

APRIL 1, 2005

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**SCIENCE AND  
THE BIBLE**  
**Do They Contradict  
Each Other?**

# 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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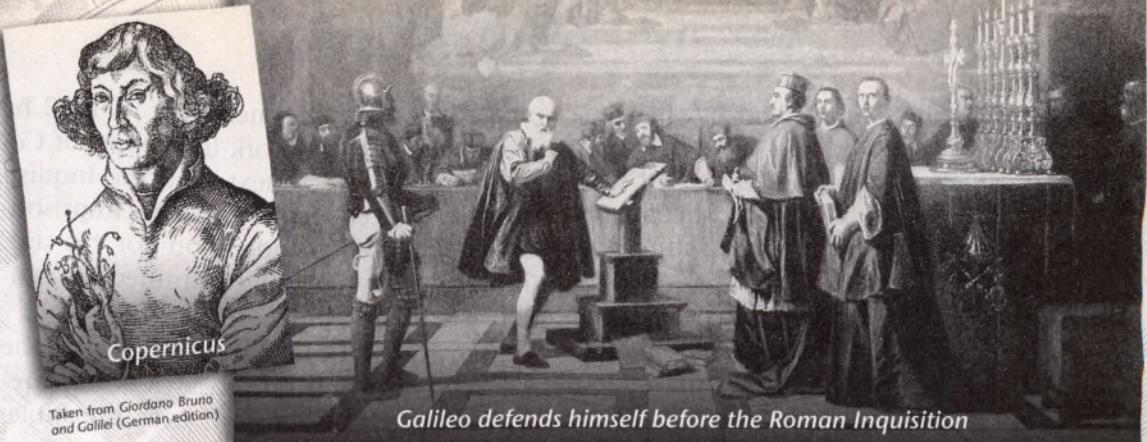
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From the book 'The Historian's History of the World', Vol. IX, 1904

# SCIENCE AND RELIGION The Birth of a Conflict

THE 70-year-old astronomer was on his deathbed, struggling to read. In his hands were the proofs of a document of his, ready for publication. Whether he knew it or not, his work would revolutionize mankind's view of the universe. It would also trigger a heated controversy within Christendom, the effects of which are still being felt today.

The dying man was Nicolaus Copernicus, a Polish Catholic, and the year was 1543. Copernicus' work, entitled *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, put the sun, not the earth, at the center of the solar system. In one stroke Copernicus replaced the extremely complex, earth-centered system with one of elegant simplicity.

At first, there was little indication of the clash that was to come. For one thing, Copernicus had been discreet when sharing his ideas. Additionally, the Catholic Church, which had adopted the earth-centered view, seemed to be more tolerant

of scientific speculation at the time. Even the pope himself urged Copernicus to publish his work. When Copernicus finally did publish it, a fearful editor wrote his own preface, presenting the sun-centered, or heliocentric, concept as a mathematical ideal, not necessarily an astronomical truth.

## The Conflict Becomes Heated

Next on the scene was Italian astronomer, mathematician, and physicist Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), also a Catholic. Using telescopes that he built incorporating the newly invented lens, Galileo saw the heavens in unprecedented detail. His observations convinced him that Copernicus was correct. Galileo also saw spots on the sun, today called sunspots, thus challenging another cherished philosophical and religious tenet—that the sun is not subject to change or decay.

Unlike Copernicus, Galileo was bold and zealous in promoting his ideas. And he did so in a more hostile religious environment,

for the Catholic Church had by then become openly opposed to the Copernican theory. Hence, when Galileo argued that not only was the heliocentric concept correct but it harmonized with Scripture, the church smelled heresy.\*

Galileo went to Rome to defend himself but to no avail. In 1616 the church ordered him to stop advocating Copernicus. Galileo

\* Galileo unnecessarily made powerful enemies for himself by his quick wit and cutting sarcasm. Also, by arguing that the heliocentric concept harmonized with Scripture, he presented himself as an authority on religion, which further provoked the church.

was silenced for a time. Then in 1632 he published another work in support of Copernicus. The very next year, the Inquisition sentenced Galileo to life imprisonment. Out of consideration for his age, however, they quickly commuted the sentence to house arrest.

Many view Galileo's conflict with the church as a great triumph of science over religion and, by extension, over the Bible. However, as we shall see in the next article, this simplistic conclusion ignores many facts.

## SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE Do They Really Contradict Each Other?

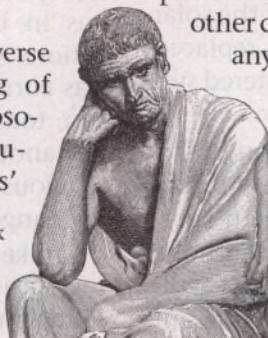
**T**HE seeds of the clash between Galileo and the Catholic Church were sown centuries before Copernicus and Galileo were born. The earth-centered, or geocentric, view of the universe was adopted by the ancient Greeks and made famous by the philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) and the astronomer-astrologer Ptolemy (second century C.E.).\*

Aristotle's concept of the universe was influenced by the thinking of Greek mathematician and philosopher Pythagoras (sixth century B.C.E.). Adopting Pythagoras'

\* In the third century B.C.E., a Greek named Aristarchus of Samos put forth the hypothesis that the sun is at the center of the cosmos, but his ideas were dismissed in favor of Aristotle's.

view that the circle and sphere were perfect shapes, Aristotle believed that the heavens were a series of spheres within spheres, like layers of an onion. Each layer was made of crystal, with the earth at the center. Stars moved in circles, deriving their motion from the outermost sphere, the seat of divine power. Aristotle also held that the sun and other celestial objects were perfect, free of any marks or blemishes and not subject to change.

Aristotle's great scheme was a child of philosophy, not science. A moving earth, he felt, would violate common sense. He also rejected the idea of a void, or space, believing that a moving earth would be



Aristotle

subject to friction and would grind to a halt without the application of constant force. Because Aristotle's concept seemed logical within the framework of existing knowledge, it endured in its basic form for almost 2,000 years. Even as late as the 16th century, French philosopher Jean Bodin expressed that popular view, stating: "No one in his senses, or imbued with the slightest knowledge of physics, will ever think that the earth, heavy and unwieldy . . . , staggers . . . around its own center and that of the sun; for at the slightest jar of the earth, we would see cities and fortresses, towns and mountains thrown down."

### Aristotle Adopted by the Church

A further step leading to the confrontation between Galileo and the church occurred in the 13th century and involved Catholic authority Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). Aquinas had a profound respect for Aristotle, whom he referred to as The Philosopher. Aquinas struggled for five years to fuse Aristotle's philosophy with church teaching. By the time of Galileo, says Wade Rowland in his book *Galileo's Mistake*, "the hybridized Aristotle in the theology of Aquinas had become bedrock dogma of the Church of Rome." Keep in mind, too, that in those days there was no scientific community as such. Education was largely in the hands of the church. The authority on religion and science was often one and the same.

The stage was now set for the confrontation between the church and Galileo. Even before his involvement with astronomy, Galileo had written a treatise on motion. It challenged many assumptions made by the revered Aristotle. However, it was Galileo's steadfast promotion of the heliocentric concept and his assertion

that it harmonizes with Scripture that led to his trial by the Inquisition in 1633.

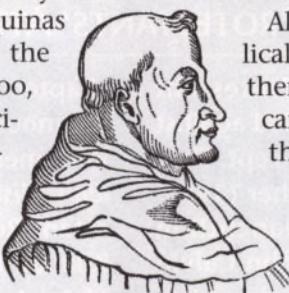
In his defense, Galileo affirmed his strong faith in the Bible as the inspired Word of God. He also argued that the Scriptures were written for ordinary people and that Biblical references to the apparent movement of the sun were not to be interpreted literally. His arguments were futile. Because Galileo rejected an interpretation of Scripture based on Greek philosophy, he stood condemned! Not until 1992 did the Catholic Church officially admit to error in its judgment of Galileo.

### Lessons to Be Learned

What can we learn from these events? For one thing, Galileo had no quarrel with the Bible. Instead, he questioned the teachings of the church. One religion writer observed: "The lesson to be learned from Galileo, it appears, is not that the Church held too tightly to biblical truths; but rather that it did not hold tightly enough." By allowing Greek philosophy to influence its theology, the church bowed to tradition rather than follow the teachings of the Bible.

All of this calls to mind the Biblical warning: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ."—Colossians 2:8.

Even today, many in Christendom continue to embrace theories and philosophies that contradict the Bible. One example is Darwin's theory of evolution, which they have accepted in place of the Genesis account of creation. In making this substitution, the churches have, in effect,



**Thomas Aquinas**  
From the book: *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 1855

made Darwin a modern-day Aristotle and evolution an article of faith.\*

### True Science Harmonizes With the Bible

The foregoing should in no way discourage an interest in science. To be sure, the Bible itself invites us to learn from God's handiwork and to discern God's amazing qualities in what we see. (Isaiah 40:26; Romans 1:20) Of course, the Bible does not claim to teach science. Rather, it reveals God's standards, aspects of his personality that creation alone cannot teach, and his purpose for humans. (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16) Yet, when the Bible does refer to natural phenomena, it is consistently accurate. Galileo himself said: "Both the Holy Scriptures and nature proceed from the Divine Word . . . Two



Isaac Newton

truths can never contradict one another." Consider the following examples.

Even more fundamental than the movement of stars and planets is that all matter in the universe is governed by laws, such as the law of gravity. The earliest known non-Biblical reference to physical laws was made by Pythagoras, who believed that the universe could be explained by numbers. Two thousand years later, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton finally proved that matter is governed by rational laws.

The earliest Biblical reference to natural law is contained in the book of Job. About 1600 B.C.E., God asked Job: "Have you come to know the *statutes* [or, laws] of the heavens?" (Job 38:33) Recorded in the seventh century B.C.E., the book of Jeremiah refers to Jehovah as the Creator of "the *statutes* of the moon and the stars" and "the *statutes* of heaven and earth." (Jeremiah 31:35; 33:25) In view of these statements, Bible commen-

\* For an in-depth discussion on this topic, see chapter 15, "Why Do Many Accept Evolution?" in the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

## THE PROTESTANTS' ATTITUDE

Leaders of the Protestant Reformation also railed against the sun-centered concept. They included Martin Luther (1483-1546), Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560), and John Calvin (1509-64). Luther said of Copernicus: "This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy."

The Reformers based their argument on a literal interpretation of certain scriptures, such as the account in Joshua

chapter 10 that mentions that the sun and the moon "kept motionless."\* Why did the Reformers take this stand? The book *Galileo's Mistake* explains that while the Protestant Reformation broke the papal yoke, it failed to "shake the essential authority" of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, whose views were "accepted by Catholic and Protestant alike."

\* Scientifically speaking, we use incorrect terms when we refer to "sunrise" and "sunset." But in everyday speech, these words are both acceptable and accurate, when we keep in mind our terrestrial perspective. Likewise, Joshua was not discussing astronomy; he was simply reporting events as he saw them.



Luther



Calvin



*Over 3,000 years ago, the Bible described the earth's water cycle*

tator G. Rawlinson observed: "The general prevalence of law in the material world is quite as strongly asserted by the sacred writers as by modern science."

If we use Pythagoras as a point of reference, the statement in Job was about a thousand years ahead of its time. Keep in mind that the Bible's objective is not simply to reveal physical facts but primarily to impress upon us that Jehovah is the Creator of all things—the one who can *create* physical laws.—Job 38:4, 12; 42:1, 2.

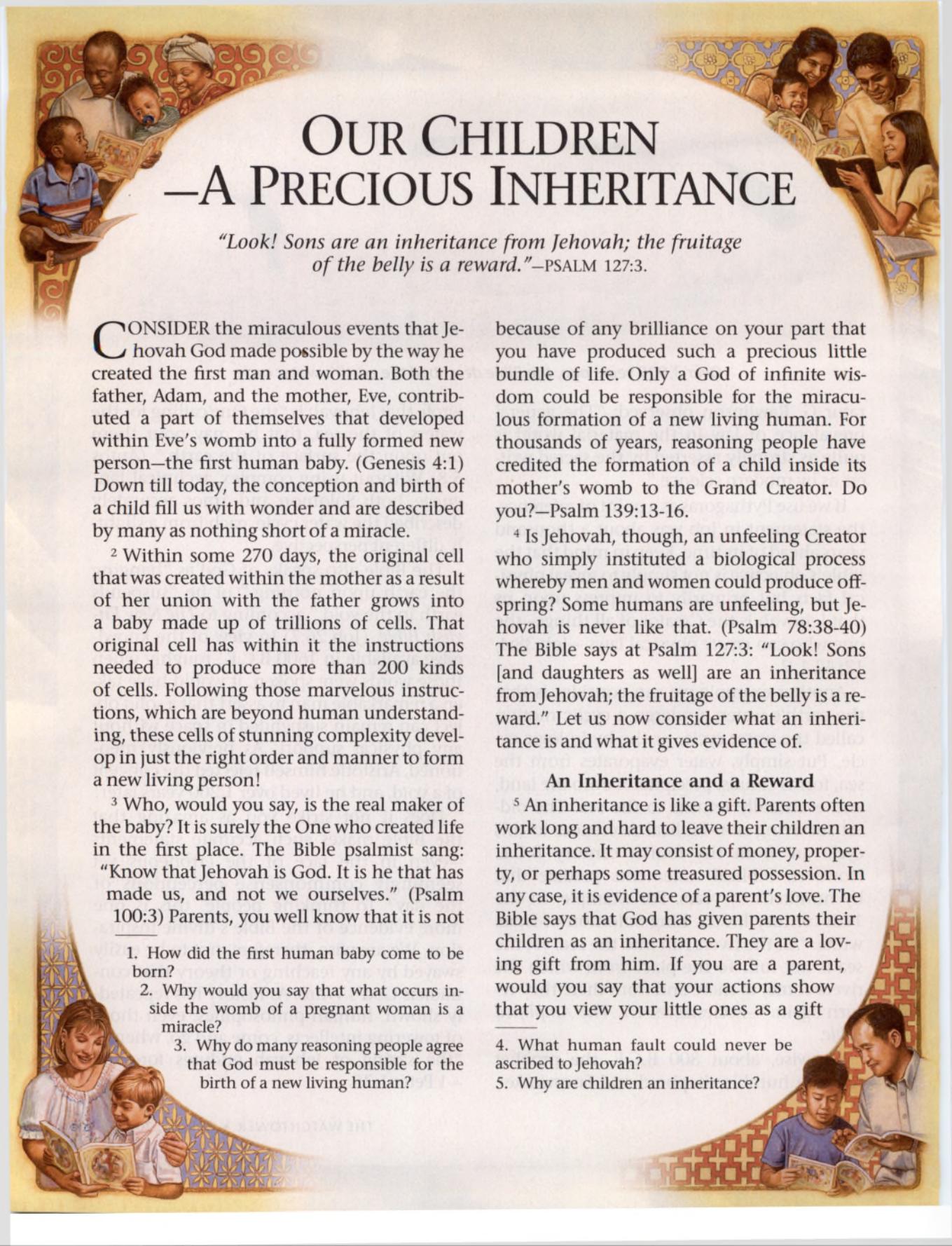
Another example we can consider is that the earth's waters undergo a cyclic motion called the water cycle, or the hydrologic cycle. Put simply, water evaporates from the sea, forms clouds, precipitates onto the land, and eventually returns to the sea. The oldest surviving non-Biblical references to this cycle are from the fourth century B.C.E. However, Biblical statements predate that by hundreds of years. For example, in the 11th century B.C.E., King Solomon of Israel wrote: "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place from which the rivers come, to there and from there they return again."—Ecclesiastes 1:7, *The Amplified Bible*.

Likewise, about 800 B.C.E. the prophet Amos, a humble shepherd and farmworker,

wrote that Jehovah is "the One calling for the waters of the sea, that he may pour them out upon the surface of the earth." (Amos 5:8) Without using complex, technical language, both Solomon and Amos accurately described the water cycle, each from a slightly different perspective.

The Bible also speaks of God as "hanging the earth upon nothing," or he "suspends earth in the void," according to *The New English Bible*. (Job 26:7) In view of the knowledge available in 1600 B.C.E., roughly when those words were spoken, it would have taken a remarkable man to assert that a solid object can remain suspended in space without any physical support. As previously mentioned, Aristotle himself rejected the concept of a void, and he lived over 1,200 years later!

Does it not strike you as amazing that the Bible makes such accurate statements—even in the face of the erroneous yet seemingly commonsense perceptions of the day? To thinking people, this is one more evidence of the Bible's divine inspiration. We are wise, therefore, not to be easily swayed by any teaching or theory that contradicts God's Word. As history has repeatedly shown, human philosophies, even those of towering intellects, come and go, whereas "the saying of Jehovah endures forever."—1 Peter 1:25.



# OUR CHILDREN —A PRECIOUS INHERITANCE

*"Look! Sons are an inheritance from Jehovah; the fruitage of the belly is a reward." —PSALM 127:3.*

**C**ONSIDER the miraculous events that Jehovah God made possible by the way he created the first man and woman. Both the father, Adam, and the mother, Eve, contributed a part of themselves that developed within Eve's womb into a fully formed new person—the first human baby. (Genesis 4:1) Down till today, the conception and birth of a child fill us with wonder and are described by many as nothing short of a miracle.

<sup>2</sup> Within some 270 days, the original cell that was created within the mother as a result of her union with the father grows into a baby made up of trillions of cells. That original cell has within it the instructions needed to produce more than 200 kinds of cells. Following those marvelous instructions, which are beyond human understanding, these cells of stunning complexity develop in just the right order and manner to form a new living person!

<sup>3</sup> Who, would you say, is the real maker of the baby? It is surely the One who created life in the first place. The Bible psalmist sang: "Know that Jehovah is God. It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves." (Psalm 100:3) Parents, you well know that it is not

1. How did the first human baby come to be born?
2. Why would you say that what occurs inside the womb of a pregnant woman is a miracle?
3. Why do many reasoning people agree that God must be responsible for the birth of a new living human?

because of any brilliance on your part that you have produced such a precious little bundle of life. Only a God of infinite wisdom could be responsible for the miraculous formation of a new living human. For thousands of years, reasoning people have credited the formation of a child inside its mother's womb to the Grand Creator. Do you?—Psalm 139:13-16.

<sup>4</sup> Is Jehovah, though, an unfeeling Creator who simply instituted a biological process whereby men and women could produce offspring? Some humans are unfeeling, but Jehovah is never like that. (Psalm 78:38-40) The Bible says at Psalm 127:3: "Look! Sons [and daughters as well] are an inheritance from Jehovah; the fruitage of the belly is a reward." Let us now consider what an inheritance is and what it gives evidence of.

## An Inheritance and a Reward

<sup>5</sup> An inheritance is like a gift. Parents often work long and hard to leave their children an inheritance. It may consist of money, property, or perhaps some treasured possession. In any case, it is evidence of a parent's love. The Bible says that God has given parents their children as an inheritance. They are a loving gift from him. If you are a parent, would you say that your actions show that you view your little ones as a gift

4. What human fault could never be ascribed to Jehovah?
5. Why are children an inheritance?

that the Creator of the universe has entrusted to you?

<sup>6</sup> Jehovah's purpose in granting this gift was to have the earth populated with the descendants of Adam and Eve. (Genesis 1:27, 28; Isaiah 45:18) Jehovah did not individually create every human, as he did the millions of angels. (Psalm 104:4; Revelation 4:11) Instead, God chose to create humans with the ability to produce children who would resemble their parents in identifiable ways.

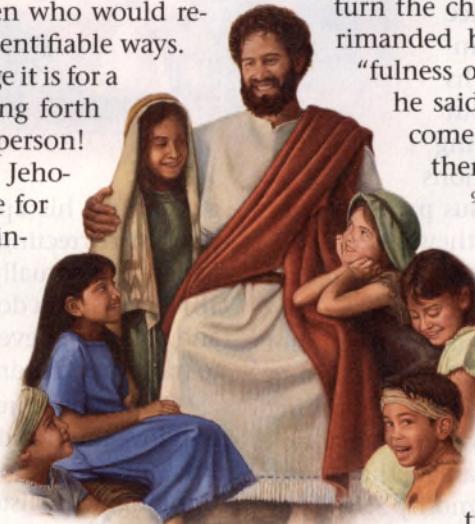
What a marvelous privilege it is for a mother and father to bring forth and care for such a new person! As parents, do you thank Jehovah for making it possible for you to enjoy this precious inheritance?

### Learn From Jesus' Example

<sup>7</sup> Sad to say, not all parents consider children a reward. Many show little compassion for their offspring. Such parents do not reflect the attitude of Jehovah or of his Son. (Psalm 27:10; Isaiah 49:15) In contrast, consider Jesus' interest in young ones. Even before Jesus came to earth as a human—when he was a mighty spirit person in heaven—the Bible says that his "fulness of delight was with the sons of men." (Proverbs 8:31, *Rotherham*) His love for humans was so great that he willingly gave his life as a ransom so that we might receive everlasting life. —Matthew 20:28; John 10:18.

<sup>8</sup> While on earth, Jesus set an especially fine example for parents. Consider what he

6. What was God's purpose for enabling humans to have children?
7. In contrast with what some parents do, how did Jesus show interest in and compassion for "the sons of men"?
8. How did Jesus set a good example for parents?



did. He took time for children, even when he was very busy and under stress. He watched them at play in the marketplace and used aspects of their behavior in his teaching. (Matthew 11:16, 17) During his final trip to Jerusalem, Jesus knew that he would suffer and be killed. So when people brought little ones to see him, Jesus' disciples, perhaps in an effort to protect Jesus from further stress, tried to turn the children away. But Jesus reprimanded his disciples. Showing his "fulness of delight" with little ones, he said: "Let the young children come to me; do not try to stop them."—Mark 10:13, 14.

<sup>9</sup> We can learn from Jesus' example. When young ones come to us, how do we respond—even when we are busy? As Jesus did? What children need, especially from their parents, is what Jesus was willing to give them—his time and attention. True,

such words as "I love you" are important. Yet, actions speak louder than words. Your love is manifest not only by what you say but even more so by what you do. It is shown by the time, attention, and care that you provide your little ones. Doing all of that, however, may not produce tangible results, at least not as quickly as you would hope. Patience is required. We can learn patience if we imitate the way Jesus dealt with his disciples.

### Jesus' Patience and Affection

<sup>10</sup> Jesus was aware of the ongoing competition for prominence among his disciples. One day, after arriving in Capernaum with

9. Why may what we do be even more important than what we say?
10. How did Jesus teach his disciples a lesson on humility, and with what success at first?

his disciples, he asked them: “‘What were you arguing over on the road?’ They kept silent, for on the road they had argued among themselves who is greater.” Instead of harshly reprimanding them, Jesus patiently provided an object lesson in an effort to teach them humility. (Mark 9:33-37) Did it produce the desired results? Not immediately. Some six months later, James and John put their mother up to requesting from Jesus prominent positions in the Kingdom. Again, Jesus patiently corrected their thinking.—Matthew 20:20-28.

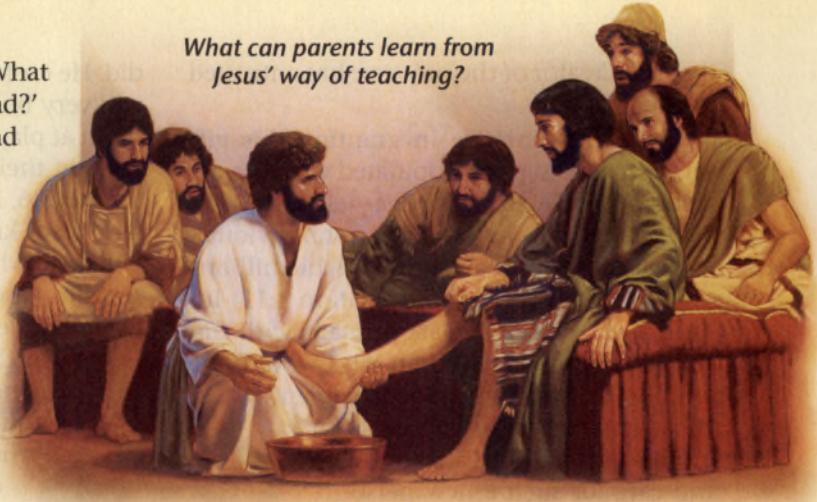
<sup>11</sup> Soon the Passover of 33 C.E. arrived, and Jesus met privately with his apostles to celebrate it. On arriving in the upper room, not one of the 12 apostles took the initiative to perform the customary service of washing the dusty feet of the others—the menial task of a servant or of a woman in the household. (1 Samuel 25:41; 1 Timothy 5:10) How it must have grieved Jesus to see that his disciples continued to show evidence of aspiring to rank and position! So Jesus washed the feet of each one and then earnestly appealed to them to follow his example of serving others. (John 13:4-17) Did they? The Bible says that later that evening “there also arose a heated dispute among them over which one of them seemed to be greatest.”—Luke 22:24.

<sup>12</sup> When your children fail to respond to your counsel, do you parents appreciate how Jesus must have felt? Note that Jesus did not

11. (a) What customary task did Jesus’ apostles fail to perform after arriving in an upper room with Jesus? (b) What did Jesus do, and were his efforts successful at that time?

12. How might parents imitate Jesus in their efforts to train their children?

*What can parents learn from Jesus’ way of teaching?*



give up on his apostles, though they were slow in correcting their shortcomings. His patience eventually bore fruit. (1 John 3:14, 18) Parents, you do well to imitate Jesus’ love and patience, never giving up in your efforts to train your children.

<sup>13</sup> Young ones need to sense that their parents love them and are interested in them. Jesus wanted to know what his disciples were thinking, so he listened when they had questions. He asked them what they thought about certain matters. (Matthew 17:25-27) Yes, good teaching includes attentive listening and genuine interest. A parent should resist any inclination to put off an inquiring child with a gruff: “Go away! Can’t you see that I am busy?” If a parent really is busy, the child should be told that the matter will be discussed later. Parents must then make sure that it is discussed. In this way the child will sense that the parent really is interested in him, and he will more readily confide in the parent.

<sup>14</sup> Can parents appropriately show their affection by putting their arms around their

13. Why should a parent not gruffly dismiss a child’s inquiry?

14. What can parents learn from Jesus about showing affection to their children?

children and hugging them? Again, parents can learn from Jesus. The Bible says that he "took the children into his arms and began blessing them, laying his hands upon them." (Mark 10:16) How do you think the young ones responded? Surely their hearts were warmed, and they were drawn to Jesus! If there is genuine affection and love between you parents and your young ones, they will respond more readily to your efforts to discipline and teach them.

### The Question of How Much Time

<sup>15</sup> Some have questioned whether children really need much of their parents' time and

15, 16. What has been a popular child-rearing concept, and what apparently prompted it?

*When and how were  
Israelite parents to teach  
their children?*



loving attention. A child-rearing concept that has been skillfully promoted is called *quality time*. Advocates claim that children do not need a lot of their parents' time as long as the limited time spent with them is meaningful, well-thought-out, and planned. Is the quality-time concept a good one, conceived with the welfare of young ones in mind?

<sup>16</sup> One writer who had spoken with many children said that what they "wanted most from their parents was more time," along with "undivided attention." Significantly, one college professor observed: "The term [quality time] has grown out of parental guilt. People were giving themselves permission to spend less time with their children." How much time should parents spend with their children?

<sup>17</sup> The Bible does not say. However, Israelite parents were urged to speak with their children when they were in their house, when they walked on the road, when they lay down, and when they got up. (Deuteronomy 6:7) This clearly means that parents need to interact with children and to teach them constantly each day.

<sup>18</sup> Jesus successfully trained his disciples as he ate with them, traveled with them, and even relaxed with them. He thus took advantage of every opportunity to teach them. (Mark 6:31, 32; Luke 8:1; 22:14) Similarly, Christian parents should be alert to use every opportunity to establish and maintain good communication with their children and to train them in Jehovah's ways.

### What to Teach and How to Do It

<sup>19</sup> Simply spending time with children and

17. What do children need from their parents?

18. How did Jesus take advantage of opportunities to train his disciples, and what can parents learn from this?

19. (a) What is needed besides spending time with children? (b) What do parents primarily need to teach young ones?

even teaching them is not all there is to rearing them successfully. Vital, too, is *what* is taught. Notice how the Bible emphasizes what this should be. "These words that I am commanding you today," it says, "you must inculcate . . . in your son." What are "these words" that children need to be taught? Evidently, they are the words that had just been mentioned, namely: "You must love Jehovah your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your vital force." (Deuteronomy 6:5-7) Jesus said that this is the most important of all God's commandments. (Mark 12:28-30) Parents primarily need to teach young ones about Jehovah, explaining why he alone is worthy of our whole-souled love and devotion.

<sup>20</sup> However, "these words" that parents are urged to teach their children include more than simply to love God with one's whole self. You will notice that in the preceding chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses restates the laws that God wrote on tablets of stone—the Ten Commandments. These laws include commands not to lie, not to steal, not to murder, and not to commit adultery. (Deuteronomy

20. What were parents of old commanded by God to teach their children?

### How Would You Answer?

- Why should parents consider their children precious?
- What can parents and others learn from Jesus?
- How much time should parents devote to their children?
- What should children be taught, and how should the teaching be done?



*Parents should keep the teachings of God before their children*

5:11-22) So the need to impart moral values to their children was impressed upon parents of old. Christian parents today need to provide their children with similar instruction if they are to help them to have a secure, happy future.

<sup>21</sup> Note that parents are told *how* they are to teach "these words," or commandments, to their young ones: "You must inculcate them in your son." The word "inculcate" means "to teach and impress by frequent repetitions or admonitions: urge on or fix in the mind." So God is, in effect, telling parents to institute a planned program of Bible instruction that

21. What was meant by the instruction to "inculcate" God's word in young ones?

has the express purpose of impressing spiritual matters on the minds of their children.

<sup>22</sup> Such a planned program takes parental initiative. The Bible says: "You must tie them [“these words,” or commandments of God] as a sign upon your hand, and they must serve as a frontlet band between your eyes; and you must write them upon the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:8, 9) This does not mean that parents should literally write God's laws on doorposts and gates, tie a copy of them on the hands of their children, and place one between their eyes. Rather, the point is that

22. What were Israelite parents told to do to instruct their children, and what did that mean?

gracious to mean and to fulfill a righteous law.  
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parents should constantly keep the teachings of God before their children. Teaching their children should be done in such a regular, constant way that it is as though God's teachings are right there before the children all the time.

<sup>23</sup> What are some especially important things that parents need to teach their children? Why is it vital today that children be both taught and trained to protect themselves? What assistance is now available to parents to help them teach their children effectively? These and other questions that concern many parents will be considered in the following article.

23. What will be considered in next week's lesson?

## PARENTS, PROTECT YOUR PRECIOUS INHERITANCE

*"Wisdom is for a protection . . . [It] preserves alive its owners."*

—ECCLESIASTES 7:12.

PARENTS bring into the world a new living person who has physical characteristics and personality traits similar to their own. The Bible calls such little ones “an inheritance from Jehovah.” (Psalm 127:3) Since he is the true Life-Giver, Jehovah is really entrusting parents with what ultimately belongs to him. (Psalm 36:9) Parents, how do you view receiving such a precious gift from God?

<sup>2</sup> Surely such a gift should be received with humility and appreciation. Over 3,000 years

1. Why should parents view their children as gifts?
2. What was Manoah's response upon learning that he was to become a father?

ago, the Israelite Manoah responded in this way when his wife was informed by an angel that she was to bear a child. Upon hearing the good news, Manoah prayed: “Excuse me, Jehovah. The man of the true God that you just sent, let him, please, come again to us and instruct us as to what we ought to do to the child that will be born.” (Judges 13:8) Parents, what can you learn from Manoah's example?

### Why Divine Help Is Needed Now

<sup>3</sup> Now more than ever before, parents need Jehovah's help in rearing their children. The

3. Why is God's help in rearing children especially needed today?

reason? Satan the Devil and his angels have been hurled from heaven down to earth. "Woe for the earth," the Bible warns, "because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." (Revelation 12:7-9, 12) "Like a roaring lion," the Bible explains, Satan is "seeking to devour someone." (1 Peter 5:8) Lions usually prey on the most vulnerable, often the young. Wisely, then, Christian parents look to Jehovah for direction to protect their children. How much effort are you making to do so?

<sup>4</sup> If you knew that a lion was loose in the neighborhood, protecting your children would surely be a primary concern. Satan is a predator. He seeks to corrupt God's people, thus making them unworthy of God's approval. (Job 2:1-7; 1 John 5:19) Children are an easy target. To escape the snares of the Devil, children must come to know and obey Jehovah. Bible knowledge is essential. "This means everlasting life," Jesus said, "their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) Furthermore, young ones need wisdom—the ability to understand and to apply what they learn. Since "wisdom itself preserves alive its owners," you parents need to instill the truth in the hearts of your children. (Ecclesiastes 7:12) How might you do this?

<sup>5</sup> You can—and should—read to your children from God's Word. But helping them to love and obey Jehovah requires more than that—it requires understanding on their part. To illustrate: A child may be told not to cross the street before looking both ways. Yet, some children do not obey. Why not? The consequences of being hit by a car may not

4. (a) Knowing that a lion is roaming in the neighborhood should prompt what reaction from parents? (b) What do children need for protection?
5. (a) How can wisdom be imparted? (b) How does Proverbs describe the value of wisdom?

have been explained often enough or in a manner that impresses the danger upon the child, overcoming the "foolishness" that could lead to an accident. Imparting wisdom takes time, as well as much patience. But how valuable wisdom is! "Its ways are ways of pleasantness," the Bible says, "and all its roadways are peace. It is a tree of life to those taking hold of it, and those keeping fast hold of it are to be called happy."—Proverbs 3:13-18; 22:15.

### Teaching That Imparts Wisdom

<sup>6</sup> Often young ones act improperly, not because they have not been taught what is right, but because the teaching has not reached their heart—their inner self. The Devil is waging a battle for the heart of young ones. He schemes to see that they are exposed to ungodly influences of his world. He also tries to exploit their inherited sinful inclination to do bad things. (Genesis 8:21; Psalm 51:5) Parents need to recognize that a real war is being waged for the heart of their children.

<sup>7</sup> Parents usually *tell* a child what is right or wrong, believing that they have taught him a certain moral principle. They may say to the child that it is wrong to lie, to steal, or to have sexual relations with anyone to whom one is not married. However, the child needs to have a stronger motivation for obeying than simply because his parents say so. These are Jehovah's laws. The child should learn that the course of wisdom is to obey God's commandments.—Proverbs 6:16-19; Hebrews 13:4.

<sup>8</sup> The complexity of the universe, the diversity of living things, the change of the sea-

6. (a) Why do children often act unwisely?
- (b) What battle is going on?
7. Why is telling a child what is right or wrong not sufficient?
8. What kind of teaching can help children act wisely?



***Parents, what can you learn  
from Manoah's example?***

sons—all such things can help a young child appreciate the existence of an all-wise Creator. (Romans 1:20; Hebrews 3:4) Further, the child should be taught that God loves him and has made provision through the sacrifice of His Son to give him eternal life and that he can make God happy by obeying what He says. Then likely the child will come to want to serve Jehovah, despite attempts of the Devil to stop him.—Proverbs 22:6; 27:11; John 3:16.

<sup>9</sup> The kind of teaching that protects a child and motivates him to do what is right takes time, attention, and planning. It requires that parents accept direction from God. The Bible says: "You, fathers, . . . go on bringing [your children] up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) What does that mean? "Mental-

9. (a) What does lifesaving teaching require? (b) What are fathers instructed to do, and what does this involve?

regulating," in the original Greek, conveys the idea of "putting mind in." So fathers are, in effect, urged to put the mind of Jehovah in their children. What a protection that will be for the young ones! If children have God's thoughts, his way of thinking, inculcated in their mind, they are safeguarded against wrongdoing.

**Desire Motivated by Love**

<sup>10</sup> In order for you to fulfill your desire to bring your child up properly, however, your efforts need to be prompted by love. An important factor is good communication. Find out what is happening in your youngster's life and what his or her views are. In a comfortable setting, tactfully draw out your child. At times, you may be shocked by what he says. Be very careful not to overreact. Rather, listen with sympathetic concern.

<sup>11</sup> True, you may have read to your child from the Bible about God's laws prohibiting sexual immorality, even doing so a number of times. (1 Corinthians 6:18; Ephesians 5:5) This may have impressed upon your young ones what is pleasing and not pleasing to Jehovah. However, putting his mind in a child requires more. Children need help to reason on the value of Jehovah's laws. They need to be convinced that his laws are right and good and that obeying them is the proper and loving thing to do. Only if you reason with your children from the Scriptures so that they accept God's viewpoint can it be said that you have put his mind in them.

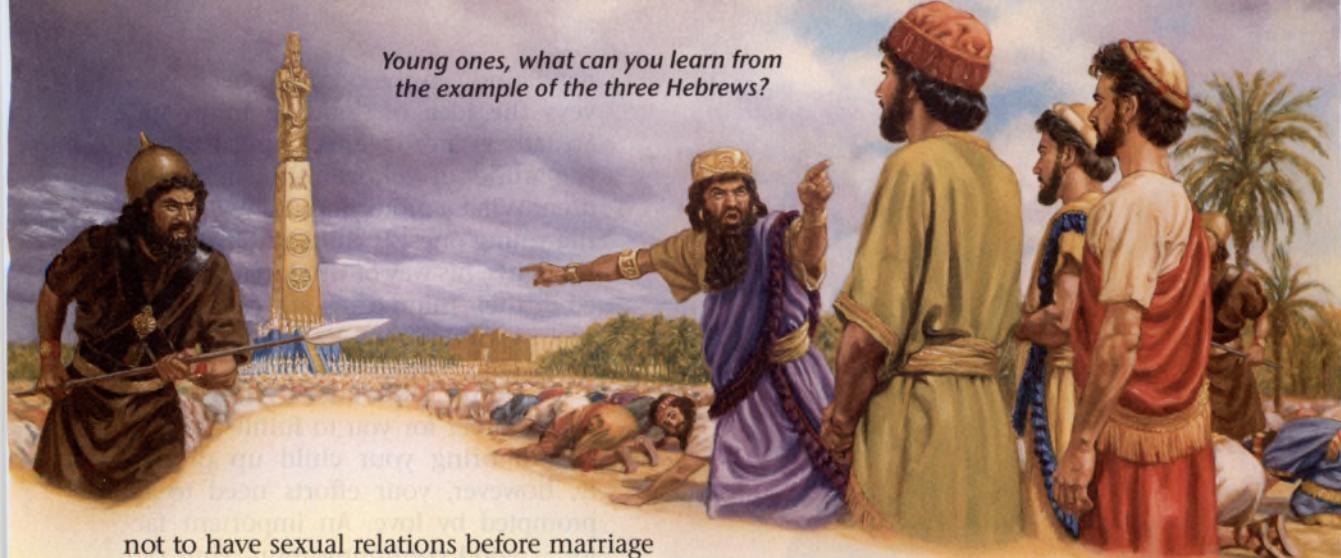
<sup>12</sup> When talking about sex, you might ask, "Do you think that obeying Jehovah's law

10. To instruct your child effectively, what is it important for you to know?

11. How can a parent put God's mind in a child?

12. How can a parent help his child to get the proper view of sexual relations?

*Young ones, what can you learn from the example of the three Hebrews?*



not to have sexual relations before marriage will rob a person of happiness?" Encourage your child to explain his answer. After reviewing God's marvelous provision for producing a child, you might ask: "Do you think our loving God would make laws to rob us of enjoyment of life? Or do you think his laws are there to make us happy and to protect us?" (Psalm 119:1, 2; Isaiah 48:17) Get your child's thinking on this matter. Then you might draw attention to examples of how sexual immorality has led to heartache and trouble. (2 Samuel 13:1-33) By reasoning with your child so that he understands and accepts God's view, you will have gone a long way toward putting God's mind in him. However, there is something else you can do.

<sup>13</sup> Wisely, you will not only teach your child the consequences of disobeying Jehovah but also explain how Jehovah is personally affected by the way we live. Show your child from the Bible that we can cause Jehovah pain when we fail to do his will. (Psalm 78:41) You might ask, "Why do you not want to hurt Jehovah?" and explain: "God's enemy Satan claims that we serve Jehovah for selfish reasons and not because we love him." Then explain that by keeping integri-

13. Understanding what can especially motivate a child to obey Jehovah?

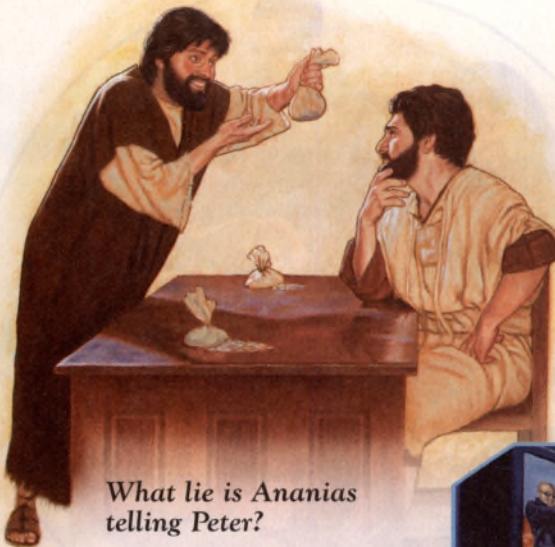
ty, Job made God's heart rejoice, thus providing an answer to Satan's lying charge. (Job 1: 9-11; 27:5) Your child needs to understand that depending on how he behaves, he can make Jehovah either sad or happy. (Proverbs 27:11) This and many other vital lessons can be taught to children by using the book *Learn From the Great Teacher*.\*

### Gratifying Results

<sup>14</sup> A grandfather in Croatia who reads the *Teacher* book with his seven-year-old grandson writes that the boy told him the following: "Mum said to do something, but I didn't want to do it. Then I remembered the chapter 'Obedience Protects You,' so I went back and told her I would be obedient to her." Regarding the chapter "Why We Should Not Lie," a couple in Florida, U.S.A., said: "It provides questions that invite children to open their hearts and admit errors they would otherwise not admit."

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses. See chapter 40, "How to Make God Happy."

14, 15. (a) Which lessons in the *Teacher* book have motivated children? (b) What good results have you had from using the book? (See also box on pages 18-19.)



What lie is Ananias telling Peter?

The pictures and captions in the "Teacher" book are powerful teaching tools

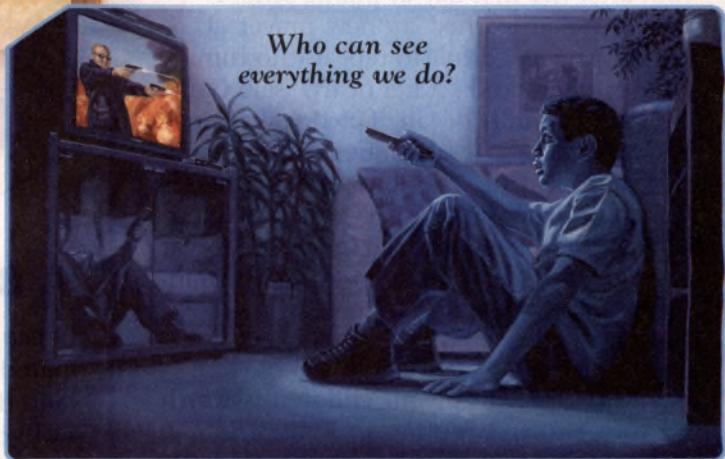
<sup>15</sup> The Teacher book has more than 230 pictures, and there is a caption, or description, for each picture or group of pictures. "Often my son will fix his eyes on a picture and not want the page turned," noted one appreciative mother. "Not only are the pictures appealing but they teach lessons on their own, or at least cause children to ask questions. Regarding a picture in which a child is watching television in a darkened room, my son asked, 'Mommy, what is that boy doing?' in a tone that indicated that he knew that something was wrong." The caption to the picture reads: "Who can see everything we do?"

### Vital Education for Today

<sup>16</sup> Children need to know the proper and the improper use of their private body parts.

16. What is it vital that children be taught today, and why?

Yet, talking about this is not always easy. A newspaper columnist observed that she grew up in an era in which using words that refer to the sexual organs was considered rude. Concerning the teaching of her children, she wrote: "I'm going to have to get over my embarrassment." Truly, when out of embarrassment parents avoid the subject of sex, it does not protect a child. Sexual molesters exploit a child's ignorance. *Learn From the Great Teacher* addresses the subject in a wholesome, dignified manner. Informing children about sex does not take away their



innocence, whereas failing to do so can lead to their being robbed of it.

<sup>17</sup> In chapter 10, when discussing the wicked angels who came to earth and fathered children, the child is asked, "What do you know about sex relations?" The book gives a simple, dignified answer. Later, chapter 32 explains how children can be protected from sexual predators. Many letters have reported that such teaching is vital. One observed: "Last week when my son Javan saw his pediatrician, she asked if we had discussed with him the proper use of private parts of the

17. How does the Teacher book help parents to teach their children about sex?

body. She was very impressed that we had done this using our new book."

<sup>18</sup> Another chapter deals with the Bible account of the three Hebrew youths Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to bow to an image representing the Babylonian State. (Daniel 3:1-30) Some may not relate paying homage to an image to saluting the flag, as the *Teacher* book does. However, note what author Edward Gaffney had to say in an interview by *U.S. Catholic*. He mentioned that when his daughter told him after her first day at public school that she had learned a "new prayer at school," he asked her to repeat it to him. "She put her hand on her heart," said Gaffney, "and proudly began, 'I pledge allegiance to the flag . . .' " He continued: "All of a sudden, it kicked in. The Jehovah's Witnesses were right. There is an aspect of national spirituality that's being shaped in our schools at a very early stage—an unquestioning transcendent loyalty."

### Worth All the Effort

<sup>19</sup> Really, teaching your children is worth all your effort. A mother in Kansas, U.S.A., was moved to tears upon receiving a letter from her son. He wrote: "I feel very fortu-

18. How does the *Teacher* book discuss paying homage to national emblems?
19. What rewards are there for teaching children?

### How Would You Answer?

- Why do parents especially now need to protect their children?
- What kind of teaching imparts wisdom?
- What are vital issues to discuss with your children today?
- How has the *Teacher* book helped parents teach their children?



## A Book for Everyone

*Learn From the Great Teacher* was prepared to help parents or other adults read and discuss the teachings of Jesus Christ with children. Yet, adults who have read the book by themselves have expressed sincere appreciation for what they have learned.

A man in Texas, U.S.A., said: "*Learn From the Great Teacher* is eloquent in its simplicity, motivating us at any age—even at 76, as I am. Thank you very much, from one who has served Jehovah since youth."

A reader from London, England, reports: "The beautiful illustrations are bound to capture the hearts of parents and children alike. The questions and format are wonderful, and how fantastic to see sensitive issues dealt with, as in chapter 32, 'How Jesus Was Protected.'" She concluded: "Even though this book is no doubt primarily designed

nate to have had an upbringing that left me relatively emotionally stable and whole. You and Daddy certainly deserve commendation." (Proverbs 31:28) *Learn From the Great Teacher* can help many more parents to teach children so as to protect this precious heritage.

<sup>20</sup> Our children deserve all the time, atten-

20. What should parents always remember, and what effect should that have on them?

tion, and effort we can give them. They are young for such a short time. Take advantage of every opportunity to be with them and to help them. You will never regret it. They will come to love you. Always remember, your children are God's gift to you. What a precious inheritance they are! (Psalm 127:3-5) So treat them as such, as though you are answerable to God for how you rear them because the fact is, you are.

with the children of Jehovah's Witnesses in mind, I imagine that teachers and others will be more than glad to have a copy too. I look forward to using it in the months and years to come."

A woman from Massachusetts, U.S.A., commented about the many "well-thought-out pictures." She observed: "I noticed that even though the book is meant for children, the subjects discussed can also help us adults think about our personal relationship with Jehovah."

"Wow! What a wonderful book!" exclaimed a woman from Maine, U.S.A. "It is not just for young ones but for all of us as God's children. It has reached into places I didn't know were there and has stirred emotions and then soothed them, so that there was peace. I feel so close to Jehovah as my Father. He has taken away all the hurt that has happened over the years and has made his purpose so clear." She concluded: "I'm telling everyone, 'Please read it.'"

A woman from Kyoto, Japan, reported that when she was reading to her grandchildren, they asked such questions as: "What

is that boy doing? Why is this little girl being scolded? What about this mother? What about this lion?" It teaches things we are interested in, so I love it much more than any book I could find in a library."

A father in Calgary, Canada, says that as soon as he received the book, he began to

read it to his six-year-old daughter and his nine-year-old son. "Immediately the response was wonderful," he reports. "My children were following along and answering the questions from their heart. They felt a part of the study, and it gave them a chance to express themselves. They have come alive, and my daughter says she wants to study from the new book every night."

After one study, the father said: "My son and I talked for hours about Jehovah and his purposes. He had so many questions that came from the book. Tears came to my eyes when he said good night to me and asked: 'Can we do this again, Dad? I have so many questions, and I want to know everything about Jehovah.'"





## A FORSAKEN ORPHAN FINDS A LOVING FATHER

AS TOLD BY  
**DIMITRIS SIDIROPOULOS**

"Go ahead, pick up that weapon and shoot," snarled the officer, thrusting a rifle in front of me. I calmly refused. To the horror of the onlooking soldiers, bullets from the officer's gun began to whiz over my shoulder. Death seemed imminent. Happily, I survived. But this was not the first time my life was in danger.

MY FAMILY belonged to an ethnic minority living near Kayseri, in Cappadocia, Turkey. Some individuals from this area apparently embraced Christianity in the first century C.E. (Acts 2:9) By the beginning of the 20th century, however, things had changed drastically.

### From Refugee to Orphan

A few months after I was born in 1922, ethnic conflict caused my family to flee to Greece as refugees. My panic-stricken parents left with nothing but their months-old baby,

me. After suffering untold hardships, they arrived in a wretched condition in the village of Kiria, near Drama, in northern Greece.

When I was four years old and after my younger brother was born, my father died. He was only 27 years of age, but the misery of those harrowing times had worn him down. Mother suffered terrible deprivations, and soon she too died. My brother and I were left completely destitute. We were sent from orphanage to orphanage, and at the age of 12, I ended up in one in Thessalonica, where I served an apprenticeship as a mechanic.

As I was growing up inside the cold and inhospitable walls of orphanages, I wondered why certain people experience so much suffering and injustice. I asked myself why God allows such sad conditions to exist. In our religious education classes, we were taught that God is omnipotent, but no reasonable explanation was given about the existence and prevalence of evil. A popular mantra said that the Greek Orthodox Church is the best religion. When I asked, "If Orthodoxy is the best religion, why isn't everybody Orthodox?" I received no satisfactory answer.

Our teacher, nevertheless, had deep respect for the Bible, and he impressed on us that it is a sacred book. The director of the orphanage displayed the same attitude, but he inexplicably refrained from participating in religious services. When I inquired about this, I was told that he had once studied with Jehovah's Witnesses, a religion unknown to me.

When my education at the Thessalonica orphanage was completed, I was 17 years old. World War II had begun, and Greece was under Nazi occupation. People were dying in the streets from hunger. In order to survive, I fled to the countryside to work for meager wages as a field hand.

### The Bible Provides Answers

When I returned to Thessalonica in April 1945, I received a visit from the sister of one of my childhood friends with whom I had lived in a number of orphanages. Paschalia told me that her brother had disappeared and asked me if I knew anything of his whereabouts. During the conversation, she said that she was one of Jehovah's Witnesses and mentioned God's interest in humans.

Bitterly, I raised many objections. Why had I been suffering since early childhood?

Why had I been left an orphan? Where is God when we need him the most? She replied, "Are you sure that God is to blame for these conditions?" Using her Bible, she showed me that God does not make people suffer. I was helped to see that the Creator loves humans and will shortly improve things. Using such scriptures as Isaiah 35:5-7 and Revelation 21:3, 4, she showed me that soon war, strife, sickness, and death will be removed, and faithful people will live forever on earth.

### Finding a Supportive Family

I learned that Paschalia's brother had been killed in a skirmish of the guerrilla forces. I visited her family to comfort them, but instead they provided Scriptural comfort to me. I went back for more consoling thoughts from the Bible, and soon I became part of a small group of Jehovah's Witnesses who met secretly to study and worship. Despite the ostracism brought upon the Witnesses, I was determined to continue associating with them.

In that group of humble Christians, I found the warm, loving family atmosphere that I missed. They provided the spiritual support and assistance that I desperately needed. In them, I found selfless and concerned friends, who were ready and willing to help and comfort me. (2 Corinthians 7: 5-7) More important, I was helped to draw closer to Jehovah, whom I now thought of as my loving heavenly Father. His qualities of love, compassion, and deep concern were very appealing. (Psalm 23:1-6) At last I had found a spiritual family and a loving Father! My heart was touched. Soon I was moved to dedicate myself to Jehovah, and I was baptized in September 1945.

Attending Christian meetings not only increased my knowledge but also deepened

my faith. Since there was no other means of transportation, a number of us often walked the three miles between our village and the meeting place, engaging in unforgettable spiritual discussions. In late 1945, when I learned of the opportunity to participate in the full-time evangelizing work, I started pioneering. A strong relationship with Jehovah was vital, as my faith and integrity would soon be tested to the limit.

### Opposition Backfires

The police often raided our meeting place at gunpoint. The country was under martial law, since civil war was raging in Greece. Opposing groups turned on one another with savage hatred. Taking advantage of the situation, the clergy led the authorities to believe that we were Communists and to persecute us viciously.

During a two-year period, we were arrested numerous times, and six times we received sentences of up to four months. However, the prisons were already full of political prisoners, so we were set free. We used our unexpected freedom to continue preaching, but after a while we were again arrested —three times in the same week. We knew that many of our brothers had been exiled to barren islands. Would my faith be strong enough for me to face such a test?

Conditions became extremely difficult when I was put on police probation. In order to keep an eye on me, the authorities sent me to Evosmos, near Thessalonica, where there was a police station. I rented a room nearby, and to support myself, I started working as an itinerant craftsman, polish-



*I worked as a cook  
in the Drama prison*

ing copper pots and pans. While I pioneered in the surrounding villages, this trade enabled me to get easy access to homes without arousing the suspicion of the police. As a result, several people heard the good news and responded favorably. More than ten of them eventually became dedicated worshipers of Jehovah.

### Ten Years, Eight Prisons

I remained under police surveillance until the end of 1949, and then I returned to Thessalonica, eager to continue in the full-time ministry. Just when I thought that my travails were over, in 1950, I was unexpectedly ordered to join the army. Because of my Christian neutrality, I was determined not to "learn war." (Isaiah 2:4) Thus started a long, tormenting journey that would take me to some of the most infamous prisons in Greece.

It all started in the city of Drama. During the first weeks of my incarceration there, the newly conscripted soldiers began their target practice. One day, I was taken to the shooting range. One of the officers thrust a rifle in front of me and ordered me to shoot. When I refused, he started shooting at me. When other officers saw that I would not compromise, they began to punch me savagely. They lit cigarettes and stubbed them out in the palms of my hands. Afterward, they threw me into solitary confinement. This went on for three days. The pain from the cigarette burns was excruciating, and for many years I bore the scars on my hands.

Before I was court-martialed, I was transferred to a military camp at Iráklion, Crete. There, in an effort to break my integrity,

they beat me severely. Afraid that I might give in, I prayed fervently, asking my heavenly Father to strengthen me. The words of Jeremiah 1:19 came to mind: "They will be certain to fight against you, but they will not prevail against you, for 'I am with you,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'to deliver you.'" The soothing "peace of God" brought calmness and tranquillity. I understood the wisdom of putting implicit trust in Jehovah.—Philippians 4:6, 7; Proverbs 3:5.

At the trial that followed, I was sentenced to life imprisonment. Jehovah's Witnesses were considered the worst "enemies of the State." The life term began at the Itsedin criminal prison, outside Canea, where I was put in solitary confinement. Itsedin was an old fort, and my cell was full of rats. I used to wrap a ragged, old blanket around me from head to toe so that the rats would not have direct contact with my body when they crawled all over me. I fell very sick with pneumonia. The doctor said that I had to sit in the sunshine, and thus I was able to have discussions with many of the prisoners in the courtyard. However, my condition worsened, and after a massive pulmonary hemorrhage, I was transferred to the Iráklion hospital.

Again, my spiritual family of fellow Christians were there when I needed them. (Colos-

sians 4:11) The brothers in Iráklion visited me regularly, providing comfort and encouragement. I told them that I needed literature in order to witness to interested ones. They brought me a suitcase with a double bottom in which I could safely hide the literature. How happy I was that during my stay in those prisons, at least six fellow inmates were helped to become true Christians!

In the meantime the civil war had ended, and my sentence was commuted to ten years in prison. I served the remainder of my sentence in prisons in Rethimno, Genti Koule, and Cassandra. After spending almost ten years in eight prisons, I was discharged, and I returned to Thessalonica, where I was warmly received into the arms of my beloved Christian brothers.

### Thriving in the Christian Brotherhood

By now the Witnesses in Greece could worship in relative freedom. I immediately seized the opportunity to continue in the



*With Katina on our wedding day, 1959*

*An assembly in a forest near Thessalonica, late 1960's*



full-time ministry. Soon another blessing was added, as I got to know a faithful Christian sister, Katina, who loved Jehovah and was very active in the preaching work. We were married in October 1959. The birth of our daughter, Agape, and having my own Christian family further healed the wounds of my orphanhood. Above all, our family was content to serve under the protective care of our loving heavenly Father, Jehovah.—Psalm 5:11.

Because of circumstances beyond my control, I was forced to stop pioneering, but I supported my wife as she continued in the full-time service. A real milestone in my Christian life came in 1969 when an international convention of Jehovah's Witnesses was held in Nuremberg, Germany. As I prepared to travel there, I applied for a passport. When my wife went to the police station to ask why more than two months had passed without my getting the passport, an officer pulled a thick file out of his drawer and said: "Are you asking for a passport for this person so that he can proselytize people in Germany? No way! He is dangerous."

With Jehovah's help and the assistance of some brothers, I was included in a group passport and was thus able to attend that wonderful convention. The attendance reached a peak of over 150,000, and I could clearly see Jehovah's spirit directing and unifying this international spiritual family. Later in life, I would appreciate even more the value of the Christian brotherhood.

In 1977 my beloved wife and faithful companion passed away. I tried my best to



*With our daughter,  
1967*

raise my daughter according to Bible principles, but I was not left alone. Again, my spiritual family came to the rescue. I will always be grateful for the support of the brothers during that difficult time. Some of them even moved into our home for a while to look after my daughter. I will never forget their self-sacrificing love.—John 13:34, 35.

Agape grew up and married a brother, Elias. They have four sons, all in the truth. In recent years, I have had a number of strokes and my health has deteriorated. My daughter and her family take good care of me. Despite poor health, I still have many reasons to rejoice. I remember the time when there were only about one hundred brothers in all of Thessalonica, meeting secretly in private homes. Now there are about five thousand zealous Witnesses in that area. (Isaiah 60:22) At conventions, young brothers approach me, asking: "Do you remember when you used to bring the magazines to our home?" Although the parents might not have been reading those magazines, their children did, and they progressed spiritually!

As I observe the growth of Jehovah's organization, I feel that it was worth all the trials I endured. I always tell my grandchildren and other young ones to remember their heavenly Father in their youth, and he will never abandon them. (Ecclesiastes 12:1) Jehovah proved true to his word, becoming for me "a father of fatherless boys." (Psalm 68:5) Although I was a forsaken orphan early in life, eventually I found a caring Father!

# Making Jehovah Your God

In Bible times, certain individuals enjoyed such a close relationship with Jehovah that he was spoken of as their God. For example, in the Scriptures, Jehovah is described as "the God of Abraham," "the God of David," and "the God of Elijah."—Genesis 31:42; 2 Kings 2:14; 20:5.

How did each of these men come to have a close attachment to God? What can we learn from them so that we too can build and maintain a strong personal relationship with the Creator?

## Abraham Put "Faith in Jehovah"

Abraham was the first person about whom the Bible speaks about putting faith in Jehovah. Faith was the preeminent quality of Abraham that gained him God's approval. In fact, Abraham enjoyed such favor with Jehovah that the Creator later introduced himself to Moses as "the God of Abraham" and of his son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob.—Genesis 15:6; Exodus 3:6.

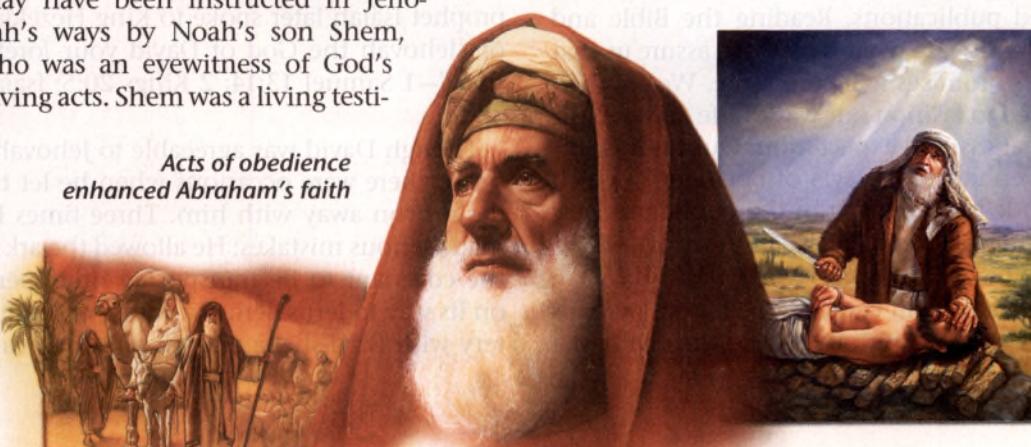
How did Abraham come to have this kind of faith in God? First of all, Abraham built his faith on a solid foundation. He may have been instructed in Jehovah's ways by Noah's son Shem, who was an eyewitness of God's saving acts. Shem was a living testi-

mony that Jehovah "kept Noah, a preacher of righteousness, safe with seven others when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly people." (2 Peter 2:5) Abraham might have learned from Shem that once Jehovah promised something, the fulfillment was certain. In any case, when Abraham himself received a promise from God, he rejoiced and based his course of life on the sure knowledge that the promise would be fulfilled.

Having a solid foundation, Abraham's faith was then strengthened by works. The apostle Paul wrote: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed in going out into a place he was destined to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, although not knowing where he was going." (Hebrews 11:8) That act of obedience enhanced Abraham's faith, regarding which the disciple James wrote: "You behold that his faith worked along with his works and by his works his faith was perfected."—James 2:22.

Furthermore, Jehovah allowed Abraham's faith to be tested, making it more robust.

Paul went on to say: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, as good as offered



*Acts of obedience  
enhanced Abraham's faith*



*Like David,  
we should  
repent when  
we sin*

up Isaac." Testing refines and strengthens faith, making it "of much greater value than gold."—Hebrews 11:17; 1 Peter 1:7.

Although Abraham did not live to see the fulfillment of all that God had promised, he had the joy of seeing others follow his example. His wife Sarah and three other members of his family—Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—are also commended in the Bible for their outstanding faith.—Hebrews 11:11, 20-22.

### Faith Like Abraham's Today

Faith is essential for anyone who desires to make Jehovah his God. "Without faith it is impossible to please [God] well," wrote Paul. (Hebrews 11:6) How can a servant of God today develop strong faith like that of Abraham?

As with Abraham, our faith must be established on a solid foundation. That can best be done by regular study of the Bible and Bible-based publications. Reading the Bible and meditating on what is read can assure us that God's promises will come true. We are then moved to fashion our way of life on the basis of that assured expectation. Our faith is further enhanced by acts of obedience, which include participation in the public ministry and attendance at Christian meetings.—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20; Hebrews 10:24, 25.

Our faith will certainly be tested, perhaps by opposition, serious illness, the death of a

loved one, or something else. Remaining loyal to Jehovah under test enriches our faith, making it more valuable than gold. Whether we live to see the fulfillment of all of God's promises or not, our faith will draw us closer to Jehovah. Moreover, our example will encourage others to imitate our faith. (Hebrews 13:7) This was the case with Ralph, who observed and imitated the faith of his parents. He explains:

"When I was living at home, my parents encouraged the whole family to get up early in the morning so that we could read the Bible together. We read the entire Bible that way." Ralph still reads the Bible each morning, and this gives him a fine start to the day. Ralph used to go in the public ministry with his father every week. "That is when I learned to make return visits and to conduct home Bible studies." Ralph now serves as a volunteer at one of the branch offices of Jehovah's Witnesses in Europe. What a fine reward for his parents' faith!

### A Man Agreeable to Jehovah's Heart

David, born about 900 years after Abraham, is an outstanding figure among Jehovah's servants mentioned in the Scriptures. Concerning Jehovah's choice of David as future king, the prophet Samuel said: "Jehovah will certainly find for himself a man agreeable to his heart." So close was the attachment between Jehovah and David that the prophet Isaiah later spoke to King Hezekiah of "Jehovah the God of David your forefather."—1 Samuel 13:14; 2 Kings 20:5; Isaiah 38:5.

Though David was agreeable to Jehovah's heart, there were occasions when he let his desires run away with him. Three times he made serious mistakes: He allowed the ark of the covenant to be transported improperly on its way to Jerusalem; he committed adultery with Bath-sheba and plotted the death

of her husband, Uriah; and he conducted a census of the people of Israel and Judah that Jehovah had not commanded. On each occasion, David overstepped the Law of God.—2 Samuel 6:2-10; 11:2-27; 24:1-9.

When David was confronted with his sins, however, he accepted responsibility for them and did not shift the blame to others. He admitted that the transporting of the Ark had not been properly arranged, adding that “we did not search after [Jehovah] according to the custom.” When Nathan the prophet uncovered David’s adultery, David replied by saying: “I have sinned against Jehovah.” And once David became aware of the foolishness of counting the people, he admitted: “I have sinned very much in what I have done.” David repented of his sins and remained close to Jehovah.—1 Chronicles 15:13; 2 Samuel 12:13; 24:10.

### When We Err

In our efforts to make Jehovah our God, David’s example is encouraging. If a man so agreeable to Jehovah’s heart was capable of such serious sins, we need not despair if, despite our best efforts, we at times err or even make big mistakes. (Ecclesiastes 7:20) We can take heart from the fact that when David repented, his sins were forgiven. That is what happened to Uwe\* some years ago.

Uwe was serving as an elder in a congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses. On one occasion, he succumbed to wrong desires and committed immorality. At first Uwe, like King David, tried to keep the matter to himself, hoping that Jehovah would turn a blind eye to his transgression. Eventually, Uwe’s conscience bothered him so much that he confessed to a fellow elder and action was taken to help Uwe recover from his spiritual disaster.

\* Name has been changed.

Uwe repented of his sins and stayed close to Jehovah and the congregation. He was so grateful for the help he received that some weeks later he wrote to the elders expressing his sincere and deeply felt gratitude for the assistance. “You helped me to clear the name of Jehovah of reproach,” he wrote. Uwe was able to retain his relationship with Jehovah and in time was reappointed as a servant in the same congregation.

### A Man With Feelings Like Ours”

Elijah, who lived in the century after David, was one of Israel’s foremost prophets. Elijah was a champion of true worship at a time when corruption and immorality were widespread, and he never wavered in his devotion to Jehovah. No wonder that his successor, Elisha, once called Jehovah “the God of Elijah”!—2 Kings 2:14.

Nonetheless, Elijah was not superhuman. James wrote: “Elijah was a man with feelings like ours.” (James 5:17) For instance, after he had dealt Baal worshipers in Israel a painful defeat, Queen Jezebel threatened to kill him. How did he react? He became afraid and fled into the wilderness. There, sitting under a broom tree, Elijah lamented: “It is enough! Now, O Jehovah, take my soul away, for I am no better than my forefathers.” Elijah no longer wanted to be a prophet but preferred to die instead.—1 Kings 19:4.

Jehovah, however, showed understanding of Elijah’s feelings. God strengthened him, reassuring Elijah that he was not alone, since there were others who were loyal to true worship. Moreover, Jehovah still trusted Elijah and had work for him to do.—1 Kings 19:5-18.

Elijah’s emotional turmoil was not a sign that he had lost God’s favor. About 1,000 years later, when Christ Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, whom did Jehovah choose to appear in the vision

alongside Jesus? Moses and Elijah. (Matthew 17:1-9) Clearly, Jehovah regarded Elijah as an exemplary prophet. Although Elijah was just “a man with feelings like ours,” God appreciated his hard work in restoring pure worship and sanctifying His name.

### Our Emotional Struggle

Servants of Jehovah today may at times feel discouraged or anxious. What a comfort to know that Elijah experienced the same emotions! And how reassuring that just as Jehovah understood Elijah’s feelings, He also understands our emotional struggle.—Psalm 103:14.

On the one hand, we love God and our fellowman and desire to do Jehovah’s work of proclaiming the Kingdom good news. On the other hand, we may be disappointed at the lack of response to our preaching or even anxious over threats from enemies of true worship. However, just as Jehovah equipped Elijah to carry on, He also equips his servants today. Take, for example, the case of Herbert and Gertrud.

Herbert and Gertrud were baptized as Jehovah’s Witnesses in Leipzig, in the former German Democratic Republic, in 1952. Life then was difficult for servants of God, since their public ministry was under ban. How did Herbert feel about preaching from house to house?

“We were very anxious at times. When we went from house to house, we did not know whether the authorities would suddenly appear and arrest us.” What helped Herbert and others to overcome their fear? “We did a great deal of personal Bible study. And Jehovah gave us the strength to carry on our

preaching work.” In his public ministry, Herbert had a number of experiences that fortified—even amused—him.

Herbert met a middle-aged woman who showed interest in the Bible. When Herbert called back on her some days later, a young man was present and listened to the conversation. After several minutes Herbert caught sight of something that made him shudder. On a chair in the corner of the room was a police officer’s hat. It belonged to the young man, who was clearly a policeman determined to arrest Herbert.

“You are one of Jehovah’s Witnesses!” the young man exclaimed. “Let me see your ID.”

Herbert handed over his identification card. Then the unexpected happened. The woman turned to the policeman and warned him: “If anything happens to this man of God, you are no longer welcome in this house.”

The young man paused for a moment, handed the ID to Herbert, and let him go. Herbert later learned that the policeman was courting the woman’s daughter. Obviously, he felt that he would do better to continue to court the girl than to turn Herbert in.

### Make Jehovah Our God

What can we learn from these events? Like Abraham, we must have a robust faith in Jehovah’s promises. Like David, we should turn to Jehovah in true repentance whenever we err. And like Elijah, we need to lean on Jehovah for strength in times of anxiety. Doing so, we can make Jehovah our God now and for all eternity, since he is “a living God, who is a Savior of all sorts of men, especially of faithful ones.”—1 Timothy 4:10.



*As Jehovah understood Elijah’s feelings, so he understands ours*

## Questions From Readers

**Should a Christian give a government employee a tip or a gift for his services, or would that be viewed as bribery?**

Wherever they live, Christians seek to exercise practical wisdom in dealing with local situations, remembering that what is acceptable and legal in one land may be totally unacceptable and illegal in another. (*Proverbs 2:6-9*) Of course, a Christian should always bear in mind that anyone who wants to be “a guest in [Jehovah’s] tent” must shun bribery.—*Psalm 15:1, 5; Proverbs 17:23*.

What is bribery? According to *The World Book Encyclopedia*, “bribery means giving or offering something of value to a . . . person in a position of public trust, who in return violates his or her duty or the law in order to benefit the giver.” Thus, regardless of where one lives, it is bribery to give money or a gift to a judge or a police officer to pervert justice or to an inspector to turn a blind eye to a defect or a violation. It is also bribery to use a gift to receive preferential treatment, such as getting moved forward on a waiting list or bypassing others in line. Such a course would also betray a lack of love.—*Matthew 7:12; 22:39*.

But is it bribery to give a gift or a tip to, say, a public servant in order to obtain a legitimate service or to avoid unfair treatment? For example, in some lands officials may be unwilling to enroll children in school, admit a person into a hospital, or stamp immigration documents until they receive a tip. Or they may procrastinate in processing applications to renew licenses and permits.

Tipping practices and the general attitude toward them vary from one place to another. Where such payments are customary or ex-

pected, some Christians may feel that within the law, they are not violating Bible principles when they tip an official to perform his duty. In some lands people may even view such payments as a gift to supplement a public employee’s otherwise low income. Keep in mind that there is a difference between extending a gift for a legitimate service and offering a bribe for an unlawful favor.

On the other hand, when making legitimate requests, some of Jehovah’s Witnesses have declined to give tips to inspectors, customs officials, or others even where such gift-giving is routine. Because the Witnesses are known locally both for taking this conscientious stand and for their honesty, they sometimes receive treatment that most people get only through a payment.—*Proverbs 10:9; Matthew 5:16*.

In summary, each servant of Jehovah must decide for himself whether he will extend a tip to receive a legitimate service or to avoid unfair treatment. Above all, he should pursue a course that leaves him with a good conscience, that brings no reproach on Jehovah’s name, and that does not stumble others.—*Matthew 6:9; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; 2 Corinthians 6:3; 1 Timothy 1:5*.

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Taking in Knowledge Now and Forever

A Useful Translation Aid

Does Your Faith Move You to Action?

## Searching for Deserving Ones in Australia's Outback

A VAST inland section of Australia is affectionately known as the outback. Some parts of this remote area had not received a witness in 12 years. So Jehovah's Witnesses in Darwin, the Northern Territory's capital city, organized an intensive nine-day preaching campaign to search out deserving ones.

—Matthew 10:11.

Careful planning began 12 months ahead of the campaign, including the mapping of more than 300,000 square miles—an area three times the size of New Zealand. To get some idea of how isolated this vast territory is, consider that the average driveway in a cattle station (ranch) stretches more than 20 miles from the front gate to the house! Moreover, some stations are 180 miles or more apart.

A total of 145 Witness volunteers shared in the campaign. Some came from as far away as Tasmania. Some arrived in four-wheel-drive vehicles packed with camping gear, spare parts, and fuel. Others hauled their gear in trailers. In addition, two 22-seat buses were hired to carry those who did not have suitable four-wheel-drive vehicles. Those traveling by bus concentrated on witnessing to the inhabitants of small towns in the selected territory.

Before setting out, the brothers arranged talks and demonstrations to provide guidelines on how to present the good news in this unusual territory. For example, to preach effectively in Aboriginal communities usually requires following

certain protocol and being aware of Aboriginal customs. Environmental concerns were also discussed to help protect the wildlife.

Many outstanding experiences were enjoyed. For instance, in one Aboriginal settlement, the brothers arranged to deliver



a Bible-based public talk. The headlady in the community personally went to inform people about it. Afterward, 5 books and 41 brochures were placed with those in attendance. In another settlement an Aborigine was contacted. He even had his own Bible, a *King James Version*, but it was old and tattered. When asked if he knew God's name, he said yes and then proceeded to pull out of his jacket an old issue of *The Watchtower*. He read from the magazine, quoting Mark 12:30, which says: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart." He said, "I really like that scripture." After an extensive Bible discussion, he accepted a new Bible and other Bible-based literature.

Near the Gulf of Carpentaria, the headman of a million-acre cattle station showed some interest in the Kingdom message. When he was shown the publications *My Book of Bible Stories* and *Knowledge That Leads to Everlast-*

*ing Life,\** he asked if there was any literature available in the Kriol language. This was unusual because even though many Aborigines speak Kriol, few can read it. It turned out that all 50 of the workers on that station were able to read Kriol. The headman was delighted to obtain Bible literature in Kriol, and he gladly provided his telephone number so that he could be contacted.

During the nine days of intensive witnessing, a total of 120 Bibles, 770 books, 705 magazines, and 1,965 brochures were placed. Additionally, 720 return visits were made, and 215 Bible studies were started.

Indeed, the spiritual hunger of many deserving ones scattered across this vast area was at last being satisfied.—Matthew 5:6.

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



# A Humble African Who Loved God's Word

VISITORS to Africa are often surprised to find how easy it is to start a conversation on Bible topics with the local people. Such questions as, "What is the Kingdom of God?" or "Is there a lasting solution to problems like food shortage, disease, war, and crime?" easily find listening ears. Many will gladly allow a stranger to show them the answers from the Bible. This often leads to a regular study of the Bible. And as the students make spiritual progress, they become baptized Christians.

One of the first Africans to respond in that way is mentioned in the Bible at Acts 8:26-40. He was an Ethiopian man who had traveled to Jerusalem to worship the true God, Jehovah.

As shown in the picture below, the Ethiopian man is returning home in his chariot, reading from an open scroll. A stranger approaches him and asks: "Do you actually know what you are reading?" Humbly,

the Ethiopian acknowledges his need for help and entreats the stranger, the Christian evangelizer Philip, to get into the chariot. Then he asks Philip to explain the meaning of the Scripture passage he has just read. Philip explains that it is a prophecy pointing to the recent death of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Philip also relates other matters concerning "the good news about Jesus," undoubtedly including Jesus' resurrection.

Having heard these wonderful truths, the Ethiopian wants to become a disciple of Jesus and asks: "What prevents me from getting baptized?" Following his baptism, this humble African man happily gets back on the road home, and the Bible speaks no more about him.

Today, Jehovah's Witnesses are helping millions of people around the world to learn about the same "good news." About six million free home Bible studies are currently being conducted.

