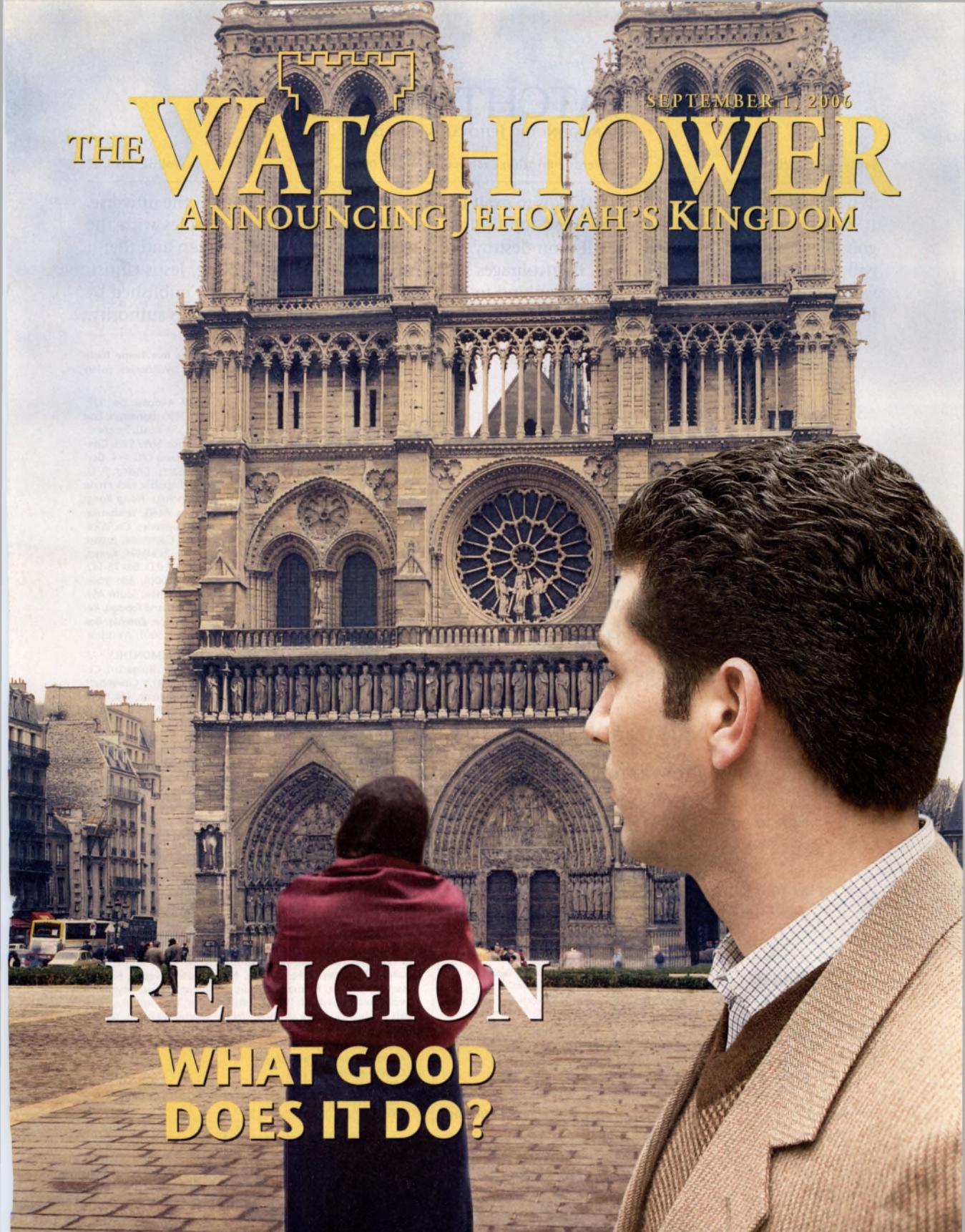


SEPTEMBER 1, 2006

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

A photograph of a man with dark hair, seen from the side and back, looking towards the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. The cathedral's famous rose window and intricate stonework are prominent in the background. In the foreground, another person's back is visible, wearing a red hoodie.

RELIGION
WHAT GOOD
DOES IT DO?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

September 1, 2006

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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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RELIGION WHAT GOOD DOES IT DO?

“CAN be good without being religious!” That is a common sentiment. Many honest, compassionate, responsible people are not attracted to religion. For example, few Western Europeans are churchgoers, although most say that they believe in God.* Even in Latin America, a mere 15 to 20 percent of Catholics go to church regularly.

Like many others, perhaps you feel that religion is irrelevant to a better life. Possibly, though, you are also aware that decades ago, in your grandparents' day, most people were much more religious than they are today. How did religion lose its widespread appeal? Can a person be good without being religious? Is there a religion that can benefit you?

Why Many Have Turned From Religion

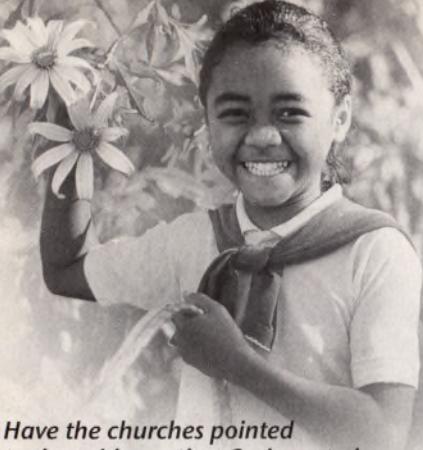
For centuries, most people in Christendom believed that God requires obedience. They went to church to gain God's favor, either through rites conducted by a priest or through guidance provided by a preacher. Of course, many were aware of the hypocrisy in religion. The role of religion in war was well-known, as was the abusive conduct of some clergymen. But most people felt that religion itself was good. Others liked the mystique, the tradition, and the music; some even saw value in the threat of eternal

damnation in hell, which is a teaching not found in the Scriptures. Then, several developments changed the way that many people viewed the churches.

The theory of evolution became popular. Some became convinced that life originated by accident—without God. Most religions failed to provide convincing evidence that God is the Source of life. (Psalm 36:9) In addition, as technology advanced, dramatic achievements in medicine, transportation, and communications gave people the impression that *any* problem can be solved by science. Further, it was felt that social scientists and psychologists provided better guidance than did the churches. The churches, for their part, failed to demonstrate clearly that living by God's law is the best way of life.—James 1:25.

In response, many churches changed their message. Priests and preachers gave up teaching that God requires obedience. Instead, many taught that each individual must decide for himself what is right and what is wrong. Trying to gain popularity, some religious leaders claimed that God accepts you no matter how you live. Such teaching calls to mind what the Bible foretold: “There will be a period of

* “The 1960s . . . marked the beginning in many countries of the collapse of religious culture as a whole.” —*The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000*.



*Have the churches pointed
to the evidence that God created
all things?*

time when they will not put up with the healthful teaching, but, in accord with their own desires, they will accumulate teachers for themselves to have their ears tickled.”—2 Timothy 4:3.

Rather than attracting people, such teaching turned them away. They naturally wondered: ‘If the churches doubt the power of God to create and the wisdom of God to make laws, how does going to church benefit me? Why should I bother teaching religion to my children?’ Individuals who were just trying to lead a decent life began to see religion as irrelevant. They left the churches, and religion was no longer important to them. Where did something that should be right go so wrong? The Bible provides a persuasive explanation.

Religion Used for Evil Ends

The apostle Paul warned the early Christians that some would use Christianity for evil ends. He said: “Oppressive wolves will enter in among you and will not treat the flock with tenderness, and from among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:29, 30) One who spoke “twisted things” was the Roman

Catholic theologian Augustine. Jesus had taught his followers to convince others by reasoning from the Scriptures. However, Augustine twisted the meaning of Jesus’ words recorded at Luke 14:23, “Compel them to come in,” to mean that it was all right to use force in the work of converting people. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 28:23, 24) Augustine used religion to control people.

Satan, a rebellious angel, is behind the misuse and corruption of religion. He provoked religious men in the first century to try to corrupt Christian congregations. The Bible says of those men: “Such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light. It is therefore nothing great if his ministers also keep transforming themselves into ministers of righteousness.”—2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

Satan still uses religion that makes a pretense of being Christian, moral, and enlightening in order to make people live by his standards rather than God’s. (Luke 4:5-7) You have probably noticed that many clergymen today use religion to elevate themselves with high-sounding titles and to obtain money from their flocks. Governments have also used religion to persuade citizens to sacrifice themselves in war.

The Devil employs religion more extensively than most realize. You might imagine that only a few religious extremists are serving Satan’s interests. But according to the Bible, “the one called Devil and Satan . . . is misleading the entire inhab-



ited earth." The Bible also says: "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (Revelation 12:9; 1 John 5:19) How does God feel about religion that is used by leaders who just want to draw people after themselves?

"What Do I Care?"

If you are shocked at the conduct of some churches of Christendom, know that Almighty God is greatly displeased with them. Christendom claims to have made a pact with God; ancient Israel made a similar claim. Both have proved unfaithful. Jehovah's denunciation of Israel therefore applies with equal force to Christendom today. Jehovah said: "They have not listened to my words and have rejected my law. What do I care about incense from Sheba? . . . Your sacrifices do not please me." (Jeremiah 6:19, 20, *New International Version*) God did not recognize acts of worship performed by hypocrites. He was not interested in their rituals and prayers. He told Israel: "Your festal seasons

Does a representative of God belong in this setting?



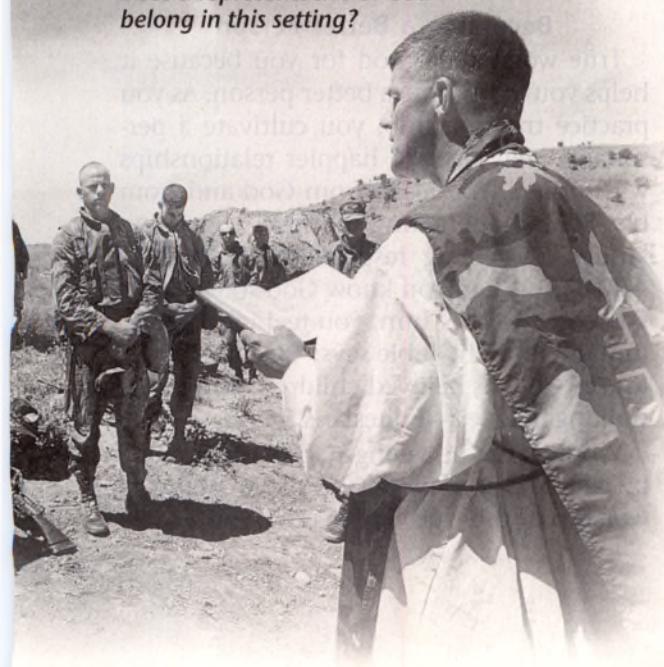
AP Photo/Georgy Abdaladze

How does God view this kind of festival?

my soul has hated. To me they have become a burden; I have become tired of bearing them. And when you spread out your palms, I hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I am not listening."—Isaiah 1:14, 15.

Is Jehovah attracted to festivals that the churches present as Christian but that originally honored false gods? Does he listen to the prayers of clergymen who corrupt Christ's teachings? Does God accept any religion that rejects his law? You can be sure that he reacts to church rituals today just as he reacted to the sacrifices of Israel of old, regarding which he said: "What do I care?"

Nevertheless, Jehovah does care deeply about worship rendered in truth by sincere people. God is pleased when individuals express appreciation for all that they receive from him. (Malachi 3:16, 17) So can you be good without worshipping God? A person who does nothing for his loving parents is hardly justified in considering himself good, is he? Can a person who does nothing for God be good? Reasonably, we should take an active interest in the true God, with whom life itself originated. In the following article, we will see how true worship not only honors God but also benefits us.



WORSHIP THAT IS GOOD FOR YOU

THE drawing near to God is good for me," declared the psalmist Asaph. He had considered imitating those who become unconcerned about God in order to pursue a life of ease. But then Asaph thought of the advantages of drawing close to God and concluded that it was good for him. (Psalm 73:2, 3, 12, 28) Is true worship good for you today? How can it benefit you?

Worshipping the true God helps you to rise above a purely self-centered way of life. Because of the way we have been made by "the God of love," those who pursue only their own interests can never find happiness. (2 Corinthians 13:11) Jesus taught a fundamental truth about human nature when he said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) That is why we enjoy doing things for our friends and family. But the greatest happiness comes from doing things for God. He is more deserving of our love than anyone else is. Millions of people from all walks of life have found that worshipping God by doing as he asks is deeply satisfying.—1 John 5:3.

Having a Purpose in Life

True worship is also good for you because it gives you a purpose in life. Have you noticed how often happiness is linked to the feeling that you are achieving something worthwhile? Most people have a goal in life, whether related to their family, friends, business, or pleasure. Because of the uncertainties of life, these things often fail to make them happy. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) However, true worship helps you to find a higher pur-

pose, one that continues to be satisfying even when other aspects of life prove to be disappointing.

True worship involves knowing Jehovah and serving him faithfully. Those practicing it draw very close to God. (Ecclesiastes 12:13; John 4:23; James 4:8) You might find it difficult to imagine knowing God so well that he becomes your friend. But by contemplating the record of his dealings with people and by considering what he has created, you really can discern facets of his personality. (Romans 1:20) What is more, by reading God's Word, you can understand why we are here, why God allows suffering, how he will end suffering and, perhaps most fascinating of all, how you can play a meaningful part in what God is doing. (Isaiah 43:10; 1 Corinthians 3:9) Such understanding can give you a new reason for living!

Becoming a Better Person

True worship is good for you because it helps you to become a better person. As you practice true worship, you cultivate a personality that leads to happier relationships with others. You learn from God and from his Son about acting honestly, speaking kindly, and living responsibly. (Ephesians 4:20-5:5) When you know God so well that you come to love him, you feel impelled to imitate him. The Bible says: "Become imitators of God, as beloved children, and go on walking in love."—Ephesians 5:1, 2.

Would it not be a delight to be surrounded by people who imitate God's love? Happily, worship of the true God is not a solitary ac-

tivity. It brings you into contact with others who love what is right and good. Of course, you may feel uncomfortable with the idea of organized religion. As we saw in the preceding article, however, the problem with most religions is not that they are organized but that they are not organized in the right way and for the right reasons. Many organized religions serve unchristian ends. God's people are organized by Jehovah himself for a noble purpose. The Bible says: "God is a God, not of disorder, but of peace." (1 Corinthians 14:33) Like millions of others, you may find that associating with a well-ordered body of Christians has a pleasant influence on your outlook.

Hope for the Future

The Holy Scriptures show that God is organizing true worshippers so that they can survive the end of the present system of things and inherit a new earth in which "righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 7:9-17) Worship that is good for you thus provides hope, indispensable to happiness. Some base their expectations for the future on the stability of governments, the prospects for business, or the anticipation of good health and satisfying retirement. But few if any of these things provide a solid basis for looking forward to a happy future. On

the other hand, the apostle Paul wrote: "We have rested our hope on a living God." —1 Timothy 4:10.

If you make a thorough search, you can find true worshippers. In today's divided world, love and unity clearly distinguish Jehovah's Witnesses. They come from nearly every nation and background; yet, they are united by love for one another and love for Jehovah. (John 13:35) They invite you to discover for yourself what they have experienced. Asaph wrote: "The drawing near to God is good for me." —Psalm 73:28.



You can become
God's friend



BENEFITING FROM THE LOYALTY OF LOVED ONES

AS TOLD BY
KATHLEEN COOKE

WHILE visiting relatives in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1911, my grandmother Mary Ellen Thompson attended a lecture by Charles Taze Russell, a prominent member of the Bible Students, later known as Jehovah's Witnesses. Grandma was thrilled with what she heard. Back in South Africa, she contacted local Bible Students. In April 1914 she was one of the 16 baptized at the Bible Students' first convention in South Africa. Grandma's daughter Edith, who became my mother, was then six years old.

Following the death of Brother Russell in 1916, there was dissension among the Bible Students worldwide. The number of faithful ones in Durban fell from 60 to about 12. My paternal grandmother, Ingeborg Myrdal, and her son Henry, a teenager

who had recently been baptized, took their stand with the loyal ones. In 1924, Henry became a colporteur, as full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses were then called. He preached in many parts of southern Africa for the next five years. In 1930, Henry and Edith were married, and three years later I was born.

Grandma with her daughters

An Extended Family

For a while we lived in Mozambique, but in 1939 we moved into Grandma and Grandpa Thompson's home in Johannesburg. Grandpa had no interest in Bible truth



and sometimes opposed Grandma, but he was nonetheless very hospitable. My sister, Thelma, was born in 1940, and she and I learned to care for the needs of older people. Many a supertime was prolonged as we shared the day's events with one another or reminisced about the past.

Our family enjoyed the company of visiting Witnesses, especially those in the full-time ministry. They would share in our supertime conversation, and their expressions added to our appreciation for the spiritual heritage we had. This strengthened the desire of Thelma and me to become pioneers like them.

From a very tender age, we were taught the joys of reading. Mom, Dad, and Grandma all shared in reading to us from good story-books or straight from the Bible. Christian

meetings and the ministry were as much a part of our lives as breathing was. Dad was the company servant (now called presiding overseer) of the Johannesburg Congregation, so we all had to be at the meetings in good time. When we had a convention, Dad was busy helping with its administration, while Mom helped delegates with their accommodations.

A Special Convention for Us

The convention in 1948 in Johannesburg was special. For the first time, members of the headquarters staff of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York, were present. Dad was assigned with his car to be the driver for Nathan Knorr and Milton Henschel for the duration of their stay. At that convention, I was baptized.

Shortly afterward, to Dad's surprise his father told him that he deeply regretted that following the death of Brother Russell, he had allowed himself to be influenced by those who left the Bible Students. He died a few months later. Granny Myrdal, on the other hand, remained loyal until she finished her earthly course in 1955.

Events That Shaped My Life

I started to serve as a regular pioneer on February 1, 1949. Soon excitement began to mount with the announcement that an international convention would be held in New York City the following year. We longed to go, but it was way beyond our means. Then, in February 1950, Grandpa Thompson died, and Grandma used the money that she inherited to pay passage for the five of us.

Some weeks before our departure, a letter arrived from the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. It

With my parents when I was baptized in 1948





With Albert Schroeder, the registrar of Gilead, and the nine other students from South Africa



With John in 1984

was an invitation for me to attend the 16th class of the missionary school of Gilead. What a thrill, for I had not yet turned 17! When the class began, there I was among the ten students from South Africa, enjoying that great privilege.

After our graduation in February 1951, eight of us returned to serve as missionaries in South Africa. For the next few years, my partner and I preached mostly in smaller towns where Afrikaans was spoken. At first, I was not conversant in that language, and I recall riding my bicycle home one day crying about my ineffectiveness in the ministry. However, in time I improved, and Jehovah blessed my efforts.

Marriage and Traveling Work

In 1955, I became acquainted with John Cooke. He had helped to open up the preaching work in France, Portugal, and Spain prior to and following World War II

and had become a missionary in Africa the year I met him. Afterward he wrote: "I got three shocks all in one week . . . A very generous brother presented me with a little car; I was appointed as district servant; and I fell in love."* We were married in December 1957.

During our courtship, John had assured me that life with him would never have a dull moment, and he was right. We visited congregations throughout South Africa, mostly in black areas. Weekly, we faced the challenge of obtaining permission just to enter such areas, let alone stay there overnight. On rare occasions, we slept on the floor of an empty shop in an adjacent white area, where we tried not to be seen by passersby. We usually had to stay with the nearest white Witnesses, who often lived many miles away.

We also faced the challenge of modest assembly facilities built right in the bush. We

* See *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1959, pages 468-72.

showed films produced by Jehovah's Witnesses that helped people gain appreciation for our worldwide brotherhood. We took our own generator, since there was usually no electricity in those areas. We also had to cope with difficulties in British protectorates where our literature was then banned as well as with the challenge of learning the Zulu language. Yet, we rejoiced to be able to serve our brothers.

In August 1961, John became the first instructor of South Africa's four-week Kingdom Ministry School course, which was designed to help congregation overseers. He was skilled in the art of teaching and reached hearts with his simple logic and vivid word pictures. For nearly a year and a half, we traveled from one place to another for each successive English-speaking class. While John taught, I shared in the field ministry with local Witnesses. Then, to our surprise, we received a letter inviting us to serve at the South Africa branch office near Johannesburg beginning July 1, 1964.

By this time, though, John's health had begun to puzzle us. In 1948 he had a bout of tuberculosis and after that often suffered from a general lack of stamina. He experienced flu-like symptoms and would be laid up for days—he could not do anything or see anyone. A doctor whom we consulted shortly before we were called to the branch diagnosed John's problem as depression.

It was unthinkable for us to change our pace of life, as the doctor suggested. At the branch, John was assigned to the Service Department, and I to proofreading. And what a blessing it was to have a room of our own! John had served in Portuguese territories prior to our marriage, so in 1967 we were asked to help the only local Portuguese Witness family to preach to the large Portuguese community in and around Johannesburg. This meant yet another language for me to tackle.

As the Portuguese community was scattered over a large area, we did a lot of traveling—sometimes up to 200 miles to reach deserving ones. By this time, Portuguese-speaking Witnesses from Mozambique began visiting us at assembly times, which was a great help to the new ones. During our 11 years with the Portuguese, we saw our little group of about 30 blossom into four congregations.

Changes at Home

In the meantime, there had been changes in my parents' home. In 1960 my sister, Thelma, married John Urban, a pioneer from the United States. In 1965 they attended the 40th class of Gilead and served loyally as missionaries in Brazil for 25 years. In 1990 they returned to Ohio to care for John's ailing parents. Despite the stresses of caregiving, they have remained in the full-time ministry to this day.

Grandma Thompson finished her earthly course in 1965, still faithful to God at 98 years of age. Dad retired from secular work that same year. So when John and I were asked to help in the local Portuguese field, Dad and Mom volunteered to join us. They were a stabilizing influence in the group, and after a few months, the first congregation was formed. Shortly afterward, Mom began to feel the effects of cancer, which took her life in 1971. Dad died seven years later.

Coping With John's Illness

By the 1970's, it became clear that John's health was not improving. Bit by bit, he had to relinquish some of his cherished privileges of service, including presiding at our branch family's weekly *Watchtower* Study and morning Bible discussions. His work assignment was changed from the Service Department to the Mail Room and then to working in the garden.

John's fighting spirit made it hard for him to make changes. When I persistently tried to get him to slow down, he teasingly called me his ball and chain—usually accompanied by an appreciative hug. We eventually felt it advisable to leave the Portuguese field and serve with the congregation that met in the Kingdom Hall at the branch.

As John's health deteriorated, it was touching to observe his intimate relationship with Jehovah. When John would wake in the middle of the night in a state of deep depression, we talked together until he felt calm enough to pray for Jehovah's help. Eventually, he managed to cope alone with those bad moments by forcing himself to repeat slowly Philippians 4:6, 7: "Do not be anxious over *anything* . . ." Then he would become calm enough to begin praying. Often I was awake and would quietly watch his lips move as he lingered in earnest supplication to Jehovah.

Since our branch facilities had become very cramped, construction of a large new branch was begun outside Johannesburg. John and I made frequent visits to this peaceful site, away from the city's noise and pollution. It helped John very much when we were allowed to move into temporary accommodations there until the new branch was completed.

New Challenges

As John's thinking and reasoning abilities became more impaired, fulfilling his work assignments became more difficult. I was deeply touched by the way that others supported John in his efforts. For example, when a brother visited a public library to do research, he would take John along. John's pockets would be bulging with tracts and magazines for the day's outing. This helped John to retain a sense of accomplishment and worth.

Eventually, Alzheimer's disease made it impossible for John to understand the written word. We were grateful for the audiotapes of Bible literature and Kingdom songs. We listened to them over and over again. John would often get agitated if I was not sitting and listening with him, so I kept myself busy during those many hours by doing needlework. It kept us well supplied with sweaters and blankets!

In time, John's condition demanded more nursing care from me. Even though I was often too tired to read or study, it was a privilege to care for him to the end. That end came in 1998 when John died quietly in my arms soon after he turned 85—unswervingly loyal to the finish. How I look forward to seeing him in the resurrection, his health and mind restored!

Being Refreshed

After John's death, it was not easy for me to learn to live a life of my own. So in May 1999, I visited my sister, Thelma, and her husband in the United States. How delightful and refreshing it was to meet up with dozens of loyal, dear friends, especially during our visit to the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York! It was definitely the spiritual boost I needed.

Reminiscing about the lives of my loyal loved ones is a reminder of so many things that have been beneficial for me. By means of their instruction, example, and help, I learned to widen out in my love for people of other nations and races. I learned patience, endurance, and adaptability. Above all, I experienced the graciousness of Jehovah, the Hearer of prayer. I echo the feelings of the psalmist who wrote: "Happy is the one you choose and cause to approach, that he may reside in your courtyards. We will certainly be satisfied with the goodness of your house."—Psalm 65:4.

Jehovah's Word Is Alive

Highlights From Book Five of Psalms

THE rich may say: "Our sons are like little plants grown up in their youth, our daughters like corners carved in palace style, our garners full, . . . our flocks multiplying by thousands." Moreover, the wealthy may exclaim: "Happy is the people for whom it is just like that!" In contrast, however, the psalmist says: "Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah!" (Psalm 144:12-15) How could it be otherwise? Jehovah is the happy God, and happiness is the lot of those worshipping him. (1 Timothy 1:11) This truth is made evident in the final collection of divinely inspired songs, consisting of Psalms 107 to 150.

Book Five of Psalms also highlights Jehovah's superlative qualities, including his loving-kindness, trueness, and goodness. The more insight we gain into God's personality, the more inclined we are to love and fear him. This, in turn, contributes to our happiness. What a valuable message we find in Book Five of Psalms!—Hebrews 4:12.

HAPPY BECAUSE OF JEHOVAH'S LOVING-KINDNESS (Psalm 107:1–119:176)

"O let people give thanks to Jehovah for his loving-kindness and for his wonderful works to the sons of men," sing the exiled Jews returning from Babylonian captivity. (Psalm 107:8, 15, 21,

31) Praising God, David sings: "Your trueness [is] up to the skies." (Psalm 108:4) In the following melody, he prays: "Help me, O Jehovah my God; save me according to your loving-kindness." (Psalm 109:18, 19, 26) Psalm 110 is prophetic of the Messiah's rulership. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom," states Psalm 111:10. According to the next psalm, "happy is the man in fear of Jehovah."—Psalm 112:1.

Psalms 113 to 118 are called the Hallel Psalms, so termed because they repeatedly use the expression "Hallelujah," or "Praise Jah!" According to the Mishnah—a third-century work that put into writing the earlier oral tradition—these songs were sung at the Passover and the three annual festivals of the Jews. The longest of all psalms and chapters in the Bible, Psalm 119 magnifies Jehovah's revealed word, or message.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

109:23—What did David mean when he said: "Like a shadow when it declines, I am obliged to go away"? David was poetically saying that he felt that his death was very near.—Psalm 102:11.

110:1, 2—What did "[David's] Lord," Jesus Christ, do while sitting at God's right hand? Following his resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven and waited at God's right hand until 1914 to begin ruling as King. During that time, Jesus ruled over his anointed followers, guiding them in their preaching and disciple-making work as well as preparing them to rule with him in his Kingdom.—Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 22:28-30.

110:4—To what has Jehovah ‘sworn without feeling regret’? This oath is the covenant that Jehovah made with Jesus Christ to serve as King and High Priest.—Luke 22:29.

113:3—In what way is Jehovah’s name to be praised “from the rising of the sun until its setting”? This involves more than a group of individuals worshipping God every day. From the sun’s rising in the east to its setting in the west, the rays of the sun illuminate the entire globe. Likewise, Jehovah is to be praised earth wide. This cannot be accomplished without an organized effort. As Jehovah’s Witnesses, we have the cherished privilege to praise God and share zealously in the Kingdom proclamation work.

116:15—How ‘precious in Jehovah’s eyes is the death of his loyal ones’? Jehovah’s worshippers are so precious to him that he considers their death as a body, or a group, too costly to permit. If Jehovah were to allow that to happen, it would be as if his enemies were more powerful than he is. Moreover, no one would be left on the earth as a foundation for the new world.

119:71—What could be good about suffering affliction? Hardship can teach us to rely more fully on Jehovah, to pray to him more earnestly, and to be more diligent in studying the Bible and applying what it says. Moreover, our response to affliction can reveal personality flaws that can be corrected. Suffering will not make us bitter if we allow it to refine us.

119:96—What is meant by ‘an end to all perfection’? The psalmist is speaking about perfection from a human viewpoint. He likely had in mind that man’s concept of perfection is limited. In contrast, God’s commandment has no such limit. Its guidance applies to all aspects of life. “To all perfection I see a limit,” reads the *New International*

al Version, “but your commands are boundless.”

119:164—What is significant about praising God “seven times in the day”? The number seven often denotes completeness. Therefore, the psalmist is stating that Jehovah is deserving of all praise.

Lessons for Us:

107:27-31. The wisdom of the world will ‘prove confused’ when Armageddon strikes. (Revelation 16:14, 16) It cannot save anyone from destruction. Only those who look to Jehovah for salvation will live to “give thanks to [him] for his loving-kindness.”

109:30, 31; 110:5. The sword-wielding right hand of a soldier normally lacks the protection of the shield, which was held on the left. Metaphorically, Jehovah is “at the right hand” of his servants, to fight for them. Thus he gives them protection and help—a fine reason for us to “laud [him] very much”!

113:4-9. Jehovah is so high that he has to descend even “to look on heaven.” Yet, he is compassionate to the lowly one, the poor one, and the barren woman. The Sovereign Lord Jehovah is humble and wants his worshippers to be that way too.—James 4:6.

114:3-7. Learning about the wonderful works that Jehovah performed in behalf of his people at the Red Sea, at the Jordan River, and at Mount Sinai ought to affect us deeply. Mankind, represented by “earth,” should be in awe—figuratively “in severe pains”—because of the Lord.

119:97-101. Gaining wisdom, insight, and understanding from God’s Word protects us from spiritual harm.

119:105. God’s Word is a lamp to our foot in that it can help us to deal with current problems. It also figuratively lights up our roadway, since it foretells God’s purpose for the future.

HAPPY DESPITE ADVERSITIES

(Psalm 120:1–145:21)

How can we face trialsome circumstances and survive adversities? Psalms 120 to 134 give a clear answer to this question. We survive hardship and maintain our joy by looking to Jehovah for help. These psalms, called Songs of the Ascents, were probably sung as the Israelites traveled up to Jerusalem for the observance of their annual festivals.

Psalms 135 and 136 portray Jehovah as the Doer of whatever pleases him, in sharp contrast with helpless idols. The 136th Psalm is composed for responsive singing, the last part of each verse being sung in response to the first. The next psalm relates the heart-broken condition of the Jews in Babylon who wanted to worship Jehovah in Zion. Psalms 138 to 145 are of David. He wants to ‘laud Jehovah with all his heart.’ Why? “Because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made,” he says. (Psalm 138:1; 139:14) In the following five psalms, David prays for protection from bad men, for righteous reproofs, for deliverance from persecutors, and for guidance in conduct. He highlights the happiness of Jehovah’s people. (Psalm 144:15) After reviewing God’s greatness and goodness, David declares: “The praise of Jehovah my mouth will speak; and let all flesh bless his holy name to time indefinite, even forever.”—Psalm 145:21.

Scriptural Questions Answered:

122:3—How was Jerusalem a city “joined together in oneness”? As was usually the case in cities of ancient times, houses in Jerusalem were built close together. The city was compact and therefore easy to defend. Moreover, the physical proximity of homes made it possible for city dwellers to rely upon one another for assistance and protection. This suggests the spiritual unity of the 12 tribes of Israel when they came together for worship.

123:2—What is the point of the illustration about the eyes of servants? Servants and maidservants look toward the hand of a master or a mistress for two reasons: to determine his or her wishes and to receive protection and life’s necessities. Similarly, we look to Jehovah in order to discern his will and to gain his favor.

131:1-3—How did David ‘soothe and quiet his soul like a weanling upon his mother’? As a weaned child learns to find solace and satisfaction in his mother’s arms, David learned to soothe and calm his soul “like a weanling upon his mother.” How? By not being haughty at heart and lofty in eyes and by not going after things that were too great for him. Rather than seeking prominence, David usually recognized his limitations and manifested humility. We are wise to imitate his attitude, particularly when reaching out for privileges in the congregation.

Lessons for Us:

120:1, 2, 6, 7. Slanderous and cutting speech can cause unbearable distress to others. Keeping our tongue in check is one way to show that we “stand for peace.”

*Jehovah's wonderful
works are
awe-inspiring*



120:3, 4. If we have to put up with someone having a “tricky tongue,” we can take comfort in knowing that Jehovah will set matters straight in his due time. Slanderers will suffer calamity at the hands of “a mighty man.” They will surely be recipients of Jehovah’s fiery judgment symbolized by “burning coals of the broom trees.”

127:1, 2. In all our endeavors, we should look to Jehovah for guidance.

133:1-3. The unity of Jehovah’s people is soothing, wholesome, and refreshing. We should not disrupt it by engaging in fault-finding, quarreling, or complaining.

137:1, 5, 6. Exiled worshippers of Jehovah felt attached to Zion, which had represented God’s organization. What about us? Have we formed a loyal attachment to the organization that Jehovah is using today?

138:2. Jehovah ‘magnifies his saying even above all his name’ in that the fulfillment of all that he has promised in his name will far exceed whatever expectations we may have. Truly, grand prospects lie ahead of us.

139:1-6, 15, 16. Jehovah knows our activities, our thoughts, and our words even before we speak them. He knows us from when the embryo was formed, before each body part became distinct. God’s knowledge of us as individuals is “too wonderful” to fathom. How comforting it is to know that Jehovah not only sees a trialsome situation we may be facing but also understands its effect on us!

139:7-12. No place that we might go to is too remote for God to strengthen us.

139:17, 18. Has knowledge of Jehovah become pleasurable to us? (Proverbs 2:10) If so, we have found an inexhaustible fountain of delight. Jehovah’s thoughts “are more than even the grains of sand.” There will always be more to learn about him.

139:23, 24. We should want Jehovah to examine our inner person for ‘painful ways’—improper thoughts, desires, and inclinations—and to help us root them out.

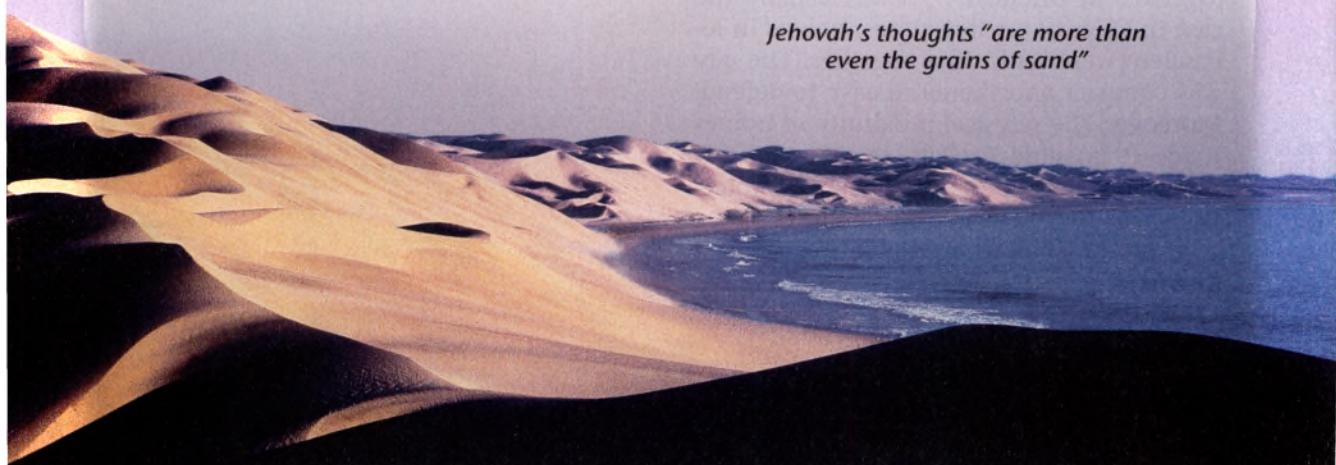
143:4-7. How can we endure even severe hardships? The psalmist gives us the key: Meditate on Jehovah’s activity, keep ourselves concerned with his doings, and pray to him for help.

“Praise Jah, You People!”

Each of the first four collections of psalms ends with an expression of praise to Jehovah. (Psalm 41:13; 72:19, 20; 89:52; 106:48) The final collection is no exception. Psalm 150:6 states: “Every breathing thing—let it praise Jah. Praise Jah, you people!” That will indeed become a reality in God’s new world.

As we look forward to that blessed time, we have ample reason to glorify the true God and praise his name. When we think of the happiness we experience because we know Jehovah and enjoy a good relationship with him, are we not moved to praise him with a grateful heart?

Jehovah’s thoughts “are more than even the grains of sand”





When a Loved One Leaves Jehovah

MARK and Louise are Jehovah's Witnesses.* With love and care, they taught the Scriptures to their children, as the Bible exhorts Christian parents to do. (Proverbs 22:6; 2 Timothy 3:15) Sadly, not all of their children continued to serve Jehovah upon becoming young adults. "My heart aches for the children who strayed," says Louise. "How can I pretend that it doesn't hurt desperately from day to day? When others speak of their sons, my throat tightens up and I have to hold back tears."

Yes, when a person chooses to leave Jehovah and the way of life set out in the Scriptures, faithful family members typically experience deep anguish. "I love my sister very much," says Irene. "I would do anything to see her come back to Jehovah!" Maria, whose brother turned his back on Jehovah to pursue a course of immoral conduct, says: "This

has been hard for me to bear because in every other respect, he has been a wonderful brother to me. I especially miss him at large family gatherings."

Why Is It So Hard?

Why does the spiritual loss of a child or other loved one cause such deep distress to Christian relatives? Because they know that the Scriptures promise eternal life on a paradise earth for those who remain loyal to Jehovah. (Psalm 37:29; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:3-5) They look forward to sharing these blessings with their mates, children, parents, siblings, and grandchildren. How it pains them to think that their loved ones who have stopped serving Jehovah may miss out! Even with regard to their present life, Christians appreciate that Jehovah's laws and principles are for their benefit. Christians are therefore heartbroken to see their loved ones sow in such a way as to ensure a bitter harvest.—Isaiah 48:17, 18; Galatians 6:7, 8.

* Some names have been changed.



Being absorbed in spiritual activities can help you keep the right perspective

It may be difficult for some who have never experienced such a loss to appreciate just how devastating it can be. Virtually every aspect of life is affected. "It has become harder and harder to sit at Christian meetings and see parents laughing and talking with their children," says Louise. "Any happy event is overshadowed by emptiness because of the ones missing." One Christian elder recalls the four years during which his wife's daughter cut off association with them. He says: "Often, even the 'good times' were difficult. If I gave my wife a gift or took her somewhere nice for a weekend, she would break down crying, remembering that her daughter did not share our happiness."

Are such Christians overreacting? Not necessarily. In fact, they may to some extent be reflecting the qualities of Jehovah, in whose image man was made. (Genesis 1:26, 27) What does this mean? Well, how did Jehovah feel when his people Israel rebelled



against him? From Psalm 78:38-41, we learn that Jehovah was hurt and pained. Yet, he patiently warned and disciplined them, forgiving them time and again upon their demonstrating repentance. Obviously, Jehovah feels a personal attachment to his creatures, 'the work of his hands,' and does not easily give up on them. (Job 14:15; Jonah 4:10, 11) He implanted in humans the capacity for

having similar loyal attachments, and the bond between family members can be especially strong. So it is not surprising that humans would grieve over the spiritual loss of a beloved relative.

Indeed, the spiritual loss of a loved one is among the most difficult of trials that come upon true worshippers. (Acts 14:22) Jesus said that accepting his message would cause division in some families. (Matthew 10:34-38) This is not because the Bible message of itself causes family division. Rather, unbelieving or unfaithful family members cause a rift by rejecting, abandoning, or even opposing the way of Christianity. We can be thankful, however, that Jehovah does not leave his faithful ones without a means of coping with the trials that beset them. If you are presently sorrowing over the spiritual loss of a loved one, what Bible principles can help you endure the grief and find a measure of joy and contentment?

Coping

"By building up yourselves . . . , keep yourselves in God's love." (Jude 20, 21) Depending on your particular circumstances, it may be that there is nothing you can do at this time to help a family member who has stopped serving Jehovah. Nevertheless, you can and should build up yourself as well as any remaining faithful family members. Veronica, who saw two of her three sons leave the truth, says: "My husband and I were reminded that if we remain in a strong spiritual state, we will be in the best condition to welcome back our sons when they come to their senses. Where would the prodigal son have been if his father had not been in a condition to receive him back?"

To keep yourself in a strong condition, be absorbed in spiritual activities. This would include maintaining a schedule for deep Bible study and attending Christian meetings.

How to Cope

- ◆ **"By building up yourselves . . . , keep yourselves in God's love."**—Jude 20, 21.
- ◆ **Do not give up hope.**
—1 Corinthians 13:7.
- ◆ **Resist self-blame.**—Ezekiel 18:20.
- ◆ **Be patient with others.**
—Colossians 3:13.
- ◆ **Respect Jehovah's arrangement for discipline.**—Hebrews 12:11.
- ◆ **Express your feelings.**—Psalm 62:7, 8.

Make yourself available to help others in the congregation to the extent that your circumstances allow. True, initially you may find such activities difficult. Veronica recalls: "My first instinct was to isolate myself like a wounded animal. But my husband insisted on our keeping a good spiritual routine. He made sure that we went to the meetings. When it was time to attend a convention, I needed a lot of courage to go and face people. Yet, the program drew us closer to Jehovah. Our son who had remained faithful was particularly built up by that convention."

Maria, mentioned earlier, finds it especially helpful to stay busy in the field ministry and is presently helping four persons to learn about the Bible. Similarly, Laura says: "Although I still cry daily, I thank Jehovah that even if I have not had the success that some parents have had in raising children, I do have the Bible's perfect message, which is able to help families in these last days." Ken and Eleanor, whose adult children left the congregation, arranged their circumstances to move to an area where there is a greater need for Kingdom publishers and to pursue the full-time ministry. This has helped them

keep matters in perspective and avoid being swallowed up by sorrow.

Do not give up hope. Love "hopes all things." (1 Corinthians 13:7) Ken, mentioned above, says: "When our children left the way of the truth, I thought that it was like their death. But after my sister died, my view changed. I am grateful that my children are not literally dead and that Jehovah continues to leave the way open for them to return to him." Indeed, experience has shown that many who have left the truth eventually do return.—Luke 15:11-24.

Resist self-blame. Parents especially may tend to look back and regret that they did not handle certain situations differently. However, the main thought conveyed at Ezekiel 18:20 is that Jehovah holds the sinner, not his parents, responsible for his wrong choice. Interestingly, while the book of Proverbs makes many comments about the parents' obligation to bring up their children in the right way, it contains over four times as much counsel for young ones to listen to and obey their parents. Yes, children have the responsibility to respond to the Bible-based training of their imperfect parents. You likely handled matters as well as you could at the time. Still, even if you feel that you made certain mistakes and that these were indeed your fault, that does not necessarily mean that your mistakes caused your loved one to

leave the truth. At any rate, there is nothing to be gained by indulging in "if onlys." Learn from your mistakes, determine not to repeat them, and pray to Jehovah for forgiveness. (Psalm 103:8-14; Isaiah 55:7) Then look to the future, not the past.

Be patient with others. It may be hard for some to know just how to encourage or comfort you, especially if they have never had a similar experience. Besides, people differ as to what they consider encouraging and comforting. So if some say things that upset you, apply the apostle Paul's counsel found at Colossians 3:13: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another."

Respect Jehovah's arrangement for discipline. If your relative has received discipline from the congregation, remember that this is part of Jehovah's arrangement and is in the best interests of all, including the wrongdoer. (Hebrews 12:11) Therefore, resist any inclination to find fault with the elders who were involved or the decisions they made. Remember, the best results come from doing things Jehovah's way, whereas opposing Jehovah's arrangements can only result in added distress.

After Israel's deliverance from Egypt, Moses regularly served as judge. (Exodus 18:13-16) Since a judgment in favor of one individual would probably have been against another, it is not hard to imagine that some were disappointed by Moses' decisions. Finding fault with Moses' judgments perhaps contributed to some instances of rebellion against his leadership. However, Jehovah was using Moses to lead His people, and He punished, not Moses, but the rebels and their families who supported them. (Numbers 16:31-35) We can learn from this by striving to respect and cooperate with deci-

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Are We Living in "the Last Days?"

"They Called Together the Sanhedrin"

"Rejoice With the Wife of Your Youth"



Have You Left Jehovah?

If so, whatever the reason, your relationship with Jehovah and your eternal prospects are at risk. Perhaps you intend to return to Jehovah. Are you vigorously pursuing this now? Or are you putting it off until "the right time"? Remember, the storm clouds of

Armageddon are swiftly approaching. Moreover, life in this system is short and uncertain. You cannot know if you will even be alive tomorrow. (Psalm 102:3; James 4:13, 14) One man who was diagnosed with a terminal illness said: "This illness caught me serving Jehovah

full-time, with no skeletons in my closet. And that's a good feeling to have right now." Imagine, though, how he would have felt if his illness had caught him saying, "Someday, I will return to Jehovah!" If you have left Jehovah, now is the best time to return.

sions made by those with theocratic authority today.

In this regard, Delores recalls how difficult it was for her to maintain a balanced view when her daughter was disciplined by the congregation. "What helped me," she says, "was to read over and over again articles dealing with the reasonableness of Jehovah's arrangements. I made a special notebook of points from talks and articles that would help me to bear up and carry on." This leads to another important means of coping.

Express your feelings. You may find it helpful to confide in one or two understanding friends who have your trust. In doing so, select friends who will help you to maintain a positive attitude. It will certainly be most effective to "pour out your heart" in prayer to Jehovah.* (Psalm 62:7, 8) Why? Because he

fully understands the depth of what you are feeling. For example, you may feel that it is unfair that you should have to experience such emotional anguish. After all, *you* did not leave Jehovah. Commit your feelings to Jehovah, and ask him to help you view the situation in a less painful way.—Psalm 37:5.

With the passing of time, you will likely be better able to manage your feelings. Meanwhile, do not give up in your efforts to be pleasing to your heavenly Father, and never feel that these are in vain. (Galatians 6:9) Remember, if we were to leave Jehovah, we would still have problems. On the other hand, by remaining loyal to him, we have his help with the trials we face. Be assured, then, that Jehovah appreciates the magnitude of your situation and will continue to give you needed strength at the right time. —2 Corinthians 4:7; Philippians 4:13; Hebrews 4:16.

* Regarding praying in behalf of a disfellowshipped relative, see *The Watchtower*, December 1, 2001, pages 30-1.

HOW TO APPROACH THE “HEARER OF PRAYER”

“O Hearer of prayer, even to you people of all flesh will come.”—PSALM 65:2.

OF ALL earth's thousands of living creatures, only humans have the capacity to worship the Creator. Only humans are conscious of having a spiritual need and feel the desire to satisfy it. This opens up for us the wonderful possibility of having a personal relationship with our heavenly Father.

² God created man with the ability to approach his Maker. Adam and Eve were created without sin. Thus, they could approach God as freely as a child approaches his father. However, that grand privilege was taken away by sin. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and lost their close relationship with him. (Genesis 3:8-13, 17-24) Does that mean that Adam's imperfect offspring can no longer communicate with God? No, Jehovah still allows them to approach him but only if they meet certain conditions. What are those conditions?

Requirements for Approaching God

³ An event involving two of Adam's sons helps us to see what God requires of an imperfect human who wishes to approach Him. Both Cain and Abel made efforts to approach God by presenting sacrifices to him. Abel's offering was accepted, whereas Cain's was not. (Genesis 4:3-5) What made the difference? Hebrews 11:4 states: “By faith Abel

1. What sets humans apart from earth's other creatures, and what possibility does this open up?
2. What adverse effect did sin have on man's relationship with his Creator?
3. How should sinful humans approach God, and what example illustrates this?

offered God a sacrifice of greater worth than Cain, through which faith he had witness borne to him that he was righteous.” Clearly, then, faith is a prerequisite for gaining access to God. Another prerequisite is seen in Jehovah's words to Cain: “If you turn to doing good, will there not be an exaltation?” Yes, Cain's approach to God would have been accepted if Cain had turned to doing good. However, Cain rejected God's counsel, killed Abel, and ended up as an outcast. (Genesis 4:7-12) Thus, early on, the importance of approaching God in faith along with doing good works was emphasized.

⁴ Recognition of our own sinful state is essential if we wish to approach God. All men are sinful, and sin is an obstacle to approaching God. The prophet Jeremiah wrote concerning Israel: “We ourselves have transgressed . . . You have blocked approach to yourself with a cloud mass, that prayer may not pass through.” (Lamentations 3:42, 44) Even so, throughout human history God has shown himself willing to accept the prayers of those who approach him in faith and with the proper heart attitude, observing his commandments. (Psalm 119:145) Who were some of these individuals, and what can we learn from their prayers?

⁵ One such person was Abraham. His approach to God was accepted, for God called

4. What should we recognize regarding our approach to God?
- 5, 6. What can we learn from Abraham's approach to God?

Abraham "my friend." (Isaiah 41:8) What can we learn from Abraham's approach to God? This faithful patriarch asked Jehovah about an heir, saying: "What will you give me, seeing that I am going childless?" (Genesis 15:2, 3; 17:18) On another occasion, he expressed his concern over who would be saved when God rendered judgment against the wicked in Sodom and Gomorrah. (Genesis 18:23-33) Abraham also made supplication in behalf of others. (Genesis 20:7, 17) And, as in the case of Abel, Abraham's approach to God at times involved an offering to Jehovah.—Genesis 22:9-14.

⁶ On all these occasions, Abraham felt free to speak with Jehovah. However, his freedom of speech was coupled with a humble view of his standing in relation to his Creator. Notice his respectful words, found at Genesis 18:27: "Please, here I have taken upon myself to speak to Jehovah, whereas I am dust and ashes." What a fine attitude to imitate!

⁷ Patriarchs prayed about a variety of matters, and they were favorably heard by Jehovah. Jacob uttered a prayer in the form of a vow. After asking for God's support, he solemnly promised: "As for everything that you will give me I shall without fail give the tenth of it to you." (Genesis 28:20-22) Later, when he was about to meet his brother, Jacob implored Jehovah for protection, saying: "Deliver me, I pray you, from my brother's hand, from Esau's hand, because I am afraid of him." (Genesis 32:9-12) The patriarch Job approached Jehovah in behalf of his family, offering sacrifices for them. When Job's three companions sinned in their speech, Job prayed in their behalf, and "Jehovah

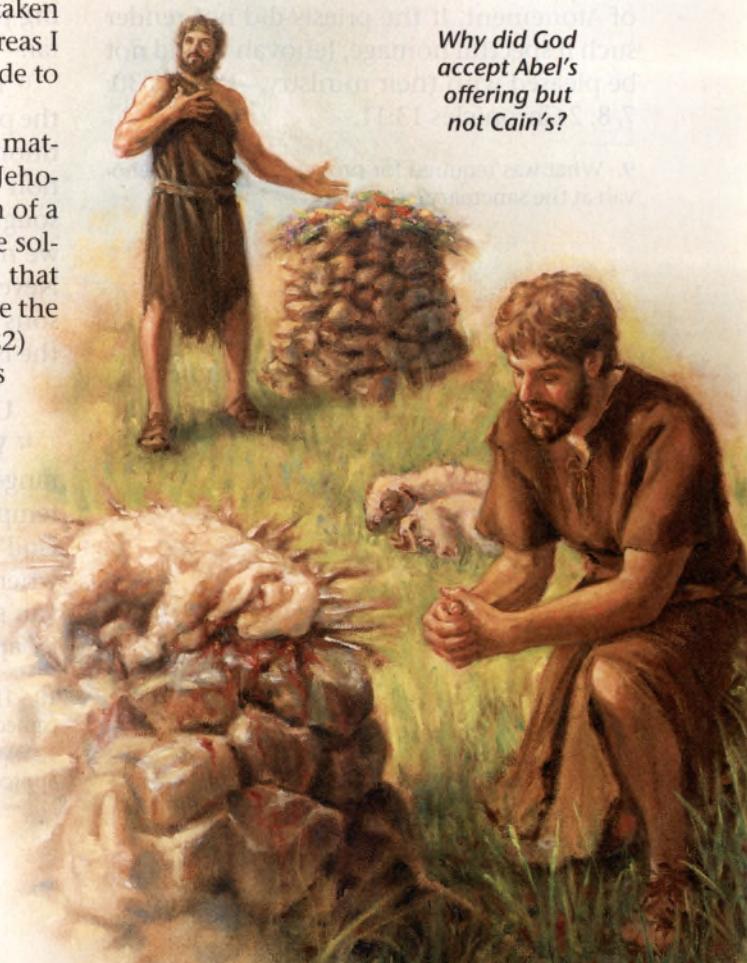
accepted Job's face." (Job 1:5; 42:7-9) These accounts help us to identify matters we might take to Jehovah in prayer. We also see that Jehovah is prepared to accept the prayers of those approaching him in a proper manner.

Under the Law Covenant

⁸ After Jehovah delivered the nation of Israel from Egypt, he gave them the Law covenant. The Law prescribed the arrangement for approach to God through an appointed priesthood. Some Levites were assigned to act as priests on behalf of the people. When matters of national importance arose, a

8. Under the Law covenant, how were matters taken to Jehovah on behalf of the people?

Why did God accept Abel's offering but not Cain's?



7. What matters did the patriarchs take to Jehovah in prayer?

representative of the people—sometimes a king or a prophet—took the matter to God in prayer. (1 Samuel 8:21, 22; 14:36-41; Jeremiah 42:1-3) For example, at the dedication of the temple, King Solomon approached Jehovah in heartfelt prayer. In turn, Jehovah indicated his acceptance of Solomon's prayer by filling the temple with His glory and saying: "My ears [will be] attentive to prayer at this place."—2 Chronicles 6:12-7:3, 15.

⁹ In the Law given to Israel, Jehovah included a requirement for acceptable approach to him at the sanctuary. What was that? Every morning and every evening, in addition to offering animal sacrifices, the high priest was required to burn perfumed incense before Jehovah. Later, underpriests also rendered this service, except on the Day of Atonement. If the priests did not render such respectful homage, Jehovah would not be pleased with their ministry.—Exodus 30:7, 8; 2 Chronicles 13:11.

9. What was required for proper approach to Jehovah at the sanctuary?

¹⁰ In ancient Israel, was approach to God possible only through designated representatives? No, the Scriptures show that Jehovah was pleased to accept the personal prayers of individuals. In Solomon's prayer of dedication at the temple, he entreated Jehovah, saying: "Whatever prayer, whatever request for favor there may occur on the part of any man or of all your people Israel, . . . when he actually spreads out his palms toward this house, then may you yourself hear from the heavens." (2 Chronicles 6:29, 30) Luke's account tells us that when Zechariah, the father of John the Baptizer, was offering incense in the sanctuary, a multitude of nonpriestly worshippers of Jehovah were "praying outside." Evidently, it had become the custom for people to gather in prayer outside the sanctuary while incense was being presented to Jehovah on the golden altar.—Luke 1:8-10.

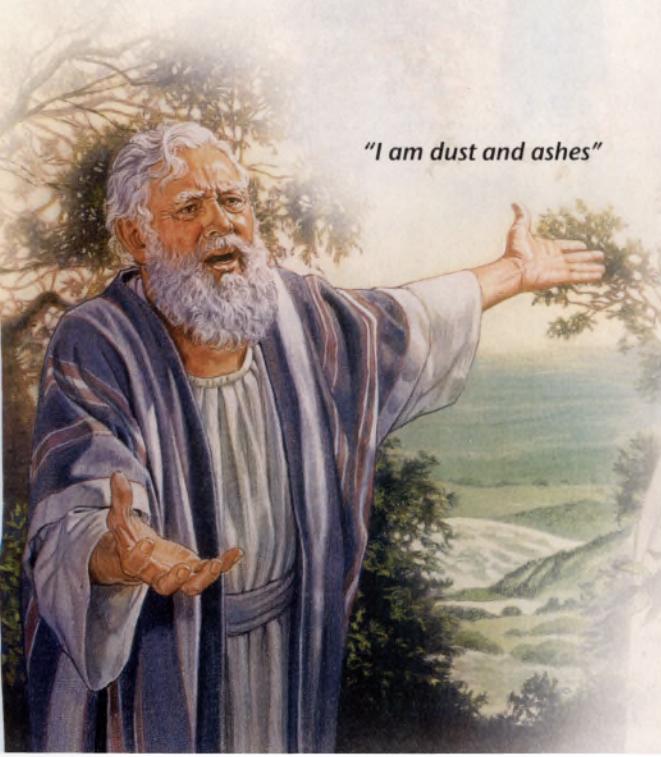
¹¹ Thus, when Jehovah was approached in the proper manner, he was glad to accept petitions from those who represented the nation as a whole and from individuals who sought to approach him personally. Today, we no longer live under the Law covenant. Nevertheless, we can learn some vital lessons about prayer from the ways in which the Israelites of old approached God.

Under the Christian Arrangement

¹² We now live under the Christian arrangement. There is no longer a physical temple in which priests represent all of God's people or toward which we can turn when we pray to God. Nevertheless, Jehovah still has an arrangement in place for us to approach him. What is it? In 29 C.E.,

10, 11. What evidence do we have that Jehovah accepted the prayers of individuals?

12. What arrangement is in place for Christians to approach Jehovah?



when Christ was anointed and appointed High Priest, a spiritual temple came into operation.* This spiritual temple was the new arrangement for approaching Jehovah in worship on the basis of the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ.—Hebrews 9:11, 12.

¹³ Many features of the temple in Jerusalem well picture the provisions of the spiritual temple, including those related to prayer. (Hebrews 9:1-10) For example, what was represented by the incense that was offered, morning and evening, upon the altar of incense in the Holy compartment of the temple? According to the book of Revelation, “the incense means the prayers of the holy ones.” (Revelation 5:8; 8:3, 4) David was inspired to write: “May my prayer be prepared as incense before you.” (Psalm 141:2) Thus, in the Christian arrangement, the sweet-smelling incense appropriately represents acceptable prayers and praise to Jehovah.—1 Thessalonians 3:10.

¹⁴ Who may approach God at this spiritual temple? At the physical temple, the priests and Levites were privileged to serve in the inner courtyard, but only priests could enter the Holy. Anointed Christians with the heavenly hope enjoy a unique spiritual condition foreshadowed by the inner courtyard and the Holy, which enables them to render prayers and praise to God.

¹⁵ What about those with an earthly hope, the “other sheep”? (John 10:16) The prophet Isaiah indicated that people of many nations would come to worship Jehovah “in

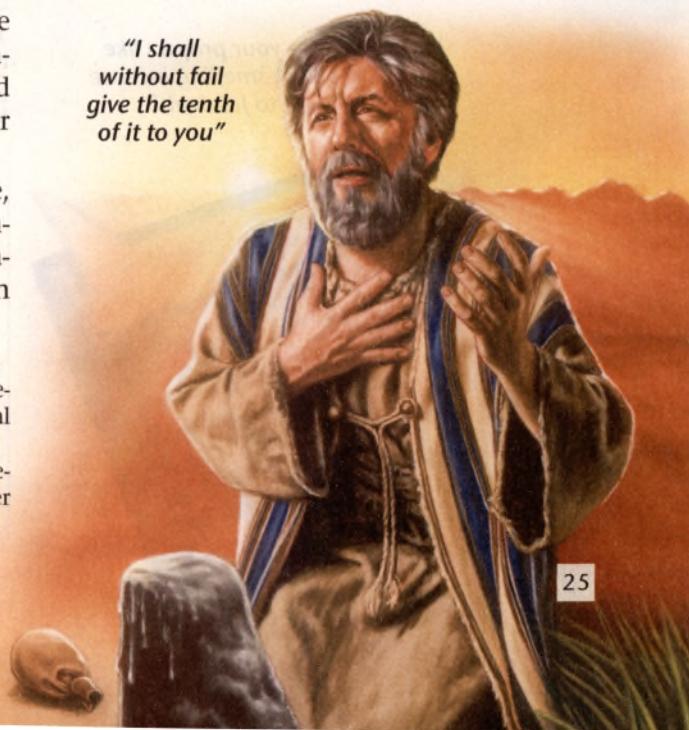
the final part of the days.” (Isaiah 2:2, 3) He also wrote that “foreigners” would join themselves to Jehovah. Indicating his willingness to accept their approach, God said: “I will . . . make them rejoice inside my house of prayer.” (Isaiah 56:6, 7) Revelation 7:9-15 gives further details, telling of “a great crowd” from “all nations” who gather in worship and prayer to God “day and night” as they stand in the outer courtyard of the spiritual temple. What a comforting thought that all of God’s servants today can freely approach God with full confidence that they are heard by him!

What Prayers Are Accepted?

¹⁶ The early Christians were people of prayer. Concerning what matters did they pray? Christian elders requested guidance in selecting men for organizational responsibilities. (Acts 1:24, 25; 6:5, 6) Epaphras prayed in behalf of fellow believers. (Colossians 4:12) Members of the congregation in Jerusalem prayed for Peter when he was

16. What can we learn about prayer from the early Christians?

*“I shall
without fail
give the tenth
of it to you”*



* See *The Watchtower*, May 15, 2001, page 27.

13. With regard to prayer, what is one parallel between the temple in Jerusalem and the spiritual temple?

14, 15. What can be said about approach to Jehovah by (a) anointed Christians? (b) the “other sheep”?

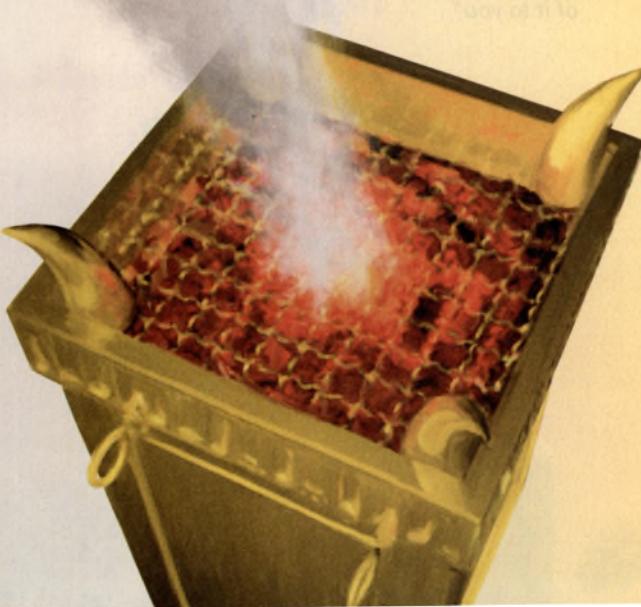
imprisoned. (Acts 12:5) The early Christians asked God to give them boldness in the face of opposition, saying: "Jehovah, give attention to their threats, and grant your slaves to keep speaking your word with all boldness." (Acts 4:23-30) The disciple James urged Christians to pray to God for wisdom when under trial. (James 1:5) Do you include such matters in your petitions to Jehovah?

¹⁷ God does not accept all prayers. How, then, can we pray with the assurance that our prayers will be accepted? Faithful people to whom God listened in former times approached him in sincerity and with the right heart attitude. They showed faith and backed this up with fine works. We can be assured that Jehovah will listen to those who approach him in like manner today.

¹⁸ There is an additional requirement. The apostle Paul explained this, saying: "Through him we . . . have the approach to

17. Whose prayers does Jehovah accept?
18. For their prayers to be heard, what requirement must Christians meet?

Are your prayers like sweet-smelling incense to Jehovah?



the Father by one spirit." To whom was Paul referring when he wrote, "through him"? To Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 2:13, 18) Yes, we can have free approach to the Father only through Jesus.—John 14:6; 15:16; 16:23, 24.

¹⁹ As already mentioned, the incense offered by Israelite priests represents the acceptable prayers of God's faithful servants. However, at times, the incense offerings of the Israelites were disgusting to Jehovah. This was the case when the Israelites were burning incense in the temple but at the same time bowing down to idols. (Ezekiel 8:10, 11) Likewise today, the prayers of those who profess to serve Jehovah but at the same time practice works that conflict with his laws become like an offensive odor to him. (Proverbs 15:8) Let us, then, continue to keep all aspects of our lives clean so that our prayers are like sweet-smelling incense to God. Jehovah delights in the prayers of those who follow his righteous paths. (John 9:31) However, some questions still remain. How should we pray? For what can we pray? And how does God answer our prayers? Our next article will consider these and other questions.

19. (a) When did the offering of incense in Israel become offensive to Jehovah? (b) How can we make sure that our prayers are like sweet-smelling incense to Jehovah?

Can You Explain?

- How can imperfect humans approach God acceptably?
- In our prayers, how can we imitate the patriarchs?
- What do we learn from the prayers of the early Christians?
- When are our prayers like sweet-smelling incense to God?

"LET YOUR PETITIONS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD"

"In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God."—PHILIPPIANS 4:6.

IF YOU were to request an audience with the ruler of your country, what kind of response would you get? You might receive a polite reply from his office, but it is highly unlikely that you would be allowed to speak with the ruler himself. However, with the greatest Ruler of all, Jehovah God, the Sovereign of the universe, the situation is different. We have access to him from any place we may be and at any time we may choose. Acceptable prayers will always reach him. (Proverbs 15:29) That is truly wonderful! Should not appreciation for this move us to pray regularly to the One who is rightly called the "Hearer of prayer"?—Psalm 65:2.

² However, someone may ask, 'What prayers are acceptable to God?' The Bible explains one thing that is necessary for prayers to be acceptable when it states: "Without faith it is impossible to please him well, for he that approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Hebrews 11:6) Yes, as explained in the preceding article, a key factor in approaching God is faith. God is willing to accept the prayers of those who approach him, but they must do so in faith and with right works along with sincerity and a right heart attitude.

1. With whom do we have the privilege to communicate, and why is that so amazing?

2. What is necessary for prayers to be acceptable to God?

³ The apostle Paul urged Christians in his day: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God." (Philippians 4:6, 7) The Bible contains many examples of those who took their concerns to God. Among such ones are Hannah, Elijah, Hezekiah, and Daniel. (1 Samuel 2:1-10; 1 Kings 18:36, 37; 2 Kings 19:15-19; Daniel 9:3-21) We should follow their example. Note, too, that Paul's words show that our prayers can take various forms. He mentioned *thanksgiving*, that is, prayer in which we express appreciation for what God does for us. This may be accompanied by praise. *Supplication* refers to humble, earnest entreaty. And we can express *petitions*, or requests for something specific. (Luke 11:2, 3) Our heavenly Father is happy to accept our approach to him in any of these ways.

⁴ Some may ask, 'Does not Jehovah already know all our needs?' Yes, he does. (Matthew 6:8, 32) Why, then, does he still want us to approach him with our petitions? Consider this example: A store owner may offer a gift to some of his customers. However, to receive this gift, the customers must come to the owner and claim it. Those unwilling to make the effort to do so would

3. (a) As shown by the prayers of faithful servants of old, what types of expressions may be included in prayers? (b) What forms may our prayers take?

4. Although Jehovah knows our needs, why do we still make petitions to him?

show that they do not really appreciate the offer. Similarly, neglecting to make our petitions known in prayer would show a lack of appreciation for what Jehovah provides. Jesus said: "Ask and you will receive." (John 16:24) In this way, we demonstrate our reliance on God.

How Should We Approach God?

⁵ Jehovah does not lay down a lot of rigid rules on how to pray. Nevertheless, we need to learn the proper approach to God, which is explained in the Bible. For instance, Jesus taught his followers: "If you ask the Father for anything he will give it to you *in my name.*" (John 16:23) Hence, we are required to pray in Jesus' name, recognizing Jesus as the sole channel through which God's blessings are extended to all mankind.

⁶ What bodily position should we assume when praying? In the Bible, no particular position is specified for our prayers to be heard. (1 Kings 8:22; Nehemiah 8:6; Mark 11:25; Luke 22:41) What is important is to pray to God in sincerity and with the right heart attitude.—Joel 2:12, 13.

⁷ What about the use of the word "amen"? The Scriptures indicate that this is usually a suitable conclusion to our prayers, especially when we pray in public. (Psalm 72:19; 89:52) The Hebrew word '*a-men'*' has the basic meaning of "surely." McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia* explains that the significance of saying "Amen" at the end of prayers is "to confirm the words which have preceded, and invoke the fulfilment of them." Thus, by concluding with a sincere "Amen," the one praying indicates his earnest feelings about what he has just said. When a Christian representing the congregation in prayer

5. Why do we need to pray in Jesus' name?
6. When praying, what bodily position should we assume?
7. (a) What is the meaning of "amen"? (b) How is it appropriately used in prayers?

concludes with this expression, those listening may also add an "Amen" in their hearts or audibly to indicate their strong approval of what has just been said.—1 Corinthians 14:16.

⁸ There are times when God may allow us to demonstrate the depth of our concern about matters for which we pray. We may need to become like Jacob of old, who wrestled all night with an angel in order to obtain a blessing. (Genesis 32:24-26) Or some circumstances may require that we become like Abraham, who repeatedly appealed to Jehovah in behalf of Lot and any other righteous people who might be in Sodom. (Genesis 18:22-33) We may similarly plead with Jehovah about things that are precious to us, appealing to him on the basis of his justice, loving-kindness, and mercy.

What May We Ask For?

⁹ Remember that Paul said: "In *everything* . . . let your petitions be made known to God." (Philippians 4:6) Hence, personal prayers may touch virtually every facet of life. However, the first concern in our prayers should be Jehovah's interests. Daniel set a fine example in this. When Israel suffered punishment because of their sins, Daniel implored Jehovah to show mercy, saying: "Do not delay, for your own sake, O my God, for your own name." (Daniel 9:15-19) Do our prayers likewise show that the sanctification of Jehovah's name and the fulfillment of his will are our main concerns?

¹⁰ Nevertheless, it is also appropriate to make requests concerning personal matters. For example, like the psalmist, we may

8. How may some of our prayers resemble the prayers of Jacob or Abraham, and what would this demonstrate on our part?
9. What should be our main concerns when praying?
10. How do we know that it is appropriate to pray about personal matters?

pray for deeper spiritual comprehension. He prayed: "Make me understand, that I may observe your law and that I may keep it with the whole heart." (Psalm 119:33, 34; Colossians 1:9, 10) Jesus "offered up supplications and also petitions to the One who was able to save him out of death." (Hebrews 5:7) In so doing, he demonstrated the appropriateness of seeking strength when one faces danger or trials. When giving the model prayer to his disciples, Jesus included matters of personal concern, such as forgiving errors and obtaining daily food.

¹¹ In that model prayer, Jesus included the request: "Do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the wicked one." (Matthew 6:9-13) He later counseled: "Keep on the watch and pray continually, that you may not enter into temptation." (Matthew 26:41) Prayer is essential when we face temptations. We may be tempted to

11. How can prayer help us not to succumb to temptations?

ignore Bible principles at work or at school. Non-Witnesses may invite us to join them in questionable activities. We may be asked to do something that violates upright principles. At such times, we do well to follow Jesus' counsel to pray—both in advance and when actually facing a temptation—asking God to help us so that we do not fall.

¹² Various pressures and anxieties arise in the lives of God's servants today. Illness and emotional stress are major sources of anxiety for many. Violent conditions around us make life stressful. Economic hardships

12. What causes of anxiety might move us to pray, and what can we expect of Jehovah?



**Heartfelt prayer
helps us not
to succumb
to temptations**



make it difficult to eke out a living. How comforting it is to know that Jehovah lends an ear to his servants who bring these matters to him! Psalm 102:17 states about Jehovah: “He will certainly turn to the prayer of those stripped of everything, and not despise their prayer.”

¹³ Actually, any matter that affects our service to Jehovah or our relationship with him can be a fitting subject for prayer. (1 John 5:14) If you have decisions to make about marriage or employment or about expanding your ministry, feel free to bring these to God, asking for his guidance. A young woman in the Philippines, for example, wanted to share in the full-time ministry. However, she did not have a job to support herself. She says: “One Saturday, I prayed to Jehovah specifically about pioneering. Later that same day, when out in the preaching work, I offered a book to a teenager. Out of the blue, the girl said: ‘You should go to my school first thing Monday morning.’ I asked, ‘Why?’ She explained that there was a job vacancy that needed to be filled as soon as possible. I went, and I was hired right away. It all happened so quickly.” Numerous Witnesses around the world have had similar experiences. So do not hesitate to bring your heartfelt petitions to God in prayer!

What if We Have Sinned?

¹⁴ How can prayer help if someone has sinned? Because of shame, some who have sinned hold back from praying. That, however, is not a wise course to follow. To illustrate: Airplane pilots know that if they get lost, they can communicate with air traffic controllers to get help. What, though, if a

13. (a) What personal matters are fitting subjects for prayer? (b) Relate an example of such a prayer.
14, 15. (a) Why should a person not hold back from praying even if he has sinned? (b) Besides personal prayers, what else will aid a person in his recovery from sin?

lost pilot hesitates to contact the controllers because he is embarrassed that he got lost? That could lead to disaster! Similarly, the person who has sinned and is embarrassed to pray to God could suffer further harm. Shame over sin should not stop one from speaking with Jehovah. In fact, God invites those who have made serious errors to pray to him. The prophet Isaiah urged sinners in his day to call to Jehovah, “for he will forgive in a large way.” (Isaiah 55:6, 7) Of course, one may need to ‘soften the face of Jehovah’ by first softening one’s own heart, turning from the sinful course, and sincerely repenting.—Psalm 119:58; Daniel 9:13.

¹⁵ Where sin is involved, prayer becomes important for yet another reason. The disciple James states regarding someone needing spiritual help: “Let him call the older men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, . . . and Jehovah will raise him up.” (James 5:14, 15) Yes, an individual should personally confess his sin to Jehovah in prayer, but he can also ask the older men to pray in his behalf. That will aid him in his spiritual recovery.

Answers to Prayers

¹⁶ How are prayers answered? Some may be answered quickly and obviously. (2 Kings 20:1-6) Others may take some time, and the an-

- 16, 17. (a) How does Jehovah answer prayers? (b) What experiences illustrate that prayer and the preaching work are closely connected?

Can You Answer?

- What forms may our prayers take?
- How should we pray?
- What subjects may we include in our prayers?
- What is the role of prayer when one has sinned?



Through prayer, we express to God our gratitude, concerns, and petitions

swers may be harder to discern. As shown in Jesus' illustration about the widow who kept coming back to the judge, repeated approach to God may be necessary. (Luke 18:1-8) However, we can be assured that when we pray in harmony with God's will, Jehovah will never tell us: "Quit making me trouble."—Luke 11:5-9.

¹⁷ Jehovah's people have much experience in seeing prayers answered. This has often been apparent in our public ministry. For example, two Christian sisters in the Philippines were distributing Bible literature in a remote area of the country. When they gave a tract to one woman, her eyes filled with tears. She said: "Last night I prayed to God to send someone to teach the Bible to me, and I think that this is the answer to my prayer." Shortly thereafter, the woman began attending meetings at the Kingdom Hall. In another part of Southeast Asia, a Christian brother was nervous about preaching in a high-security residential complex. However, he prayed to Jehovah, took courage, and entered the building. He knocked on the door of an apartment, and a young woman appeared. When the brother explained the rea-

son for his visit, she began to cry. She said that she had been looking for Jehovah's Witnesses and had prayed for help to find them. The brother gladly helped her get in touch with the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

¹⁸ Prayer truly is a wonderful provision. Jehovah is ready to listen and to respond. (Isaiah 30:18, 19) Yet, we need to be observant as to how Jehovah answers our prayers. It may not always be in the way we expected. Still, when we discern his guidance, we should never forget to offer our thanks and praise to him. (1 Thessalonians 5:18) Moreover, always remember the apostle Paul's admonition: "In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God." Yes, take advantage of every opportunity to talk to God. In that way, you will continue to experience the truthfulness of what Paul states regarding those whose prayers are answered: "The peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers."—Philippians 4:6, 7.

18. (a) When our prayers are answered, how should we respond? (b) Of what can we be assured if we pray at every opportunity?

"Because of a Nine-Year-Old Boy"

WHENEVER Jehovah's Witnesses came to her door, Wiesława, who lives in southern Poland, politely thanked them and then dismissed them. One day, nine-year-old Samuel came to her door with his mother. This time Wiesława decided to listen to the message and accepted a magazine about a paradise on earth.

Because the Memorial of Jesus Christ's death was approaching, Samuel wanted to invite Wiesława to this special occasion. So, accompanied by his mother, the boy visited her again, this time with a printed invitation. Seeing that the boy was well dressed, Wiesława excused herself for a moment and got dressed up. When she returned, she listened to Samuel, accepted the invitation, and asked: "Should I come on my own or with my husband?" Then she added: "Even if my husband does not come, I will come. I will do it for you, Samuel." To Samuel's delight, she kept her word.

During the Memorial talk, Samuel sat next to Wiesława and showed her the scriptures that were being discussed. This impressed her. She enjoyed the Memorial and appreciated that the profound thoughts were explained in simple terms. She was also moved by the warm reception and the kindness that the congregation extended. Since then, Wiesława has shown more and more appreciation for spiritual matters and has begun to associate with Jehovah's Witnesses regularly. She recently said: "I am ashamed that previously I did not listen to you when you came to my door. And I have to admit that I lis-



tened to your message only because of a nine-year-old boy, because of Samuel."

Like Samuel in Poland, many other young Witnesses of Jehovah praise God orally and through their decorum and fine conduct. If you are a young person, you too may be able to help sincere people come to appreciate sound spiritual values.