterranean," observes the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In 168 B.C.E., at Pydna, some miles south of Beroea, a Roman general won a decisive victory over the last ancient Macedonian ruler, Perseus. As foretold in Bible prophecy, the Greek world



power had been supplanted by Rome. (Daniel 7:6, 7, 23) After that battle, Beroea was one of the first Macedonian cities to surrender to Rome.

In the first century B.C.E., Macedonia became a battle-ground during the conflict between Pompey and Julius Caesar. In fact, Pompey located his headquarters and army in the vicinity of Beroea.

### Thriving Under the Romans

During the *Pax Romana*, or Roman Peace, visitors to Beroea found stone-paved streets flanked by colonnades. The city had public baths, theaters, libraries, and facilities for gladiatorial contests. Drinking water flowed through pipes, and the city was equipped with a subterranean drainage system. Beroea grew famous as a commercial center vis-

*Silver coin with Alexander the Great depicted as a Greek deity*



ited by merchants, artists, and athletes, while spectators came to attend athletic and other events. Foreigners could find places of worship where they might engage in the rituals of their own religions. Yes, in this city, cults of the whole Roman world met and mingled.

Posthumously deified Roman emperors were among the gods worshipped in Beroea. That might not have seemed strange to the Beroeans because a precursor of emperor worship was the worship of Alexander the Great, who was venerated as a god. One Greek source says: “Accustomed as they were to according divine honours to a king during his lifetime, the Hellenes [Greeks] of the

eastern Empire happily accorded cultic honours to the Roman emperors too . . . On their coins the emperor was represented as deified, wearing the radiate crown. They would acclaim him with the same invocations as for a god, with hymns and songs." Altars and temples were erected, and sacrifices to him were offered. Even emperors came to attend imperial cult festivities, which included athletic, artistic, and literary contests.

Why was Beroea a center of pagan worship? Because it was the seat of the Koinon of Macedonia. This was an assembly of delegates from Macedonian cities. These delegates convened regularly in Beroea to discuss city and provincial matters and to handle them under Roman supervision. One of the main functions of the Koinon was to oversee imperial cult observances.

So this was the environment of the city to which Paul and Silas journeyed after fleeing Thessalonica. By that time, Beroea had been under Roman occupation for two centuries.

### The Good News Reaches Beroea

Paul began his preaching in Beroea in the city's synagogue. How was he received? The inspired account reports that the Jews there



*A gate to the Jewish quarter in Beroea (Véroia)*

"were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things were so." (Acts 17:10, 11) Being "noble-minded," they did not stubbornly cling to their traditions. Although they were hearing something new, they were not suspicious or ill-tempered. Instead of rejecting Paul's message, they were attentive, giving it a fair hearing and doing so free of partiality.

How could those Jews recognize the ring of truth in Paul's teaching? They tested what they heard by using the most trustworthy touchstone. They carefully and diligently searched the Scriptures. Bible scholar Matthew Henry concluded: "Since Paul reasoned out of the scriptures, and referred them to the Old Testament for the proof of what he said, they had recourse to their Bibles, turned to the places to which he referred them, read the context, considered the scope and drift of them, compared them with other places of scripture, exam-

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Help From "the God Who Supplies Endurance and Comfort"

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ined whether Paul's inferences from them were natural and genuine and his arguments upon them cogent, and determined accordingly."

This was no one-time casual look. The Beroeans applied themselves to a diligent, ongoing study, taking the time to do this daily, not just on the Sabbath.

And think about the result. Many Jews in Beroea accepted the message and became believers. A number of Greeks, perhaps including some who were Jewish proselytes, also believed. But this did not go unnoticed. When the Thessalonian Jews heard of it, they hurried to Beroea "to incite and agitate the masses."—Acts 17:4, 12, 13.

Paul was forced to leave Beroea, but he continued his preaching elsewhere. This

time he boarded a ship bound for Athens. (Acts 17:14, 15) Nonetheless, he could rejoice that as a result of his work in Beroea, Christianity took root there. And it is bearing fruit today.

Yes, there are still people in Beroea (Véroia) who carefully examine the Scriptures to "make sure of all things" and "hold fast" to what is well-founded and true. (1 Thessalonians 5:21) Two flourishing congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in the city engage in the preaching work, as Paul did, sharing the Bible's message with others. They search out honesthearted ones and reason with them from the Scriptures, allowing the motivating force of the Bible to help all those who want to know Jehovah, the true God.—Hebrews 4:12.

*An old synagogue in modern-day Beroea (Véroia)*





# A Field “White for Harvesting”

At the northern tip of South America lies the Guajira Peninsula. It is in northern Colombia and northwestern Venezuela. Scorching sun and limited rainfall are the bane of this semidesert, where temperatures reach up to 110 degrees Fahrenheit. Despite the weather, people here are busy and productive farmers. Steady ocean breezes and northeast trade winds make life bearable, allowing visitors to enjoy captivating landscapes and beautiful beaches.

**W**ELOCOME to the land of the Wayuu Indians. There are some 305,000 Wayuu, 135,000 of whom live in Colombia. This tribe lived here long before the Spanish colonization.

The primary livelihood of the Wayuu is raising livestock and farming. They also engage in fishing and cross-border trading. The women do masterful weaving in bright colors, and their products are popular with tourists.

The Wayuu are known for their sincerity and hospitality. However, they too are living in “critical times hard to deal with.” (2 Timothy 3:1) Poverty is one of their major problems that, in turn, leads to other troubles, such as illiteracy, infantile malnutrition, lack of medical care and, in some areas, delinquency.

For decades, churches of Christendom have sent missionaries to live among the Wayuu. As a result, the majority of teachers’ training schools and boarding schools are under church control. Many Wayuu have accepted so-called Christian customs, such as image worship and infant baptism, but they have not abandoned beliefs and rites rooted in traditional mythology and superstitions.

In general, the Wayuu fear God and respond favorably to Bible truths taught by Jehovah’s Witnesses. In the early 1980’s, there were only seven Wayuu Witnesses in Guajira, three of whom lived in Riohacha, the capital. In addition to the indigenous Witnesses, 20 other publishers preached the Kingdom good news there in Spanish.

## Message in Their Own Tongue

The majority of the Wayuu living in Riohacha use limited Spanish in addition to their native tongue, Wayuunaiki. At first, very little was accomplished in the preaching of the Kingdom message. The natives seemed to shy away from the *arijanas*, as they call the non-Wayuu. When the Witnesses called at their homes, most Wayuu responded in their own language, not in Spanish. The Witnesses simply moved on to the next house.

By the end of 1994, however, the branch office of Jehovah’s Witnesses had assigned a group of special pioneers, or full-time Bible educators, to serve in the Riohacha Congregation.

Wayuu camp below:  
Victor Englebert

gation. The pioneers asked a Wayuu Witness to teach them Wayuunaiki. After memorizing some simple presentations, those ministers went to the territory and immediately noticed a marked change in the people's response. Even though the Bible teachers were speaking in broken Wayuunaiki, the householders were pleasantly surprised and were willing to listen, at times continuing a lively conversation in their own limited Spanish!

### "White for Harvesting"

The apostle Paul likened the Christian disciple-making work to the cultivation of a field, a comparison that the agricultural Wayuu understand well. (1 Corinthians 3:5-9) In a figurative sense, the Wayuu field is indeed "white for harvesting."—John 4:35.

Neil, a Wayuu Indian who lived in Manaure, suffered from a congenital defect. Blaming God, Neil was depressed to the point of attempting suicide. A Witness who took the opportunity to preach from house to house while visiting different towns in connection with his secular work spoke to Neil about Jehovah's Kingdom. Neil was only 14 years old. Discerning Neil's interest, the Witness started a Bible study with him. Neil was happy

to learn about Jehovah's loving personality, leading him to the conclusion that God did not cause his suffering. How deeply touched he was when he read about God's promise of an earthly paradise, where there will be no more sickness!—Isaiah 33:24; Matthew 6:9, 10.

At the time, Neil's family was caught up in a feud with another family. Trying to ensure their own protection, Neil's relatives performed certain tribal rituals. Neil recalls: "At first, I was afraid to speak to my family about my newfound faith, especially to the family elders, who are held in high esteem." Neil's parents were angered to learn that he would neither follow unscriptural beliefs nor practice spiritistic customs. Neil then moved to Ríohacha and began associating with the congregation there. He was later baptized. In 1993 he was appointed as a ministerial servant, and three years later he became a regular pioneer. Then in 1997 he was appointed as a congregation elder. In the year 2000, he expanded his ministry, becoming a special pioneer.

Consider, too, the case of Teresa, a Wayuu native who started to study the Bible with the Witnesses. Daniel, her live-in partner, ridiculed her and physically abused her and their three children. Even though he later agreed to

study the Bible along with Teresa, he often went on drinking sprees with his friends, sometimes for four or five days. His family was left impoverished. Teresa continued to study faithfully and to attend Christian meetings. This helped Daniel to see the importance of studying the Bible. Then one of their children accidentally fell into a boiling



kettle and died of severe burns. Besides enduring the deep grief of losing a son, Teresa had to face pressure from friends and neighbors to observe unscriptural funeral customs.

During that difficult time, this couple received encouraging help and comfort from members of congregations nearby. After the funeral, they continued to receive comforting visits from the local Wayuu-language congregation. Upon seeing Christian love in action, Daniel was moved to make spiritual progress. He stopped drinking and mistreating Teresa. Daniel and Teresa got married, and he began working hard to support his family. They progressed spiritually and were baptized in 2003. Both conduct several Bible studies. Thanks to the excellent witness that Teresa has given to her family, her relatives are now willing to listen to the Witnesses when they call. One of Daniel's nephews is an unbaptized publisher, and two of his nieces are studying the Bible and attending congregation meetings. Teresa's sister-in-law, who also lost a son in an accident, and her family have shown interest in studying the Bible.

### Spiritual Food in Wayuunaiki

In 1998 the booklet *Enjoy Life on Earth Forever!*\* was released in Wayuunaiki. This became a valuable tool for cultivating the Wayuu field and conducting home Bible studies. Arrangements were made in 2003 to train several brothers to translate publications of Jehovah's Witnesses into Wayuunaiki. Thanks to the hard work of a group of translators in Ríohacha, more brochures have been made available, contributing to the spiritual growth of Wayuunaiki-speaking disciples.

Since 2001, some parts on the district convention program have been interpreted into Wayuunaiki. Bible students are stimulated spiritually when they hear the program in

their own language. They anticipate the day when Bible dramas will also be presented in Wayuunaiki.

### A Flourishing Field

Uribia is a town some 60 miles northeast of Ríohacha. The Uribia Wayuu Congregation has 16 Kingdom publishers, many of whom are expanding their efforts to preach to the Indians who live in rural areas. One of the congregation elders says this about such a witnessing trip: "We visited a ranch compound made up of about a dozen houses with low roofs and small windows. In front of each house is a flat roof made of *yotojolo*, the woody inside stem of a cactus. There, family and visitors are protected from the scorching sun. We were happy to see that many showed great interest, so we made arrangements to return and start Bible studies. Upon returning, we noticed that many were illiterate. They told us of a school that had been abandoned for lack of funds. The person in charge kindly gave us permission to use one of the classrooms to hold literacy classes and to conduct Bible studies. Six Wayuu have learned to read and write and are progressing in their Bible study. We are touched by the appreciation shown, so we plan to hold meetings on the ranch."

A number of nonnative Witnesses have learned Wayuunaiki, and their assistance is greatly appreciated. On the Guajira Peninsula, eight congregations and two groups now use this language.

Jehovah's blessing on these efforts is evident. No doubt, much more can be accomplished in preaching the good news among the Wayuu. The prospects are promising as those who are conscious of their spiritual need become Christian disciples. May Jehovah send more ministers to cultivate this field, which is "white for harvesting."—Matthew 9:37, 38.

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

# Do You Remember?

Have you appreciated reading the recent issues of *The Watchtower*? Well, see if you can answer the following questions:

- **What can we learn from Jesus' illustration about the persistent host? (Luke 11:5-10)**

This illustration shows what our disposition should be when we pray. We ought to ask persistently, or keep on asking, especially for God's holy spirit. (Luke 11:11-13)—12/15, pages 20-2.

- **Jesus' illustration about a widow and a judge contains what lesson for us? (Luke 18:1-8)**

It stresses the need to pray. Unlike the judge, Jehovah is righteous and wants to come to our aid. Moreover, we should have faith like that of the widow in the illustration.—12/15, pages 26-8.

- **Why did the apostle Paul tell Corinthian Christians to "widen out"? (2 Corinthians 6:11-13)**

It seems that some in Corinth lacked appreciation for fellow believers, being narrow and ungenerous at heart. We need to put forth effort to develop genuine appreciation for fellow believers, even reaching out to make new friends.—1/1, pages 9-11.

- **What sealing is referred to at Revelation 7:3?**

When God anoints Christians with holy spirit, these are initially sealed. But Revelation 7:3 refers to a final sealing, when such anointed ones are confirmed as having fully demonstrated their loyalty.—1/1, pages 30-1.

- **Parents can learn what from the Bible record about Samuel?**

For one thing, they should teach their children God's word, as Samuel's parents surely

taught him. In addition, they ought to encourage their children to make service to Jehovah a career.—1/15, page 16.

- **How can we show that we are happy to wait for Jehovah?**

We are "awaiting . . . the day of Jehovah," looking forward to relief when he eliminates all ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:7, 12) But eager as Jehovah is to end all evil, he is exercising restraint so as to bring about the salvation of Christians in a way that will glorify his name. We should trust that Jehovah knows the right time to act, and in the meantime, we should actively praise him. (Psalm 71:14, 15)—3/1, pages 17-18.

- **Did Noah take into the ark seven of each clean animal or seven pairs of each?**

Noah was told to 'take to himself by sevens' each clean animal. (Genesis 7:1, 2) In Hebrew, the expression "sevens" literally reads "seven seven." That way of speaking does not mean seven pairs, as other Bible texts bear out. Noah evidently took seven of each, three pairs and a seventh that he could later use in sacrifice. (Genesis 8:20)—3/15, page 31.

- **Why should Christians "contemplate" how the faith of elders, those who are taking the lead, turns out?**

The apostle Paul invites us to "contemplate," or carefully observe, the outcome of the faithful conduct of the elders and to follow such examples of faith. (Hebrews 13:7) We do this because we are directed to do so in God's Word. Also, we are persuaded that the elders have both Kingdom interests and our best interests at heart.—4/1, page 28.

# LET THE CONGREGATION PRAISE JEHOVAH

*"I will declare your name to my brothers; in the middle of the congregation I will praise you."*—HEBREWS 2:12.

THROUGHOUT history, individuals have found companionship and security within the basic family unit. However, the Bible identifies another unit in which countless individuals around the globe today are enjoying exceptional companionship and security. That is the Christian congregation. Whether you are part of a close, supportive family or not, you can and should appreciate what God has provided through the congregation arrangement. Of course, if you already associate with a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, you can likely testify to the warm fellowship that you enjoy there and the sense of security that you have.

<sup>2</sup> The congregation is no mere social group. It is not a community association or a club where people with a similar background or similar interests in a sport or a hobby come together. Rather, the congregation arrangement is primarily for the praise of Jehovah God. That has long been so, as the book of Psalms emphasizes. At Psalm 35:18, we read: "I will laud you in the big congregation; among a numerous people I shall praise you." Similarly, Psalm 107:31, 32 encourages us: "O let people give thanks to Jehovah for his loving-kindness and for his wonderful works to the sons of men. And let them extol him in the congregation of the people."

<sup>3</sup> The Christian apostle Paul highlighted another essential role of the congrega-

tion when he referred to "God's household, which is the congregation of the living God, a pillar and support of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15) About which congregation was Paul speaking? In what ways does the Bible use the term "congregation"? And what bearing should this have on our life and prospects? To see, let us first examine uses of the term "congregation" in God's Word.

<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew word often translated "congregation" is from a root meaning "call together" or "congregate." (Deuteronomy 4:10; 9:10) The psalmist used "congregation" regarding the angels in heaven, and it can be used about a group of evil men. (Psalm 26:5; 89:5-7) However, most often the Hebrew Scriptures apply it to the Israelites. God indicated that Jacob would "become a congregation of peoples," and that occurred. (Genesis 28:3; 35:11; 48:4) The Israelites were called out, or selected, to be "Jehovah's congregation," "the congregation of the true God."—Numbers 20:4; Nehemiah 13:1; Joshua 8:35; 1 Samuel 17:47; Micah 2:5.

<sup>5</sup> The corresponding Greek word is *ek-klesi'a*, from two Greek words meaning "out" and "call." It can be applied to a secular group, such as "the assembly" that Demetrius stirred up against Paul in Ephesus. (Acts 19:32, 39, 41) But the Bible generally uses it for the Christian congregation. Some translations render this word "church," but *The*

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- 1, 2. Why is the congregation so beneficial, and what is its key role?
  3. According to Paul, what does the congregation do?

4. How is the word "congregation" most often used in the Hebrew Scriptures?
5. What Greek word is usually translated "congregation," and how can this word be applied?

*Imperial Bible-Dictionary* reports that it “never . . . signifies the actual building in which Christians assembled for public worship.” Interestingly, though, in the Christian Greek Scriptures, we find the word “congregation” applied in at least four different ways.

### The Anointed Congregation of God

<sup>6</sup> Applying David’s words found at Psalm 22:22 to Jesus, the apostle Paul wrote: “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the middle of the congregation I will praise you with song.’ Consequently [Jesus] was obliged to become like his ‘brothers’ in all respects, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.” (Hebrews 2:12, 17) David had praised God in the midst of the congregation of ancient Israel. (Psalm 40:9) However, to what was Paul referring when he said that Jesus praised God “in the middle of *the congregation*”? Which congregation?

<sup>7</sup> What we read at Hebrews 2:12, 17 is significant. It shows that in an inclusive sense,

6. What did David and Jesus do in the congregation?
7. In what primary way do the Christian Greek Scriptures use the word “congregation”?

*Jesus was the foundation of which congregation?*

Christ was a member of a congregation where he declared God’s name to his brothers. Who were those brothers? Those forming part of “Abraham’s seed,” the spirit-anointed brothers of Christ, “partakers of the heavenly calling.” (Hebrews 2:16-3:1; Matthew 25:40) Yes, the primary sense of “congregation” in the Christian Greek Scriptures is *the composite group of spirit-anointed followers of Christ*. These 144,000 anointed ones constitute “the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens.”—Hebrews 12:23.

<sup>8</sup> Jesus indicated that this Christian “congregation” was to be formed. About a year before his death, he told one apostle: “You are Peter, and on this rock-mass I will build my congregation, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (Matthew 16:18) Both Peter and Paul correctly understood that Jesus himself was the foretold rock-mass. Peter wrote that those who are built as “living stones” of a spiritual house on the rock-mass, Christ, were “a people for special possession [to] declare abroad the excellencies” of the One who called them.—1 Peter 2:4-9; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4.

<sup>9</sup> When did this “people for special possession” begin to be formed into the Christian congregation? It was at Pentecost 33 C.E. when God poured out holy spirit on the disciples assembled in Jerusalem. Later that day, Peter gave a masterful discourse to a group of Jews and proselytes. Many were stabbed to the heart over Jesus’ death; they repented and were baptized. We find in the historical report that three thousand did so, thereupon becoming part of the new and growing congregation of God. (Acts 2:1-4)

8. How did Jesus point forward to the formation of the Christian congregation?
9. When did the congregation of God begin to be formed?

14, 37-47) It was growing because more and more Jews and proselytes accepted the fact that fleshly Israel was no longer the congregation of God. Rather, anointed Christians constituting the spiritual "Israel of God" had become the true congregation of God.—Galatians 6:16; Acts 20:28.

<sup>10</sup> The Bible often makes a distinction between Jesus and the anointed ones, such as in the phrase "with respect to Christ *and* the congregation." Jesus is the Head of this congregation of spirit-anointed Christians. Paul wrote that God "made [Jesus] head over all things to the congregation, which is his body." (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 5:23, 32; Colossians 1:18, 24) Today, there remains on earth only a small remnant of the anointed members of this congregation. We can be sure, though, that their Head, Jesus Christ, loves them. His feelings toward them are described at Ephesians 5:25: "Christ also loved the congregation and delivered up himself for it." He loves them because they actively offer to God "a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name," even as Jesus did when he was on earth.—Hebrews 13:15.

### "Congregation"—In Other Senses

<sup>11</sup> At times, the Bible uses the term "congregation" in a more limited or defined sense, not applying it to the entire group of 144,000 anointed ones making up "the congregation of God." For instance, Paul wrote to one group of Christians: "Keep from becoming causes for stumbling to Jews as well as Greeks and to the congregation of God." (1 Corinthians 10:32) Obviously, if a Christian in ancient Corinth acted improperly, that might be a cause for stumbling to some.

10. What is Jesus' relationship to the congregation of God?
11. The Christian Greek Scriptures use "congregation" in what second way?

Would it, though, have the potential to stumble any and all Greeks, Jews, or anointed ones from that time down till today? Hardly. It thus seems that in this verse "the congregation of God" applies to *Christians living at a certain time*. Accordingly, one can speak of God's guiding, providing for, or blessing the congregation, meaning all Christians at a given time, wherever they are located. Or we can speak of the happiness and peace prevailing in God's congregation today, meaning among the whole Christian brotherhood.

<sup>12</sup> A third way that the Bible uses "congregation" applies to *all Christians in a geographic area*. We read: "The congregation throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria entered into a period of peace." (Acts 9:31) There was more than one group of Christians in that considerable area, but all of them in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria were spoken of as "the congregation." In view of the number baptized at Pentecost 33 C.E. and soon thereafter, there may even have been more than one group that regularly assembled in the Jerusalem area. (Acts 2:41, 46, 47; 4:4; 6:1, 7) Herod Agrippa I ruled Judea until his death in 44 C.E., and it is clear from 1 Thessalonians 2:14 that at least by 50 C.E., there were a number of congregations in Judea. Thus, when we read that Herod was "mistreating some of those of the congregation," it may refer to more than a single group that gathered in Jerusalem.—Acts 12:1.

<sup>13</sup> Fourth, a still more limited and common use of the term "congregation" refers to *Christians making up a single local congregation, such as in a home*. Paul mentioned "the congregations of Galatia." There was more

12. In what third sense is "congregation" used in the Bible?
13. What is a fourth and common way that the Bible uses "congregation"?



*Local groups of Christians met as “congregations of God”*

than one such congregation in that sizable Roman province. Paul twice used the plural “congregations” regarding Galatia, which would include those in Antioch, Derbe, Lysstra, and Iconium. Qualified older men, or overseers, were appointed in these local congregations. (1 Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 1:2; Acts 14:19-23) Scripturally, all those were “congregations of God.”—1 Corinthians 11:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:4.

<sup>14</sup> In some cases, the groups at Christian meetings must have been small, able to fit into a private home. Still, the expression “congregation” was applied to some such groups. Those that we know of were congregations in the houses of Aquila and Prisca, Nympha, and Philemon. (Romans 16:3-5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2) This should be a source of encouragement to local congregations today that are quite small and that may even meet regularly in a private home. Jehovah recognized such small congregations in the first century, and he certainly does today, blessing them by means of his spirit.

14. What can we conclude from the use of “congregation” in a few texts?

### Congregations Praise Jehovah

<sup>15</sup> We noted that in fulfillment of Psalm 22:22, Jesus praised God in the middle of the congregation. (Hebrews 2:12) His faithful followers were to do likewise. Back in the first century when true Christians were anointed by holy spirit to become sons of God and thus Christ’s brothers, some received an additional, special operation of the spirit. They received miraculous gifts of the spirit. Some manifestations of such gifts were special speech of wisdom or knowledge, the power to heal or to prophesy, or even the ability to make utterances in tongues unknown to them.—1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

<sup>16</sup> Regarding speaking in a tongue, Paul said: “I will sing praise with the gift of the spirit, but I will also sing praise with my mind.” (1 Corinthians 14:15) He saw the importance of others’ understanding his words and thus being instructed. It was Paul’s goal to praise Jehovah in the

15. How was the operation of holy spirit manifested in some early congregations?

16. What was one objective of miraculous gifts of the spirit?

*Like Christians in Benin,  
we can praise Jehovah among the  
congregated throngs*

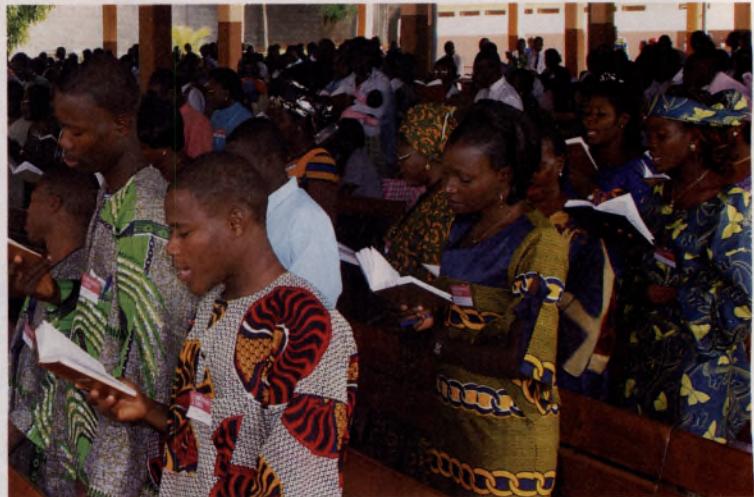
congregation. He urged others who had the gifts of the spirit: "Seek to abound in them for the upbuilding of the congregation," meaning the local congregation where they manifested the gift. (1 Corinthians 14:4, 5, 12, 23) Clearly, Paul was interested in the local congregations, knowing that in each of them, Christians would have opportunities to praise God.

<sup>17</sup> Jehovah continues to use and support his congregation. He is blessing the composite group of anointed Christians on earth today. This can be seen from the rich supply of spiritual food that God's people enjoy. (Luke 12:42) He is blessing the worldwide brotherhood as a whole. And he is blessing the local congregations, where we praise our Creator by our actions and upbuilding spiritual comments. There we receive education and training so that we can praise God in other set-

17. As to local congregations today, of what can we be certain?

### Do You Recall?

- How did "the congregation of God," made up of anointed Christians, come to be?
- What are three additional ways that the Bible uses the term "congregation"?
- Regarding the congregation, what did David, Jesus, and first-century Christians want to do, and how should this affect us?



tings, when we are not physically in the midst of our local congregation.

<sup>18</sup> Recall that the apostle Paul urged Christians in the local congregation in Philippi, Macedonia: "This is what I continue praying, that [you] may be filled with righteous fruit, which is through Jesus Christ, to God's glory and praise." That would include their speaking to others, to outsiders, about their faith in Jesus and their wonderful hope. (Philippians 1:9-11; 3:8-11) Accordingly, Paul urged fellow Christians: "Through [Jesus] let us always offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name."—Hebrews 13:15.

<sup>19</sup> Do you find delight in praising God "in the middle of the congregation," as Jesus did, and in using your lips to praise Jehovah before those who have yet to come to know and praise him? (Hebrews 2:12; Romans 15:9-11) To some degree, our personal answer may depend on how we feel about the role of our local congregation in God's purpose. In the following article, let us consider how Jehovah is directing and using our local congregation and what its role should be in our lives today.

18, 19. What do devoted Christians in any local congregation want to do?

# LET THE CONGREGATION BE BUILT UP

*"The congregation . . . entered into a period of peace, being built up."*—ACTS 9:31.

**O**N THE day of Pentecost 33 C.E., Jehovah recognized a group of Christ's disciples as a new nation, "the Israel of God." (Galatians 6:16) These spirit-anointed Christians also became what the Bible terms "the congregation of God." (1 Corinthians 11:22) What, though, did that involve? How would "the congregation of God" be arranged? How would it function on earth, wherever its members lived? And how are our lives and happiness involved?

<sup>2</sup> As noted in the preceding article, Jesus foretold the existence of this congregation of anointed followers, telling the apostle Peter: "On this rock-mass [Jesus Christ] I will build my congregation, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." (Matthew 16:18) Furthermore, while Jesus was still with the apostles, he gave indications as to the function and arrangement within that soon-to-be-established congregation.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus taught by word and deed that some in the congregation would take the lead. They would do so by serving, or ministering to, others in their group. Christ said: "You know that those who appear to be ruling the nations lord it over them and their great ones wield authority over them. This is not the way among you; but whoever wants to become great among you must be your minister, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of all." (Mark 10:42-44) Clearly, "the congregation of God" would

1. What questions might be asked about "the congregation of God"?

2, 3. How did Jesus indicate that the congregation would have structure?

not be merely scattered, isolated individuals, amounting to an amorphous congregation. Rather, there would be structure, with individuals in the congregation interacting with one another.

<sup>4</sup> The One who would be the Head of that "congregation of God" indicated that his apostles and others who had learned from him would have specific responsibilities toward the rest. To do what? A key assignment would be to give spiritual instruction to those in the congregation. Recall that the resurrected Jesus, in the presence of some of the other apostles, said to Peter: "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter answered: "Yes, Lord, you know I have affection for you." Jesus said to him: "Feed my lambs. . . . Shepherd my little sheep. . . . Feed my little sheep." (John 21:15-17) What an assignment!

<sup>5</sup> We can see from Jesus' words that those being gathered into the congregation are likened to sheep in a fold. These sheep—Christian men, women, and children—would need to be spiritually fed and properly shepherded. Furthermore, since Jesus charged all his followers to teach others and make disciples, any new ones becoming his sheep would need to be trained in how to carry out that divine commission.—Matthew 28:19, 20.

<sup>6</sup> Once "the congregation of God" was

4, 5. How do we know that the congregation would need spiritual instruction?

6. What arrangements were made in the newly formed "congregation of God"?



*The apostles and older men in Jerusalem served as a governing body*

formed, those making it up gathered regularly for instruction and mutual encouragement: "They continued devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to sharing with one another, to taking of meals and to prayers." (Acts 2:42, 46, 47) Another notable detail in the historical record is that some qualified men were designated to help in caring for certain practical matters. They were not selected because of years of schooling or technical skills. These were men "full of spirit and wisdom." One was Stephen, and the account calls attention to his being "a man full of faith and holy spirit." One result of the congregational arrangement was that "the word of God went on growing, and the number of the disciples kept multiplying in Jerusalem very much."—Acts 6:1-7.

### Men Used by God

<sup>7</sup> Understandably, the apostles took the lead in the early congregational arrange-

7, 8. (a) The apostles and older men in Jerusalem served as what among early Christians? (b) What resulted when instruction was provided through the congregations?

ment, but they were not alone. At one point, Paul and his companions returned to Syrian Antioch. Acts 14:27 relates: "When they had arrived and had gathered the congregation together, they proceeded to relate the many things God had done by means of them." While they were still with that local congregation, a question arose about whether Gentile believers needed to be circumcised. To resolve the matter, Paul and Barnabas were sent "to the apostles and older men in Jerusalem," who clearly served as a governing body.—Acts 15:1-3.

<sup>8</sup> The Christian elder James, Jesus' half brother but not an apostle, presided when "the apostles and the older men gathered together to see about this affair." (Acts 15:6) After deliberation and with the help of the holy spirit, they reached a conclusion in harmony with the Scriptures. They sent this in writing to the local congregations. (Acts 15:22-32) Those receiving this information accepted and applied it. With what result? The brothers and sisters were built up and encouraged. The Bible reports: "Therefore,

indeed, the congregations continued to be made firm in the faith and to increase in number from day to day.”—Acts 16:5.

<sup>9</sup> But how were the local congregations to function day by day? Take, for example, the congregations on the island of Crete. Though many people living there had a bad reputation, some changed and became true Christians. (Titus 1:10-12; 2:2, 3) They lived in various cities, and all were a long distance from the governing body in Jerusalem. That was not a major problem, however, because spiritual “older men” were appointed in each of the local congregations on Crete, as elsewhere. Such men met qualifications that we find recorded in the Bible. They were appointed as elders, or overseers, who could “exhort by the teaching that is healthful and . . . reprove those who contradict.” (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7) Other spiritual men were qualified to aid the congregations as ministerial servants, or deacons.—1 Timothy 3:8-10, 12, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus indicated that such a structure would exist. Recall the account at Matthew 18:15-17, where he noted that difficulties might arise at times between two of God’s people, one sinning in some way against the other. The wronged party was to approach the other and “lay bare his fault” privately, between just the two of them. If that step did not resolve the issue, one or two others who knew the facts might be called upon to help. What if the matter was still unsettled? Jesus said: “If he does not listen to them, speak to *the congregation*. If he does not listen even to *the congregation*, let him be to you just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector.” When Jesus said that, the Jews still constituted “the congregation of God,” so his

9. The Bible outlines what roles for qualified Christian men?

10. According to Matthew 18:15-17, how were serious problems to be resolved?

words initially applied to them.\* However, once the Christian congregation was established, Jesus’ direction would have application therein. This is another indication that God’s people would have a congregational structure for the upbuilding and guidance of each individual Christian.

<sup>11</sup> Fittingly, the older men, or overseers, would represent the local congregation in handling or resolving problems or in addressing cases of sin. That is consistent with the qualifications of elders mentioned at Titus 1:9. Granted, the local elders were imperfect men, as was Titus, whom Paul sent to congregations to “correct the things that were defective.” (Titus 1:4, 5) Today, those being considered for appointment as elders must have proved their faith and devotion over time. Others in the congregation thus have reason to put trust in the direction and leadership provided through this arrangement.

<sup>12</sup> To elders in the Ephesian congregation, Paul said: “Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son.” (Acts 20:28) It is equally true today that congregation overseers are appointed “to shepherd the congregation of God.” They are to do so lovingly, not lording it over the flock. (1 Peter 5:2, 3) The overseers should strive to build up and help “all the flock.”

\* Bible scholar Albert Barnes recognized that Jesus’ direction to “speak to the congregation” could mean “those who are authorized to try such cases—the representatives of the church, or those who act for them. In the Jewish synagogue there was a bench of elders, before whom trials of this kind were brought.”

11. How were elders to be involved in resolving problems?

12. What responsibility do elders have toward the congregation?

## Sticking With the Congregation

<sup>13</sup> The elders and all others in the congregation are imperfect, so from time to time, misunderstandings or problems occur, as they did in the first century when some of the apostles were still present. (Philippians 4: 2, 3) An overseer or another person may say something that seems rude, unkind, or not quite true. Or we may think that something unscriptural is happening, but it seems that although the local elders are aware of it, they do not correct the matter. Of course, it may be that the issue has been or is being handled in accord with the Scriptures and in the light of facts of which we are unaware. But even if the situation is what we think it is, consider this: For a while, a serious wrong existed in the Corinthian congregation, a congregation that Jehovah cared for. In time, he had the wrongdoing handled, correctly and firmly. (1 Corinthians 5:1, 5, 9-11) We might ask ourselves, 'If I had lived in Corinth back then, how would I have reacted in the meantime?'

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13. At times, what might occur in a congregation, and why?

<sup>14</sup> Consider another possibility involving the congregation. Suppose that a person finds a Scriptural teaching hard to understand and accept. He may have done research in the Bible and in publications available through the congregation and sought help from mature fellow Christians, even elders. Still, he has a hard time grasping or accepting the point. What can he do? Something similar developed about a year before Jesus died. He said that he was "the bread of life" and that to live forever a person had to "eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood." That shocked some of his disciples. Rather than seek an explanation or simply wait in faith, many disciples "would no longer walk with [Jesus]." (John 6:35, 41-66) Again, had we been there, what would we have done?

<sup>15</sup> In modern times, some have ceased associating with the local congregation, feeling that they will serve God on their own. They may say that it is because their feelings were hurt, they think a wrong is not being

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14, 15. Why did some stop following Jesus, providing what lesson for us?

*Elders and ministerial servants receive instruction  
so that they can fulfill their responsibilities toward the congregation*



corrected, or they cannot accept some teaching. How reasonable is their course? While it is true that each Christian should have a personal relationship with God, we cannot deny that he is using a worldwide congregation, as he did in the apostles' day. Furthermore, Jehovah used and blessed local congregations in the first century, arranging for qualified elders and ministerial servants to benefit the congregations. That is also true today.

<sup>16</sup> If a Christian feels that he can rely just on his own relationship with God, he is turning away from a God-ordained arrangement—that of both the worldwide congregation and the local congregations of God's people. The individual might go off on his own or be associating with just a few others, but where is the arrangement for congregation elders and the provision of ministerial servants? Significantly, when Paul wrote to the congregation in Colossae and directed that the letter be read also in Laodicea, he spoke of being "rooted and being built up in [Christ]." Those in the congregations, not individuals who separated themselves from such, would benefit from this.—Colossians 2:6, 7; 4:16.

### Pillar and Support of Truth

<sup>17</sup> In his first letter to the Christian elder Timothy, the apostle Paul outlined the qualifications of elders and ministerial servants in local congregations. Right after that, Paul mentioned "the congregation of the living God," saying that this is "a pillar and support of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15) The entire congregation of anointed Christians certainly proved to be such a pillar in the first century. And it is indisputable that the principal arrangement for individual Christians

16. If tempted to leave the congregation, a person should think about what?
17. What does 1 Timothy 3:15 show about the congregation?

to receive such truth was in connection with the local congregation. That is where they could hear truth taught and supported, where they could be built up.

<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the worldwide Christian congregation is God's household, "a pillar and support of the truth." Our regular attendance at and participation in the meetings of our local congregation is a key way for us to be built up, strengthened in our relationship with God, and prepared to do his will. Writing to the congregation in Corinth, Paul focused on what was said at such meetings. He wrote that he desired that what was said at their meetings be clear and understandable so that those attending could be "built up." (1 Corinthians 14:12, 17-19) We today can be built up if we recognize that Jehovah God has authorized the arrangement for local congregations and is supporting it.

<sup>19</sup> Yes, if we desire to be built up as Christians, our place is within the congregation. It has long proved to be a bulwark against false teachings, and God has been using it to have the good news of his Messianic Kingdom declared around the globe. Without a doubt, God has accomplished much through the Christian congregation.—Ephesians 3:9, 10.

18. Why are congregation meetings vital?

19. Why do you feel indebted to your congregation?

### Can You Recall?

- Why should we expect that God would be using congregations on earth?
- What do elders, though imperfect, do for the congregation?
- How are you being built up by the local congregation?

## Questions From Readers

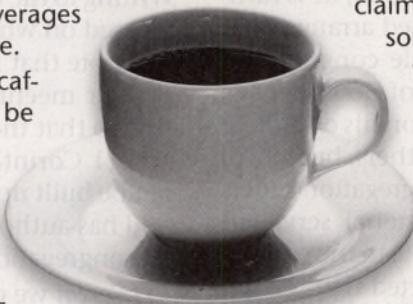
### Should a Christian avoid beverages and foods that contain caffeine?

The Bible does not rule out a Christian's consuming coffee, tea, chocolate, maté, and sodas that contain caffeine. However, the Scriptures do provide principles that can help us to make wise decisions. Let us first consider why some people avoid beverages and foods that contain caffeine.

One major reason is that caffeine might be considered to be a mood-altering drug, having a stimulating effect on the mind. It can also be addictive. A standard reference book for pharmacists states: "Prolonged, high intake of caffeine may produce tolerance, habituation, and psychological dependence. Physical signs of withdrawal such as headaches, irritation, nervousness, anxiety, and dizziness may occur upon abrupt discontinuation of the stimulant." The caffeine-withdrawal syndrome has been considered for inclusion in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, along with other drug withdrawal. Hence, it is understandable that some Christians may have concerns because they want to avoid any dependency and they desire to display self-control.—Galatians 5:23.

Some believe that caffeine can affect a person's health or that of an unborn child. Christians must love God 'with their whole soul,' so they do not practice anything that will shorten their life. And since they are also commanded to love their neighbor, they stay away from things that might harm an unborn child.—Luke 10:25-27.

Are such health concerns warranted? There is controversy about a link between



various diseases and caffeine consumption. Some researchers even report that coffee is healthful. In 2006, *Time* magazine reported: "Initial studies suggested [that caffeine] might lead to bladder cancer, high blood pressure and other ills. More recent research has not only refuted most of those claims but also come up with some significant benefits. Caffeine appears to have some protective effect against liver damage, Parkinson's disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's, gallstones, depression and maybe even some forms of cancer." On the use of caffeine, a news-magazine reported: "The key—no surprise—is moderation."

Each Christian should make a personal decision based on his understanding of the information currently available about caffeine and on the Bible principles that seem to be involved. For example, a Christian who is an expectant mother may choose to refrain from taking in caffeine during her pregnancy if she concludes that it could affect her unborn child. If a Christian finds that being deprived of a regular intake of caffeine makes him irritable or somewhat ill, he might be advised to abstain from caffeine, at least temporarily. (2 Peter 1:5, 6) Other Christians should respect such a decision, not pressing their view.

Whatever decision you make regarding beverages and foods containing caffeine, keep in mind Paul's admonition: "Whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, do all things for God's glory."—1 Corinthians 10:31.

# Disabled

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## *Yet Eager to Serve*



**W**HEN you first meet Leonardo, you might not view him as a construction worker. He does not have the use of either of his hands, having lost them earlier in a work-related accident. Despite his disability, however, Leonardo was working hard at a construction site in Acajutla, El Salvador, as you can see in the picture.

In order to participate in that construction project, Leonardo designed his own tools. He slips his right forearm into a metal loop attached to one end of a shovel and skillfully scoops dirt into a wheelbarrow. In place of grips, he attached rings to the handles so that he can push the wheelbarrow himself. What moved him to participate in this project?

Leonardo wanted to share in the construction of a Kingdom Hall, or place of worship for the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. He had plenty of reasons to excuse himself from the construction work. He was employed full-time, he was disabled, and he was already serving in his congregation as a ministerial servant. Yet, he wanted to do what he could to serve God at the construction site as well.

Do you have the same spirit in serving God? Rather than using his disability as an excuse, Leonardo used his mental faculties to design his own tools so that he could do the work that would otherwise have been impossible for him. He was serving God 'with his whole mind.' (Matthew 22: 37) Disabled or not, the workers who participate in the construction of Kingdom Halls of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the world have a volunteer spirit. Their meetings are open to the public, and you are welcome to attend.

WATCHTOWER

## Adryana's Wish

ADRYANA, a six-year-old girl in Tulsa, Oklahoma, U.S.A., had a wish. It was comparable to that of the psalmist David, who sang: "One thing I have asked from Jehovah— it is what I shall look for, that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the pleasantness of Jehovah and to look with appreciation upon his temple." —Psalm 27:4.

When Adryana was just six months old, she was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a malignant tumor that grows in parts of the nervous system. The life-threatening disease left her paralyzed in both legs. Doctors treated her condition with numerous surgeries and a year-long regimen of chemotherapy.

Adryana's father, who does not share the religious convictions of Adryana and her mother, contacted a certain foundation to request that his daughter visit a world-renowned amusement park. Before granting the wish, the foundation interviewed Adryana. She expressed her appreciation for being considered but told them that she would rather visit Bethel, the center of the worldwide activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York. After she found out about her father's request, Adryana prayed to Jehovah to give her an opportunity to visit Bethel. Although



concerned at first that Bethel may not be sufficiently child friendly, the foundation granted the wish when her father did not dispute the choice.

Accompanied by her mother, her sister, and a friend, Adryana traveled to New York to visit Bethel for the first time. "Jehovah answered me," Adryana said. "I knew that he would make room for us at Bethel. I saw how the books, magazines, and Bibles are made. It's better than an amusement park."

Adryana did "behold the pleasantness of Jehovah" and looked with appreciation upon the operation of the center of the activities of Jehovah's people today. You too are welcome to visit Bethel. In addition to the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York, there are branch offices in various other parts of the world.