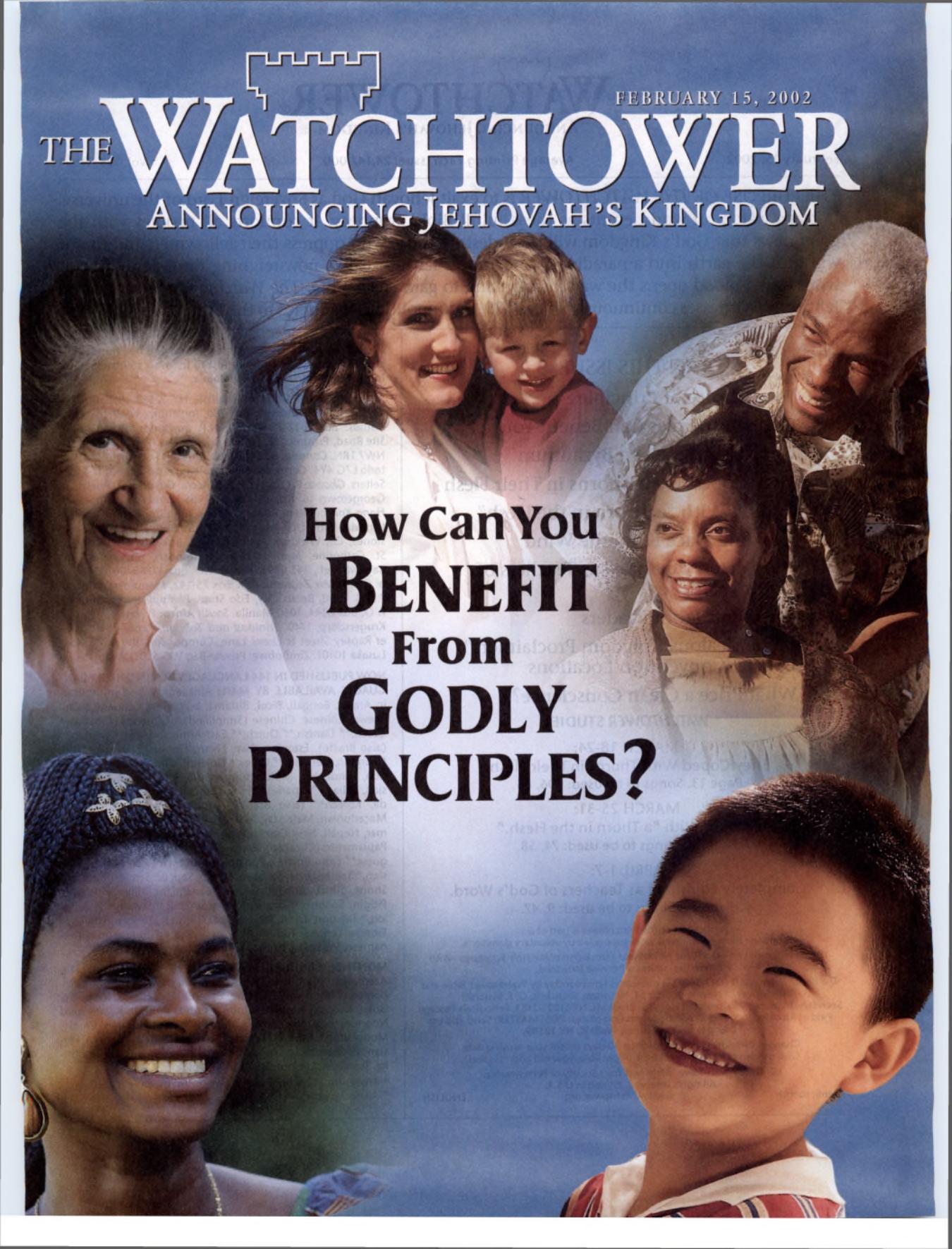


FEBRUARY 15, 2002

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



How Can You
BENEFIT
From
GODLY
PRINCIPLES?

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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Your Choice of Principles

ARE you a person of principle? Or do you consider ethics to be a bit old-fashioned? The fact is, everyone is guided by principles of some sort, which he or she believes are important. According to *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, a principle can be defined as "a personal code of right action." Principles influence our decisions and determine the direction we take in life. Principles can act like a compass.

For instance, Jesus urged his followers to keep the Golden Rule, found at Matthew 7:12: "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them." Followers of Confucius observe the principles of li and jen, which address such qualities as kindness, humility, respect, and loyalty. Even people who are not religious have some priorities or guidelines that determine their conduct.

Principles of What Sort?

We do well to bear in mind, however, that principles may be either good or bad. For example, an increasing number of people are motivated by what, for the last decade or so, has been identified as me-ism. Though many may not know the term or may feel that it does not apply to them, me-ism is a principle by default, that is, a code of conduct that many resort to as they abandon high standards of behavior. Whether identified by that term or not, me-ism is a manifestation of selfishness, often accompanied by mind-

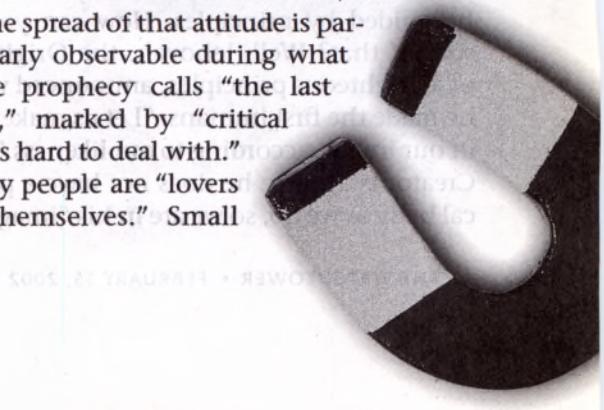
less materialism. "We have just two principles," claimed a TV executive in China. "One is satisfying demand. The other is making money."

Me-ism can act like a magnet. And how does a magnet affect a compass? When the two are side by side, the compass needle gets misdirected. In the same way, me-ism can throw a person's moral compass, or code of right behavior, into confusion by making everything subordinate to the desires of the person.

Would it surprise you to learn that me-ism is not a modern phenomenon? This approach to life found its origin in the garden of Eden

when our first parents abandoned the standard of behavior laid down by our Creator. That altered their moral compass. As descendants of Adam and Eve, humans are troubled with the same approach to life, more recently labeled "me-ism."—Genesis 3:6-8, 12.

The spread of that attitude is particularly observable during what Bible prophecy calls "the last days," marked by "critical times hard to deal with." Many people are "lovers of themselves." Small



wonder that we find ourselves under pressure to copy the me-first approach.
—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Perhaps you find yourself agreeing with a youth named Olaf who wrote to a European branch of Jehovah's Witnesses: "It is very hard to remain morally upright, especially for us young ones. Please keep reminding us of the necessity to stick to Bible principles."

Olaf reflected a perceptive view. Godly principles can help us—young or old—to keep to high standards of behavior. They can also enable us to resist me-ism, whether labeled that or not. If you would like to learn more about how Bible principles can really help you, kindly consider the next article.

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Many people today show no regard for the needs of others



Godly Principles Can Benefit You

YOU are no doubt aware that animals are governed by instinct. Many machines are designed to obey instructions. But humans were actually created to be guided by principles. How can you be sure of that? Well, Jehovah, the Originator of all righteous principles, announced when he made the first humans: "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness." The Creator is a spirit; he does not have a physical body as we do, so we are in his "image" in

that we can reflect his personality, displaying a measure of his fine qualities. Humans have the capacity to chart their lives according to principles, that is, according to what they believe to be a code of right action. Jehovah has had many of these principles recorded in his Word.—Genesis 1:26; John 4:24; 17:17.

'But the Bible contains hundreds of principles,' one might say. 'I cannot hope to know them all.' True. Consider this fact though: While all godly principles are beneficial,

some carry more weight than others. You can see that from Matthew 22:37-39, where Jesus showed that among the commandments and corresponding principles of the Mosaic Law, some were more important than others.

Which are the weightier principles? The key principles of the Bible are those that have a direct bearing upon our relationship with Jehovah. If we take these to heart, the Creator becomes the prime influence on our moral compass. Additionally, there are principles that affect our relationships with other people. Applying these will help us withstand me-ism, however it may be designated.¹⁰²

Let us start with one of the most important truths in the Bible. What is that truth, and how does it affect us?

"The Most High Over All the Earth"

The Holy Scriptures make it clear that Jehovah is our Grand Creator, God Almighty. He can never be equaled or supplanted. This is a key truth recorded in the Bible.—Genesis 17:1; Ecclesiastes 12:1.

One of the writers of the book of Psalms noted about Jehovah: "You alone are the Most High over all the earth." Ancient King David said: "Yours is the kingdom, O Jehovah, the One also lifting yourself up as head over all." And the renowned prophet Jeremiah was moved to record: "In no way is there anyone like you, O Jehovah. You are great, and your name is great in mightiness."—Psalm 83:18; 1 Chronicles 29:11; Jeremiah 10:6.

How should we apply those truths about God in everyday life?

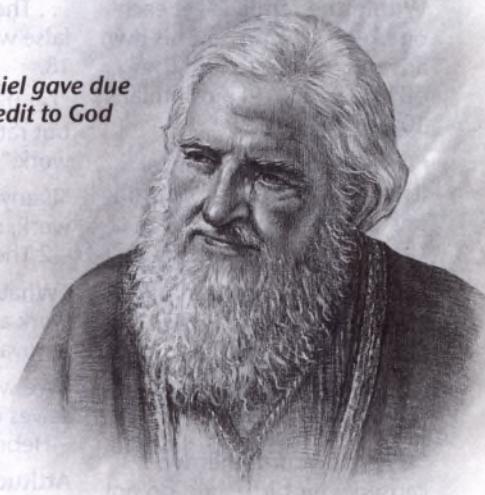
It is clear who should really be preeminent in our lives—our Creator and Life-Giver. Would it not be fitting, then, to resist any tendency to draw attention to ourselves—a tendency that may be stronger in some than in others? A wise guiding principle is to "do all things for God's glory." (1 Corinthians 10:

31) The prophet Daniel set a fine example in this regard.

The historical record tells us that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was once agitated by a dream and demanded to know its meaning. Whereas everyone else was baffled, Daniel accurately told the king what he wanted to know. Did Daniel take credit for this? No, he gave glory to "God in the heavens who is a Revealer of secrets." Daniel went on: "It is not through any wisdom that exists in me more than in any others alive that this secret is revealed to me." Daniel was a man of principle. No wonder that in the book of Daniel, he is described three times as being "very desirable" in God's eyes.—Daniel 2:28, 30; 9:23; 10:11, 19.

You will be benefited when you imitate Daniel. In following Daniel's example, the decisive factor is motive. Who should get the

Daniel gave due credit to God



honor for what you do? Regardless of your situation, you have the ability to act in harmony with this vitally important Bible principle—Jehovah is the Sovereign Lord. Your doing so will make you "very desirable" in his eyes.

Let us now consider two basic principles that can guide us in the field of human relations. In the face of the widespread emphasis on self, this area of life is especially challenging.

"With Lowliness of Mind"

Those who put themselves first are rarely satisfied. Most want an ever better life, and they want it now. For them, modesty is a type of weakness. They consider patience to be something that only others should display. When it comes to their getting ahead, anything goes. Do you think that you have any alternative to behaving as they do?

Servants of God encounter that attitude daily, but it should not rub off on them.

Mature Christians accept the principle that it is "not the one who recommends himself [who] is approved, but the man whom Jehovah recommends."—2 Corinthians 10:18.

Applying the principle at Philippians 2:3, 4 will help. That text encourages you to do "nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism, but with lowliness of mind [consider] that the others are superior to you." Thus you will be "keeping an eye, not in personal interest upon just your own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others."

Someone who had a healthy attitude about himself and who made a sound appraisal of his own worth, was Gideon, a judge among the an-

Some Helpful Bible Principles

Within the family: "Let each one keep seeking, not his own advantage, but that of the other person."—1 Corinthians 10:24.

"Love . . . does not look for its own interests."—1 Corinthians 13:4, 5.

"Let each one of you individually so love his wife as he does himself."—Ephesians 5:33.

"You wives, be in subjection to your husbands."—Colossians 3:18.

"Listen to your father who caused your birth, and do not despise your mother just because she has grown old."—Proverbs 23:22.

At school, at work, or in business: "A cheating pair of scales is something detestable

. . . The wicked one is making false wages."—Proverbs 11:1, 18.

"Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work."—Ephesians 4:28.

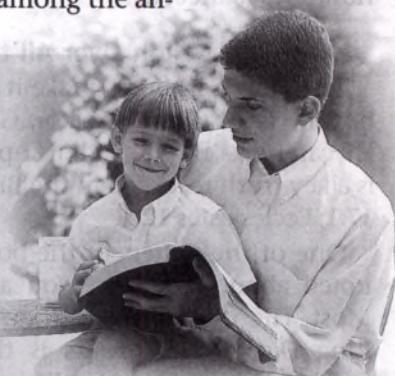
"If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat."—2 Thessalonians 3:10.

"Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah."—Colossians 3:23.

"We wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things."—Hebrews 13:18.

Attitude toward wealth: "He that is hastening to gain riches will not remain innocent."—Proverbs 28:20.

"A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver."—Ecclesiastes 5:10.



Assessing one's own worth:

"For people to search out their own glory, is it glory?"—Proverbs 25:27.

"May a stranger, and not your own mouth, praise you."—Proverbs 27:2.

"I tell everyone there among you not to think more of himself than it is necessary to think."—Romans 12:3.

"If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deceiving his own mind."—Galatians 6:3.

cient Hebrews. He did not seek to be leader of Israel. When he was designated to fill that role, however, Gideon called attention to his unworthiness. "My thousand is the least in Manasseh, and I am the smallest in my father's house," he explained.—Judges 6:12-16.

Moreover, after Jehovah gave a victory to Gideon, men of Ephraim picked a quarrel with him. How did Gideon react? Had his own importance been inflated by the triumph? No. He averted disaster by giving a mild reply. "What have I been able to do in comparison with you?" Gideon was lowly in mind.—Judges 8:1-3.

Granted, the events involving Gideon occurred a long time ago. Still, there is value in considering the account. You can see that Gideon had an attitude quite different from what is so common today, and he lived in accord with it, to his benefit.

The prevailing attitude that focuses on self can distort our view of worth. Bible principles correct that distortion, teaching us our true value in relation to the Creator and to others.

By heeding Bible principles, we rise above the mood of the moment. We are no longer swayed by feelings or personalities. The more we learn about righteous principles, the better acquainted we become with their Originator. Yes, taking special note of godly principles when reading the Bible is well worth the effort.—See box.



Dealing with others in line with godly principles contributes to pleasant relations and happiness

Jehovah has made humans higher than animals, which are moved primarily by instinct. Following God's will involves applying divine principles. We thus can keep our moral compass in good order, a compass that will direct us into a new system of God's making. The Bible gives us reason to expect very soon an earth-wide new system in which "righteousness is to dwell."—2 Peter 3:13.



CHURCH AND STATE IN

Byzantium



THE founder of Christianity was very clear about the sharp distinction that should exist between his followers and the world of mankind alienated from God. Jesus told his followers: "If you were part of the world, the world would be fond of what is its own. Now because you are no part of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, on this account the world hates you." (John 15:19) To Pilate, a representative of the political power of his day, Jesus declared: "My kingdom is no part of this world."—John 18:36.

In order to fulfill their responsibility to preach "to the most distant part of the earth," Christians had to avoid being distracted by secular affairs. (Acts 1:8) Like Jesus,



the early Christians would not get involved in politics. (John 6:15) It was noticeable that faithful Christians did not get involved in holding public office or administrative positions. This eventually changed.

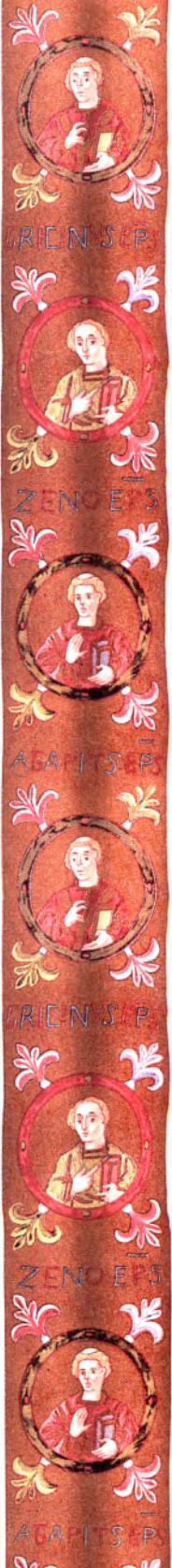
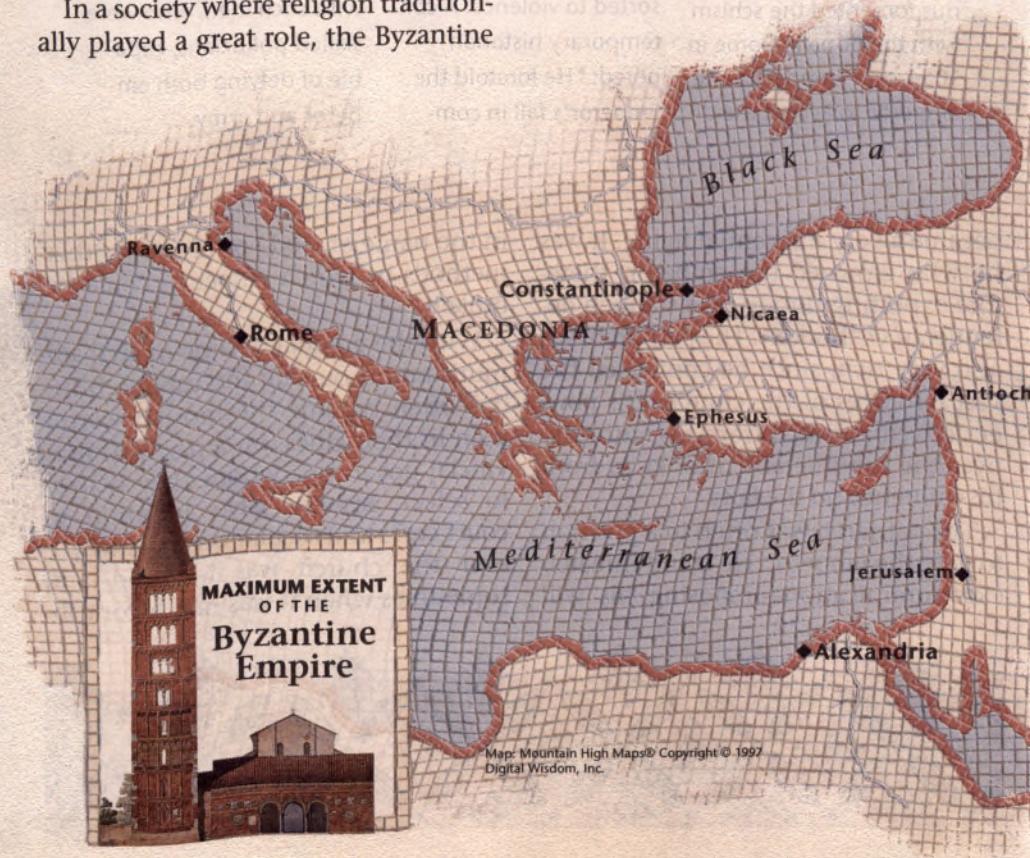
"Part of the World"

Some time after the death of the last of the apostles, religious leaders willingly began to change their views regarding themselves and the world. They started envisioning a "kingdom" that not only was in the world but also was a part of it. A look at how religion and politics intertwined in the Byzantine Empire—the East Roman Empire, with its capital at Byzantium (now Istanbul)—will prove instructive.

In a society where religion traditionally played a great role, the Byzantine

Church, with its center in Byzantium, wielded considerable power. Church historian Panayotis Christou once observed: "The Byzantines saw their earthly empire an image of the Kingdom of God." The imperial authority did not always share that view, however. As a result, the relationship between Church and State was stormy at times. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* states: "The bishops of Constantinople [or Byzantium] displayed a wide range of behavior, including cowardly subservience to a powerful ruler . . . , fruitful collaboration with the throne . . . , and bold opposition to the imperial will."

The patriarch of Constantinople, the head of the Eastern Church,



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"LIKE A GOD PACING ACROSS THE HEAVENS"

The events surrounding Patriarch Michael Cerularius (c. 1000-1059) are typical of the role that the head of the church could play in the affairs of State and the ambitions involved. After having attained the patriarchate, Cerularius aimed higher. He has been described as arrogant, presumptuous, and uncompromising—"seeming in his demeanour like a god pacing across the heavens."

Out of his desire for self-promotion, Cerularius fomented the schism with the pope in Rome in 1054, and compelled the emperor to accept the di-

vision. Pleased with this victory, Cerularius arranged to put Michael VI on the throne and helped him consolidate his power. A year later, Cerularius forced that emperor to quit and installed Isaac Comnenus (c. 1005-1061) on the throne.

The conflict between patriarchate and empire escalated. Cerularius—assured of public support—threatened, demanded, and resorted to violence. A contemporary historian noted: "He foretold the Emperor's fall in com-

monplace, vulgar language, saying, 'I raised you up, you imbecile; but I'll break you.'" However, Isaac Comnenus had him arrested, imprisoned, and banished to Imbros.

Such examples show how much trouble the patriarch of Constantinople could cause and how boldly he could resist the emperor. The throne often had to deal with such men, who were skilled politicians, capable of defying both emperor and army.



became a very influential figure. It was he who crowned the emperor, therefore expecting him to be a staunch defender of Orthodoxy. The patriarch was also very rich, since he controlled the vast resources of the church. His power derived as much from his authority over the innumerable monks as from his influence on the laity.

The patriarch was often in a position to defy the emperor. He could threaten excommunication—imposing his will

in the name of God—or resort to other methods by which emperors could be broken.

With the gradual decline of civil administration outside the capital, bishops often became the most powerful men in their cities, on a par with provincial governors, whom they helped to select. Bishops gave attention to court cases and secular business whenever the church was involved—and sometimes when it was not. A contrib-



uting factor was that priests and monks, all subject to their local bishops, numbered in the tens of thousands.

Politics and Simony

As the above shows, the pastoral office became inextricably intertwined with politics. Moreover, the great number of clerics and their religious activities of necessity involved large sums of money. Most high-ranking clergymen lived luxuriously. As the church gained power and wealth, apostolic poverty and sanctity disappeared. Some priests and bishops paid for their appointment. Simony was common all the way to the highest ranks of the hierarchy. Clerics supported by wealthy lobbies vied for ecclesiastical offices before the emperor.

Bribes were also a means to influence senior religious leaders. When the Empress Zoe (c. 978-1050 C.E.) had her husband Romanus III murdered and wanted to marry her lover and would-be Emperor Michael IV, she hastily summoned Patriarch Alexius to the palace. There the patriarch learned of the death of Romanus and the patriarchal service expected. That the church was celebrating Good

Friday that evening did not make things easier for Alexius. However, he accepted the generous gifts offered by the empress and satisfied her request.

Subservience to the Emperor

At times during the history of the Byzantine Empire, the emperor used his de fac-

to right of appointment when it came to the choice of the patriarch of Constantinople. During such periods, nobody could become patriarch against the emperor's will or remain so for long.

Emperor Andronicus II (1260-1332) found it necessary to change patriarchs nine times. In most of such cases, the objective was to put the most pliable candidate possible on the patriarchal throne. According to the book *The Byzantines*, one patriarch even promised the emperor in writing "to do whatever he demanded, no matter how unlawful, and to refrain from doing anything that displeased him." Emperors twice tried to impose their will on the church by consecrating as patriarch a prince of the royal family. Emperor Romanus I raised his son Theodore, a mere 16-year-old, to patriarchal dignity.

If a patriarch failed to please him, the sovereign might compel him to abdicate or instruct a synod to depose him. The book *Byzantium* observes: "More and more in the course of Byzantine history higher authorities and even the direct influence of the Emperor [came] to play a preponderant part in the choice of bishops."

With the patriarch at his side, the emperor also presided at ecclesiastical councils. He guided debates, formulated articles of faith, and argued with bishops as well as with heretics, for whom he had the ultimate argument—death at the stake. The emperor also confirmed and implemented the canons adopted in council. He charged those who opposed him not only with *lèse-majesté* but with



Empress Zoe



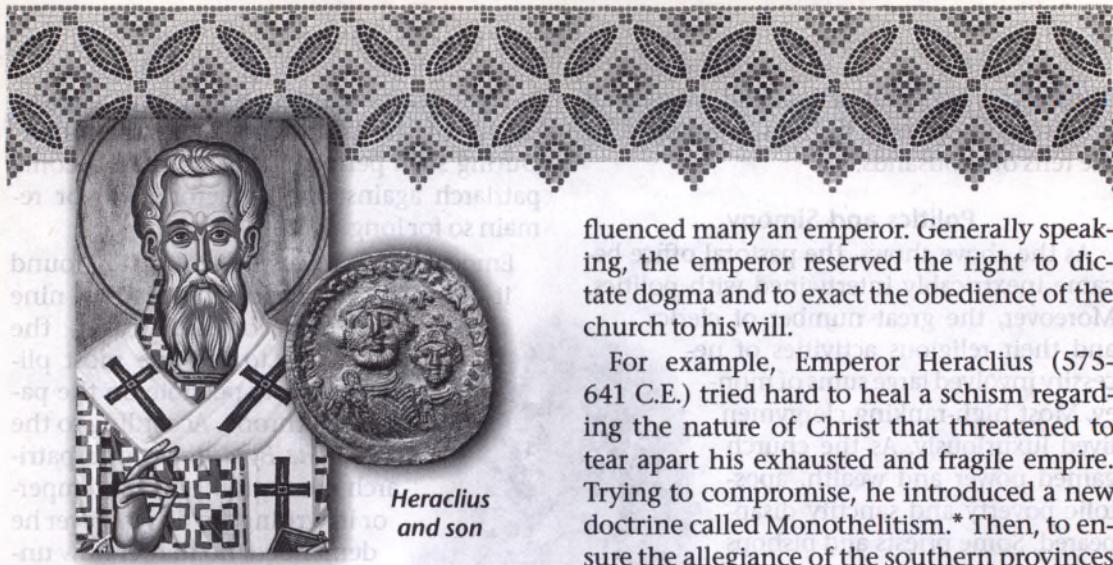
Romanus III (on left)



Michael IV



Romanus I (on left)



Photius

**Heraclius
and son**

being enemies of the faith and of God. "Nothing must be done in the Church that is contrary to the will and commands of the Emperor," said one sixth-century patriarch. The bishops around the court—suave, pliant men, accessible to discreet gestures of favor and adroit bargaining—as a rule protested as little as their superior.

For instance, when Patriarch Ignatius (c. 799-878 C.E.) refused communion to Chief Minister Bardas, the minister fought back. Bardas implicated Ignatius in an alleged plot and treason. The patriarch was arrested and banished. As his replacement, the minister procured the election of Photius, a layman who within six days climbed the ladder of all ecclesiastical orders, eventually reaching the rank of patriarch. Was Photius qualified for that spiritual office? He has been described as a man "of consummate ambition, prodigious arrogance, and unsurpassed political skill."

Dogma in the Service of Politics

Orthodoxy and heresy often masked political opposition, and political factors rather than a desire to introduce new doctrines in-

fluenced many an emperor. Generally speaking, the emperor reserved the right to dictate dogma and to exact the obedience of the church to his will.

For example, Emperor Heraclius (575-641 C.E.) tried hard to heal a schism regarding the nature of Christ that threatened to tear apart his exhausted and fragile empire. Trying to compromise, he introduced a new doctrine called Monothelitism.* Then, to ensure the allegiance of the southern provinces of his empire, Heraclius chose a new patriarch of Alexandria, Cyrus of Phasis, who endorsed the doctrine that the emperor supported. The emperor made Cyrus not just patriarch but prefect of Egypt, with authority over its local rulers. With the pressure of a little persecution, Cyrus managed to win the consent of most of the Egyptian church.

A Bitter Harvest

How could these developments and events reflect the word and spirit of Jesus' prayer where he said that his followers would be "no part of the world"?—John 17:14-16.

Professed Christian leaders in Byzantine times and later have paid dearly for their involvement in the political and military affairs of the world. What does this brief consideration of history tell you? Did the leaders of the Byzantine Church win the favor of God and Jesus Christ?—James 4:4.

True Christianity has not been served by such ambitious religious leaders and their political paramours. This unholy mix of religion and politics has misrepresented the pure religion taught by Jesus. May we learn from history and remain "no part of the world."

* Monothelitism holds that although having two natures as God and man, Christ has one will.

THEY COPED WITH THORNS IN THEIR FLESH

"There was given me a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan, to keep slapping me."

—2 CORINTHIANS 12:7

ARE you contending with some ongoing trial? If so, you are not alone. In these "critical times hard to deal with," faithful Christians are coping with bitter opposition, family problems, sickness, financial anxieties, emotional distresses, the loss of loved ones in death, and other challenges. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) In certain lands, the lives of many are threatened by food shortages and wars.

² Such problems can make one feel completely overwhelmed, especially if a number of hardships strike at the same time. Note what Proverbs 24:10 says: "Have you shown yourself discouraged in the day of distress? Your power will be scanty." Yes, discouragement over our trials can rob us of much-needed strength and can weaken our resolve to endure to the end. How so?

³ Well, discouragement might cause us to lose our objectivity. For example, it is easy for us to blow our hardships out of proportion and to start feeling sorry for ourselves. Some may even cry out to God, "Why are you letting this happen to me?" If such a negative attitude were to take root in a person's heart, it could erode his joy and confidence. A servant of God could become so discouraged that he might even give up fighting "the fine fight of the faith."—1 Timothy 6:12.

1. What are some problems facing people today?
- 2, 3. What negative attitude may result from the thornlike problems we face, and how might that prove dangerous?

⁴ Jehovah God certainly does not cause our trials. (James 1:13) Some tests come upon us simply because we are trying to be faithful to him. In fact, all who serve Jehovah make themselves targets of his archenemy, Satan the Devil. In the short time he has left, that wicked "god of this system of things" is trying to make anyone who loves Jehovah give up doing His will. (2 Corinthians 4:4) Satan inflicts as much suffering as he can on the entire association of our brothers around the world. (1 Peter 5:9) Granted, Satan does not directly cause all our problems, but he can exploit the problems we face, seeking to weaken us further.

⁵ No matter how fearsome Satan or his weapons may be, though, we can defeat him! How can we be certain of that? Because Jehovah God fights in our behalf. He has made sure that his servants are not ignorant regarding Satan's tactics. (2 Corinthians 2:11) In fact, God's Word tells us much about the trials that afflict true Christians. In the apostle Paul's case, the Bible used the expression "a thorn in the flesh." Why? Let us take a look at how God's Word explains that phrase. Then we will see that we are far from alone in needing Jehovah's help to triumph over trials.

Why Tests Are Like Thorns

- 6 Paul, having been sorely tried, was
- 4, 5. In some cases, how is Satan involved with our problems, yet what confidence may we have?
6. What did Paul mean by "a thorn in the flesh," and what might that thorn have been?

inspired to write: "There was given me a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan, to keep slapping me, that I might not be overly exalted." (2 Corinthians 12:7) What was this thorn in Paul's flesh? Well, a thorn lodged deep under the skin would certainly be painful. So the metaphor suggests something that caused Paul pain—whether physical, emotional, or both. It may be that Paul suffered from an eye affliction or some other physical infirmity. Or the thorn may have involved those individuals who challenged Paul's credentials as an apostle and called into question his preaching and teaching work. (2 Corinthians 10:10-12; 11:5, 6, 13) Whatever it was, that thorn remained in place and could not be removed.

⁷ Note that the thorn kept slapping Paul. Interestingly, the Greek verb Paul used here is derived from the word for "knuckles." That word is used literally at Matthew 26:67 and figuratively at 1 Corinthians 4:11. In those verses, it conveys the idea of being beaten with fists. In view of Satan's bitter hatred of Jehovah and His servants, we can be sure that the Devil was pleased that a thorn kept on slapping Paul. Today, Satan is just as pleased when we are similarly troubled by a thorn in the flesh.

⁸ Therefore, like Paul, we need to know how to cope with such thorns. Doing so means our very life! Remember, Jehovah wants to prolong our life forever in his new world, where thornlike problems will never beset us again. To help us win this wonderful prize, God has given us many examples in his holy Word, the Bible, showing that his faithful servants have successfully coped with thorns in their flesh. They were ordinary, imperfect people, just as we are. Considering some among this great "cloud of witnesses"

7, 8. (a) What does the expression "to keep slapping" indicate? (b) Why is it vital that we cope with any thorns afflicting us now?

may help us to "run with endurance the race that is set before us." (Hebrews 12:1) Meditating on what they endured can build our confidence that we can cope with any thorns that Satan may use against us.

The Thorns Afflicting Mephibosheth

⁹ Consider Mephibosheth, the son of David's friend Jonathan. When Mephibosheth was five years old, news came that his father, Jonathan, and his grandfather, King Saul, had been killed. The boy's nurse panicked. She "began to carry him . . . , but it came about that as she was running in panic to flee, he then had a fall and was lamed." (2 Samuel 4:4) This disability must have been quite a thorn for Mephibosheth to endure as he grew up.

¹⁰ Some years later King David, out of his great love for Jonathan, expressed loving-kindness to Mephibosheth. David turned over all of Saul's property to him and assigned Saul's attendant Ziba as caretaker of this land. David also told Mephibosheth: 'You will eat bread at my table constantly.' (2 Samuel 9:6-10) No doubt David's loving-kindness was comforting to Mephibosheth and helped to blunt the pain of his disability. What a fine lesson! We too should show kindness to those contending with a thorn in the flesh.

¹¹ Later on, Mephibosheth had to contend with another thorn in his flesh. His servant Ziba slandered him before King David, who was then fleeing Jerusalem because of the rebellion of Absalom, David's son. Ziba said that Mephibosheth had disloyally stayed behind in Jerusalem in the hope of acquiring

9, 10. (a) How did Mephibosheth come to have a thorn in his flesh? (b) What kindness did King David show to Mephibosheth, and how might we imitate David?

11. What did Ziba claim about Mephibosheth, but how do we know that his claim was a lie? (See footnote.)

the kingship for himself.* David believed Ziba's slander and turned over all of Mephibosheth's property to that liar!—2 Samuel 16:1-4.

¹² However, when Mephibosheth finally met with David, he told the king what had really happened. He had been preparing to join David when Ziba tricked him and volunteered to go in his place. Did David right this wrong? Partially. He divided the property between the two men. Here, then, was another potential thorn in Mephibosheth's flesh. Was he badly disappointed? Did he protest David's decision, crying out that it was unfair? No, he humbly acceded to the king's wishes. He focused on the positive, rejoicing that Israel's rightful king had returned safely. Mephibosheth truly set a sterling example by enduring disability, slander, and disappointment.—2 Samuel 19:24-30.

Nehemiah Coped With His Trials

¹³ Think of the figurative thorns that Nehemiah endured when he returned to the unwalled city of Jerusalem in the fifth century B.C.E. He found the city to be virtually defenseless, and the repatriated Jews there were disorganized, discouraged, and unclean in the eyes of Jehovah. Even though authorized by King Artaxerxes to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah soon learned that his mission was odious to the governors of nearby lands. "It seemed to them something

* An ambitious scheme of that kind would have been out of character for such an appreciative, humble man as Mephibosheth. No doubt he well knew the faithful record set by his father, Jonathan. Although a son of King Saul, Jonathan had humbly recognized David as Jehovah's choice to be king over Israel. (1 Samuel 20:12-17) As the God-fearing parent of Mephibosheth and a loyal friend to David, Jonathan would not have taught his young son to aspire to royal power.

12. How did Mephibosheth react to his situation, and how is he a fine example for us?

13, 14. What thorns did Nehemiah have to endure when he returned to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem?

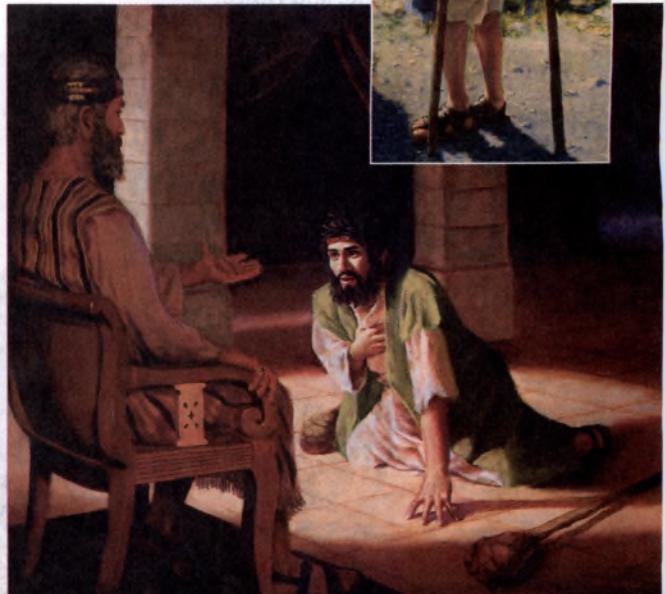
very bad that a man had come to seek something good for the sons of Israel."—Nehemiah 2:10.

¹⁴ Those foreign opposers did everything in their power to stop Nehemiah's work. Their threats, lies, slander, intimidation—including the use of spies sent to discourage him—must have been like persistent thorns in his flesh. Did he succumb to the machinations of those enemies? No! He put his full trust in God, not weakening. Thus, when Jerusalem's walls were finally rebuilt, they provided lasting testimony to Jehovah's loving support of Nehemiah.—Nehemiah 4:1-12; 6:1-19.

¹⁵ As governor, Nehemiah also had to contend with many problems among God's people. These difficulties were like thorns that troubled him deeply because they

15. What problems among the Jews deeply troubled Nehemiah?

Mephibosheth had to cope with disability, slander, and disappointment



affected the people's relationship with Jehovah. Wealthy ones were exacting heavy interest, and their poorer brothers, in order to pay debts as well as the Persian tax, had to give up their land and even sell their children into slavery. (Nehemiah 5:1-10) Many Jews were violating the Sabbath and were failing to support the Levites and the temple. Also, some had married "Ashdodite, Ammonite and Moabite wives." How this pained Nehemiah! But none of these thorns made him quit. Again and again he rose to the occasion as a zealous upholder of God's righteous laws. Like Nehemiah, may we refuse to allow the unfaithful conduct of others to dissuade us from loyal service to Jehovah.—Nehemiah 13:10-13, 23-27.

Many Other Faithful Ones Coped

¹⁶ The Bible contains many other examples of people who coped with distressing situations that were like thorns. One common source of such thorns was family problems. Esau's two wives "were a source of bitterness of spirit to Isaac and Rebekah," Esau's parents. Rebekah even said that she abhorred her life with those wives. (Genesis 26:34, 35; 27:46) Think, too, of Hannah and how her rival wife, Peninnah, " vexed her sorely" because Hannah was barren. Perhaps Hannah

16-18. How did family strife beset Isaac and Rebekah, Hannah, David, and Hosea?

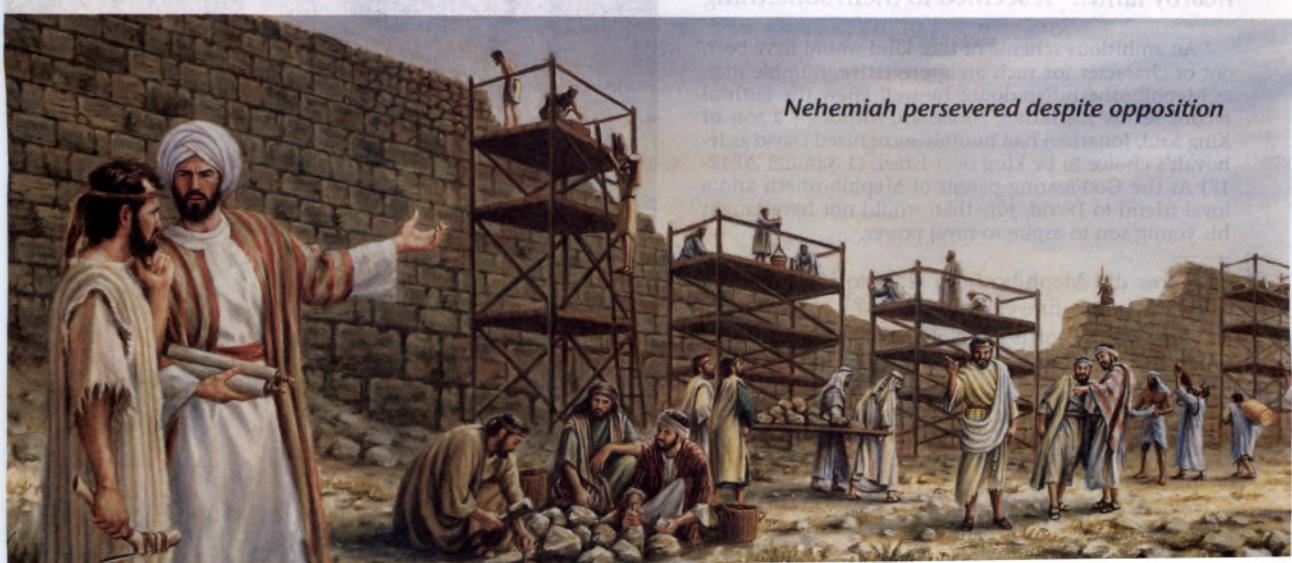
suffered this torment frequently in the privacy of their home. Peninnah also publicly vexed her—no doubt before relatives and friends—while the family attended the festival at Shiloh. This was like pushing the thorn deeper into Hannah's flesh.—1 Samuel 1:4-7.

¹⁷ Contemplate what David endured because of the insane jealousy of his father-in-law, King Saul. To save his own life, David was forced to live in caves in the wilderness of En-gedi, where he had to climb precipitous and dangerous rocky passes. The injustice must have been galling, for he had done nothing bad against Saul. Still, for years David had to live on the run—all of this because of Saul's jealousy.—1 Samuel 24:14, 15; Proverbs 27:4.

¹⁸ Imagine the family strife that beset the prophet Hosea. His wife became an adulteress. Her immorality must have been like thorns stuck into his heart. And what further anguish he must have suffered when she bore two illegitimate children from her fornication!—Hosea 1:2-9.

¹⁹ Another thorn in the flesh is persecution. Consider the experience of Micaiah the prophet. To see that wicked King Ahab surrounded himself with false prophets and that Ahab believed their blatant lies must have

19. What persecution afflicted the prophet Micaiah?



Nehemiah persevered despite opposition

tormented Micaiah's righteous soul. Then, when Micaiah told Ahab that all those prophets were speaking by "a deceptive spirit," what did the leader of those frauds do? Why, he "struck Micaiah upon the cheek"! Even worse was Ahab's reaction to Jehovah's warning that the campaign to recover Ramoth-gilead was doomed to failure. Ahab ordered that Micaiah be thrown into prison with reduced rations. (1 Kings 22:6, 9, 15-17, 23-28) Remember, too, Jeremiah and the way he was treated by his murderous persecutors.—Jeremiah 20:1-9.

²⁰ The loss of loved ones is yet another bitter situation that can be like a thorn in the flesh. Naomi had to endure the painful loss of her husband and her two sons in death. Still feeling those devastating blows, she returned to Bethlehem. She told her friends to call her, not Naomi, but Mara, a name that reflected the bitterness of her experiences. In the end, though, Jehovah rewarded her endurance with a grandson who became a link in the line to the Messiah.—Ruth 1:3-5, 19-21; 4:13-17; Matthew 1:1, 5.

²¹ Think of how shocked Job must have been when he heard of the sudden and violent death of his ten dear children, not to mention the loss of all his livestock and his servants. Suddenly, his whole world seemed to collapse! Then, as Job was reeling from these blows, Satan struck him with illness. Job may well have thought that this malignant sickness was going to kill him. His pain became so unbearable that he felt that death would be a relief.—Job 1:13-20; 2:7, 8.

²² As if all of this were not enough, his wife, in her grief and anguish, came to him and cried out: "Curse God and die!" What a thorn

20. What thorns did Naomi have to endure, and how was she rewarded?

21, 22. How was Job beset by loss, and how did he respond?

this was in his aching flesh! Next, Job's three companions, instead of comforting him, attacked him with specious reasoning, accusing him of secret sins and holding that this was responsible for his misfortune. Their erroneous arguments shoved the thorns in his flesh deeper and deeper, as it were. Remember, too, that Job did not know why these terrible things were happening to him; nor did he know that his own life was to be spared. Yet, "in all this Job did not sin or ascribe anything improper to God." (Job 1:22; 2:9, 10; 3:3; 14:13; 30:17) Although beset by many thorns at once, he never gave up his course of integrity. How encouraging!

²³ The preceding examples by no means represent an exhaustive list. The Bible contains many more. All these faithful servants had to contend with their own figurative thorns. And what a wide variety of problems they faced! Yet, they had something in common. None of them gave up in their service to Jehovah. Despite all their distressing tests, they overcame Satan in the strength that Jehovah provided them. How? The next article will answer this question and show us how we too can cope with anything that is like a thorn in our flesh.

23. Why were the faithful ones we have discussed able to endure various thorns in the flesh?

How Would You Answer?

- Why can the problems we face be likened to thorns in the flesh?
- What were some of the thorns that Mephibosheth and Nehemiah had to endure?
- Among the Scriptural examples of men and women who endured various thorns in the flesh, which did you find especially moving, and why?

COPING WITH “A THORN IN THE FLESH”

“My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you.”—2 CORINTHIANS 12:9.

ALL those desiring to live with a godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted.” (2 Timothy 3:12) Why is that so? Because Satan contends that man serves God only for selfish reasons, and he is desperate to prove his point. Jesus once warned his faithful apostles: “Satan has demanded to have you men to sift you as wheat.” (Luke 22:31) Jesus well knew that God allows Satan to test us by means of painful problems. Of course, that does not mean that every difficulty we face in life springs directly from Satan or his demons. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) But Satan is eager to use any means at his disposal to break our integrity.

² The Bible tells us that we should not be puzzled over our trials.

Whatever may befall us, it is neither strange nor unexpected. (1 Peter 4:12) In fact, “the same things in the way of sufferings are being accomplished in the entire association

1, 2. (a) Why should we not be puzzled over the fact that we face tests and problems? (b) Why can we be confident in the face of trials?



*Three times
Paul prayed that God
would remove
the thorn in his flesh*

of [our] brothers in the world.” (1 Peter 5:9) Today, Satan is putting extreme pressure on every servant of God. The Devil delights to see us tormented with as many thornlike problems as possible. To that end, he uses his system of things in such a way that it is likely to add to or aggravate any ‘thorns in our flesh.’ (2 Corinthians 12:7) Nonetheless, Satan’s attacks need not break our integrity. Just as Jehovah will “make the way out” for us to endure temptation, he will do the same when we face troubles that are like thorns in our flesh.—1 Corinthians 10:13.

How to Cope With a Thorn

³ The apostle Paul begged God to remove the thorn from his flesh. “In this behalf I three times entreated the Lord that it might depart from me.” What was Jehovah’s reply to Paul’s ardent request? “My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you; for my power is being made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corin-

3. How did Jehovah reply when Paul asked him to remove the thorn in his flesh?

ans 12:8, 9) Let us analyze this response and see how it can help us to cope with any thornlike problems that pain us.

⁴ Notice that God encouraged Paul to appreciate the undeserved kindness that had already been extended to him through Christ. Indeed, Paul had been greatly blessed in many ways. Jehovah lovingly granted him the privilege of discipleship, though he had been a fanatic opposer of Jesus' followers. (Acts 7:58; 8:3; 9:1-4) Jehovah thereafter kindly gave Paul many thrilling assignments and privileges. The lesson for us is clear. Even in the worst of times, we still have many blessings for which to be grateful. Never should our trials make us forget the abundant goodness of Jehovah.—Psalm 31:19.

⁵ Jehovah's undeserved kindness proves sufficient in another way. God's power is more than enough to help us through our trials. (Ephesians 3:20) Jehovah taught Paul that divine power is "made perfect in weakness." How? He lovingly supplied Paul with all the strength he needed in order to cope with his trial. In turn, Paul's endurance and his implicit trust in Jehovah revealed to all that God's power was triumphing in the case of this weak and sinful man. Now consider the effect on the Devil, who claims that men serve God only when life is comfortable and uncomplicated. Paul's integrity amounted to a slap in the face of that slanderer!

²¹ ⁶ Here was Paul, Satan's former ally in his fight against God, an insolent persecutor of Christians, a zealous Pharisee who, no doubt, once enjoyed many comforts of life because he was born into a privileged class. Paul was now serving Jehovah and Christ

4. In what ways had Paul benefited from Jehovah's undeserved kindness?

5, 6. (a) How did Jehovah teach Paul that divine power is "made perfect in weakness"? (b) How did Paul's example prove Satan a liar?

as "the least of the apostles." (1 Corinthians 15:9) As such, he was humbly submitting to the authority of the first-century Christian governing body. And he was enduring faithfully despite his thorn in the flesh. Much to Satan's chagrin, life's trials did not cause Paul's zeal to wane. Never did Paul lose his focus on the hope that he would share in Christ's heavenly Kingdom. (2 Timothy 2:12; 4:18) No thorn, however painful, could diminish his zeal. May our zeal, likewise, continue strong! By sustaining us through our trials, Jehovah dignifies us with the privilege of helping to prove Satan a liar.—Proverbs 27:11.

Jehovah's Provisions Vital

²¹ ⁷ Today, Jehovah empowers faithful Christians by means of his holy spirit, his Word, and our Christian brotherhood. Like the apostle Paul, we can throw our burdens on Jehovah in prayer. (Psalm 55:22) Although God may not remove our trials, he can grant us the wisdom to cope with them, even with those that are especially hard to bear. Jehovah can also supply us with fortitude—giving us "power beyond what is normal"—to help us endure.—2 Corinthians 4:7.

⁸ How do we receive such help? We must diligently study God's Word, for therein we will find his sure consolations. (Psalm 94:19) In the Bible, we read the poignant words of God's servants as they begged for divine help. Jehovah's responses, which often include the use of comforting words, are food for meditation. Study will fortify us so that "the power beyond what is normal may be God's and not that out of ourselves." Just as we need to eat physical food every day for nourishment and strength, so we must

7, 8. (a) By what means does Jehovah empower his servants today? (b) Why is daily Bible reading and study so vital to coping with a thorn in our flesh?



feed on God's words regularly. Do we do this? If we do, then we will see that our receiving "power beyond what is normal" helps us to endure whatever figurative thorns may afflict us now.

⁹ God-fearing Christian elders can "prove to be like a hiding place from the wind" of distress, "a place of concealment from the rainstorm" of problems. Elders, who want to fit that inspired description, humbly and sincerely ask Jehovah to give them "the tongue of the taught ones" so that they may know how to answer suffering ones with the right words. The words of the elders can be like a gentle rain that cools and comforts our spirit during hard times in life. By speaking "consolingly to the depressed souls," elders truly support their spiritual brothers and sisters who may be getting weary or downhearted because of some thorn in their flesh.—Isaiah 32:2; 50:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

¹⁰ All of Jehovah's servants are part of his united Christian family. Yes, we are "members belonging individually to one another," and we are "under obligation to love one an-

9. How can elders support those coping with problems?
10, 11. How can God's servants encourage others who are undergoing severe tests?

other." (Romans 12:5; 1 John 4:11) How do we fulfill this obligation? According to 1 Peter 3:8, we do so by "showing fellow feeling, having brotherly affection, [and being] tenderly compassionate" to all those related to us in the faith. As for those coping with a particularly painful thorn in the flesh, be they young or old, all of us can give them special consideration. How?

¹¹ We should strive to be sensitive to their suffering. If we are callous, cold, or indifferent, we might inadvertently make their suffering worse. Our being aware of their trials ought to move us to be careful in what we say, how we say it, and how we act. Our being positive and encouraging can help to dull some of the sharp pain of whatever thorn is afflicting them. We may thereby prove to be a strengthening aid to them.—Colossians 4:11.

How Some Have Coped Successfully

¹² As we near the end of these last days, the "pangs of distress" are increasing daily. (Matthew 24:8) Thus, trials are likely to afflict everyone on earth, especially Jehovah's

12-14. (a) What did one Christian do to cope with cancer? (b) How did this woman's spiritual brothers and sisters support and encourage her?

faithful servants, who are seeking to do his will. For example, consider a Christian serving in the full-time ministry. She was diagnosed with cancer and had to have her salivary and lymphatic glands surgically removed. When she and her husband learned that she had this disease, they immediately turned to Jehovah in a long, beseeching prayer. She later said that an unbelievable peace came over them. Still, she endured many ups and downs, especially when coping with the side effects of her treatments.

¹³ To deal with her situation, this sister tried to learn as much as she could about cancer. She consulted with her doctors. In *The Watchtower*, *Awake!*, and related Christian publications, she found personal accounts showing how individuals had coped emotionally with this illness. She also read relevant Bible passages showing Jehovah's ability to sustain his people during difficulties, and other helpful information.

¹⁴ One article on coping with despair cited these wise words: "One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing." (Proverbs 18:1) The article therefore gave this advice: "Resist isolation."^{*} The sister relates: "Many told me they were praying for me; others phoned me. Two elders called regularly to check up on me. I received flowers and loads of cards. Some even prepared meals. Also, many volunteered to take me to my treatments."

¹⁵ A longtime servant of Jehovah in New Mexico, U.S.A., was in two automobile accidents. Her neck and shoulders were injured, aggravating an arthritic condition with which she had been coping for over 25 years. She relates: "I had great difficul-

* See the article "The Bible's Viewpoint: How to Cope With Despair," in the May 8, 2000, issue of *Awake!*

- 15-17. (a) How did one Christian cope with the difficulties that resulted from accidents? (b) What support did those in the congregation provide?

ty holding my head up and carrying anything weighing over five pounds. But fervent prayer to Jehovah has sustained me greatly. So have the articles in *The Watchtower* that we have studied. One commented on Micah 6:8, noting that being modest in walking with God means knowing one's limitations. This helped me to appreciate that in spite of my condition, I should not get discouraged, even though the time I spent in the ministry was less than I wished. Serving him with pure motives is primarily what counts."

¹⁶ She also reports: "The elders always commended me for my efforts to attend the meetings and to go out in the field ministry. Young ones would greet me with a hug. The pioneer ministers were so patient with me and often rearranged their plans on my bad days. When the weather was difficult, they would kindly take me on return visits or invite me to sit in on their Bible studies. And since I could not carry a book bag, other publishers put my literature in their bag when I went out in the preaching work."

¹⁷ Notice how congregation elders and fellow believers helped these two sisters to cope with their thornlike infirmities. They offered practical, kind assistance designed to meet specific spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. Does that not encourage you to render aid to other brothers and sisters who are experiencing problems? You young ones too can be an aid to those in your congregation who are contending with thorns in their flesh.—Proverbs 20:29.

¹⁸ The *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines have published many life stories and experiences of Witnesses who have coped, and are still coping, with problems in life. As you regularly read such articles, you will see that

18. What encouragement may we find in the life stories published in the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines?

many of your spiritual brothers and sisters around the world have endured economic hardships, loss of loved ones in disasters, and dangerous wartime conditions. Others live with incapacitating diseases. Many cannot do some of the simple things in life that healthy ones take for granted. Their illnesses test them most severely, especially when they cannot share in Christian activities as much as they would like. How deeply they appreciate the help and support that their brothers and sisters, young and old, render them!

Endurance Brings Happiness

¹⁹ Paul rejoiced to see how God strengthened him. He said: "Most gladly . . . will I rather boast as respects my weaknesses, that the power of the Christ may like a tent remain over me. Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in cases of need, in persecutions and difficulties, for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am powerful." (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10) Because of his personal experiences, Paul could confidently state: "Not that I am speaking with regard to being in want, for I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be self-sufficient. I know indeed how to be low on provisions, I know indeed how to have an abundance. In everything and in all circumstances I have learned the secret of both how to be full and how to hunger, both how to have an abundance and how to suffer want. For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me."—Philippians 4:11-13.

²⁰ So, then, by enduring whatever figurative thorn is in our flesh, we can find great happiness in showing everyone that Je-

19. Why was Paul able to rejoice in spite of his thornlike trials and weaknesses?

20, 21. (a) Why may we find joy in meditating on "things unseen"? (b) What are some "things unseen" that you hope to see in the earthly Paradise?

hovah's power is being made perfect in our weakness. Paul wrote: "We do not give up . . . Certainly the man we are inside is being renewed from day to day. For though the tribulation is momentary and light, it works out for us a glory that is of more and more surpassing weight and is everlasting; while we keep our eyes . . . on the things unseen. For the things . . . unseen are everlasting."—2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

²¹ Most of Jehovah's people today hope to live in his earthly Paradise and to enjoy the blessings he has promised. Such blessings might be considered "unseen" to us today. However, the time is rapidly approaching when we will see those blessings with our own eyes, yes, and enjoy them forever. One such blessing will be the relief of never again having to live with any thornlike problem! God's Son will "break up the works of the Devil" and "bring to nothing the one having the means to cause death."—1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14.

²² Therefore, whatever thorn in our flesh is hurting us today, let us keep on coping with it. Like Paul, we will have the strength to do so by virtue of Jehovah, who generously imparts power to us. When we are living in the earthly Paradise, we will bless Jehovah our God every day for all his wonderful doings in our behalf.—Psalm 103:2.

22. What confidence and determination should be ours?

How Would You Answer?

- Why and how does the Devil try to break the integrity of true Christians?
- How is Jehovah's power "made perfect in weakness"?
- How can elders and others encourage those pained by problems?

A Hiding Place From the Wind

HIGH in the alpine mountains of Europe, you can find growing a sturdy bush called the alpine rose. This dwarf rhododendron often grows in dense low thickets huddled against the ground for protection against the harsh upland winds. The unrelenting wind threatens the existence of the alpine plants by lowering their temperature, drying the air and the soil, and pulling at their roots.

The alpine rose often escapes the ravages of the wind by growing in crevices among the rocks. Although the soil at these sites may not be plentiful, the rocky fissures provide protection against the wind and enable the plant to conserve water. Practically hidden from view for much of the year, in the summer these rhododendrons decorate their mountain refuge with bright red flowers.

The prophet Isaiah explained that "princes" would be appointed by God, and each one would serve as "a hiding place from the wind." (Isaiah 32:1, 2) Under the direction of the King, Christ Jesus, these spiritual princes, or overseers, would be like stable rocks, firm in times of stress or affliction. They would offer reliable shelter in the face of adversity and help needy ones to safeguard their reserves of spiritual water from God's Word.

Winds of persecution, discouragement, or infirmity can buffet a Christian, causing his faith to wither if he is unprotected. Christian elders can provide protection by listening attentively to his problem, offering Bible-based counsel, and giving encouragement or practical help. Like their appointed King, Christ Jesus, they want to help those who have been

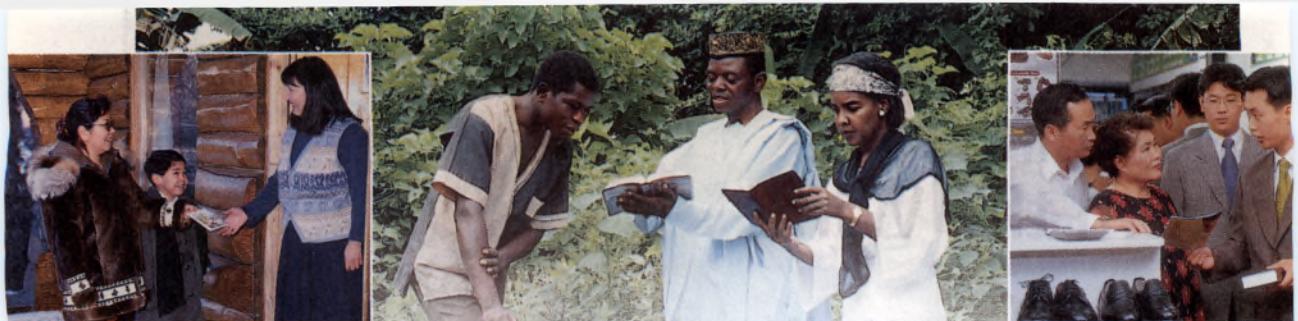


"thrown about." (Matthew 9:36) And they desire to assist others who have been damaged by the winds of false teaching. (Ephesians 4:14) Such assistance at the opportune time can prove vital.

"I went through a traumatic period in my life when some close friends left the congregation and, at the same time, my father suffered a brain hemorrhage," explains Miriam. "In an attempt to overcome my depression, I began to go out with a worldly boyfriend. Soon thereafter, feeling unworthy, I informed the congregation elders that I had decided to leave the truth, since I was sure Jehovah could not love me."

"At this critical moment, a compassionate elder reminded me of the years that I had served as a regular pioneer minister. He told me that he had always admired my faithfulness, and he kindly requested that I allow the elders to help me, to reassure me of Jehovah's love. Their loving interest at that crucial time was like 'a hiding place' for me during the spiritual storm that raged around me. Within a month, I terminated my relationship with my boyfriend, and I have kept on walking in the way of truth ever since."

Elders feel rewarded when they see fellow Christians blooming spiritually, thanks to the protection afforded them at the proper time. And these 'hiding places' provide us with a foretaste of the bountiful spiritual help that we will enjoy during Christ's Millennial Reign.



COMPLETELY EQUIPPED AS TEACHERS OF GOD'S WORD

"God . . . has indeed adequately qualified us to be ministers."—2 CORINTHIANS 3:5, 6.

HOW would you like to be given a job that you are not qualified to perform? Imagine: The materials you need are spread out before you, and the tools are at hand. But you have no idea how to carry out the task. Worse yet, this particular job is urgent. People are counting on you. How frustrating that would be!

² Such a dilemma is not entirely imaginary. Consider an example. At times, one of Christendom's churches has attempted to organize and carry out a door-to-door ministry. Such efforts have usually failed, fading out within weeks or months. Why? Christendom has not helped her adherents to qualify for the job. Even the clergy are not qualified for that preaching work, often despite years of education at secular schools and seminaries. Why can we say that?

³ God's Word explains what qualifies a true preacher of the Christian good news. The apostle Paul was inspired to write: "Not that we of ourselves are adequately qualified to reckon anything as issuing from ourselves, but our being adequately qualified is-

sues from God, who has indeed adequately qualified us to be ministers." (2 Corinthians 3:5, 6) Note the expression used three times here—"adequately qualified." What does it mean? *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* says: "When said of things [the original Greek word] signifies 'enough' . . . ; when said of persons, it means 'competent,' 'worthy.'" Thus, one who is "adequately qualified" is competent and worthy to undertake a given task. Yes, true ministers of the good news are qualified to do this work. They are competent, fit, or worthy to preach.

⁴ From where, though, does that qualification come? From personal talents? From superior intellect? From specialized education at prestigious schools? The apostle Paul evidently had all those things. (Acts 22:3; Philippians 3:4, 5) Yet, he humbly acknowledged that his qualifications as a minister came, not from schools of higher learning, but from Jehovah God. Are such qualifications for only an elite few? Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation about "*our* being adequately qualified." That certainly suggests

1, 2. What efforts at preaching are at times made, but why do they usually fail?

3. At 2 Corinthians 3:5, 6, what expression is used three times, and what does it mean?

4. (a) How does Paul's example show that qualifying for the Christian ministry is not limited to an elite few? (b) What are three means by which Jehovah qualifies us as ministers?

that Jehovah makes sure that *all* of his faithful servants are competent, able to do the job he has assigned them to do. How does Jehovah qualify true Christians today? Let us discuss three means that he uses: (1) his Word, (2) his holy spirit, and (3) his earthly organization.

Jehovah's Word Qualifies Us

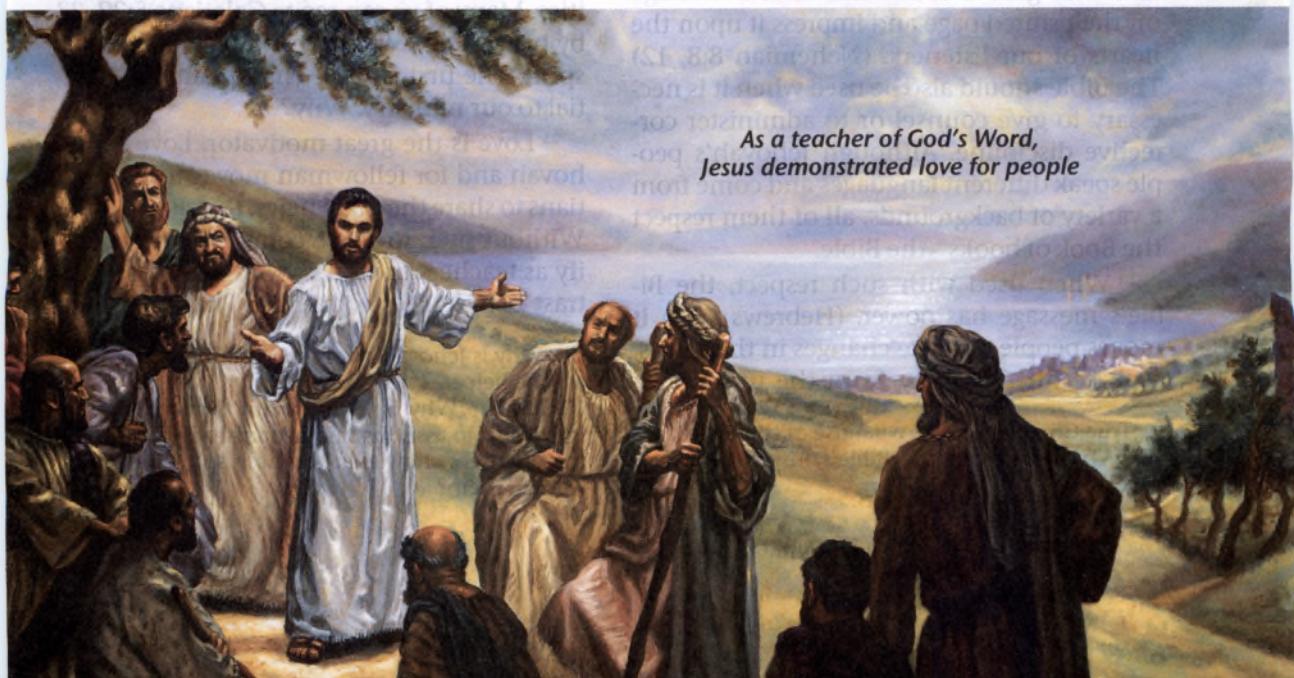
⁵ First, how does God's Word help to qualify us as ministers? Paul wrote: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) So the Holy Scriptures help make us "fully competent, completely equipped" to carry out the "good work" of teaching people about God's Word. What, though, about all those adherents of the churches of Christendom? They have access to the Bible. How could one book help some people to become competent ministers and not help others? The answer lies in our attitude toward the Bible.

5, 6. The Holy Scriptures have what effect upon true Christians?

⁶ Sadly, many who attend church do not accept the Bible's message "just as it truthfully is, as the word of God." (1 Thessalonians 2: 13) Christendom has built up a shameful record in this regard. After spending years studying in theological institutions, are the clergy equipped as teachers of God's Word? Not really. Why, some students begin seminary studies as believers in the Bible but graduate as skeptics! Thereafter, instead of preaching the Word of God—which many of them no longer believe—they direct their ministry along other lines, taking sides in political debates, promoting a social gospel, or highlighting human philosophies in their sermons. (2 Timothy 4:3) In contrast, genuine Christians follow the example of Jesus Christ.

⁷ Jesus did not allow the religious leaders of his day to mold his thinking. Whether teaching a small group, such as his apostles, or vast multitudes, Jesus made good use of the holy writings. (Matthew 13:10-17; 15: 1-11) This practice set him apart from the religious leaders of the day. They strongly discouraged the common people from peering

7, 8. How did Jesus' attitude toward God's Word differ from that of the religious leaders of his day?



*As a teacher of God's Word,
Jesus demonstrated love for people*

into the deep things of God. In fact, it was customary for a teacher in those days to hold that some Bible passages were just too profound to discuss with any but his most intimate pupil—and even then, only in a low voice and with the head covered. Those religious leaders were almost as superstitious about discussing certain portions of the Bible as they were about pronouncing the divine name!

⁸ Christ was not like that. He believed that not just a select few but people in general needed to consider “every utterance coming forth through Jehovah’s mouth.” Jesus was not interested in giving any key of knowledge to an elite group of scholars. He told his disciples: “What I tell you in the darkness, say in the light; and what you hear whispered, preach from the housetops.” (Matthew 4:4; 10:27) Jesus ardently desired to share the knowledge of God with as many people as possible.

⁹ God’s Word should be the focal point of our teaching. When we give a talk at a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, it is usually not enough to read selected verses from the Bible. We may need to explain, illustrate, and apply a scripture in context. Our goal is to lift the Bible’s message off the printed page and impress it upon the hearts of our listeners. (Nehemiah 8:8, 12) The Bible should also be used when it is necessary to give counsel or to administer corrective discipline. Although Jehovah’s people speak different languages and come from a variety of backgrounds, all of them respect the Book of books—the Bible.

¹⁰ When used with such respect, the Bible’s message has power. (Hebrews 4:12) It moves people to make changes in their lives, such as turning away from the unscriptur-

9. True Christians make what use of the Bible?
10. What effect can the Bible’s inspired message have on us?

al practices of fornication, adultery, idolatry, drunkenness, and thievery. It has helped a great many to strip off the old personality and put on the new. (Ephesians 4:20-24) Yes, if we respect it above any human opinion or tradition and use it faithfully, the Bible can help make us competent, completely equipped as teachers of God’s Word.

Jehovah’s Spirit Qualifies Us

¹¹ Second, let us discuss the role of Jehovah’s holy spirit, or active force, in making us completely equipped. We must never forget that Jehovah’s spirit is the strongest force there is. Jehovah has empowered his beloved Son to wield that awesome force in behalf of all true Christians. Aptly, Jesus referred to the holy spirit as “the helper.” (John 16:7) He urged his followers to ask Jehovah for that spirit, assuring them that Jehovah would provide it generously.—Luke 11:10-13; James 1:17.

¹² We need to pray for holy spirit daily, especially to help us in our ministry. What effect can that active force have upon us? It can work on our mind and heart, helping us to change, to grow, and to replace the old personality with the new. (Colossians 3:9, 10) It can help us to build precious, Christlike qualities. Many of us can recite Galatians 5:22, 23 by heart. Those verses list the fruits of God’s spirit. The first is love. That quality is essential to our ministry. Why?

¹³ Love is the great motivator. Love for Jehovah and for fellowman moves true Christians to share the good news. (Mark 12:28-31) Without such love, we could not truly qualify as teachers of God’s Word. Note the contrast between Jesus and the Pharisees. Mat-

11. Why is Jehovah’s holy spirit fittingly referred to as “the helper”?

12, 13. (a) Why is it important that we pray for holy spirit to assist us in our ministry? (b) How did the Pharisees show that the holy spirit was not at work in them?

thew 9:36 says of Jesus: "On seeing the crowds he felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd." How did the Pharisees feel about the common people? They said: "This crowd that does not know the Law are *accursed people*." (John 7:49) Those Pharisees had no love for the people but plenty of contempt. Clearly, Jehovah's spirit was not at work in them.

¹⁴ Jesus felt for people. He was aware of their pain. He knew that they had been abused, skinned, and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd. John 2:25 tells us that Jesus "knew what was in man." Having been Jehovah's Master Worker during creation, Jesus had a profound understanding of human nature. (Proverbs 8:30, 31) That understanding deepened his love. May such love always be the motivating force behind our preaching activity! If we feel that we could improve in this regard, let us pray for Jehovah's holy spirit and then work in harmony with our prayers. Jehovah will answer us. He will send this irresistible force to help us be more like Christ, who was supremely qualified to preach the good news.

¹⁵ Where did Jesus' qualifications come from? "Jehovah's spirit is upon me," he said. (Luke 4:17-21) Yes, Jehovah himself appointed Jesus by means of holy spirit. Jesus needed no further credentials. Had the religious leaders of his day been appointed by holy spirit? No. Nor were they equipped to fulfill Isaiah 61:1-3, which Jesus read aloud and applied to himself. Please read those verses, and see for yourself that the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees did not measure up. They had no good news to declare to the poor. And

14. How should Jesus' example of showing love in his ministry move us?

15. How did the words of Isaiah 61:1-3 apply to Jesus and at the same time expose the scribes and Pharisees?

how could they preach a release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind? In a spiritual sense, they themselves were blind and in bondage to man-made traditions! Unlike those men, are we qualified to teach the people?

¹⁶ True, we have not studied at Christendom's schools of higher learning. We have no appointment as teachers from a theological seminary. Are we lacking, then, in qualifications? Certainly not! Our appointment as his Witnesses comes from Jehovah. (Isaiah 43:10-12) If we pray for his spirit and work in harmony with our prayer, we have the highest of qualifications. Of course, we are imperfect and fall short of the example set by the Great Teacher, Jesus. Nonetheless, are we not thankful that Jehovah uses his spirit to qualify and equip us as teachers of his Word?

Jehovah's Organization Qualifies Us

¹⁷ Now let us discuss a third means by which Jehovah equips us as teachers of his Word—his earthly congregation, or organization, which trains us to be ministers. How? Just think of the program of instruction we enjoy! In a typical week, we attend five Christian meetings. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) We gather in small groups at the Congregation Book Study to enjoy an in-depth Bible study by means of a textbook made available through Jehovah's organization. By listening and commenting, we learn from and encourage one another. We also receive individualized instruction and attention from the book study overseer. At the Public Meeting and Watchtower Study, we take in further rich spiritual food.

¹⁸ Our Theocratic Ministry School is

16. What confidence may Jehovah's people today feel as to their qualification as ministers?

17-19. How do the five weekly meetings provided by Jehovah's organization help to qualify us as ministers?

designed to give us instruction on how to teach. By preparing student talks, we learn how to use God's Word to teach on a wide range of subjects. (1 Peter 3:15) Have you ever been assigned to give a talk on a subject that seemed quite familiar, only to find yourself learning something new about it? That is a common experience. Nothing sharpens our knowledge of a subject more than teaching it to others. Even when we are not assigned a presentation ourselves, we can still learn to be better teachers. In each student, we observe good qualities, and we can think about how to imitate those qualities.

¹⁹ The Service Meeting too is designed to equip us as teachers of God's Word. Week after week, we enjoy lively talks, discussions, and demonstrations geared toward our ministry. What presentation will we use? How can we deal with special challenges in our public ministry? What avenues of preaching are open to us that we may need to explore further? What will help us to be more effective teachers when we make return visits and conduct Bible studies? (1 Corinthians 9:19-22) Such questions are addressed and discussed in detail at the Service Meeting. Many meeting parts are based on articles in *Our Kingdom Ministry*, another tool provided to equip us for our vital work.

²⁰ By preparing for and attending our meetings and then applying what we have learned to our work as teachers, we receive extensive training. But there is more. We also have larger meetings—assemblies and conventions—that are designed to equip us as teachers of God's Word. And how we look forward to listening attentively and putting such counsel to work!—Luke 8:18.

- ²¹ Has the training that Jehovah has provided been effective? Let the facts speak for themselves. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people are being helped to learn basic Bible doctrines and to live in harmony with what God requires of them. Our number is increasing, but none of us can personally take credit for that. We must view matters realistically, as Jesus did. He said: "No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him." Like the apostles of old, we are for the most part unlettered and ordinary. (John 6:44; Acts 4:13) Our success depends upon Jehovah, who draws honest-hearted people to the truth. Paul put it well: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God kept making it grow."—1 Corinthians 3:6.
22. Why should we never get overly discouraged about participating fully in the Christian ministry?

23. How does the Bible equip us for the preaching work?

24. What role does the holy spirit play in qualifying us as ministers?

25. In what ways has Jehovah's earthly organization helped you to qualify as a preacher of the good news?

26. Why may we be confident when engaging in the ministry?

How Would You Answer?

- How does the Bible equip us for the preaching work?
- What role does the holy spirit play in qualifying us as ministers?
- In what ways has Jehovah's earthly organization helped you to qualify as a preacher of the good news?
- Why may we be confident when engaging in the ministry?

Questions From Readers

What is the meaning of the comment at Hebrews 12:4: "You have never yet resisted as far as blood"?

The phrase "resisted as far as blood" implies going to the extreme point of dying, literally shedding one's lifeblood.

The apostle Paul knew that as a result of their faith, some Hebrew Christians had already "endured a great contest under sufferings." (Hebrews 10:32, 33) When pointing that out, Paul seems to have been using the metaphor of a struggle in a Greek athletic contest, which could include foot racing, wrestling, boxing, and discus and javelin throwing. Accordingly, at Hebrews 12:1, he urged fellow Christians: "Let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us *run with endurance the race that is set before us.*"

Three verses later, at Hebrews 12:4, Paul may have been shifting from the image of a footrace to that of a boxing contest. (Both figures appear at 1 Corinthians 9:26.) Ancient pugilists had their fists and wrists bound with leather thongs. The thongs might even have been weighted "with lead, iron, or metal studs, which produced grave injuries to the boxers." Such brutal matches caused bleeding, sometimes even death.

In any event, the Hebrew Christians had adequate examples of faithful servants of God who had suffered persecution and brutal abuse, even to the point of death, "as far as blood." Note the context in which Paul called attention to what ancient faithful ones experienced:

"They were stoned, they were tried, they were sawn asunder, they died by slaughter with the sword, they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, while they were in want, in tribulation, under ill-treatment." Thereafter, Paul highlighted the Perfector of our faith, Jesus: "He endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

—Hebrews 11:37; 12:2.

Yes, many had "resisted as far as blood," that is, to the point of dying. Theirs was more than an inner struggle against the sin of lack of faith. They were loyal under brutal external abuse, maintaining their faithfulness till death.

Newer ones in the Jerusalem congregation, perhaps having become Christians after the bitter persecution of the past had died down, had never faced such extreme tests. (Acts 7:54-60; 12:1, 2; Hebrews 13:7) Yet, even trials of a less severe nature were discouraging some of them from continuing to carry on the contest; they were 'getting tired and giving out in their souls.' (Hebrews 12:3) They needed to progress toward maturity. That would build up their ability to endure whatever might come, even if that included physical abuse to the point of shedding their lifeblood.—Hebrews 6:1; 12:7-11.

Many Christians in modern times have "resisted as far as blood," being executed because they would not compromise their Christianity. Rather than letting Paul's words at Hebrews 12:4 be a cause of terror, we can take them as indicating the extent to which we are determined to go to remain loyal to God. Later in the same letter to the Hebrews, Paul wrote: "Let us continue to have undeserved kindness, through which we may acceptably render God sacred service with godly fear and awe."—Hebrews 12:28.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

How Precious Is the Truth to You?

Serving With a Spirit of Self-Sacrifice

The Baptism of Clovis—1,500 Years of Catholicism in France

2002

"ZEALOUS KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS" DISTRICT CONVENTION LOCATIONS

MAY 17-19

ROCHESTER, NY, Blue Cross Arena, 100 Exchange Blvd.

MAY 24-26

BAKERSFIELD, CA, Centennial Garden Arena, 1001 Truxtun Ave.

DENVER, CO, Coliseum, 4600 Humboldt St.

MAY 31-JUNE 2

DENVER, CO, Coliseum, 4600 Humboldt St.

FORT WORTH, TX, Fort Worth Convention Center,

1111 Houston St.

OAKLAND, CA (TENTATIVE), Oakland/Alameda County Arena, 7000 Coliseum Way.

PORTLAND, ME, Cumberland County Civic Center,

1 Civic Center Sq.

ROCHESTER, NY, Blue Cross Arena, 100 Exchange Blvd.

TUCSON, AZ, Convention Center, 260 S. Church St.

WEST PALM BEACH, FL, Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

JUNE 7-9

COLUMBIA, SC, Carolina Coliseum, Assembly & Blossom Sts.

DENVER, CO, Coliseum, 4600 Humboldt St.

FORT WORTH, TX, Fort Worth Convention Center,

1111 Houston St.

KANSAS CITY, MO, Kemper Arena, 1800 Genessee St.

LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center Arena, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

MADISON, WI, Alliant Energy Center Memorial Coliseum, 1881 Expo Mall E.

NEW HAVEN, CT, Veterans Memorial Coliseum,

275 S. Orange St.

OAKLAND, CA (TENTATIVE), Oakland/Alameda County Arena, 7000 Coliseum Way.

PONTIAC, MI, Silverdome, 1200 Featherstone Rd.

ROCHESTER, MN, Mayo Civic Center Arena,

30 2nd Ave. S.E.

SAINT CHARLES, MO, Saint Charles County Family Arena, 2002 Arena Pkwy.

SAN DIEGO, CA, Qualcomm Stadium, 9449 Friars Rd.

TUCSON, AZ (Spanish only), Convention Center,

260 S. Church St.

WEST PALM BEACH, FL, Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

JUNE 14-16

ALBANY, GA, Civic Center, 100 W. Oglethorpe Ave.

AMARILLO, TX (Spanish only), Civic Center Coliseum,

3rd & Buchanan Sts.

COLUMBIA, SC (Spanish only), Carolina Coliseum, Assembly & Blossom Sts.

FORT WORTH, TX, Fort Worth Convention Center,

1111 Houston St.

HOUSTON, TX, Reliant Astrodome, Loop 610 at Kirby Dr.

HUNTINGTON, WV, Civic Arena, 3rd Ave. & 8th St.

MACON, GA, Coliseum, 200 Coliseum Dr.

MADISON, WI, Alliant Energy Center Memorial Coliseum, 1881 Expo Mall E.

OAKLAND, CA (TENTATIVE), Oakland/Alameda County Arena, 7000 Coliseum Way.

ROCHESTER, MN, Mayo Civic Center Arena,

30 2nd Ave. S.E.

SAINT CHARLES, MO, Saint Charles County Family Arena, 2002 Arena Pkwy.

SAINT PETERSBURG, FL, Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.

TUCSON, AZ (Spanish only), Convention Center,

260 S. Church St.

WEST PALM BEACH, FL, Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

JUNE 21-23

ALBANY, GA, Civic Center, 100 W. Oglethorpe Ave.

AMARILLO, TX (Spanish only), Civic Center Coliseum,

3rd & Buchanan Sts.

AMHERST, MA, The Mullins Center, University of Massachusetts, Commonwealth Ave.

COLUMBIA, SC, Carolina Coliseum, Assembly & Blossom Sts.

DAYTON, OH, Ervin J. Nutter Center, Wright State University, 3640 Colonel Glen Hwy.

FLORENCE, SC, Florence Civic Center, 3300 W. Radio Dr.

HOUSTON, TX (Spanish only), Reliant Astrodome, Loop 610 at Kirby Dr.

JACKSON, MS, Mississippi Coliseum, 1207 Mississippi St.

LONG BEACH, CA (Spanish only), Long Beach Convention Center Arena, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

LOUISVILLE, KY, Freedom Hall Coliseum, Kentucky Fair & Expo Center, 937 Phillips Ln.

MACON, GA, Coliseum, 200 Coliseum Dr.

NEW HAVEN, CT, Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 275 S. Orange St.

OAKLAND, CA (TENTATIVE), Oakland/Alameda County Arena, 7000 Coliseum Way.

PORTLAND, ME, Cumberland County Civic Center, 1 Civic Center Sq.

SAINT PETERSBURG, FL, Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.

WEST PALM BEACH, FL (Spanish only), Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

JUNE 28-30

ALBANY, GA, Civic Center, 100 W. Oglethorpe Ave.

AMHERST, MA, The Mullins Center, University of Massachusetts, Commonwealth Ave.

FLORENCE, SC, Florence Civic Center, 3300 W. Radio Dr.

JACKSON, MS, Mississippi Coliseum, 1207 Mississippi St.

LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center Arena, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

OGDEN, UT, Dee Events Center, 4450 S. Harrison Blvd.

RICHMOND, VA, Coliseum, 601 E. Leigh St.

ROCHESTER, MN, Mayo Civic Center Arena,

30 2nd Ave. S.E.

SAINT PETERSBURG, FL, Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.

SAN DIEGO, CA (Spanish only), Qualcomm Stadium, 9449 Friars Rd.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (Spanish only), Cow Palace, 2600 Geneva Ave.

TACOMA, WA, Tacoma Dome, 2727 E. "D" St.

TULSA, OK, Tulsa Convention Center, 100 Civic Center.

UNIONDALE, NY, Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.

WEST PALM BEACH, FL (Spanish only), Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

WICHITA, KS (Spanish only), Century II Convention Hall, 225 W. Douglas.

WINSTON-SALEM, NC, Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 2825 University Pkwy.

LONG ISLAND CITY, NY (Tagalog only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 44-17 Greenpoint Ave.

MACON, GA, Coliseum, 200 Coliseum Dr.

MADISON, WI, Alliant Energy Center Memorial Coliseum, 1881 Expo Mall E.

NATICK, MA (Portuguese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 85 Bacon St.

NEW HAVEN, CT (Spanish only), Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 275 S. Orange St.

RICHMOND, VA, Coliseum, 601 E. Leigh St.

ROCHESTER, MN, Mayo Civic Center Arena,

30 2nd Ave. S.E.

ROCHESTER, NY, Blue Cross Arena, 100 Exchange Blvd.

SAINT PETERSBURG, FL (Spanish only), Bayfront Center,

400 1st St. S.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (Spanish only), Cow Palace, 2600 Geneva Ave.

SPRINGFIELD, IL, Prairie Capital Convention Center, One Convention Center Plaza.

TACOMA, WA, Tacoma Dome, 2727 E. "D" St.

TUCSON, AZ, Convention Center, 260 S. Church St.

TULSA, OK, Tulsa Convention Center, 100 Civic Center.

UNIONDALE, NY (Polish sessions also), Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.

WEST PALM BEACH, FL (Spanish only), Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

WICHITA, KS (Spanish only), Century II Convention Hall, 225 W. Douglas.

WINSTON-SALEM, NC, Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 2825 University Pkwy.

JULY 12-14

AMHERST, MA, The Mullins Center, University of Massachusetts, Commonwealth Ave.

CLEVELAND, OH, Cleveland State University Convocation Centre, Prospect & E. 21st Sts.

COLUMBUS, GA, South Commons Civic Center, 400 4th St.

HAMPTON, VA, Coliseum, 1000 Coliseum Dr.

HUNTSVILLE, AL, Von Braun Civic Center Arena, 700 Monroe St.

JERSEY CITY, NJ (French only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Blvd.

JOHNSON CITY, TN, Freedom Hall Civic Center Arena, Liberty Bell Blvd.

KENNEWICK, WA, Tri-Cities Coliseum, 7100 W. Quinault Ave.

LONG ISLAND CITY, NY (Russian only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 44-17 Greenpoint Ave.

MACON, GA, Coliseum, 200 Coliseum Dr.

MOBILE, AL, Civic Center, 401 Civic Center Dr.

NEW HAVEN, CT, Veterans Memorial Coliseum,

275 S. Orange St.

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK, Myriad, One Myriad Gardens.

PHILADELPHIA, PA, Veterans Stadium, S. Broad & Pattison Ave.

RICHMOND, CA (Tagalog only), Richmond Memorial Convention Center Arena, 403 Civic Center Plaza.

ROANOKE, VA (Spanish only), Civic Center, 710 Williamson Rd. N.E.

SAINT PETERSBURG, FL (Spanish only), Bayfront Center,

400 1st St. S.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (Spanish only), Cow Palace, 2600 Geneva Ave.

TACOMA, WA, Tacoma Dome, 2727 E. "D" St.

TUCSON, AZ, Convention Center, 260 S. Church St.

UNIONDALE, NY (Spanish only), Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.

WEST PALM BEACH, FL (French only), Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.

JULY 19-21

AMARILLO, TX, Civic Center Coliseum, 3rd & Buchanan Sts.

AMHERST, MA, The Mullins Center, University of Massachusetts, Commonwealth Ave.

BELTON, TX, Bell County Expo Center Arena,

301 W. Loop 121.

CICERO, IL, Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.

CLEVELAND, OH, Cleveland State University Convocation Centre, Prospect & E. 21st Sts.
FORT WORTH, TX (Spanish only), Fort Worth Convention Center, 1111 Houston St.
FREMONT, CA (Vietnamese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 43400 Osgood Rd.
HAMPTON, VA, Coliseum, 1000 Coliseum Dr.
JERSEY CITY, NJ (French only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Blvd.
JOHNSON CITY, TN, Freedom Hall Civic Center Arena, Liberty Bell Blvd.
KENNEWICK, WA, Tri-Cities Coliseum, 7100 W. Quinault Ave.
LONG ISLAND CITY, NY (Japanese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 44-17 Greenpoint Ave.
RICHMOND, VA, Coliseum, 601 E. Leigh St.
SAINT PETERSBURG, FL (Spanish only), Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.
SAN FRANCISCO, CA (Portuguese sessions also), Cow Palace, 2600 Geneva Ave.
TACOMA, WA, Tacoma Dome, 2727 E. "D" St.
UNIONDALE, NY (Spanish only), Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.
JULY 25-27 (Thursday through Saturday)
UNIONDALE, NY, Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.
JULY 26-28
AMARILLO, TX, Civic Center Coliseum, 3rd & Buchanan Sts.
BELTON, TX, Bell County Expo Center Arena, 301 W. Loop 121.
BILOXI, MS, Mississippi Coast Coliseum, 3800 W. Beach Blvd.
CICERO, IL, Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.
CLEVELAND, OH, Cleveland State University Convocation Centre, Prospect & E. 21st Sts.
DAYTON, OH, Ervin J. Nutter Center, Wright State University, 3640 Colonel Glen Hwy.
FORT WORTH, TX (Spanish only), Fort Worth Convention Center, 1111 Houston St.
JERSEY CITY, NJ (Korean only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Blvd.
LONG BEACH, CA (Spanish only), Long Beach Convention Center Arena, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.
LONG ISLAND CITY, NY (Italian only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 44-17 Greenpoint Ave.
OAKLAND, CA (TENTATIVE), Oakland/Alameda County Arena, 7000 Coliseum Way.
PHILADELPHIA, PA, Veterans Stadium, S. Broad & Pattison Ave.
RICHMOND, VA, Coliseum, 601 E. Leigh St.
ROANOKE, VA, Civic Center, 710 Williamson Rd. N.E.
SAINT PETERSBURG, FL, Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.
WEST PALM BEACH, FL, Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.
WOODLANDS HILLS, CA (Japanese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2600 Ventura Blvd.
AUGUST 1-3 (Thursday through Saturday)
UNIONDALE, NY, Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.
AUGUST 2-4
BELTON, TX (Spanish only), Bell County Expo Center Arena, 301 W. Loop 121.
BILOXI, MS, Mississippi Coast Coliseum, 3800 W. Beach Blvd.
CICERO, IL (Spanish only), Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.
DAYTON, OH, Ervin J. Nutter Center, Wright State University, 3640 Colonel Glen Hwy.
KENNEWICK, WA (Spanish only), Tri-Cities Coliseum, 7100 W. Quinault Ave.
LONG BEACH, CA (Spanish only), Long Beach Convention Center Arena, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.
MIRA LOMA, CA (Korean only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 3300 Cornerstone Dr.
SAINT PETERSBURG, FL, Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.
WEST PALM BEACH, FL (Spanish only), Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.
AUGUST 9-11
BELTON, TX (Spanish only), Bell County Expo Center Arena, 301 W. Loop 121.
CICERO, IL (Spanish only), Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.
KENNEWICK, WA, Tri-Cities Coliseum, 7100 W. Quinault Ave.

LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center Arena, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.
MIRA LOMA, CA (American Sign Language only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 3300 Cornerstone Dr.
SAINT PETERSBURG, FL, Bayfront Center, 400 1st St. S.
WEST PALM BEACH, FL (Spanish only), Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.
AUGUST 16-18
BAKERSFIELD, CA (Spanish only), Centennial Garden Arena, 1001 Truxtun Ave.
BELTON, TX, Bell County Expo Center Arena, 301 W. Loop 121.
CICERO, IL, Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.
LONG BEACH, CA (Spanish only), Long Beach Convention Center Arena, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.
WEST PALM BEACH, FL (Spanish only), Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.
AUGUST 23-25
BAKERSFIELD, CA (Spanish only), Centennial Garden Arena, 1001 Truxtun Ave.
CICERO, IL, Hawthorne Race Track, 35th & Cicero Ave.
LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center Arena, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.
WEST PALM BEACH, FL (Spanish only), Christian Convention Center of Jehovah's Witnesses, 1610 Palm Beach Lakes Blvd.
AUGUST 30-SEPTEMBER 1
HUNTSVILLE, AL, Von Braun Civic Center Arena, 700 Monroe St.
LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center Arena, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.
SEPTEMBER 6-8
LONG BEACH, CA (Spanish only), Long Beach Convention Center Arena, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.
UNIONDALE, NY (Spanish only), Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.
SEPTEMBER 13-15
LONG BEACH, CA, Long Beach Convention Center Arena, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.
UNIONDALE, NY, Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpke.
Britain
JUNE 7-9
JERSEY, C.I., Fort Regent Leisure Centre, St. Helier
JUNE 14-16
NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE, Newcastle Arena, Arena Way
JUNE 21-23
BOURNEMOUTH, Bournemouth Athletic Football Club, Dean Court Ground
COVENTRY, Coventry City Football Club, Highfield Road Stadium, King Richard Street
NOTTINGHAM, Nottingham Ice Rink, Lower Parliament Street
JUNE 28-30
LEEDS, Leeds United Football Club, Elland Road
LONDON (Italian only), North London Assembly Hall, 174 Bowes Road
PLYMOUTH, Plymouth Argyle Football Club, Home Park
JULY 5-7
LONDON (French only), North London Assembly Hall, 174 Bowes Road
MANCHESTER, Manchester Arena, Hunts Bank
WOLVERHAMPTON, (English and Punjabi), Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club, Molineux Stadium, Waterloo Road
JULY 12-14
LONDON (Greek only), North London Assembly Hall, 174 Bowes Road
PERTH, St. Johnstone Football Club, McDiarmid Park, Crieff Road
JULY 19-21
BRIGHTON, The Brighton Centre, Kings Road
LONDON (Portuguese only), North London Assembly Hall, 174 Bowes Road
NORWICH, Norwich City Football Club, Carrow Road
JULY 26-28
LONDON (Spanish only), North London Assembly Hall, 174 Bowes Road
AUGUST 2-4
LONDON, London Arena, Limeharbour
TWICKENHAM, Rugby Football Union, Whitton Road, Twickenham, Middx.
AUGUST 9-11
DUDLEY (British Sign Language only), Assembly Hall, 22 Castle Hill
AUGUST 16-18
CARDIFF, Millennium Stadium, West Gate Street
Malta
SEPTEMBER 6-8
St. Paul's Bay, New Dolmen Hotel Conference Centre, Qawra
Ireland
JULY 12-14
National Show Centre Cloghran Swords County Dublin
JULY 19-21
National Show Centre Cloghran Swords County Dublin
JULY 26-28
National Show Centre Cloghran Swords County Dublin
Canada
JUNE 14-16
CALGARY, AB, Pengrowth Saddledome, 555 Saddledome Rise SE.
CORNWALL, ON, Ed Lumley Arena, Cornwall Civic Complex, 100 Water St. E.
DARTMOUTH, NS, Dartmouth Sportsplex, 110 Wyse Rd.
NANAIMO, BC, Frank Crane Arena, Beban Park Recreation Centre, 2300 Bowen Rd.
NORTH BAY, ON, Memorial Gardens Sports Arena, 100 Chippewa St. E.
JUNE 21-23
CORNWALL, ON (French only), Ed Lumley Arena, Cornwall Civic Complex, 100 Water St. E.
GRANDE PRAIRIE, AB, Canada Games Arena, 1001 99th Ave.
KITCHENER, ON, Kitchener Memorial Auditorium Complex, 400 East Ave.
MONCTON, NB, Coliseum Agrena, Killam Dr.
VANCOUVER, BC, Pacific Coliseum, 100 Renfrew St.
VICTORIA, BC, Esquimalt's Archie Browning Sports Centre (Arena), 1151 Esquimalt Rd.
JUNE 28-30
CORNWALL, ON, Ed Lumley Arena, Cornwall Civic Complex, 100 Water St. E.
KITCHENER, ON, Kitchener Memorial Auditorium Complex, 400 East Ave.
PRINCE GEORGE, BC, Prince George Multi-plex Arena, 2188 Opisika Blvd.
SASKATOON, SK (Sign language also), Saskatchewan Place, 3515 Thatcherville Ave.
JULY 5-7
EDMONTON, AB, Skyreach Centre, Northlands Park, 7424 118th Ave.
HAMILTON, ON (Polish sessions also), Copps Coliseum, 101 York Blvd.
KAMLOOPS, BC, Sport Mart Place, 300 Lorne St.
KITCHENER, ON (Spanish only), Kitchener Memorial Auditorium Complex, 400 East Ave.
MONTREAL, QC (Arabic only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 12700, boul. Métropolitain Est, Pointe-aux-Trembles.
MOUNT PEARL, NF, Mount Pearl Glacier, Olympic Dr.
QUEBEC CITY, QC (French only), Colisée Pepsi, 250, boul. Wilfrid-Hamel.
JULY 12-14
BRAMPTON, ON (Chinese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2594 Highway 7 W.
HAMILTON, ON, Copps Coliseum, 101 York Blvd.
KAMLOOPS, BC, Sport Mart Place, 300 Lorne St.
SHERBROOKE, QC (French only), Palais des sports, 360, rue du Parc.
JULY 19-21
BRAMPTON, ON (Italian only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2594 Highway 7 W.
SELKIRK, MB, Selkirk Recreation Complex, 180 Easton Dr.
SHERBROOKE, QC (French only), Palais des sports, 360, rue du Parc.
JULY 26-28
BRAMPTON, ON (Portuguese only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2594 Highway 7 W.
SELKIRK, MB, Selkirk Recreation Complex, 180 Easton Dr.
SHERBROOKE, QC (French only), Palais des sports, 360, rue du Parc.
SURREY, BC (Spanish only), Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 15577 82nd Ave.

What Price a Clean Conscience?

by

ROBERT L.

GOVERNMENT ORDERED to Receive R\$20,000." This strange headline recently appeared in the Brazilian newspaper *Correio do Povo*. The article related the story of Luiz Alvo de Araújo, a local mailman, who had sold a piece of land to the state government. After signing over his property, Luiz was surprised to discover that he had been paid R\$20,000 (approximately \$8,000, U.S.) more than the agreed price!

Returning the excess payment proved easier said than done. After several fruitless visits to government departments, Luiz was advised to hire a lawyer and settle the problem in court. "Apparently someone made a mistake, and because of red tape, no one knew how to sort things out," commented the judge who sentenced the government to receive the money and pay legal costs. "It is the first case of its kind that I have ever seen."

Luiz, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, explains: "My Bible-trained conscience would not let me keep what was not rightfully mine. I had to try to return the money."

Many would find such an attitude strange or even incomprehensible. But God's Word shows that true Christians place a high value on maintaining a clean conscience in their dealings with secular authorities. (Romans 13:5) Jehovah's Witnesses are determined to maintain an 'honest conscience and conduct themselves honestly in all things.'—Hebrews 13:18.

