

APRIL 1, 2004

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



# 666

**The Mark of the Beast  
What Does It Mean?**



# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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# 666

## Not Just a Puzzle



**"Nobody might be able to buy or sell except a person having the mark, the name of the wild beast or the number of its name. Here is where wisdom comes in: Let the one that has intelligence calculate the number of the wild beast, for it is a man's number; and its number is six hundred and sixty-six."—Revelation 13:17, 18.**

FEW Bible topics have evoked as much interest and concern as the prophecy about the mysterious mark, or name, of "the wild beast"—the number 666. On television and the Internet, as well as in movies, books, and magazines, the mark of the beast has been the focus of endless speculation.

Some believe that 666 is the mark of the Biblical antichrist. Others say that it signifies some form of compulsory identification, such as a tattoo or an implanted microchip with a digital code that identifies the person as a servant of the beast. Still others hold that 666 is the mark of the Catholic papacy. Substituting Roman numerals for the letters in a form of the pope's official title, Vicarius Filii Dei (Vicar of the Son of God), and manipulating the figures a little, they come up with 666. It is also claimed that the same number can be calculated from the

Latin name of Roman Emperor Diocletian and from the Hebrew version of the name Nero Caesar.\*

These fanciful and contrived interpretations, however, are very different from what the Bible itself says about the mark of the beast, as we shall see in the following article. The Bible does reveal that those with the mark will experience God's wrath when he brings an end to the present system of things. (Revelation 14:9-11; 19:20) Understanding the meaning of 666, therefore, is much more than just solving an intriguing puzzle. Happily, Jehovah God, the very personification of love and the Source of spiritual light, has not kept his servants in the dark on this important matter.—2 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 1:5; 4:8.

\* For a discussion on numerology, see *Awake!*, September 8, 2002.

# Identifying the Wild Beast and Its Mark

DO YOU enjoy solving a mystery? To do so, you look for clues that help you work your way toward the solution. In his inspired Word, God provides the needed clues with regard to the number 666, the name, or mark, of the wild beast of Revelation chapter 13.

In this article, we will look at four main lines of reasoning—vital clues—that will reveal the meaning of the mark of the beast. We will consider (1) how Bible names are sometimes chosen, (2) the identity of the wild beast, (3) what is meant by 666 being “a man’s number,” and (4) the significance of the number 6 and why it is written in triple digits, namely, 600 plus 60 plus 6, or 666.—Revelation 13:18.

## Bible Names—More Than Just Labels

Bible names often have special significance, particularly when given by God. For example, because Abram would become the father of nations, God changed the patriarch’s name to Abraham, meaning “Father of a Multitude.” (Genesis 17:5, footnote) God told Joseph and Mary to call Mary’s future child Jesus, which means “Jehovah Is Salvation.” (Matthew 1:21, footnote; Luke 1:31) In harmony with that meaningful name, through Jesus’ ministry and sacrificial death, Jehovah made possible our salvation.—John 3:16.

Accordingly, the God-given number-name 666 must symbolize what God sees as defin-



ing attributes of the beast. Naturally, to understand those traits, we need to identify the beast itself and learn about its activities.

## The Beast Exposed

The Bible book of Daniel sheds much light on the meaning of symbolic beasts. Chapter 7 contains a vivid tableau of “four huge beasts”—a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a fearsome beast with big teeth of iron. (Daniel 7:2-7) Daniel tells us that these beasts represent “kings,” or political kingdoms, that rule in succession over vast empires.—Daniel 7:17, 23.

Regarding the beast of Revelation 13:1, 2, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* points out that it “combines in itself the joint characteristics of the four beasts of Daniel’s vision . . . Accordingly, this first beast [of Revelation] represents the combined forces of all political rule opposed to God in the world.” This observation is affirmed by Revelation 13:7, which says of the beast: “Authority was given it over *every* tribe and people and tongue and nation.”\*

Why does the Bible use beasts as symbols of human rulership? For at least two reasons. First, because of the beastly record of bloodshed that governments have accrued over

\* For an in-depth discussion of these verses, see chapter 28 of the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

the centuries. "War is one of the constants of history," wrote historians Will and Ariel Durant, "and has not diminished with civilization or democracy." How true that "man has dominated man to his injury"! (Ecclesiastes 8:9) The second reason is that "the dragon [Satan] gave to the beast its power and its throne and great authority." (Revelation 12:9; 13:2) Accordingly, human rulership is a product of the Devil, thus reflecting his beastly, dragonlike disposition.—John 8:44; Ephesians 6:12.

This does not mean, however, that every human ruler is a direct tool of Satan. Indeed, in one sense, human governments serve as "God's minister," giving structure to human society, without which chaos would rule. And some leaders have protected fundamental human rights, including the right to engage in true worship—something that Satan does not want. (Romans 13:3, 4; Ezra 7:11-27; Acts 13:7) Still, because of the Devil's influence, no human or human institution has ever been able to bring lasting peace and security to the people.\*—John 12:31.

\* While recognizing that human rulership is often beastlike, true Christians subject themselves to the governmental "superior authorities," as the Bible directs. (Romans 13:1) When such authorities command them to act contrary to God's law, however, they "obey God as ruler rather than men."—Acts 5:29.

### "A Human Number"

A third clue to the meaning of 666 lies in its being "a man's number," or as *The Amplified Bible* puts it, "a human number." This expression could not refer to an individual human, for Satan—not any man—has authority over the beast. (Luke 4:5, 6; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 13:2, 18) Rather, the beast's having "a human number," or mark, suggests that it is a human entity, not spirit or demon, and that it therefore manifests certain human traits. What might they be? The Bible answers, saying: "All [humans] have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) The beast's having "a human number," therefore, indicates that governments reflect the fallen human condition, the mark of sin and imperfection.

History bears this out. "Every civilization that has ever existed has ultimately collapsed," said former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. "History is a tale of efforts that failed, of aspirations that weren't realized... So, as a historian, one has to live with a sense of the inevitability of tragedy." Kissinger's honest appraisal testifies to this fundamental Bible truth: "To earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step."—Jeremiah 10:23.

## Clues to the Meaning of 666

1. Bible names often say something about the bearer's traits or life, as in the case of Abraham, Jesus, and many others. Likewise, the beast's number-name encodes its characteristics.
2. In the Bible book of Daniel, the various beasts represent successive human kingdoms, or empires. The composite beast of Revelation 13:1, 2 symbolizes the worldwide political system, empowered and controlled by Satan.
3. The beast's having "a man's number," or "a human number," indicates that it is a human entity, not a demon. Hence, it reflects human failings resulting from sin and imperfection.
4. In God's eyes, the number six, being short of the Biblically complete, or perfect, seven, points to imperfection. The mark 666 emphasizes that deficiency by repeating the number three times.

Now that we have identified the beast and discerned how God views it, we are in a position to examine the final part of our puzzle—the number six and why it is written in triple digits—that is, 666, or 600 plus 60 plus 6.

### Six Repeated Three Times —Why?

In the Scriptures, certain numbers have symbolic significance. The number seven, for example, is often used to symbolize that which is complete, or perfect, in God's eyes. For instance, God's creative week comprises seven 'days,' or extended time periods, during which God *completely* accomplishes his creative purpose regarding the earth. (Genesis 1:3-2:3) God's "sayings" are like silver that has been "clarified seven times," thus *perfectly* refined. (Psalm 12:6; Proverbs 30:5, 6) The leper Naaman was told to bathe seven times in the Jordan River, after which he was *completely* healed.—2 Kings 5:10, 14.

Six is one short of seven. Would it not be a fitting symbol of something imperfect, or defective, in God's eyes? Yes, indeed! (1 Chronicles 20:6, 7) Moreover, six repeated three times, as 666, powerfully stresses that imperfection. That this is the correct view is supported by the fact that 666 is "a human number," as we have considered. Thus, the beast's record, its "human number," and the number 666 itself all point to one unmistakable conclusion—gross shortcoming and failure in the eyes of Jehovah.

The portrayal of the beast's deficiencies calls to mind what was said about King Belshazzar of ancient Babylon. Through Daniel, Jehovah said to that ruler: "You have been weighed in the balances and have been found deficient." That very night Belshazzar



Starving child: UNITED NATIONS/Photo by F. GRIFFING

*Human rulership has proved to be a failure, well symbolized by the number 666*

was killed, and the mighty Babylonian Empire fell. (Daniel 5:27, 30) Likewise, God's judgment of the political beast and of those with its mark spells the end of that entity and its supporters. In this instance, however, God will eradicate not just one political system but every vestige of human rule. (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 19:19, 20) How important, therefore, that we avoid having the deadly mark of the beast!

### The Mark Identified

Immediately after disclosing the number 666, Revelation mentions 144,000 followers of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, who have his name and the name of his Father, Jehovah, written on their foreheads. These names identify the bearers as belonging to Jehovah and to his Son, about whom they proudly bear witness. Likewise, those having the



*Jesus Christ will bring perfect rulership to the earth*

mark of the beast proclaim their servitude to the beast. Thus, the mark, whether on the right hand or on the forehead, figuratively speaking, is a symbol that identifies its bearer as one who gives worshipful support to the beastlike political systems of the world. Those having the mark give to "Caesar" that which rightly belongs to God. (Luke 20:25; Revelation 13:4, 8; 14:1) How? By giving worshipful honor to the political state, its symbols, and its military might, to which they look for hope and salvation. Any worship that they render the true God is merely lip service.

In contrast, the Bible urges us: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs. His spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish." (Psalm 146: 3, 4) Those who heed that wise counsel are not disillusioned when governments fail to deliver on their promises or when charismatic leaders fall from grace.—Proverbs 1:33.

This does not mean that true Christians sit back and do nothing about mankind's plight. On the contrary, they actively proclaim the one government that will solve mankind's problems—God's Kingdom, which they represent.—Matthew 24:14.

### **God's Kingdom—Mankind's Only Hope**

When on earth, Jesus made God's Kingdom the main theme of his preaching. (Luke 4:43) In his model prayer, sometimes called the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught his followers to pray for that Kingdom to come and for God's will to be done here on earth. (Matthew 6:9, 10) The Kingdom is a government that will rule over the entire earth, not from some earthly capital, but from heaven. Hence, Jesus called it "the kingdom of the heavens."—Matthew 11:12.

Who is better suited to be King of that Kingdom than Jesus Christ, the one who died for his future subjects? (Isaiah 9:6, 7; John 3:16) Soon this perfect Ruler, now a mighty spirit person, will hurl the beast, its kings, and its armies into "the fiery lake that burns with sulphur," a symbol of complete destruction. But that is not all. Jesus will also get rid of Satan, something that no human could ever do.—Revelation 11:15; 19:16, 19-21; 20:2, 10.

God's Kingdom will bring peace to all its obedient subjects. (Psalm 37:11, 29; 46:8, 9) Even sorrow, pain, and death will be no more. What a glorious prospect for those who remain free of the mark of the beast!—Revelation 21:3, 4.

## Finding People at Their Workplace

**W**HAT did the apostles Matthew, Peter, Andrew, James, and John have in common? They were all called by Jesus when they were at their workplace. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were busy with their fishing business when Jesus invited them, saying: "Come after me." Matthew was at the tax office when invited to become Jesus' disciple.

—Matthew 4:18-21; 9:9.

Witnessing to people at their place of work can be rewarding. Recognizing this, Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan recently made a concerted effort to engage in this feature of the ministry. What were the results? Within a few months, thousands of return visits were made, and some 250 Bible studies were started. Consider the following experiences.

A full-time minister in Tokyo met a restaurant manager who had talked with a Witness some 30 years ago as a schoolboy. Although the manager did not understand much of what was said back then, he did become interested in the Bible. Now with his interest rekindled, he readily accepted a Bible study using the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*.\* In addition, he started a personal program of reading the Bible every evening before going to bed.

A special pioneer minister called at an office. Though the manager was not available,

the young woman who answered the manager's phone asked, "Would you like to speak with me?" After a short conversation over the telephone, the woman came out and said that she was interested in reading the Bible. The special pioneer arranged to return with a Bible and started a Bible study with her, held in a nearby park early in the morning before work.

At another office, a man saw a fellow worker accept the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines but quickly throw them away after the Witness left. When the man got home, he told his Witness wife about the incident and commented that he would at least have listened a little. His daughter, who overheard his comments, related the matter to a Witness who works that business territory. The Witness promptly visited the husband at the office and started a Bible study with him. The man soon began to attend the Sunday meetings regularly.

Witnessing to people at the workplace has brought other benefits. Many publishers in Japan have become skilled at making return visits in shopping areas, factories, and offices. In addition, through this means of witnessing, many inactive ones have been contacted and studies started with them. The results have been outstanding. One congregation in central Tokyo recently reported 108 home Bible studies, more than double the number reported a year ago.



\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



## RESIST THE SPIRIT OF A CHANGING WORLD

*"We received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God."*

—1 CORINTHIANS 2:12.

**T**HIS serpent—it deceived me." (Genesis 3:13) With those few words, the first woman, Eve, endeavored to explain why she had embarked on a course of rebellion against Jehovah God. What she said was true, although it did not excuse her wrongdoing. The apostle Paul was later inspired to write: "[Eve] was thoroughly deceived." (1 Timothy 2:14) She was deceived into believing that an act of disobedience—eating the forbidden fruit—would benefit her, making her like God. She was also deceived about the identity of the one who deluded her. Little did she know that the serpent was merely a mouthpiece for Satan the Devil.—Genesis 3:1-6.

<sup>2</sup> Since the time of Adam and Eve, Satan has continued to deceive people. He is, in fact, "misleading the entire inhabited

1. In what ways was Eve deceived?
2. (a) How does Satan mislead people today?  
(b) What is "the spirit of the world," and what questions will we now consider?

earth." (Revelation 12:9) His tactics have not changed. Though he no longer employs a literal serpent, he continues to conceal his identity. Through parts of the entertainment industry, the media, and other means, Satan misleads people into believing that they neither need nor benefit from God's loving direction. The Devil's campaign of deception has produced in people everywhere a spirit of rebellion against Bible laws and principles. The Bible calls this "the spirit of the world." (1 Corinthians 2:12) This spirit powerfully influences the beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of those who do not know God. How is that spirit manifested, and how can we resist its corrupting influence? Let us see.

### Moral Values in Decline

- 3 In modern times, "the spirit of the world" has become increasingly manifest.
- 3 Why is "the spirit of the world" increasingly manifest in modern times?

(2 Timothy 3:1-5) You have likely noticed that moral values are in decline. The Scriptures explain why this is so. Following the establishment of God's Kingdom in the year 1914, war broke out in heaven. Satan and his demon angels were defeated and cast down to the vicinity of the earth. Enraged, Satan has intensified his campaign of global deception. (Revelation 12:1-9, 12, 17) In every way he can, he endeavors "to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones." (Matthew 24:24) As God's people, we are his prime target. He strives to destroy our spirituality so that we will lose Jehovah's favor and the prospect of everlasting life.

<sup>4</sup> Satan tries to discredit the Bible, the precious book that teaches us about our loving Creator. Jehovah's servants love and treasure the Bible. We know that it is the inspired Word of God, not the word of men. (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16) Satan's world, however, would have us think differently. For example, the preface of a book that attacks the Bible states: "There is nothing 'holy' about the Bible, nor is it 'the word of God.' It was not written by God-inspired saints, but by power-seeking priests." Those who are led to believe such claims may easily fall prey to the misguided notion that they are free to worship God in any way that they please—or not to worship him at all.—Proverbs 14:12.

<sup>5</sup> Direct and indirect attacks on the Bible, along with the religious hypocrisy of those who claim to support it, have resulted in a growing disapproval of religion, including religion that is associated with the Bible. In

4. How do Jehovah's servants view the Bible, and how does the world view it?

5. (a) What did one author claim regarding religions associated with the Bible? (b) How do some common worldly ideas compare with what the Bible says? (Include box on the next page.)

the news media and academic circles, religion is under attack. One author observes: "The view of Judaism and Christianity that pervades popular culture is negative. At best they are seen as quaint; at worst, as archaic perspectives that hinder intellectual maturity and obstruct scientific progress. In recent years disdain has grown to ridicule and open hostility." This hostility often originates with those who deny God's existence and who have become "empty-headed in their reasonings."—Romans 1:20-22.



*Solomon drifted away from true worship and turned to false gods*

<sup>6</sup> It comes as no surprise, therefore, that people are straying ever further from God's standards of behavior. For example, the Bible describes homosexual relations as "obscene." (Romans 1:26, 27) It also states that those practicing fornication and adultery will not inherit God's Kingdom. (1 Corinthians 6:9) Yet, in many lands not only are those sexual practices considered acceptable but they are glamorized in books,

6. What view does the world have of sexual practices that are condemned by God?

magazines, songs, movies, and TV shows. Those who speak out against such practices are viewed as intolerant, judgmental, and out of touch with enlightened thinking. Rather than seeing God's standards as expressions of loving concern, the world views them as roadblocks to personal freedom and fulfillment.—Proverbs 17:15; Jude 4.

<sup>7</sup> Amid a world that is becoming increasingly entrenched in its opposition to God, it would be wise for us to look at our own attitude and values. Periodically, we should prayerfully and honestly examine ourselves to make sure that we are not gradually drifting away from Jehovah's thinking and standards. We might, for example, ask ourselves: 'Do I entertain myself with subject matter that I would have shunned some years ago? Have I become more tolerant of practices that God condemns? Am I inclined to regard spiritual matters less seriously than I did in the past? Does the way I live show that I put Kingdom interests first in my life?' (Matthew 6:33) Such reflections will help us to resist the spirit of the world.

#### "Never Drift Away"

<sup>8</sup> To fellow Christians, the apostle Paul wrote: "It is necessary for us to pay more than the usual attention to the things heard by us, that we may never drift away." (Hebrews 2:1) A ship adrift does not reach its destination. If a captain is inattentive to wind and current, his ship might easily drift past a safe harbor and run aground on a rocky shore. Similarly, if we are inattentive to the precious truths of

7. What questions should we ask ourselves?
8. How might one drift away from Jehovah?

## WORLDLY WISDOM VERSUS GODLY WISDOM

*Truth is relative—people make their own truth.* "[God's] word is truth."  
—John 17:17.

*To determine right from wrong, trust your feelings.* "The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate."—Jeremiah 17:9.

*Do your own thing.* "It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step."—Jeremiah 10:23.

*Wealth is the key to happiness.* "The love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things."  
—1 Timothy 6:10.

God's Word, we might easily drift away from Jehovah and suffer spiritual shipwreck. To suffer such loss, we would not necessarily have to reject the truth outright. In fact, not many reject Jehovah suddenly and deliberately. More often, they gradually get involved in something that distracts them from paying attention to God's Word. Almost imperceptibly, they drift into sin. Like a captain who is asleep, such individuals do not wake up until it is too late.

<sup>9</sup> Consider the life course of Solomon. Jehovah entrusted him with the kingship over Israel. God allowed Solomon to build the temple and directed him to write parts of the Bible. Jehovah spoke with him on two occasions and granted him wealth, fame, and a peaceful reign. Above all, Jehovah blessed Solomon with great wisdom. The Bible states: "God continued giving Solomon wisdom and understanding in very great measure and a broadness of heart, like the sand that is upon the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom was vaster than the wisdom of all the Orientals and than all the wisdom of Egypt." (1 Kings 4:21, 29, 30; 11:9) Surely,

9. In what ways did Jehovah bless Solomon?

one might think, if anyone was likely to remain faithful to God, it was Solomon. Yet, Solomon drifted into apostasy. How did that happen?

<sup>10</sup> Solomon thoroughly knew and understood God's Law. He would doubtless have taken special interest in the instructions that were set out for those who became kings in Israel. Among those instructions was one that stated: "[The king] should also not multiply wives for himself, that his heart may not turn aside." (Deuteronomy 17:14, 17) Despite that clear direction, Solomon acquired seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. Many of these women worshiped foreign gods. We do not know why Solomon took so many wives, nor do we know how he justified doing so. What we do know is that he failed to obey God's clear direction. The outcome was precisely what Jehovah had warned it would be. We read: "[Solomon's] wives gradually... inclined his heart to follow other gods." (1 Kings 11:3, 4) "Gradually"—but surely—his godly wisdom faded. He drifted. In time, Solomon's desire to please his pagan wives displaced his desire to obey and please God. How tragic, for Solomon was the one who earlier wrote the words: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me"!—Proverbs 27:11.

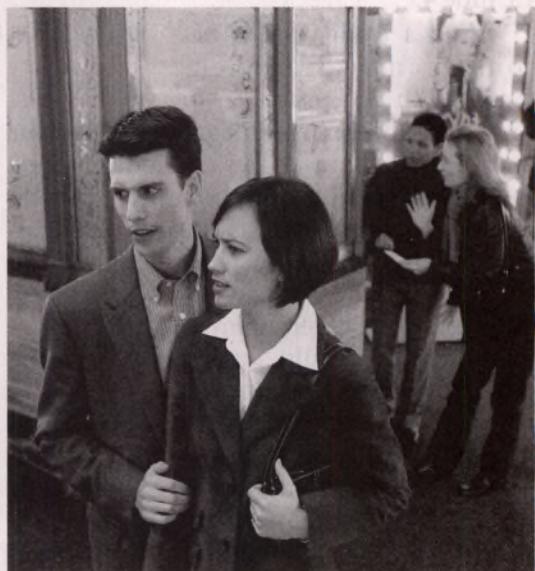
### The Spirit of the World Is Powerful

<sup>11</sup> Solomon's example teaches us that it is dangerous to reason that because we know the truth, worldly influences will have little impact on our thinking. Just as physical food affects our body, mental food affects our mind. What we feed our mind shapes our thinking and attitude. Recognizing this, corporations spend billions of dollars each

10. What direction did Solomon fail to obey, and what was the outcome?

11. How does what we take into our mind affect our thinking?

year to advertise their products. Successful ads employ clever words and pictures to appeal to the longings and fancies of the consumer. Advertisers also know that seeing an advertisement once or twice will usually not persuade people to rush out and buy the product. Repeated exposure over time, however, often causes consumers to view a product favorably. Advertising works—otherwise, no one would invest in it. It exerts a powerful influence on the thinking and attitudes of the public.



*Like an advertiser, Satan promotes the spirit of the world. Do you resist it?*

<sup>12</sup> Like an advertiser, Satan promotes his ideas by putting them in attractive settings, knowing that with time he can win people over to his way of thinking. Through the entertainment field and other avenues, Satan deceives people into believing that good is bad and bad is good. (Isaiah 5:20) Even true Christians have fallen prey to Satan's cam-

12. (a) How does Satan influence people's thinking? (b) What shows that Christians can be influenced?

paign of misinformation. The Bible warns: "The inspired utterance says definitely that in later periods of time some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to misleading inspired utterances and teachings of demons, by the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, marked in their conscience as with a branding iron."—1 Timothy 4:1, 2; Jeremiah 6:15.

<sup>13</sup> None of us are immune to the spirit of the world. The winds and currents of Satan's system are powerful. The Bible wisely admonishes us: "Do not be misled. Bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Corinthians 15:33) Bad associations can involve anything or anyone—even within the congregation—reflecting the spirit of the world. If we were to reason that bad associations cannot hurt us, would we not have to conclude that good associations cannot help us? How wrong that would be! The Bible puts the matter clearly when it says: "He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly."—Proverbs 13:20.

<sup>14</sup> To counter the spirit of the world, we must associate with wise people—those who serve Jehovah. We must fill our mind with things that build up our faith. The apostle Paul wrote: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things." (Philippians 4:8) As free moral agents, we can choose the things that we consider. May we always choose to consider things that will draw us closer to Jehovah.

13. What are bad associations, and how do our associations affect us?
14. In what ways can we counter the spirit of the world?

## God's Spirit Is More Powerful

<sup>15</sup> Unlike those who are misled by the spirit of the world, true Christians are guided by God's holy spirit. It was to the congregation in Corinth that Paul wrote: "We received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been kindly given us by God." (1 Corinthians 2:12) Ancient Corinth was a city enveloped by the spirit of the world. So licentious were most of its inhabitants that the expression "to Corinthianize" came to mean "to practice immorality." Satan had blinded the minds of the people. Consequently, they understood little or nothing about the true God. (2 Corinthians 4:4) Yet, by means of his holy spirit, Jehovah opened the eyes of some of the Corinthians, enabling them to gain a knowledge of truth. His spirit moved and guided them to make major changes in their lives so that they could receive his approval and blessing. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) Though the spirit of the world was strong, Jehovah's spirit was stronger.

<sup>16</sup> The same is true today. Jehovah's holy spirit is the most powerful force in the universe, and he gives it freely and liberally to all who ask for it in faith. (Luke 11:13) To have

15. How did Christians in ancient Corinth differ from other residents of that city?

16. How can we receive and keep God's spirit?

## Can You Explain?

- In what ways has Satan deceived and misled people?
- How can we avoid drifting away from Jehovah?
- What shows that the spirit of the world is powerful?
- How can we receive and retain the spirit that is from God?

God's spirit, however, we must do more than resist the spirit of the world. We must also regularly study and apply God's Word in our life so that our spirit—our mental disposition—is attuned to his thinking. If we do that, Jehovah will fortify us to withstand any tactic Satan may use to destroy our spirituality.

<sup>17</sup> Though Christians are no part of the world, they are in the world. (John 17:11, 16) None of us can totally avoid the spirit of the world, for we may work or even live with those who have no love for God or his ways. Do we feel as did Lot, who was "greatly distressed," even tormented, by the lawless deeds of the people of Sodom, among whom he lived? (2 Peter 2:7, 8) If so, we can take comfort. Jehovah safeguarded and delivered Lot, and he can do the same for us. Our loving Father sees and knows our circumstances,

17. In what ways can the experience of Lot be of comfort to us?

and he can give us the help and the strength we need in order to maintain our spirituality. (Psalm 33:18, 19) If we rely on him, trust in him, and call upon him, he will help us to resist the spirit of the world, no matter how difficult our situation may be.—Isaiah 41:10.

<sup>18</sup> In a world that is alienated from God and deceived by Satan, we as Jehovah's people are blessed with knowledge of the truth. We thus experience a joy and peace that the world does not have. (Isaiah 57:20, 21; Galatians 5:22) We cherish the marvelous hope of everlasting life in Paradise, where the spirit of this dying world will be no more. May we therefore treasure our precious relationship with God and be vigilant to correct any tendency to drift spiritually. Let us draw ever closer to Jehovah, and he will help us to resist the spirit of the world.—James 4:7, 8.

18. Why should we treasure our relationship with Jehovah?

## RELY ON GOD'S SPIRIT IN DEALING WITH LIFE'S CHANGES

*"Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God."*—2 TIMOTHY 2:15.

THE world around us changes continually. We see impressive scientific and technological advances accompanied by a dramatic decline in moral values. As we considered in the preceding article, Christians must resist the anti-God spirit of the world. As the world changes, however, we too change in many ways. We pass from childhood to adulthood. We may gain or lose wealth, health, and

1. What changes present a challenge to our spiritual well-being?

loved ones. Many such changes are beyond our control, and they can present new and formidable challenges to our spiritual well-being.

<sup>2</sup> Few people undergo such radical changes in their life as did David, the son of Jesse. David passed swiftly from obscurity as a shepherd boy to fame as a national hero. He later came to be a fugitive, hunted like an animal by a jealous king. After that, David became a

2. How did David's life undergo change?

king and conqueror. He endured the painful consequences of serious sin. He suffered tragedy and division within his family. He acquired wealth, grew old, and experienced the infirmities of old age. Despite the many changes in his life, however, David displayed a lifelong confidence and trust in Jehovah and His spirit. He did his utmost to present himself “approved to God,” and God blessed him. (2 Timothy 2:15) Though our circumstances differ from those of David, we can learn from the way he handled matters in his life. His example can help us understand how we can continue to have the help of God’s spirit as we face changes in our life.

### David’s Humility—A Fine Example

<sup>3</sup> As a boy, David was not prominent even within his own family. When the prophet Samuel came to Bethlehem, David’s father presented seven of his eight sons. David, the youngest son, was left to tend the sheep. Yet, Jehovah had chosen David to be the future king of Israel. David was called from the field. Next, the Bible record says: “Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the spirit of Jehovah began to be operative upon David from that day forward.” (1 Samuel 16:12, 13) David relied on that spirit throughout his life.

<sup>4</sup> Soon this shepherd boy would rise to national fame. He was called to attend to the king and to play music for him. He killed the warrior Goliath, a giant so fierce that even the seasoned soldiers of Israel feared to face him. Placed over the men of war, David successfully battled the Philistines. The people loved him. They composed songs lauding him. Earlier, an adviser to King Saul described young David not only as one “skilled at playing” the harp but also as “a valiant, mighty man and a man of war and an in-

3, 4. How did David rise from the obscurity of a shepherd boy to national fame?

telligent speaker and a well-formed man.” —1 Samuel 16:18; 17:23, 24, 45-51; 18:5-7.

<sup>5</sup> Fame, good looks, youth, eloquence, musical skills, military prowess, divine favor—David seemed to have it all. Any one of these things could have made him arrogant, yet none of them did. Note David’s reply to King Saul, who offered David his daughter in marriage. With true humility, David said: “Who am I and who are my kinsfolk, my father’s family, in Israel, so that I should become son-in-law to the king?” (1 Samuel 18: 18) Commenting on this verse, one scholar wrote: “David’s meaning was, that neither on personal grounds, nor on account of his social standing, nor because of his lineage, could he make the slightest pretension to the honour of becoming the son-in-law of the king.”

<sup>6</sup> David’s humility was based on his recognition that Jehovah is vastly superior to imperfect humans in every way. David marveled that God even takes notice of man. (Psalm 144:3) David also knew that any greatness that he might have was only because Jehovah showed humility, lowering himself to sustain, protect, and care for him. (Psalm 18:35) What a beautiful lesson

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5. What could have made David arrogant, and how do we know that he did not become so?

6. Why should we cultivate humility?



for us! Our talents, our achievements, and our privileges should never make us haughty. "Indeed, what do you have that you did not receive?" wrote the apostle Paul. "If, now, you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as though you did not receive it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7) To have God's holy spirit and to enjoy his approval, we must cultivate and maintain humility.—James 4:6.

### "Do Not Avenge Yourselves"

<sup>7</sup> While David's fame aroused no pride in his heart, it did spawn a murderous jealousy in King Saul, from whom God's spirit had departed. Though David had done no wrong, he fled for his life and took up dwelling in the wilderness. On one occasion, during a relentless pursuit of David, King Saul entered a cave, not knowing that David and his companions were hidden there. David's men urged him to take advantage of the seemingly God-sent opportunity to slay Saul. We can picture them in the gloom, whispering to David: "Here is the day on which Jehovah does say to you, 'Look! I am giving your enemy into your hand, and you must do to him just as it may seem good in your eyes.'"—1 Samuel 24:2-6.

<sup>8</sup> David refused to harm Saul. Exercising faith and patience, he was content to leave matters in the hands of Jehovah. After

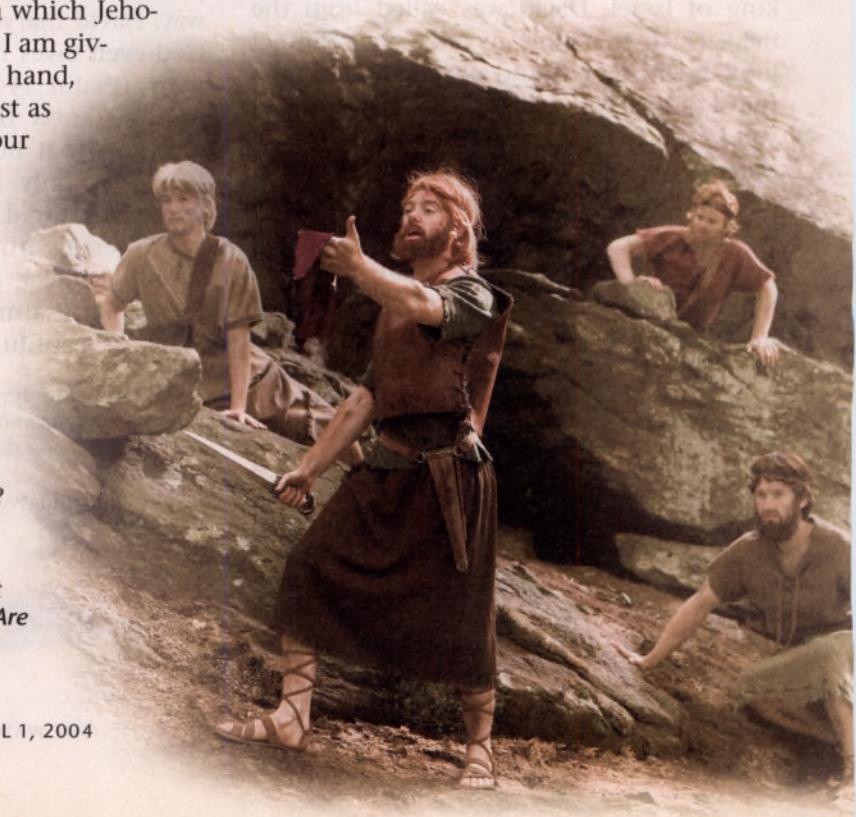
7. What opportunity to slay King Saul presented itself to David?

8. Why did David restrain himself from taking vengeance?

the king left the cave, David called out to him and said: "May Jehovah judge between me and you; and Jehovah must take vengeance for me from you, but my own hand will not come to be upon you." (1 Samuel 24:12) Though he knew that Saul was in the wrong, David did not avenge himself; neither did he speak abusively to Saul or about him. On several other occasions, David restrained himself from taking matters into his own hands. Instead, he relied on Jehovah to set things straight.—1 Samuel 25:32-34; 26:10, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Like David, you may find yourself in trying situations. Perhaps you are opposed or persecuted by schoolmates, fellow employees, family members, or others who do not share your faith. Do not retaliate. Wait on Jehovah, asking for his holy spirit to help you. Possibly those unbelievers will be im-

9. Why should we not retaliate if we experience opposition or persecution?



*David relied on God's spirit and sought divine approval. Are you doing the same?*

pressed by your good conduct and will become believers. (1 Peter 3:1) In any case, be assured that Jehovah sees your situation and will do something about it in his own due time. The apostle Paul wrote: "Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay,' says Jehovah."—Romans 12:19.

### "Listen to Discipline"

<sup>10</sup> Years passed. David became a beloved king of immense prominence. His life course of outstanding faithfulness, along with the beautiful psalms that he wrote in praise of Jehovah, might easily give the impression that this was a man who would never fall into serious sin. Yet, fall he did. One day, the king observed from his rooftop a beautiful woman bathing herself. He made inquiries. Learning that the woman was Bath-sheba and that her husband, Uriah, was off to war, David sent for her and had relations with her. Later, he found out that she was pregnant. What a scandal this would unleash if the matter was exposed! Under the Mosaic Law, adultery was a capital crime. The king evidently thought that the sin could be covered up. So he sent word to the army, ordering that Uriah return to Jerusalem. David hoped that Uriah would spend the night with Bath-sheba, but that did not happen. Now desperate, David sent Uriah back to the war with a letter to Joab, the military commander. The letter directed that Uriah be put in a battle situation that would result in his death. Joab obeyed, and Uriah was slain. After Bath-sheba observed the customary period of mourning, David took her to be his wife.—2 Samuel 11:1-27.

<sup>11</sup> The scheme seemed to have worked,

10. How did David fall into sin, and how did he try to cover it up?

11. What situation did Nathan present to David, and how did he react?

though David should have known that the entire matter was openly exposed to Jehovah. (Hebrews 4:13) Months passed, and the child was born. Then, at God's direction, Nathan the prophet went to David. The prophet presented to the king a situation in which a rich man with many sheep of his own took and slaughtered the sole, beloved sheep belonging to a man of little means. The story stirred David's sense of justice but awakened no suspicion as to its hidden meaning. David rendered swift judgment against the rich man. Hot with anger, he said to Nathan: "The man doing this deserves to die!"—2 Samuel 12:1-6.

<sup>12</sup> "You yourself are the man!" the prophet responded. David had judged himself. Doubtless, David's indignation quickly gave way to profound shame and deep sorrow. Stunned, he listened as Nathan rendered Jehovah's inescapable judgment. There were no words of comfort or consolation. David

12. What judgment did Jehovah render against David?



had despised the word of Jehovah by doing what was bad. Had he not slain Uriah with the sword of the enemy? A sword would not depart from David's house. Had he not taken Uriah's wife in secret? A similar evil would come upon him, not in secret, but publicly.—2 Samuel 12:7-12.

<sup>13</sup> To David's credit, he did not deny his guilt. He did not lash out against the prophet Nathan. He did not blame others or offer excuses for what he had done. Confronted with his sins, David accepted responsibility, saying: "I have sinned against Jehovah." (2 Samuel 12:13) Psalm 51 shows the anguish of his guilt and the depth of his repentance. He pleaded with Jehovah: "Do not throw me away from before your face; and your holy spirit O do not take away from me." He believed that Jehovah, in his mercy, would not despise "a heart broken and crushed" over sin. (Psalm 51:11, 17) David continued to rely on God's spirit. While Jehovah did not shield David from the bitter consequences of his sin, he forgave him.

<sup>14</sup> All of us are imperfect, and we all sin. (Romans 3:23) Sometimes we may fall into serious sin, as did David. Just as a loving father disciplines his children, so Jehovah corrects those who seek to serve him. While discipline is beneficial, however, it is not easy to take. In fact, at times it is "grievous." (Hebrews 12:6, 11) Yet, if we "listen to discipline," we can become reconciled to Jehovah. (Proverbs 8:33) To enjoy the continued blessing of Jehovah's spirit, we must accept correction and work to be approved by God.

### Do Not Hope in Uncertain Riches

<sup>15</sup> There is no indication that David came from a prominent background or that his

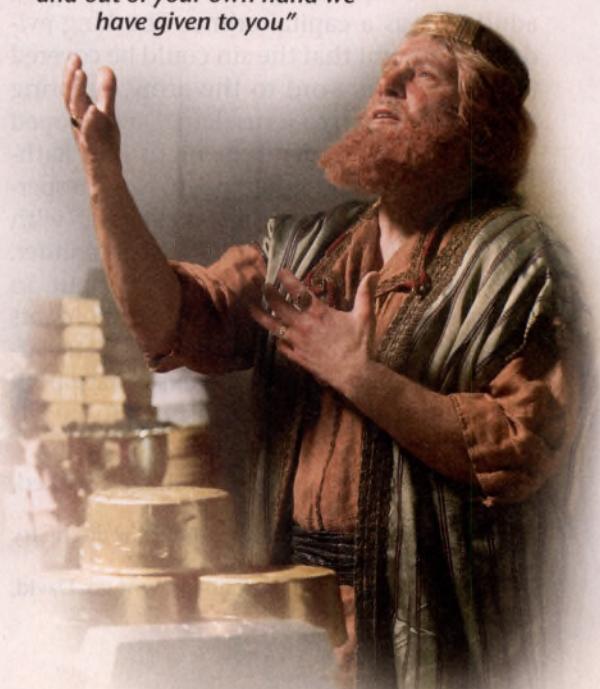
13. How did David react to Jehovah's discipline?
14. How should we react to Jehovah's discipline?
15. (a) In what ways do some people use their riches? (b) How did David desire to use his wealth?

family was wealthy. During his kingship, however, David acquired enormous wealth. As you know, many hoard their wealth, greedily seek to increase it, or spend it selfishly. Others use their money to glorify themselves. (Matthew 6:2) David used his wealth differently. He yearned to honor Jehovah. To Nathan, David expressed his desire to build a temple for Jehovah to contain the ark of the covenant, which was then in Jerusalem "dwelling in the middle of tent cloths." Jehovah was pleased with David's intentions but told him through Nathan that the building of the temple would fall to David's son Solomon.—2 Samuel 7:1, 2, 12, 13.

<sup>16</sup> David gathered materials to be used in this great construction project. To Solomon, David said: "I have prepared for Jehovah's house a hundred thousand talents of gold

16. What preparations did David make for the construction of the temple?

*"Everything is from you,  
and out of your own hand we  
have given to you"*



and a million talents of silver, and the copper and the iron there is no means of weighing because they have come to be in such quantity; and timbers and stones I have prepared, but to them you will make additions." From his personal fortune, he contributed 3,000 talents of gold and 7,000 talents of silver.\* (1 Chronicles 22:14; 29:3, 4) David's generous giving was, not an outward show, but a manifestation of faith and devotion to Jehovah God. Recognizing the Source of his riches, he said to Jehovah: "Everything is from you, and out of your own hand we have given to you." (1 Chronicles 29:14) David's generous heart moved him to do all he could to promote pure worship.

<sup>17</sup> Similarly, may we use our material assets to do good. Rather than pursuing a materialistic way of life, it is better to seek God's approval—that is the way of true wisdom and happiness. Paul wrote: "Give orders to those who are rich in the present system of things not to be high-minded, and to rest their hope, not on uncertain riches, but on God, who furnishes us all things richly for our enjoyment; to work at good, to be rich in fine works, to be liberal, ready to share, safely treasuring up for themselves a fine founda-

\* The value of David's contribution, by today's standards, amounts to over \$1,200,000,000, U.S.

17. How does the counsel at 1 Timothy 6:17-19 apply to both rich and poor?

### How Would You Answer?

- How might we guard against pride?
- Why should we not avenge ourselves?
- What view of discipline should we have?
- Why should we trust in God and not in riches?

tion for the future, in order that they may get a firm hold on the real life." (1 Timothy 6:17-19) Whatever our economic situation, let us rely on God's spirit and pursue a course of life that will make us "rich toward God." (Luke 12:21) Nothing is more valuable than an approved standing with our loving heavenly Father.

### Present Yourself Approved to God

<sup>18</sup> Throughout his life, David sought Jehovah's approval. In song, he cried out: "Show me favor, O God, show me favor, for in you my soul has taken refuge." (Psalm 57:1) His trust in Jehovah was not in vain. David grew old, "satisfied with days." (1 Chronicles 23:1) Though David made serious mistakes, he is remembered as one of many witnesses of God who displayed outstanding faith.—Hebrews 11:32.

<sup>19</sup> As you face changing situations in life, remember that just as Jehovah sustained, strengthened, and corrected David, He can do the same for you. The apostle Paul, like David, faced many changes in life. Yet, he too remained faithful by relying on God's spirit. He wrote: "For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me." (Philippians 4:12, 13) If we rely on Jehovah, he will help us to succeed. He wants us to succeed. If we listen to him and draw close to him, he will grant us the strength to do his will. And if we continue to rely on God's spirit, we will be able to 'present ourselves approved to God' now and throughout eternity.—2 Timothy 2:15.

18. In what way did David set a fine example for Christians?

19. How can we present ourselves approved to God?





# Are You Focusing on the Reward?

THE disease progresses slowly. Initially, it reduces a person's peripheral vision. Left untreated, it can spread toward the center of vision. Ultimately, it can cause complete loss of sight. What is it? Glaucoma—a leading cause of blindness.

Just as we can lose literal eyesight slowly and insidiously, we can lose an even more precious form of sight—our spiritual vision. Therefore, it is vital to keep spiritual matters in sharp focus in the center of our field of vision.

## Keeping the Reward in Focus

Among "the things unseen" to our literal eyes is the glorious reward of eternal life, which Jehovah holds out to his loyal ones. (2 Corinthians 4:18) Of course, the prime reason Christians serve God is that they love him. (Matthew 22:37) Nonetheless, Jehovah wants us to look forward to our reward. He wants us to see him as a generous Father who is "the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Hebrews 11:6) Hence, those who really know God and love him treasure his promised blessings and yearn for their fulfillment.—Romans 8:19, 24, 25.

Many readers of this journal and its companion, *Awake!*, enjoy the artwork portray-

ing the coming Paradise earth. Of course, we do not know exactly what the Paradise earth will look like, and the pictures published are simply artistic impressions based on such Bible passages as Isaiah 11:6-9. Nevertheless, one Christian woman said: "When I see pictures of the coming Paradise in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*, I examine them closely, as one would a travel brochure. I endeavor to see myself there because this is where I truly hope to be in God's due time."

The apostle Paul felt similarly about his "upward call." He did not consider himself as having already laid hold on it, for he had to prove himself faithful to the end. But he continued "stretching forward to the things ahead." (Philippians 3:13, 14) Likewise, Jesus endured death on a torture stake "for the joy that was set before him."—Hebrews 12:2.

Have you ever doubted whether you will enter the new world? It is certainly good not to be overconfident, since our receiving the prize of life is dependent on our remaining faithful to the end. (Matthew 24:13) However, if we are trying our best to meet God's requirements, we have every reason to be confident of attaining the reward. Remember that Jehovah "does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repen-

tance." (2 Peter 3:9) If we trust in Jehovah, he will help us to attain our goal. Indeed, it is contrary to his nature to search for reasons to disqualify those sincerely trying to please him.—Psalm 103:8-11; 130:3, 4; Ezekiel 18:32.

Knowing how Jehovah feels toward his people gives us hope—a quality of equal importance to faith. (1 Corinthians 13:13) The Greek word translated "hope" in the Bible carries the idea of an eager "expectation of good." With such hope in mind, the apostle Paul wrote: "We desire each one of you to show the same industriousness so as to have the full assurance of the hope down to the end, in order that you may not become sluggish, but be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Hebrews 6:11, 12) Notice that if we continue to serve Jehovah faithfully, we can be *assured* of realizing our hope. Unlike many worldly aspirations, this hope "does not lead

to disappointment." (Romans 5:5) So how can we keep our hope bright and in sharp focus?

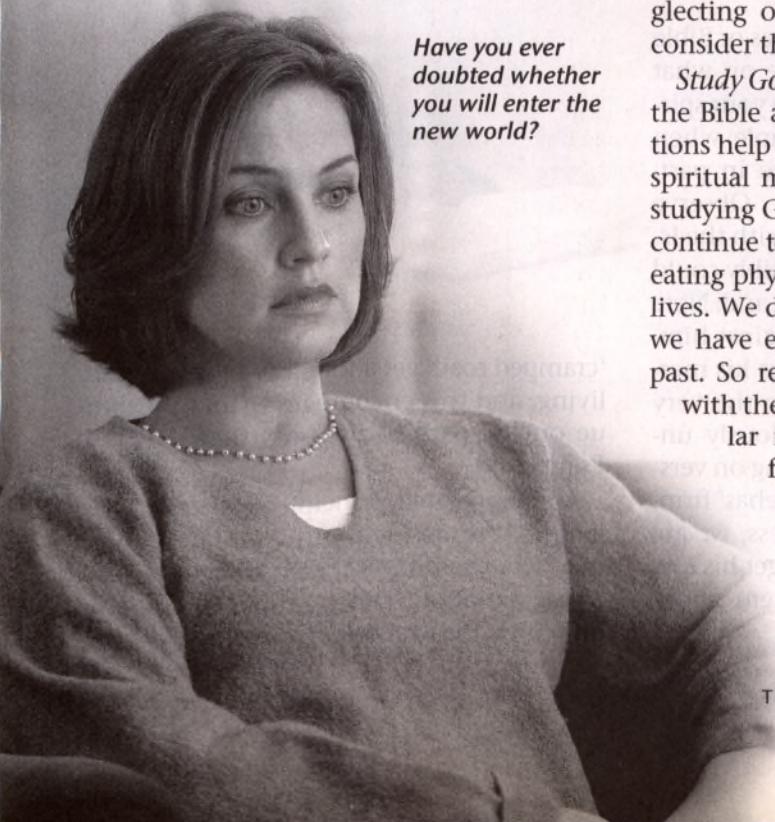
### How to Sharpen Our Spiritual Focus

Our physical eyes cannot focus on two things at the same time. The same is true of our spiritual vision. Focusing on things of the present system will surely put God's promised new world somewhat out of focus in our minds. In time, this blurred, peripheral image may lose its appeal and simply disappear from view. What a tragedy that would be! (Luke 21:34) How important, therefore, that we keep a 'simple eye'—one that stays focused on God's Kingdom and the reward of everlasting life!—Matthew 6:22.

Keeping a simple eye is not always easy. Day-to-day problems demand our attention, and distractions—even temptations—may lie in our path. Under these circumstances, how can we stay focused on the Kingdom and God's promised new world without neglecting other necessary activities? Let us consider three ways.

*Study God's Word daily.* Regular reading of the Bible and study of Bible-based publications help us to keep our minds centered on spiritual matters. True, we may have been studying God's Word for years, but we must continue to study it, just as we need to keep eating physical food in order to sustain our lives. We do not stop eating simply because we have eaten thousands of meals in the past. So regardless of how familiar we are with the Bible, we need an ongoing, regular intake of spiritual nourishment from it in order to keep our hope bright and our faith and love strong.—Psalm 1:1-3.

*Meditate appreciatively on God's Word.* Why is meditation essential? For two



*Have you ever doubted whether you will enter the new world?*

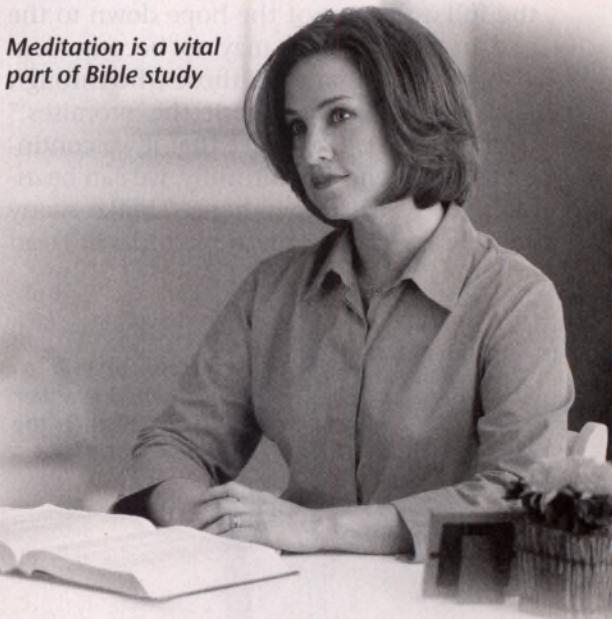
reasons. First, meditation enables us to assimilate what we read and to develop heart appreciation for it. Second, meditation prevents us from forgetting Jehovah, his wonderful works, and the hope he has set before us. To illustrate: The Israelites who left Egypt with Moses saw with their own eyes displays of Jehovah's awesome power. They also felt his loving protection as he led them toward their inheritance. Yet, no sooner did the Israelites reach the wilderness en route to the Promised Land than they began to complain, revealing a serious lack of faith. (Psalm 78:11-17) What was their problem?

The people shifted their focus from Jehovah and the wonderful hope he set before them to their immediate comforts and fleshly concerns. Despite the miraculous signs and wonders they had personally witnessed, many Israelites became faithless complainers. "Quickly they forgot [Jehovah's] works," says Psalm 106:13. Such inexcusable negligence cost that generation entry into the Promised Land.

Thus, when reading the Scriptures or Bible study aids, take time to meditate on what you read. Such reflection is vital to your spiritual health and growth. For example, when reading Psalm 106, quoted above in part, meditate on Jehovah's qualities. Observe how patient and merciful he was with the Israelites. See how he did all he possibly could to help them reach the Promised Land. Note how they continually rebelled against him. Feel Jehovah's anguish and pain as his mercy and patience were stretched to the very limit by a people who were callously unappreciative. Further, by meditating on verses 30 and 31, which describe Phinehas' firm, courageous stand for righteousness, we are assured that Jehovah does not forget his loyal ones and that he rewards them abundantly.

*Apply Bible principles in your life.* As we follow Bible principles, we see for ourselves that Jehovah's counsel works. Proverbs 3:5, 6 says: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." Think about how the immoral ways of many people have caused a backlash of mental, emotional, and physical problems. By indulging in momentary pleasures, such people reap years—even a lifetime—of woe. In sharp contrast, those who walk the

*Meditation is a vital part of Bible study*



'cramped road' get a foretaste of new system living, and this encourages them to continue on the path to life.—Matthew 7:13, 14; Psalm 34:8.

Applying Bible principles can be a challenge. At times, an unscriptural solution may seem to promise immediate relief in a trying situation. During times of financial difficulty, for example, it may be tempting



### *Keep focused on Kingdom interests*

to relegate Kingdom interests to second place. However, those who act in faith and maintain their spiritual focus are assured that in the end "it will turn out well with those fearing the true God." (Ecclesiastes 8:12) A Christian may have to work overtime on occasion, but never will he become like Esau, who despised spiritual things, dismissing them as of no importance.—Genesis 25:34; Hebrews 12:16.

Jesus clearly explained our responsibilities as Christians. We are to 'keep on seeking first the kingdom and God's righteousness.' (Matthew 6:33) If we do so, Jehovah will demonstrate his fatherly love for us by ensuring that we have what we need in a material way. He certainly does not want us to burden ourselves with anxiety over things that he says come under his care. Such undue anxiety can be like spiritual glaucoma—untended, it will slowly narrow our vision down to material concerns and ultimately make us spiritually blind. If we remain in that condition, Jehovah's day will come upon us "as a snare." What a tragedy that would be!—Luke 21:34-36.



### **Stay Focused Like Joshua**

Let us keep our glorious Kingdom hope in sharp focus, putting other responsibilities in their proper place. By persisting in the routine of study, meditation, and application of Bible principles, we can stay confident of our hope as Joshua did. Having led Israel into the Promised Land, he said: "You well know with all your hearts and with all your souls that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed."—Joshua 23:14.

May the Kingdom hope energize you, and may it brighten your days as it is reflected in your thoughts, feelings, decisions, and activities.—Proverbs 15:15; Romans 12:12.



## SMALL SACRIFICES BROUGHT US GREAT BLESSINGS

AS TOLD BY  
GEORGE AND ANN ALJIAN

Never in our wildest dreams did my wife and I ever imagine that we would one day confuse "teacher" with "mouse." Never did we think that in our 60's we would be pondering strange-looking written characters in an effort to communicate with people from the Far East. Yet, this is what Ann and I did in the late 1980's. Let us tell you how the small sacrifices we have made over the years have led to many blessings.

I CAME from a family of Armenian descent and belonged to the Armenian Church. Ann was a Roman Catholic. We both compromised our religious beliefs when we married in 1950. I was 27 years old, and Ann was 24. We settled in an apartment over my dry-cleaning shop in Jersey City, New Jersey, U.S.A. By then I had owned this business for about four years.

In 1955 we bought a beautiful three-bedroom house in Middletown, New Jersey. That home was 40 miles from my business,

where I worked six days a week. I came home late every night. The only contact I had with Jehovah's Witnesses was when they periodically came to my shop and placed Bible literature with me. I read the literature with great interest. Though my business took up most of my time and attention, I developed a deep respect for the Bible.

I soon discovered that the Watchtower radio station, WBBR, was broadcasting Bible lectures during the time I was driving to and from my shop. I listened closely to

these lectures, and my interest grew to the point that I asked the Witnesses to visit me. In November 1957, George Blanton called at my home and started a Bible study with me.

### Our Family Becomes United in Pure Worship

How did Ann feel about all of this? Let her tell you.

"Initially, I was extremely opposed. I was so disruptive during George's Bible study that he decided to study at a different location, doing so for eight months. During that time, George started attending meetings on Sundays at the Kingdom Hall. I knew then that he was serious about his Bible study because this was his only day off. Yet, he remained a good husband and father—even more so—and my attitude began to change. In fact, sometimes while dusting the coffee table when no one was looking, I picked up the *Awake!* magazine that George always left there, and I read it. At other times, George read to me *Awake!* articles that did not directly deal with doctrine but that always highlighted the Creator."

"One evening while George was out having his Bible study with Brother Blanton, I picked up a publication that our two-year-old, George, had put on the table beside my bed. It had something to do with hope for the dead. Though I was tired, I began to read it because my grandmother had just died, and I was very despondent. I immediately saw and appreciated the Bible truth that the dead are not suffering somewhere and that they will come back to life in a future resurrection. Soon I was sitting straight up in bed, avidly reading and underlining points that I wanted to show George when he



came home from his Bible study.

"My husband could hardly believe that I was the same person. When he left the house, I was opposed, and now I was bubbling over with the wonderful Bible truths I had learned! We stayed up well into the morning hours talking about the Bible. George explained God's purpose for the earth. I asked him that very night

if he could have his study at home so that I could join it.

"Brother Blanton recommended that the children sit in on our study. We thought they were too young, since they were only two and four years old. However,

*Louise and George Blanton with Ann, 1991*



Brother Blanton showed us Deuteronomy 31:12, which says: 'Congregate the people, the men and the women *and the little ones* . . . , in order that they may listen and in order that they may learn.' We appreciated that direction and even arranged for the children to comment during the Bible study.

*old and modern*  
**The Kingdom Hall in Carlyle,  
dedicated June 4, 1983**

We would prepare our comments together, but we never told them what to say. We feel that this helped to direct our children toward making the truth their own. We will always appreciate the guidance that Brother Blanton gave us to help our family grow spiritually."

### Challenges Requiring Sacrifice

Now that we were united in studying the Bible, we had new challenges to meet. Since my shop was so far away, I did not usually arrive home until nine o'clock in the evening. Because of this, I was unable to attend meetings on weekdays, though I could attend on Sundays. By that time, Ann was attending all the meetings and was making rapid progress. I too wanted to attend all the meetings as well as conduct a meaningful family study. I knew that I had to make some sacrifices. So I decided to shorten my business hours, even at the risk of losing some of my customers.

That worked out very well. We viewed the family study as seriously as the other five weekly meetings at the Kingdom Hall. We called it our sixth meeting. That meant a specific day and time—Wednesday each week at 8:00 p.m. Sometimes after supper, as we put the last dish away in the kitchen, one of us would say, "It's almost time for the 'meeting'!" Ann would start the study if I was late, and I took over as soon as I arrived.

Another thing that kept us strong and unified as a family was reading the daily text together in the morning. However, there was a problem in arranging this. Everybody got up at a different time. We discussed this and decided that we would all get up at the same time, have breakfast at 6:30 a.m., and consider the daily text together. This proved very



beneficial for us. When our sons grew up, they chose to enter Bethel service. We felt that these daily discussions contributed to their spirituality.

### Privileges After Baptism Call for Greater Sacrifice

I was baptized in 1962, and after having had my business for 21 years, I sold it and took on a local job to be closer to my family so that we could serve Jehovah together. This opened the way for many blessings. We set the goal that we would all take up the full-time ministry. That started in the early 1970's when our older son, Edward, became a full-time minister, or regular pioneer, right after finishing high school. A little later, our son George started pioneering, with Ann soon following. I was very encouraged by all three of them, as they would tell me about experiences they had had in the field service. As a family, we discussed how we could simplify our life so that we could all be in full-time service. We decided to sell the house. We had lived in that house for 18 years and had raised our family there. We really loved our home very much, but Jehovah blessed our decision to sell it.

Edward was invited to Bethel in 1972, and George, in 1974. Though Ann and I missed them, we did not dwell on how nice it would be to have them stay in our neighborhood, marry, and have children. Instead, we rejoiced that our sons were serving Jehovah at Bethel.\* We agree with Proverbs 23:

\* They are still faithfully serving at Bethel—Edward and his wife, Connie, at Patterson and George and his wife, Grace, at Brooklyn.

15, which says: "My son, if your heart has become wise, my heart will rejoice, even mine."

### We Enter the Special Pioneer Service

With both of our sons at Bethel, we continued pioneering. Then one day in 1975, we received a letter inviting us to enter the special pioneer work in unassigned territory in Clinton County, Illinois. What a surprise that was! This meant that we had to leave New Jersey, where we had been close to our sons in New York and where we had friends and relatives. However, we took it as an assignment from Jehovah and made the sacrifice, which led to new blessings.

After several months of working the unassigned territory, we began to hold meetings in a hospitality hall in Carlyle, Illinois. But we wanted a permanent place to meet. A local brother and his wife found property with a very small cottage that we were able to rent. We cleaned it up—outhouse and all—and converted it into a tiny meeting place. We remember fondly a horse that was curious about us. He often popped his head in the window to see what was going on at the meeting!

In time, the Carlyle Congregation was formed, and we were happy to have had a

share in this. We were assisted by a young pioneer couple, Steve and Karil Thompson, who had also come to work the unassigned territory. The Thompsons stayed there for several years and later attended the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead and moved to a missionary assignment in East Africa, where they serve in the traveling work.

Soon our small meeting place was becoming crowded, and we were in need of a larger hall. The same local brother and his wife again came to the rescue and bought property that was more suitable for a Kingdom Hall. How happy we were when a few years later, we were invited to the dedication of a newly built Kingdom Hall in Carlyle! I was privileged to give the dedication talk. Our assignment there was a wonderful experience for us, a blessing from Jehovah.

### A New Field Opens Up to Us

In 1979 we received a new assignment, to Harrison, New Jersey. We served there for about 12 years. During that time we started a Bible study with a Chinese woman, and this led to many other studies with Chinese people. In the meantime, we learned that thousands of Chinese students and families lived in our area. Because of this, we were encouraged to learn the Chinese language.

*With the newly formed Boston Chinese Congregation*





*With Edward, Connie, George, and Grace*

Though this meant spending time each day studying the language, it resulted in many joyful Bible studies with Chinese people in our area.

During those years, we experienced many humorous situations, especially in our attempts to speak Chinese. One day Ann introduced herself as a Bible "mouse" instead of a Bible "teacher." The words are very similar. The householder smiled and said: "Please come in. I've never spoken to a Bible mouse before." We are still struggling with the language.

Then we were assigned to another location in New Jersey where we were able to continue working in the Chinese field. Later we were invited to move to Boston, Massachusetts, where a Chinese group had been developing for about three years. It has been our privilege to give support to this group for the past seven years and to have the joy of seeing it become a congregation on January 1, 2003.

#### **Blessings From a Life of Self-Sacrifice**

At Malachi 3:10, we read Jehovah's invitation for his people to bring in their offerings

and sacrifices so that he would pour out his blessings until there was no more want. We gave up a business that I was very much interested in. We sold our home, which we loved very much. And we gave up other things as well. Yet, compared with the blessings, the sacrifices were small.

Indeed, what rich blessings Jehovah has poured out on us! We have had the satisfaction of seeing our children respond to the truth, we have had the joy of engaging full-time in a lifesaving ministry, and we have seen Jehovah taking care of our needs. Truly, our small sacrifices have brought us great blessings!

#### **IN OUR NEXT ISSUE**

**When God's Will Is Done on Earth**

**Pursuing Kindness in a Hostile World**

**The Complutensian Polyglot—A  
Historic Translation Tool**

## Questions From Readers

**Why does 1 Corinthians 10:8 say that 23,000 Israelites fell in one day for committing fornication, while Numbers 25:9 gives the figure as 24,000?**

There are several factors that may account for the difference in the figures given in these two verses. The simplest one could be that the actual number is somewhere between 23,000 and 24,000, thus allowing it to be rounded off in either direction.

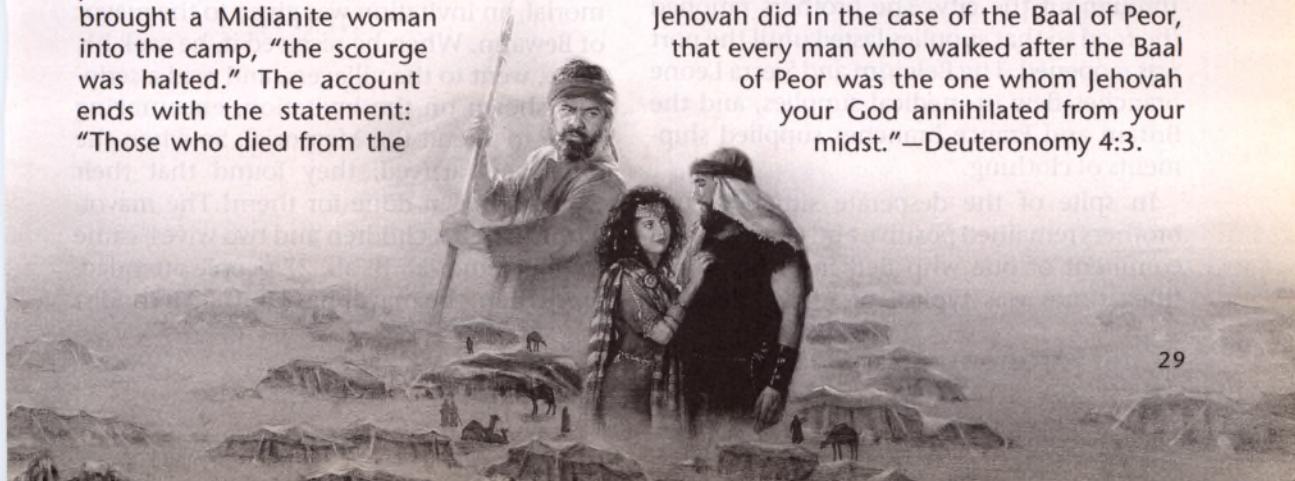
Consider another possibility. The apostle Paul cited the account of the Israelites at Shittim as a warning example to Christians in ancient Corinth, a city notorious for its licentious way of life. He wrote: "Neither let us practice fornication, as some of them committed fornication, only to fall, twenty-three thousand of them in one day." Singling out those who were put to death by Jehovah because they committed fornication, Paul gave the number as 23,000.—1 Corinthians 10:8.

Numbers chapter 25, however, tells us that "Israel attached itself to the Baal of Peor; and the anger of Jehovah began to blaze against Israel." Then, Jehovah commanded Moses to execute "all the head ones of the people." Moses, in turn, ordered the judges to carry out that command. Finally, when Phinehas acted quickly to put to death the Israelite who brought a Midianite woman into the camp, "the scourge was halted." The account ends with the statement: "Those who died from the

scourge amounted to twenty-four thousand."—Numbers 25:1-9.

The figure given in Numbers evidently included "the head ones of the people" executed by the judges and those executed directly by Jehovah. There might well have been a thousand of those head ones who died at the hands of the judges, bringing the number to 24,000. Whether these head ones, or ringleaders, committed fornication, participated in the festivities, or gave consent to those who did, they were guilty of having "an attachment with the Baal of Peor."

Regarding the word "attachment," one Bible reference work explains that it can mean "to bind one's self to a person." The Israelites were a people dedicated to Jehovah, but when they formed "an attachment with the Baal of Peor," they broke their dedicated relationship with God. Some 700 years later, through the prophet Hosea, Jehovah said of the Israelites: "They themselves went in to Baal of Peor, and they proceeded to dedicate themselves to the shameful thing, and they came to be disgusting like the thing of their love." (Hosea 9:10) All those who did so were deserving of adverse divine judgment. Thus, Moses reminded the sons of Israel: "Your own eyes are the ones that saw what Jehovah did in the case of the Baal of Peor, that every man who walked after the Baal of Peor was the one whom Jehovah your God annihilated from your midst."—Deuteronomy 4:3.



# LIBERIA

## Kingdom Increase Despite War

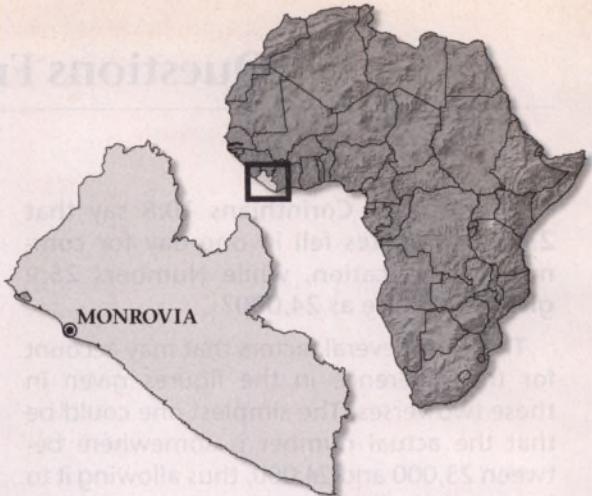
CIVIL war has raged in Liberia for over a decade. By the middle of 2003, rebels had battled their way into the capital city, Monrovia. Many of Jehovah's Witnesses were forced to flee from their homes, sometimes repeatedly. Time and again, possessions were looted.

Sadly, during the fighting in the capital, thousands of people were killed. Among them were two Witnesses, one brother and one sister. How did other brothers deal with the hardship, and what was done to help them?

### Aid for Those in Need

Throughout the crisis, the Liberia branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses organized relief for those in need. Food, essential household items, and medical supplies were provided. During the time that the rebels were in control of the port area, food became scarce. The branch had foreseen this development and had supplies on hand for the two thousand Witnesses who had fled to Kingdom Halls throughout the city. The brothers rationed the food so that supplies lasted until the port was reopened. The Belgium and Sierra Leone branches flew in medical supplies, and the Britain and France branches supplied shipments of clothing.

In spite of the desperate situation, our brothers remained positive and cheerful. The comment of one who fled from his home three times was typical of many. He said:



"These are the conditions we preach about; we are living in the last days."

### Response to the Good News

Despite the nationwide turmoil, the Witnesses continue to have excellent results in the field. There was an all-time peak of 3,879 Kingdom publishers in January 2003, and in February they conducted 15,227 home Bible studies.

People are quick to respond to the good news. An example of this comes from a village in the southeastern part of the country. A congregation planned to observe the Memorial of Christ's death in the large village of Bewahn, located about a five-hour walk from where they usually meet. Before the brothers went to the village to invite people to the Memorial, an invitation was given to the mayor of Bewahn. When he received it, he took his Bible, went to the villagers, and read a scripture shown on the invitation, encouraging them to attend the Memorial. So when the publishers arrived, they found that their work had been done for them! The mayor, along with his children and two wives, came to the Memorial. In all, 27 people attended. Since then, the mayor has left the Methodist

Church, started to study with the Witnesses, and offered land to build a Kingdom Hall.

### A Change of Heart

The conduct of our brothers has also been effective in changing some opposers' view of the truth. Consider the case of a man named Opoku. A special pioneer minister met him in field service and offered him a *Watchtower* magazine. Opoku was interested in an article in the magazine but had no money. Explaining that there was no charge, the pioneer left the magazine with him and arranged to call back. On the return visit, Opoku asked the pioneer: "Do you know me? Most of your people in the town of Harper know me. I used to throw your children out of school!" He then explained that he was the principal of a high school in the town and that he had persecuted the children of Jehovah's Witnesses for not saluting the flag.

However, three examples of Christian love displayed by Jehovah's Witnesses caused Opoku to reexamine his attitude. First, he saw the Witnesses care for a spiritual brother who was seriously sick. They even arranged for him to receive treatment in a neighboring country. Opoku had thought that the sick brother was a "big man" among the Witnesses but learned that he was just an ordinary

Witness. Second, during the 1990's, Opoku was a refugee in Côte d'Ivoire. One day when he was thirsty, he went to purchase water from a young man. Opoku had only a large bill, and the young man did not have any change, so he let Opoku have the water without charge. When he handed Opoku the water, the young man asked: "Do you think we will ever see a time when people like you and me will give things to one another without asking for money?" Opoku guessed that he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and the young man confirmed that he was. The generosity and kindness of this brother impressed him. Finally, the special pioneer's willingness to let him have a magazine free of charge convinced Opoku that his view of the Witnesses was wrong and that he needed to change. He made spiritual progress and is now an unbaptized publisher.

Though the brothers in Liberia continue to face extremely difficult conditions, they trust in God and faithfully proclaim the good news of better times under the righteous rule of God's Kingdom. Jehovah will never forget their hard work and the love they show for his name.—Hebrews 6:10.

*During times of crisis, Jehovah's people provide spiritual and physical aid to those in need*



# Should We Call Upon Angels for Help?

IS IT proper to call upon angels in times of distress? Many people think so. In fact, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says: "One prays to . . . the angels . . . but only in the sense that they may intercede before God for us." Should we call upon angels to intercede for us?

God's Word provides the names of only two of God's faithful angels, Michael and Gabriel. (Daniel 8:16; 12:1; Luke 1:26; Jude 9) Since these names are mentioned in the Bible, we discern that each angel is a unique spirit person with a name, not merely some impersonal energy or force. Yet, other angels declined to disclose their names. For instance, when Jacob asked an angel who visited him to reveal his name, he refused to do so. (Genesis 32:29; Judges 13:17, 18) No list of names of angels is provided in the Bible, thus preventing humans from giving them undue attention.

Among the duties of angels is the conveying of messages from God to humans. In fact, the original Hebrew and Greek words translated "angel" literally mean "messenger." How-

ever, angels do not serve as intercessors who bring human prayers to the throne of the Most High. God has determined that prayers be addressed to him in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, who said: "No matter what you ask the Father in my name he might give it to you."—John 15:16; 1 Timothy 2:5.

Jehovah God is never too busy to listen to us if we approach him properly. The Bible gives this assurance: "Jehovah is near to all those calling upon him, to all those who call upon him in trueness."—Psalm 145:18.

