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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**HOW CAN I MAKE
Wise
Decisions?**



THE WATCHTOWER®

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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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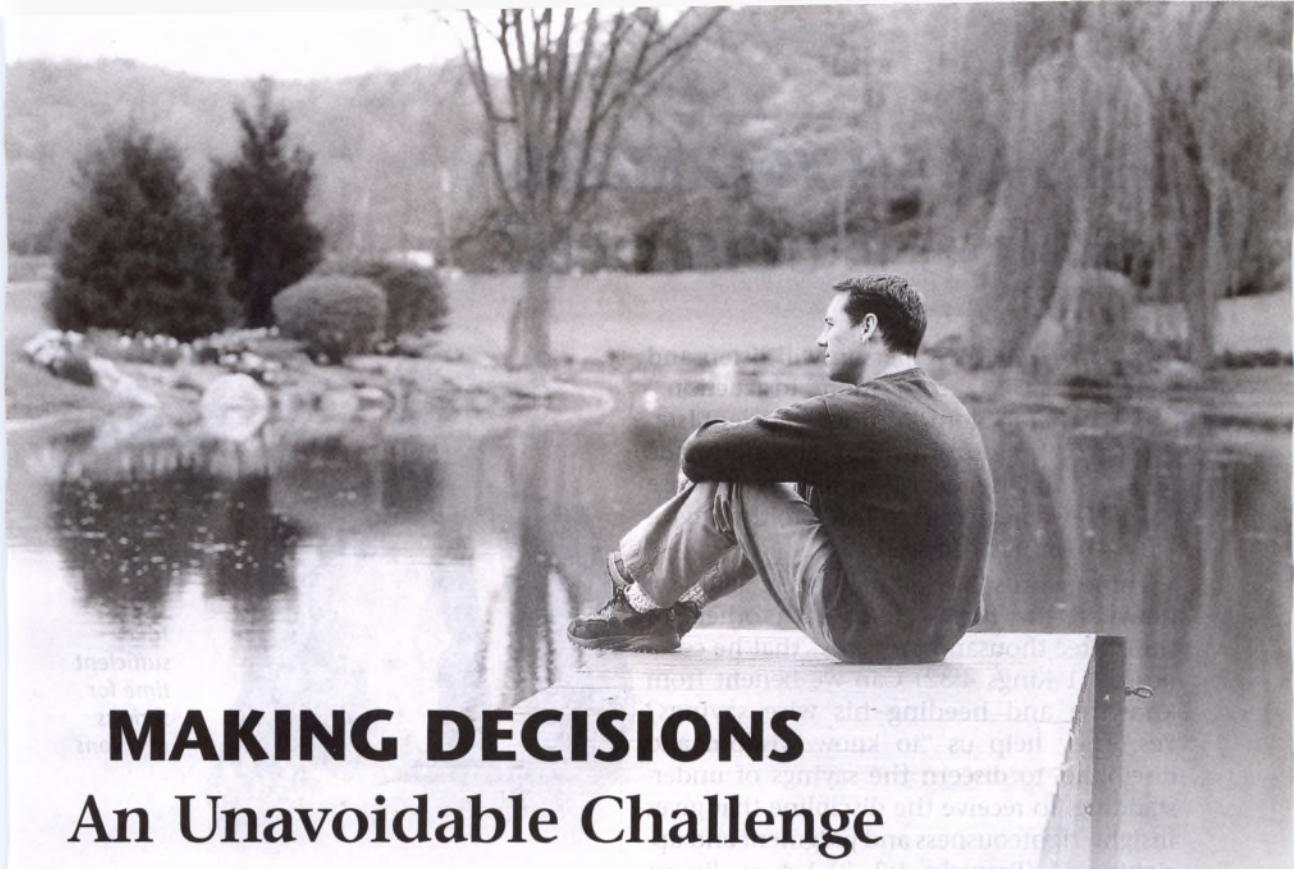
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ENGLISH



MAKING DECISIONS

An Unavoidable Challenge

Napoleon: From the book The Pictorial History of the World

NOTHING is more difficult, and therefore more precious than to be able to decide," Napoleon Bonaparte, 19th-century emperor of France, once said. You may agree on both counts, since people generally treasure being in control of their own lives. At the same time, they have learned that making decisions is sometimes far from easy.



Whether easy or hard, making decisions is unavoidable. We are faced with the task daily. After getting up in the morning, we must decide what to wear, what to eat for breakfast, and how to handle dozens of other things during the day. Most of these decisions are of only minor concern. We rarely give them a second thought. Seldom do we lose sleep over whether they were wise or unwise.

On the other hand, some decisions are far-reaching. Many young people in the world of today must decide what goals to pursue. They may have to decide what kind of schooling they need and how much. Sooner or later most of them will decide whether to marry or to continue single. Those opting for marriage must decide: 'Am I old enough and mature enough to marry? What kind of partner do I want, or more important, what kind of partner do I need?' Few decisions in life influence us more profoundly than our choice of mate.

In matters of major importance, it is vital to make wise decisions, since happiness is largely dependent on our doing so. Some people may feel that they are quite capable of making such decisions and may reject help when it is offered. Is that wise? Let us see.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE Wise Decisions?



"A WISE person will listen and take in more instruction," said Solomon, king of ancient Israel. Most of us have at times made unwise decisions simply because we neglected to listen to the advice of others.—Proverbs 1:5.

Those words of Solomon were later set down in the Bible, along with others of the "three thousand proverbs" that he composed. (1 Kings 4:32) Can we benefit from knowing and heeding his wise sayings? Yes. They help us "to know wisdom and discipline, to discern the sayings of understanding, to receive the discipline that gives insight, righteousness and judgment and uprightness." (Proverbs 1:2, 3) Let us discuss five Bible-based guidelines that can assist us in making wise decisions.

Consider Long-Term Consequences

Some decisions will have significant consequences. Therefore, try to determine ahead of time what these will be. Beware of letting the appeal of short-term benefits blind you to possibly undesirable long-term consequences. "Shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself, but the inexperienced have passed along and must suffer the penalty," warns Proverbs 22:3.

It may be helpful to put down on paper what the short-term and the long-term consequences will be. The short-term results of choosing a certain job may be good pay and enjoyable work. But could the long-term consequences include having a job without a real future? Might it eventually require that you



Take sufficient time for serious decisions

move elsewhere, perhaps away from friends or family? Might it subject you to an unhealthy environment or be so uninteresting as to leave you profoundly frustrated? Weigh the pros and cons, and then decide what should have priority.

Take Sufficient Time

Hastily made decisions can easily turn out to be unwise. Proverbs 21:5 warns: "The plans of the diligent one surely make for advantage, but everyone that is hasty surely heads for want." For instance, infatuated teenagers should take their time before deciding to cement a relationship in marriage. Otherwise, they may experience the truthfulness of what William Congreve, English playwright of the early 18th century, said: "Marry'd in haste, we may repent at leisure."

Taking sufficient time, however, *is not to* be confused with procrastinating. Some deci-

sions are so important that wisdom dictates they be made as soon as reasonably possible. To delay needlessly could prove costly either to ourselves or to others. Postponing a decision may be a decision in itself—possibly an unwise one.

Be Open to Counsel

Since no two situations are exactly alike, two people may not always make an identical decision when facing similar problems. Still, it is helpful to hear how others have decided matters resembling ours. Ask them how they now evaluate their decision. In choosing a trade, for example, ask those already engaged in this trade to tell you both sides of the story. What have they found to be the benefits of their choice, and what have been the drawbacks or possible dangers?

"There is a frustrating of plans where there is no confidential talk," we are warned, "but in the multitude of counselors there is accomplishment." (Proverbs 15:22) Of course, when seeking counsel and learning from the experience of others, we ought to do so in full recognition that we personally must make the final decision and also bear the responsibility for doing so.—Galatians 6:4, 5.

Heed a Well-Trained Conscience

The conscience can help us make decisions in harmony with the basic principles we choose to pattern our life by. For a Christian, this means training the conscience to pattern itself after God's thoughts. (Romans 2:14, 15) God's

Be open to counsel in choosing a career



Word tells us: "In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:6) Of course, in some areas two persons—each with a well-trained conscience—may reach different conclusions and thus make different decisions.

A well-trained conscience will rule out such leeway, however, when actions directly condemned by God's Word are at issue. For example, a conscience that has not been trained by Bible principles may allow a man and a woman to test their compatibility before marriage by simply living together. They may think that they have made a wise decision, reasoning that it will prevent them from rushing into an unwise marriage. Their conscience may not condemn them. Yet, anyone who shares God's views on sex and marriage will decide against such a temporary and immoral arrangement.—1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:1, 2; Hebrews 13:4.

How Your Decisions Affect Others

Often, your decisions may affect others. So never deliberately make an unwise—even stupid—decision that could jeopardize precious relationships with friends and relatives or, above all, with God. Proverbs 10:1 notes: "A wise son is the one that makes a father rejoice, and a stupid son is the grief of his mother."

On the other hand, realize that at times it is necessary to choose between friendships. To illustrate, you may decide to reject formerly held religious views that you now know to be contrary to the Scriptures. Or you may decide to make major personality changes because of your desire to pattern your life after divine guidelines that you have

now accepted. Your decision may not please some friends or relatives, but any decision that pleases God is a wise decision.

Wisely Make the Greatest Decision

Unknown to people in general, everyone today is faced with making a decision between life and death. A similar situation faced the ancient Israelites camped on the border of the Promised Land in 1473 B.C.E. Acting as God's spokesman, Moses told them: "I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring, by loving Jehovah your God, by listening to his voice and by sticking to him; for he is your life and the length of your days, that you may dwell upon the ground that Jehovah swore to your forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give to them."—Deuteronomy 30:19, 20.

Bible prophecy and chronology show that we are living in "critical times hard to deal with" and that "the scene of this world is changing." (2 Timothy 3:1; 1 Corinthians 7:31) The foretold change will climax in the destruction of a bankrupt human system, which will be replaced by God's new world of righteousness.

We are on the threshold of that new world. Will you enter to enjoy everlasting life on earth under God's Kingdom? Or will you be removed from the earth when Satan's system is eliminated? (Psalm 37:9-11; Proverbs 2:21, 22) The decision about what course to follow now is yours to make, truly a decision that is a matter of life or death. Would you welcome help in making the right decision, the wise one?

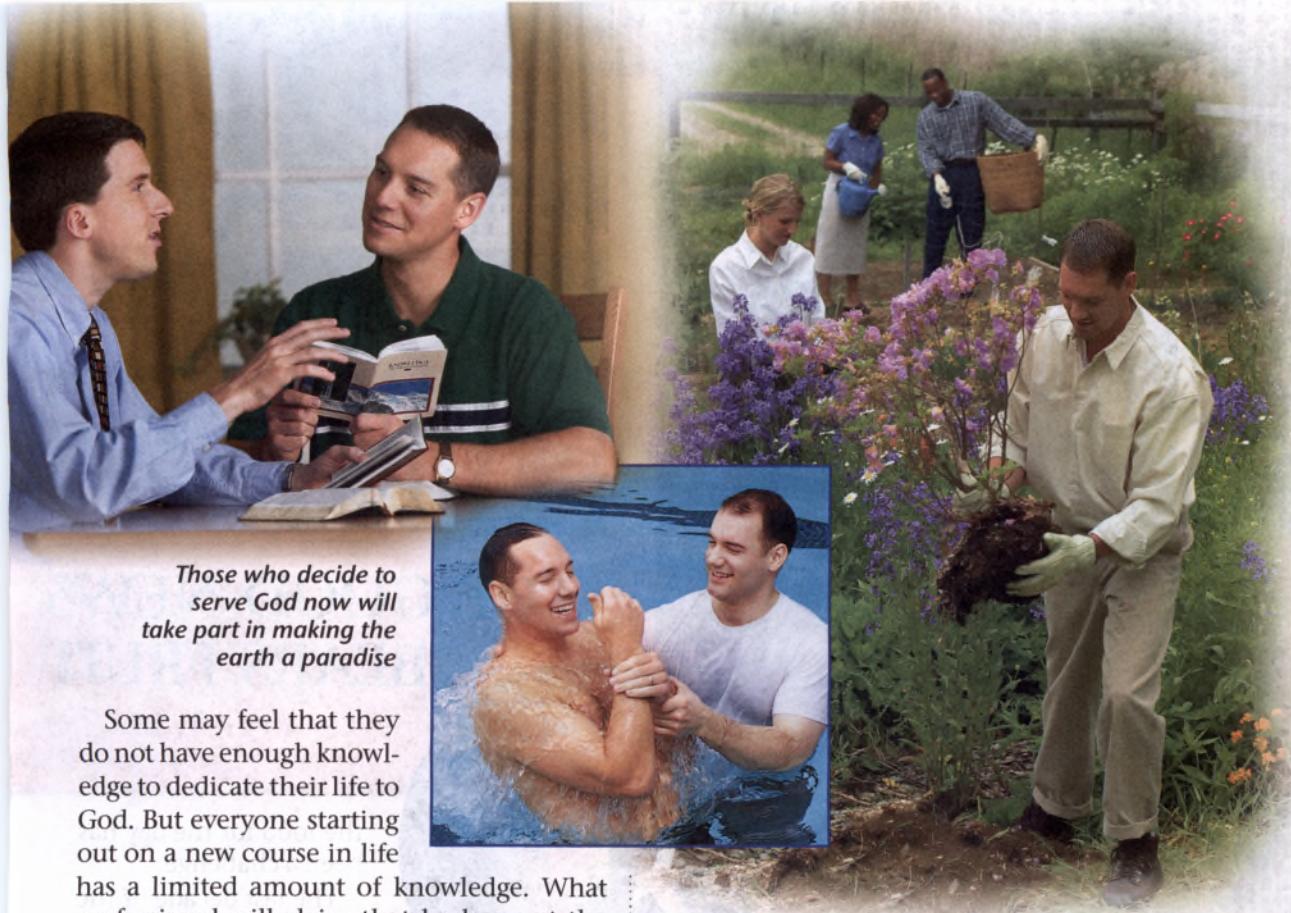
Deciding for life involves first learning of God's requirements. The churches for the most part have failed to convey these requirements accurately. Their leaders have often misled people into believing falsehoods and

doing things displeasing to God. They have neglected to explain the need for making a personal decision to worship God "with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) So most people do not. But note what Jesus said: "He that is not on my side is against me, and he that does not gather with me scatters."—Matthew 12:30.

Jehovah's Witnesses joyfully assist people to gain a better knowledge of God's Word. They conduct regular Bible discussions with individuals or groups at a time and place convenient to them. Those who want to take advantage of this provision should either contact local Witnesses or write to the publishers of *The Watchtower*.

Of course, some may already have a basic knowledge of what God requires. They may even be convinced of the truthfulness and reliability of the Bible. Still, a number of them have put off making a decision to dedicate themselves to God. Why? There may be several reasons.

Are they possibly unaware of the importance of doing so? Jesus clearly said: "Not everyone saying to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens will." (Matthew 7:21) Bible knowledge alone is insufficient; action is required. The early Christian congregation set the pattern. We read about some in the first century: "When they believed Philip, who was declaring the good news of the kingdom of God and of the name of Jesus Christ, they proceeded to be baptized, both men and women." (Acts 2:41; 8:12) Thus, if a person has embraced God's Word heartily, believes what it says, and has brought his life in line with God's standards, what prevents him from being baptized in symbol of his dedication? (Acts 8:34-38) Of course, to be acceptable to God, he ought to take *this step willingly* and with a joyful heart.—2 Corinthians 9:7.



Those who decide to serve God now will take part in making the earth a paradise

Some may feel that they do not have enough knowledge to dedicate their life to God. But everyone starting out on a new course in life has a limited amount of knowledge. What professional will claim that he knew at the beginning of his career what he knows today? Deciding to serve God simply requires a knowledge of basic Bible teachings and principles, coupled with a sincere desire to live accordingly.

Do some delay their decision for fear that they may fail to live up to it? A reasonable concern about failure is involved in many human commitments. A man who decides to marry and raise a family may feel somewhat inadequate, but making a commitment serves as an incentive for him to do the best he possibly can. Likewise, a young person with a new driver's license may have some fear of having a traffic accident—especially if he is aware of statistics that show young drivers to be proportionately more accident-prone than older ones. This knowledge, however, can be beneficial, moving him to drive

with greater caution. Refraining from getting a license is by no means the solution!

Decide for Life!

The Bible shows that the present political, economic, and religious global system and those who support it will soon pass from the earth. Yet, individuals who have wisely decided for life and who act accordingly will remain. As the nucleus of a new world society, they will take part in making the earth a paradise, as God originally intended. Would you, under God's direction, enjoy participating in this joyful work?

If so, decide to study God's Word. Decide to learn the divine requirements for pleasing God. Decide to meet them. Above all, decide to carry your decision through to completion. Briefly stated, decide for life!



THE GOOD NEWS BEARS FRUIT

MOST people have probably never heard of São Tomé and Príncipe. These islands are not usually advertised in vacation brochures. On a world map, they look like tiny spots located in the Gulf of Guinea off the western coast of Africa, São Tomé sitting almost on the equator and Príncipe a little to the northeast. The rainy, humid climate has produced luxurious rain forests, covering the slopes of mountains that rise to over 6,600 feet.

These tropical islands, surrounded by blue waters and palm-fringed beaches, are inhabited by a friendly, warmhearted people, whose mixed African and European origins have resulted in a pleasant blend of cultures. The population of 170,000 is occupied with the main export, cacao, or with farming and fishing. In recent years, obtaining even



the food for the day has been a challenge. The last decade of the 20th century, however, witnessed one event that has greatly affected the lives of increasing numbers of people on these islands. In June 1993, Jehovah's Witnesses were legally registered with the government of São Tomé and Príncipe, thus bringing to a close a long and often difficult chapter of the history of Jehovah's Witnesses on these islands.

Seeds Sown Under Hardship

It appears that the first Witness came to this country in the early 1950's when prisoners from other Portuguese colonies in Africa were sent to work in labor camps on the islands. The Witness, an African pioneer, or full-time minister, was deported



in São Tomé and Príncipe

from Mozambique because he preached the good news of God's Kingdom in that land. This lone Witness kept busy, and within six months, there were 13 others who shared in spreading the good news. Later, other Witnesses under the same circumstances arrived from Angola. During their imprisonment, they seized every opportunity to share the good news with local inhabitants.

By 1966 all the brothers serving terms in São Tomé had returned to the African mainland. The small group of Kingdom publishers left behind carried on courageously. They were persecuted, beaten, and imprisoned because they met together for Bible study, and there was no one to visit or encourage them. The country achieved independence from Portugal in 1975, and slowly but surely the seeds of Kingdom truth began to bear fruit.

Expansion and Building

The very month of the legal registration in 1993, there was a peak of 100 Kingdom



publishers. That same year, special pioneers came from Portugal. The efforts they put forth to learn Portuguese Creole endeared them to the local people. The search to find land for a Kingdom Hall then became a priority. Upon hearing of this need, a sister named Maria donated half the land on which she had her small home. The plot was big enough for a large



First Kingdom Hall in São Tomé in 1994

Kingdom Hall. Maria did not know that because she had no surviving relatives, this property was being eyed by ambitious developers. One day a prominent businessman came to talk to Maria.

"What I hear about you is not good!" he warned her. "I hear that you donated your land. Don't you know that it is worth a lot of money because it is right here in the city?"

"If I offered the land to you, how much would you pay me?" asked Maria. When the man did not answer, Maria continued: "Even if you gave me all the money in the world, it would not be enough because money cannot buy life."

- Quickly built Kingdom Hall in Mé-Zochi*
- A historic district convention took place in this auditorium*
- Happy baptismal candidates at the convention*

"You do not have children, do you?" the man asked.

To end the conversation, Maria said: "The land belongs to Jehovah. He lent it to me for so many years, and now I have given it back to him. I am looking forward to



2



living forever." Then she asked the man: "You do not have everlasting life to offer, do you?" Without saying one more word, he turned and walked away.

The result was that a splendid two-story building was constructed with the help of qualified brothers from Portugal. It has a full basement, a spacious Kingdom Hall, and living quarters. It also has classrooms for holding schools for elders, ministerial servants, and pioneers. Two congregations now have their meetings in it, making it a fine educational center for pure worship in the capital.

In Mé-Zochi, there was a congregation of 60 zealous publishers. Since meetings were held in an improvised Kingdom Hall located in a banana grove, the need for an appropriate Kingdom Hall became obvious. This was made known to city hall, and sympathetic officials offered a choice lot on the main street. A fine Kingdom Hall was built in two months

with the help of brothers from Portugal, using the quickly built method. The local people could hardly believe what they saw. A

Swedish engineer involved in a building project in the city was amazed to see the brothers and sisters in action. "This is unbelievable!" he remarked. "Jehovah's Witnesses, here in Mé-Zochi, using a quickly built method! This is the way we should organize our project." The Kingdom Hall was dedicated on June 12, 1999, with an attendance of 232. The hall has become a principal attraction for visitors to the city of Mé-Zochi.

A Historic Convention

A historic event for Jehovah's Witnesses in São Tomé and Príncipe was the three-day "Divine Teaching" District Convention in January 1994—a first in these islands. It was held in the finest air-conditioned auditorium in the country. Can you imagine the joy of the 116 Kingdom publishers at seeing a crowd of 405 and for the first time watching



3

Bible dramas and receiving convention releases? A tropical beach was the setting for the baptism of 20 dedicated persons.

A novelty that caught the attention of the public was the unique lapel badges worn by the delegates. The presence of 25 visitors from Portugal and Angola added international flavor to the convention. A bond of warm Christian love quickly developed, and tears rolled down the faces of many at the final session when they said good-bye.—John 13:35.

Journalists from the National Radio came and interviewed the convention overseer. They also broadcast excerpts of several of the discourses. It was indeed a historic occasion, and to these long-isolated faithful Witnesses, it helped to make Jehovah's visible organization seem so much closer.

Bearing Fruit to Jehovah's Praise

When the Kingdom message bears fruit, it produces fine conduct that brings praise and honor to Jehovah. (Titus 2:10) One teenage girl enjoyed what she was learning from her weekly Bible study. Her father, however, prohibited her from attending congregation meetings. When she respectfully explained to him the importance of Christian meetings and her desire to attend, he promptly expelled her from his home. Apparently, he thought that she would do what many other young people do—quickly move in with a man who would provide for her. When the father learned that she was leading an exemplary, chaste life as a Christian, he was moved to take her back and grant her complete freedom to serve Jehovah.

Another example is that of the leader of a musical group. He became disillusioned with his immoral way of life. While searching for a purpose in life, he was contacted by the Witnesses. When he started to live according to the moral standards of the Bible,

he became the talk of the town. Soon he saw the need to end all unwholesome associations. (1 Corinthians 15:33) He then took the vital step of getting baptized in symbol of his dedication to Jehovah.

Several youths were looking for the true religion. Their search led them to discussions with the pastors of several evangelical groups, but the result was further confusion and disillusionment. Consequently, they became violent vagrants and scoffers at anything religious.

One day, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, a missionary, was on his way to conduct a Bible study and came by the place where these young people were. The group wanted the missionary to answer some questions and led him to a backyard, where he was invited to sit on a small stool. What followed was a barrage of questions on such subjects as the soul, hellfire, life in heaven, and the end of the world. The Witness answered all their questions from the Bible that the gang leader lent him. An hour later, the leader, named Law, said to the missionary: "When we asked you to come and answer questions, our intention was to ridicule you, as we have done with people from other religions. We felt that no one could answer those questions. But you did, and you did it using just the Bible! Tell me, how can I learn more about the Bible?" A Bible study was started with Law, and soon he started attending meetings. Shortly after that, he abandoned the group and gave up his violent way of life. Within a year, he dedicated his life to Jehovah and was baptized. He is now serving as a ministerial servant.

One local custom that has become strongly entrenched is that couples simply live together without the benefit of legal marriage. Many have lived together for years, and they have children together. They find it hard to

accept God's viewpoint on the matter. It is heartwarming to see how God's Word helped one person to overcome this obstacle.—2 Corinthians 10:4-6; Hebrews 4:12.

Antonio understood that he should legalize his marriage and made plans to do so after the corn harvest when he would have some money for the marriage feast. One night just before the harvest, thieves came and stole his crop. He decided to wait for next year's crop, and once again it was stolen. When yet another attempt to obtain funds for his wedding failed, Antonio realized who his real opposer was. "Satan will not play with me any more," he said. "In a month and a half, we will be married, with or without a feast!" So they were, and to their surprise their friends provided chickens, ducks, and a goat for the wedding feast. After registering their marriage, Antonio and his wife—along with their six children—were baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah.

To Príncipe Island

Occasional visits to the 6,000 inhabitants of Príncipe have been made in recent years by the circuit overseer and pioneers from São Tomé. The islanders were most hospitable and eager to hear what the Witnesses had to say. After reading a tract left with him, one man looked for the pioneers the next day and offered to help them distribute more tracts. The pioneers explained that this was a work they should do, but the man insisted that he should accompany them from door to door so that he could introduce them to the householders with the recommendation to listen carefully. The man finally left, but not before commanding the pioneers on the important work they were doing.

In 1998 two pioneers from São Tomé moved to Príncipe, and soon they were con-

ducting 17 home Bible studies. The work continued to expand, and before long the Congregation Book Study averaged 16 in attendance, and more than 30 attended the public talk. The need for a meeting place was presented to city hall, and happily, land was granted to build a Kingdom Hall. Brothers from São Tomé volunteered to build a small Kingdom Hall that also has accommodations for two special pioneers.

Without a doubt the good news is bearing much fruit and increasing on these remote islands. (Colossians 1:5, 6) In January 1990 there were 46 publishers in São Tomé and Príncipe. During the 2002 service year, a peak of 388 Kingdom proclaimers was reached! Over 20 percent of the publishers are in the full-time service, and about 1,400 home Bible studies are being conducted. The 2001 Memorial attendance reached an all-time peak of 1,907. Yes, on these tropical islands, the word of Jehovah is moving ahead speedily and is being glorified.—2 Thessalonians 3:1.

Popular Radio Broadcasts

A publication that is greatly appreciated on these islands is *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*.* Every two weeks, a 15-minute program with that title is presented on National Radio. What a thrill to hear the broadcaster ask, "Young people, how do you know if it's real love or infatuation?" and follow with a reading of a portion of the book! (See chapter 31.) A similar broadcast presents selected parts of the book *The Secret of Family Happiness*.*

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



SUPPLY TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE SELF-CONTROL

"Supply . . . to your knowledge self-control."—2 PETER 1:5-8.

DURING a major campaign against drug abuse, young people in the United States were admonished: "Just say no." How much better things would be if everyone would just say no not only to drug abuse but also to overdrinking, to unwise or immoral life-styles, to dishonest business practices, and to "the desires of the flesh"! (Romans 13:14) Yet, who will claim that saying no is always easy?

² Since all imperfect humans have difficulty exercising self-control, we should be interested in learning how to win any personal battle that we face. The Bible tells us about people in the past who strove to serve God but who sometimes had difficulty just saying no. Remember David and his sin of adultery with Bath-sheba. It led to the death of their child conceived in adultery and of Bath-sheba's husband, both of whom were innocent. (2 Samuel 11:1-27; 12:15-18) Or think of the apostle Paul, who openly confessed: "For the good that I wish I do not do, but the bad that I do not wish is what I practice." (Romans 7:19) Do you at times feel similar frustration? Paul continued: "I really delight in the law of God according to the man I am within, but I behold in my members another law warring against the law of my mind and leading me captive to sin's law that is in my members. Miserable man that I am! Who

1. Many human problems are the result of what inability?
2. (a) What Bible examples show that difficulty in saying no is not new? (b) What should these examples encourage us to do?

will rescue me from the body undergoing this death?" (Romans 7:22-24) Biblical examples should strengthen our determination never to give up in our struggle to gain greater self-control.

Self-Control, a Lesson to Be Learned

³ Self-control, which includes the ability to say no, is mentioned at 2 Peter 1:5-7 along with faith, virtue, knowledge, endurance, godly devotion, brotherly affection, and love. None of these other desirable qualities are wholly inborn. They must be cultivated. To manifest them in significant measure requires determination and effort. So should we expect self-control to be any easier?

⁴ True, millions of people may feel that they have no problem with self-control. They go about life doing as they please, knowingly or unknowingly conducting themselves in accord with the dictates of their imperfect flesh and giving little consideration to the consequences—to themselves or to others. (Jude 10) The lack of ability and willingness to say no is more evident now than ever before. It is an indication that we are indeed living in "the last days" of which Paul spoke when he foretold: "Critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, . . . without self-control."—2 Timothy 3:1-3.

3. Explain why we cannot expect it to be easy to manifest self-control.
4. Why do many feel that they have no problem with self-control, but of what is this an indication?

⁵ Jehovah's Witnesses are well aware of the challenge posed by the need for self-control. Like Paul, they are conscious of the struggle between a desire to please God by living according to his standards and the course that their imperfect flesh may urge them to take. For this reason they have long been interested in how to win this tug-of-war. Back in 1916, an early issue of the magazine you are now reading spoke of "the proper course for us to take in getting control of ourselves, our thoughts, our words and our conduct." It suggested keeping Philippians 4:8 in mind. The divine advice in that text is still valid, although originally offered some 2,000 years ago and probably more difficult to follow now than it was then or in 1916. Nevertheless, Christians strive hard to say no to worldly desires, aware that by so doing, they are saying yes to their Creator.

⁶ Self-control is mentioned at Galatians 5:22, 23 as part of "the fruitage of the [holy] spirit." If we manifest this quality along with "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, [and] mildness," we will be benefited greatly. Doing so will prevent us, as Peter explained, from becoming "either inactive or unfruitful" in our service to God. (2 Peter 1:8) But we should not despair or condemn ourselves if we fail to display these qualities as rapidly and as fully as we would like. You have probably observed that in school one student learns more quickly than another. Or on the job one person learns a new task more quickly than fellow workers. Similarly, some learn to manifest Christian qualities more quickly than others. The important thing is to keep cultivating godly qualities in the best way we can. This we can do by taking full advantage of the help Jehovah provides through his Word and congrega-

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5. Why are Jehovah's Witnesses interested in the subject of self-control, and what advice is still valid?
 6. Why do we have no reason to despair while cultivating self-control?

gation. Speed in achieving our goal is less important than determined efforts to keep making progress.

⁷ Despite being listed last in the qualities produced by the spirit, self-control is in no way less important than the others. Quite on the contrary. We should keep in mind that all "the works of the flesh" could be avoided if we had perfect self-control. Yet, imperfect humans are prone to give in to some form of "the works of the flesh . . . , fornication, uncleanness, loose conduct, idolatry, practice of spiritism, enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, contentions, divisions, sects." (Galatians 5:19, 20) We must therefore constantly put up a fight, being determined to root out negative tendencies from both heart and mind.

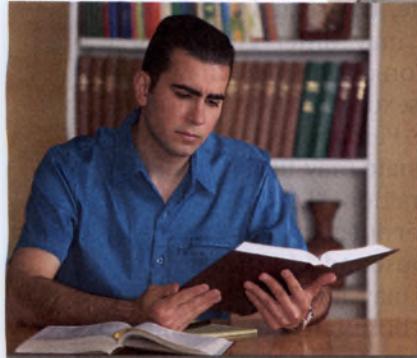
Some Have a Special Struggle

⁸ Some Christians have a more difficult time exercising self-control than do others. Why? Parental training or past experiences may contribute to the situation. If cultivating and displaying self-control has not seemed to be a problem for us, that is a reason for joy. But we certainly should be compassionate and understanding when dealing with those who have more difficulty in exercising it, even if their lack of self-control causes us some personal discomfort. In view of our own imperfection, who among us has any reason to show a self-righteous attitude?—Romans 3:23; Ephesians 4:2.

⁹ To illustrate: We may know that some fellow Christians who have given up tobacco or the use of "recreational" drugs may at times still have a strong craving for them. Or some find it challenging to limit their consumption of food or alcoholic beverages. Others have trouble guarding their tongue, so they

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7. What demonstrates that self-control is important?
 8. What factors make exercising self-control particularly difficult for some?
 9. What weaknesses do some have, and when will these weaknesses be completely overcome?

to the Lord's commandments. Quoted from the book of Deuteronomy 30:19. "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your descendants."—Deuteronomy 30:19.



Knowledge gained from Bible study helps us to exercise self-control

often stumble in word. To deal with such deficiencies requires diligent effort in cultivating self-control. Why? James 3:2 realistically admits: "We all stumble many times. If anyone does not stumble in word, this one is a perfect man, able to bridle also his whole body." Still others feel a strong urge to gamble. Or they may find it difficult to control their temper. It may take time to learn to cope successfully with these or similar weaknesses. Although we can make significant progress now, wrong desires will be permanently eradicated only when we reach perfection. In the meantime, striving to exercise self-control will help us to avoid falling back into a sinful pattern of life. As the struggle continues, let us assist one another not to give up.

—Acts 14:21, 22.

¹⁰ Another area in which exercising self-control is difficult for some is in the matter of sexuality. Of itself, human sexuality is part of how Jehovah God made us. Yet, some have a

10. (a) Why is exercising self-control in sexual matters particularly challenging for some? (b) What major change did one brother make? (See box on page 16.)

particularly difficult time keeping sex in its proper place, in harmony with God's standards. Their difficulty may be made worse because they have an unusually strong sexual drive. We live in a sex-crazed world that tends to fan the flames of passion in many ways. This can create quite a problem for Christians who want to remain single—at least for a time—so as to serve God free of the distractions of marriage. (1 Corinthians 7:32, 33, 37, 38) But in harmony with the Scriptural injunction that "it is better to marry than to be inflamed with passion," they may decide to marry, which is certainly honorable. At the same time, they are determined to marry "only in the Lord," as the Scriptures counsel. (1 Corinthians 7:9, 39) We can be sure that Jehovah rejoices over their interest in upholding his righteous principles. Their fellow Christians count it a joy to be associated with true worshipers of such high moral standards and integrity.

¹¹ What if no appropriate partner can be

11. How can we be of help to a brother or a sister who is interested in getting married but who has not been able to do so?

found? Imagine the potential frustration of a person who desires to marry but who has not been able to do so! He may see his friends marry and achieve a measure of happiness, while he is still seeking an appropriate partner. For some in that situation, the unclean habit of masturbation may become an ongoing problem. In any case, no Christian wants inadvertently to dishearten another who is struggling to remain chaste. We could unintentionally cause discouragement if we made such inconsiderate comments as, "When are you going to get married?" That might be said with no ill intent, but how much better for us to manifest self-control in the sense of guarding our tongue! (Psalm 39:1) Those among us who are remaining chaste while in a single state deserve our warmest commendation. Rather than say what might be discouraging, we could strive to be encouraging. For instance, we could make an effort to include single individuals

when a small group of mature ones gather for a meal or wholesome Christian association.

Self-Control in Marriage

¹² Being married does not in itself eliminate the need for self-control as it relates to sex. For example, the sexual needs of husband and wife may differ greatly. Or the physical condition of one mate may at times make normal sexual relations difficult or even impossible. Perhaps because of prior experiences, one mate may find it challenging to obey the injunction: "Let the husband render to his wife her due; but let the wife also do likewise to her husband." In such a situation, the other mate may need to exercise added self-control. But both can bear in mind Paul's loving advice to married Christians: "Do not be depriving each other of it, except by mutual consent for an appointed time, that you

12. Why is a measure of self-control needed even by those who are married?

He Learned to Say No

One of Jehovah's Witnesses living in Germany was employed as a technical communications clerk. His work included monitoring some 30 different television and radio programs. When interferences occurred, he had to give his attention to the program in order to pinpoint the problem. He says: "Interferences invariably seemed to occur just at the wrong time, just when scenes of violence or sex were being shown. The bad scenes seemed to stay in my head for days if not weeks, as though they had been branded into my brain." He admits that this had a negative effect on his spirituality: "I tend to be rather hotheaded, so scenes of violence made it difficult for me to exercise self-control. The sex scenes caused tension between me and my wife. I had a daily battle. In order



to take hold of myself, to think before I reacted to the evil influences around me, I would not to lose the battle, I decided to look for a new job, even if it meant less pay. Not long ago I succeeded in finding one. My wish has been fulfilled."

may devote time to prayer and may come together again, that Satan may not keep tempting you for your lack of self-regulation.” —1 Corinthians 7:3, 5.

¹³ How grateful married couples can be if both have learned to exercise proper self-control in this most intimate relationship. At the same time, they do well to show understanding to fellow worshipers who are still struggling to manifest it in that area. We should never forget to pray that Jehovah give our spiritual brothers insight, courage, and determination to continue their fight to manifest self-control and to take steps to overcome improper desires.—Philippians 4:6, 7.

Continue Helping One Another

¹⁴ At times, we may find it difficult to be understanding toward fellow Christians who are struggling to show self-control in an area that gives us no trouble. But people differ by nature. Some are easily ruled by emotions; others are not. Some find it comparatively easy to control themselves, self-control posing no great problem. Others have more difficulty. Yet, remember, a struggling person is not a bad person. Fellow Christians need our understanding and compassion. Our own happiness is involved as we continue to show mercy toward those still struggling to increase their display of self-control. We can see that from Jesus' words recorded at Matthew 5:7.

¹⁵ Never do we want to misjudge a fellow Christian who may on some occasion fail to manifest the Christian personality. How encouraging to know that in addition to seeing the one time that we may have failed, Jehovah sees the many times when we did not,

13. What can we do in behalf of ones struggling to exercise self-control?
14. Why should we deal compassionately and understandingly with fellow Christians?
15. Why are the words at Psalm 130:3 comforting in the matter of self-control?

even if all of these went unnoticed by fellow Christians. It is most comforting to keep in mind the words of Psalm 130:3: “If errors were what you watch, O Jah, O Jehovah, who could stand?”

¹⁶ To be pleasing to Jehovah, each of us must cultivate self-control, but we can be assured of the help of our Christian brothers. While each of us must bear his own burden of responsibility, we are nevertheless urged to help one another to cope with weaknesses. (Galatians 6:2, 5) We can treasure the parent, mate, or friend who prevents us from going places we should not go, from seeing things we should not see, or from doing things we should not do. He is helping us to display self-control, the ability to say no and to mean it!

¹⁷ Many Christians may be in accord with what we have considered up to this point about self-control, but they may feel that they personally have much room for improvement. They would like to display self-control more fully, to the extent that they believe can reasonably be expected of imperfect humans. Do you feel that way? What, then, can you do in the way of cultivating this aspect of the fruitage of God's spirit? And how can your doing so help you to reach your long-term objectives as a Christian? Let us see in the next article.

16, 17. (a) How can we apply Galatians 6:2, 5 with respect to self-control? (b) What will we next consider about self-control?

Do You Recall?

Why Is Self-Control . . .

- important for Christians to cultivate?
- particularly challenging for some?
- necessary in marriage?
- a quality that we can help one another to cultivate?

TO WIN THE PRIZE, EXERCISE SELF-CONTROL!

"Every man taking part in a contest exercises self-control in all things."

—1 CORINTHIANS 9:25.

IF YOU were baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, you went on public record that you were willing to engage in a contest that has eternal life as its prize. You said yes to doing Jehovah's will. Before making a dedication to Jehovah, many of us had to make significant changes so that our dedication would be meaningful, acceptable to God. We followed the apostle Paul's counsel to Christians: "Put away the old personality which conforms to your former course of conduct and which is being corrupted according to his deceptive desires . . . Put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Ephesians 4:22-24) In other words, before saying yes as respects dedication to God, we had to say no to an unacceptable former way of life.

1. In line with Ephesians 4:22-24, how have millions said yes to Jehovah?

² Certain features of the old personality that prospective Witnesses of Jehovah must put away are directly condemned by God's Word. Paul enumerated some in his letter to the Corinthians, saying: "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men, nor thieves, nor greedy persons, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit God's kingdom." He then showed that first-century Christians made necessary personality changes, adding: "Yet that is what some of you were." Notice, *were*, not *are*.—1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

³ Paul suggested that additional changes might also be necessary, for he continued: "All things are lawful for me; but not all things are advantageous." (1 Corinthians

2. How does 1 Corinthians 6:9-12 indicate that two kinds of changes must be made to gain God's approval?



6:12) Thus, many today who desire to be Jehovah's Witnesses see the need of saying no even to things that although lawful are of no advantage or are of little lasting value. These may be time-consuming and could sidetrack them from pursuing things of greater importance.

⁴ Dedication to God is made willingly, not grudgingly, as if it entailed a huge sacrifice. Dedicated Christians agree with Paul, who said after he became a follower of Christ: "On account of [Jesus] I have taken the loss of all things and I consider them as a lot of refuse, that I may gain Christ." (Philippians 3:8) Paul gladly said no to things of little value so that he could continue to say yes to God.

⁵ Paul exercised self-control in running his spiritual race and was finally able to say: "I have fought the fine fight, I have run the course to the finish, I have observed the faith. From this time on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me as a reward in that day, yet not only to me, but also to all those who have loved his manifestation." (2 Timothy 4:7, 8) Will we someday be able to

4. On what do dedicated Christians agree with Paul?

5. In what kind of race did Paul successfully participate, and how can we do likewise?

Self-control moves us to do good

make a similar expression? We will if in faith we exercise self-control while running our Christian race without letup and through to completion.

Self-Control to Do Good

⁶ The Hebrew and Greek words translated "self-control" in the Bible literally denote that a person has power or control over himself. They often convey the thought of restraining oneself from doing bad. But it is obvious that a measure of self-control is also required if we are to use our bodies in doing good works. The natural tendency of imperfect humans is to do wrong, so we have a two-fold struggle. (Ecclesiastes 7:29; 8:11) While refraining from doing bad, we must also compel ourselves to do good. In fact, controlling our body in order to do good is one of the best ways to avoid doing bad.

⁷ Clearly, self-control is vital if we are to follow through on our dedication to God. We need to pray as did David: "Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one." (Psalm 51:10) We can meditate on the benefits of avoiding

6. What is self-control, and what are two areas in which we must exercise it?

7. (a) For what should we pray, as did David?
(b) Meditating on what will help us to exercise greater self-control?



things that are morally wrong or physically debilitating. Think of the possible harm of not avoiding such things: serious health problems, disturbed relationships, even premature death. On the other hand, think of the many benefits of holding to the way of life that Jehovah prescribes. Being realistic, however, we must not forget that our heart is treacherous. (Jeremiah 17:9) We must be resolute in resisting its attempts to downplay the seriousness of upholding Jehovah's standards.

⁸ Most of us know from experience that the unwilling flesh often tries to extinguish the fire of a willing spirit. Take, for example, Kingdom preaching. Jehovah takes delight in the willingness of humans to participate in this life-giving work. (Psalm 110:3; Matthew 24:14) For most of us, learning to preach publicly did not come easy. It required—and perhaps still requires—that we control our body, "pummel" it and "lead it as a slave," instead of allowing it to dictate the course of least resistance.—1 Corinthians 9:16, 27; 1 Thessalonians 2:2.

"In All Things"?

⁹ The Bible's counsel to exercise "self-control in all things" indicates that more is involved than just controlling our temper and refraining from immoral conduct. We may feel that we have achieved self-control in these areas, and if so, we can indeed be grateful. Yet, how about other areas of life in which the need for self-control may not be so obvious? To illustrate, suppose we live in a relatively affluent country with a high standard of living. Would it not be wise to learn to say no to unnecessary spending? Parents do well to teach their children not to buy whatever they see just because it is available,

8. What reality does experience teach us? Illustrate.
9, 10. What is included in exercising "self-control in all things"?

is appealing, or is financially within their reach. Of course, if such instruction is to be effective, parents must set the proper example.—Luke 10:38-42.

¹⁰ Learning to do without can strengthen our willpower. It can also enhance appreciation for the material things we possess and can make us more sympathetic toward those who must do without some things, not by choice, but out of necessity. True, a modest course runs counter to such popular attitudes as "be good to yourself" or "you deserve the best." The world of advertising promotes the desire for instant gratification, but it does so for the sake of its own commercial profit. This situation may impede our efforts to display self-control. A magazine from a prosperous European land recently noted: "If keeping undesirable impulses under control requires an inner struggle on the part of those living under the agonizing circumstances of extreme poverty, how much more so is that true of those living in the land of milk and honey in today's affluent society!"

¹¹ If we have difficulty distinguishing between what we want and what we truly need, it might be helpful to take steps to ensure that we do not act irresponsibly. For example, if we desire to counteract a leaning toward uncontrolled spending, we may want to resolve not to buy on credit, or when shopping, we may take only a set amount of money. Recall that Paul said "godly devotion along with self-sufficiency" is "a means of great gain." He reasoned: "We have brought nothing into the world, and neither can we carry anything out. So, having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things." (1 Timothy 6:6-8) Are we? Learning to live a simple life, free of the excess baggage of self-indulgence—in whatever form—calls for

11. Why is learning to do without beneficial, but what makes this difficult?

How to Strengthen Self-Control

- Cultivate it even in little things
- Meditate on its present and future benefits
- Replace what God forbids with things that he encourages
- Reject improper ideas immediately
- Fill your mind with spiritually upbuilding thoughts
- Accept the help that mature fellow Christians can give
- Avoid compromising situations
- Pray for God's help in times of temptation



willpower and self-control. It is, though, a lesson worth learning.

¹² Attending Christian meetings, assemblies, and conventions also involves a particular manifestation of self-control. For instance, that quality is necessary lest we let our mind wander during the program. (Proverbs 1:5) It may take self-control not to disturb others by whispering to our neighbors rather than giving the speaker our full attention. Adjusting our schedule so that we can arrive on time may require self-control. Further, self-control may be needed to set aside time to prepare for the meetings and then to participate in them.

¹³ Exercising self-control in small things strengthens our ability to do so in larger matters. (Luke 16:10) Thus, how fine it is to discipline ourselves to read God's Word and Bible publications regularly, studying them and meditating on what we learn! How wise it is to discipline ourselves concerning inappropriate jobs, friendships, attitudes, and personal habits or to discipline ourselves to say no to activities that could rob us of precious

12, 13. (a) In what ways do Christian meetings involve self-control? (b) What are some other areas in which we need to cultivate self-control?

time for God's service! Staying busy in Jehovah's service is certainly a fine protection against things that could draw us away from the spiritual paradise of Jehovah's worldwide congregation.

Become Full-Grown Through Self-Control

¹⁴ A newborn infant is not noted for self-control. A pamphlet by experts in child behavior explains: "Self-control does not happen automatically or suddenly. Infants and toddlers need parental guidance and support to begin the process of learning self-control.... With parents guiding the process, self-control increases throughout the school years." A study of four-year-old children revealed that those who had learned to exercise a degree of self-control "generally grew up to be better adjusted, more popular, adventurous, confident and dependable teenagers." The ones who had not begun learning this lesson "were more likely to be lonely, easily frustrated and stubborn. They buckled under stress and shied away from challenges."

14. (a) How should children learn to exercise self-control? (b) What benefits can come when children learn such lessons early in life?

Obviously, to become a well-adjusted adult, a child must learn to exercise self-control.

¹⁵ Likewise, if we are to become full-grown Christians, we must learn to manifest self-control. A lack of it indicates that we are still spiritual babes. The Bible admonishes us to "become full-grown in powers of understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:20) Our goal is to "attain to the oneness in the faith and in the accurate knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to the measure of stature that belongs to the fullness of the Christ." Why? "In order that we should no longer be babes, tossed about as by waves and carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men, by means of cunning in contriving error." (Ephesians 4:13, 14) Clearly, learning to exercise self-control is vital to our spirituality.

Cultivating Self-Control

¹⁶ To cultivate self-control, we need divine help, and it is available. God's Word, like a perfect mirror, shows us where we need to make personal changes, and it provides counsel on how to do so. (James 1:22-25) A loving brotherhood stands ready to offer help too. Christian elders show understanding in offering personal assistance. Jehovah

15. What does a lack of self-control indicate, in contrast with what goal set out in the Bible?
16. How does Jehovah provide help?

Do You Recall?

- In what two ways must we exercise self-control?
- What does it mean to exercise "self-control in all things"?
- What practical suggestions for cultivating self-control did you take special note of during our study?
- Where does self-control start?

himself gives freely of his holy spirit if we ask for it in prayer. (Luke 11:13; Romans 8:26) Therefore, let us joyfully use these provisions. The suggestions on page 21 may help.

¹⁷ How comforting to know that Jehovah values our efforts when we try to please him! This should motivate us to continue to strive for more self-control. Regardless of how often we may stumble, we must never give up in our efforts. "The righteous one may fall even seven times, and he will certainly get up." (Proverbs 24:16) Each time we score a victory, we have reason to be pleased with ourselves. We can also be sure that Jehovah is pleased with us. One Witness says that before dedicating his life to Jehovah, each time he was successful in refraining from smoking for a week, he rewarded himself by buying something useful with the money self-control had helped him to save.

¹⁸ Above all, we should remember that self-control involves the mind and emotions. We can see this from Jesus' words: "Everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28; James 1:14, 15) He who has learned to control his mind and feelings will find it easier to control his whole body. Let us therefore strengthen our determination to avoid not only doing wrong but even thinking about it. Should wrong thoughts arise, reject them immediately. We can flee from temptation by prayerfully keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus. (1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22; Hebrews 4:15, 16) As we do our best, we will be following the counsel of Psalm 55:22: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter."

17. What encouragement does Proverbs 24:16 give us?
18. (a) What is involved in our battle for self-control? (b) What assurance does Jehovah provide?

Youths, WALK WORTHILY of JEHOVAH

SOME Christian youths have temporarily had to live away from their family and their home congregation. Some have done so in order to expand their ministry. Others have had to leave their home because of their neutral stand toward the affairs of this world. (Isaiah 2:4; John 17:16) In certain lands, "Caesar" has sentenced integrity-keeping youths to prison or to community work.*—Mark 12:17; Titus 3:1, 2.

While serving prison sentences for their neutrality, these youths may be confined with delinquents for extended periods. Being away from home for other reasons has likewise forced youths to work in an unsavory environment. How can these young Christians or others forced into such a situation successfully cope with the pressures and demands they face as they strive to "go on walking worthily of God?" (1 Thessalonians 2:12) How can their parents help them to prepare for any possible unpleasant circumstances?—Proverbs 22:3.

Particular Challenges

"Being away from the protective care of my parents as well as the loving oversight of elders who knew me well was difficult and intimidating," says 21-year-old Tákos, who was obliged to spend 37 months away from home.* He adds: "At times, I felt extremely vulnerable." Twenty-year-old Pétros had to be away from home for more than two years. He admits: "For the first time in my life, I had to

make decisions about entertainment and associations entirely on my own, and my choices were not always wise." He then comments: "Sometimes I felt uneasy with the greater responsibility that increased freedom brought." Tássos, a



Some Christian youths have had to leave their home

Christian elder who regularly comes in contact with Christian youths in such situations, observed: "The unclean speech, rebelliousness, and violent behavior of unbelieving peers may rub off on unwary and vulnerable youths."

Living and working among people who lack respect for Bible principles, such Christian youths need to guard against the temptation to imitate their peers' immoral and unscriptural ways. (Psalm 1:1; 26:4; 119:9) Maintaining a good routine of personal study, meeting attendance, and field service may seem difficult. (Philippians 3:16) Setting and working toward spiritual goals may also not be easy.

Faithful Christian youths surely want to please Jehovah with their conduct and speech. They loyally try to heed the appealing invitation of their heavenly Father: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me." (Proverbs 27:11) They recognize that their decorum and behavior has a bearing on

* See *The Watchtower*, May 1, 1996, pages 18-20.

* Some names have been changed.



By resisting temptation, youths can imitate Joseph and stay morally clean

how others view Jehovah and his people.—1 Peter 2:12.

commendably, most of such youths do their best to be like their first-century brothers about whom the apostle Paul prayed: “Walk worthily of Jehovah to the end of fully pleasing him as you go on bearing fruit in every good work . . . so as to endure fully and be long-suffering with joy.” (Colossians 1:9-11) The Bible provides several examples of God-fearing youths who successfully walked worthily of God amid a strange, hostile, and idolatrous environment.—Philippians 2:15.

“Jehovah Was With Joseph”

At a tender age, Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob and Rachel, found himself far away from the protective nest of his God-fearing father. He was sold into slavery in Egypt. Joseph set a sterling example as an industrious, trustworthy, and moral young man. Despite slaving for Potiphar—a person who was not a worshiper of Jehovah—Joseph was conscientious and diligent, so that his master eventually entrusted all household affairs to him. (Genesis 39:2-6) Joseph kept his integrity to Jehovah, and when this resulted in his being thrown



into prison, he did not conclude: “What’s the use?” Even in prison he displayed fine qualities, and soon he was taking care of many details in the prison’s operation. (Genesis 39:17-22) God blessed him, and as stated at Genesis 39:23, “Jehovah was with Joseph.”

How easy it would have been for Joseph, isolated from his God-fearing family, to have conformed his conduct to that of the pagans who lived all around him, fashioning himself after the immoral Egyptian way of life! Instead, he held on to godly principles and kept his clean standing despite the strongest of temptations. When Potiphar’s wife repeatedly urged him to have relations with her, his resolute answer was: “How could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?”—Genesis 39:7-9.

Today, Witness youths need to heed the Bible-based warnings against improper associations, immoral entertainment, pornography, and debasing music. They realize that “the eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch upon the bad ones and the good ones.”—Proverbs 15:3.

Moses Shunned the “Enjoyment of Sin”

Moses grew up in the idolatrous and pleasure-seeking environment of Pharaoh’s court. The Bible says of him: “By faith Moses . . . refused to be called the son of the daughter of Pharaoh, choosing to be ill-treated with the

people of God rather than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin.”—Hebrews 11:24, 25.

Friendship with the world can result in certain advantages, but it is short-lived. At the most, it can last only for the limited time that is left for this world. (1 John 2:15-17) Would it not be better to follow the example of Moses? The Bible says that “he continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible.” (Hebrews 11:27) He kept his mind focused on the spiritual heritage of his God-fearing ancestors. He made Jehovah’s purpose his purpose in life, setting as his goal the doing of God’s will.—Exodus 2:11; Acts 7:23, 25.

When God-fearing youths find themselves in an ungodly and unfriendly environment, they can strengthen their personal relationship with Jehovah through personal study, getting to know better “the One who is invisible.” A full program of Christian activities, including regular meeting attendance and field service, will help these youths to keep their mind focused on spiritual things. (Psalm 63:6; 77:12) They should strive to cultivate

faith and hope as strong as that of Moses. They would do well to center their thinking and actions on Jehovah, happy to be his friend.

She Used Her Tongue to Bless God

Another youth who proved exemplary while away from home was the Israelite girl captured by the Syrians in the days of God’s prophet Elisha. She became the maid-servant of the wife of a leprous Syrian army chief, Naaman. This girl told her mistress: “If only my lord were before the prophet that is in Samaria! In that case he would recover him from his leprosy.” Because of her witness, Naaman went to Elisha in Israel and was cleansed of leprosy. Moreover, Naaman became a worshiper of Jehovah.—2 Kings 5:1-3, 13-19.

The example of this girl stresses the need for youths to use their tongue in a God-honoring way, even when they are away from their parents. If that girl had had the habit of using “foolish talking” or “obscene jesting,” would she have felt comfortable to use her

PARENTS—PREPARE YOUR CHILDREN!

“Like arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the sons of youth.” (Psalm 127:4) An arrow will not reach its target by accident. It must be skillfully aimed. Similarly, children will not be prepared to face the realities of living away from home without proper parental guidance.—Proverbs 22:6.

Young ones are prone to act on impulse or to give in to “the desires incidental to youth.” (2 Timothy 2:22) The Bible warns: “The rod and reproof are what give wisdom; but a boy let on the loose will be causing his mother shame.” (Proverbs 29:15) A failure to have limits on youthful behavior leaves a child unprepared for the demands and pressures of life away from home.

In a clear and responsible way, Christian parents should outline for their children the difficulties, pressures, and realities of life in this system

of things. Without being pessimistic or negative, they can describe the unpleasant conditions a youth may face if he has to live away from home. This training, coupled with God-given wisdom, will “give to the inexperienced ones shrewdness, to a young man knowledge and thinking ability.”—Proverbs 1:4.

Parents who instill godly values and moral principles in the hearts of their children enable them to survive the challenges of life. Regular family Bible study, open communication, and genuine interest in their offspring’s welfare, can make the difference between success and failure. Parents should provide godly training in a balanced yet positive and reasonable way, preparing their children to stand on their own feet later in life. By personal example, parents can teach their children that it is possible to be in the world but to be no part of it.—John 17:15, 16.



Imitate the Israelite slave girl who used her tongue to bring glory to Jehovah

tongue effectively as she did when the opportunity arose? (Ephesians 5:4; Proverbs 15:2) Níkos, a young man in his early 20's who was imprisoned because of his neutral stand, recalls: "When I was with some other young brothers at an agricultural prison, away from parental and congregational authority, I noticed that the quality of our speech deteriorated. It definitely did not bring praise to Jehovah." Happily, Níkos and others have been helped to heed Paul's counsel on this matter: "Let fornication and uncleanness of every sort or greediness not even be mentioned among you, just as it befits holy people."—Ephesians 5:3.

Jehovah Was Real to Them

The experience of the three Hebrew companions of Daniel in ancient Babylon testifies to the truth of the principle stated by Jesus

that faithfulness in little things leads to faithfulness in big things. (Luke 16:10) When faced with the problem of eating foods forbidden by the Law of Moses, they could have rationalized that they were captives in a foreign land and thus had no choice in the matter. But what a blessing they received for taking seriously even what might have seemed to be a little thing! They proved to be both healthier and wiser than all the other captives who kept on eating the king's dainties. Faithfulness in these little things undoubtedly strengthened them, so that when they were faced with the greater test of bowing down to an idolatrous image, they refused to compromise.—Daniel 1:3-21; 3:1-30.

Jehovah was very real to these three young men. Despite being away from their home and the center of God's worship, they were determined to keep unspotted from the world. (2 Peter 3:14) Their relationship with Jehovah was so precious to them that they were willing to sacrifice their lives for it.

Jehovah Will Not Forsake You

When youths are away from the ones they love and trust, they understandably may feel insecure, uncertain, and apprehensive. However, they can meet their tests and trials with complete confidence that "Jehovah will not forsake" them. (Psalm 94:14) If such youths

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Trust Is Vital for a Happy Life

Faithful Christian Women—Precious Worshipers of God

Cultivate a Giving Spirit

"suffer for the sake of righteousness," Jehovah is there to help them keep walking in "the path of righteousness."—1 Peter 3:14; Proverbs 8:20.

Jehovah consistently strengthened and richly rewarded Joseph, Moses, the Israelite slave girl, and the three faithful Hebrew

youths. Today, he is using his holy spirit, his Word, and his organization to sustain those who "fight the fine fight of the faith," setting before them the reward of "everlasting life." (1 Timothy 6:11, 12) Yes, walking worthily of Jehovah is possible, and it is the wise thing to do.—Proverbs 23:15, 19.

Questions From Readers

To whom was Jehovah referring as "one of us" at Genesis 3:22?

Jehovah God was apparently referring to himself and his only-begotten Son when he said: "The man has become like one of us in knowing good and bad." (Genesis 3:22) Let us consider why.

Jehovah said these words after pronouncing sentence upon the first human couple. Some have taken the expression "one of us" as the plural of majesty, just as a human king might say "we are not pleased" when referring only to himself. With regard to Genesis 1:26 and 3:22, however, Bible scholar Donald E. Gowan says: "There is no support in the O[ld] T[estament] for most of the proposed explanations: the royal 'we,' the deliberative 'we,' the plural of fullness, or an indication of a plurality of persons in the Godhead. . . . None of these explanations makes much sense in 3:22, which speaks of 'one of us.'"

Could Jehovah have been referring to Satan the Devil, who had come to decide "good and bad" on his own and who had influenced the first humans to do the same? That is not reasonable. Here Jehovah used the expression "one of us." Satan was no longer among the throng of Jehovah's faithful angels, so he could not have been included with those who were on Jehovah's side.

Was God referring to the faithful angels? We cannot say definitely. However, the similarity of

the expressions at Genesis 1:26 and 3:22 gives us a clue. At Genesis 1:26, we read that Jehovah said: "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness." To whom was he addressing these words? Referring to the spirit creature who became the perfect man Jesus, the apostle Paul said: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; because by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and upon the earth." (Colossians 1:15, 16) Yes, it seems logical that at Genesis 1:26, Jehovah was speaking to his only-begotten Son, the "master worker," who was at his side during the creation of the heavens and the earth. (Proverbs 8:22-31) The similarity of the expression at Genesis 3:22 suggests that Jehovah was again speaking to the one closest to him, his only-begotten Son.

God's only-begotten Son apparently had knowledge of "good and bad." From his long and intimate experience with Jehovah, he certainly learned well his Father's thinking, principles, and standards. Convinced of his Son's acquaintance with these and loyalty to them, Jehovah may have granted him some latitude in handling matters without direct consultation with Him in each instance. So the Son would to this extent be able and authorized to determine what was good and bad. However, unlike Satan, Adam, and Eve, he did not set up a standard that conflicted with Jehovah's.

Jacob APPRECIATED SPIRITUAL VALUES

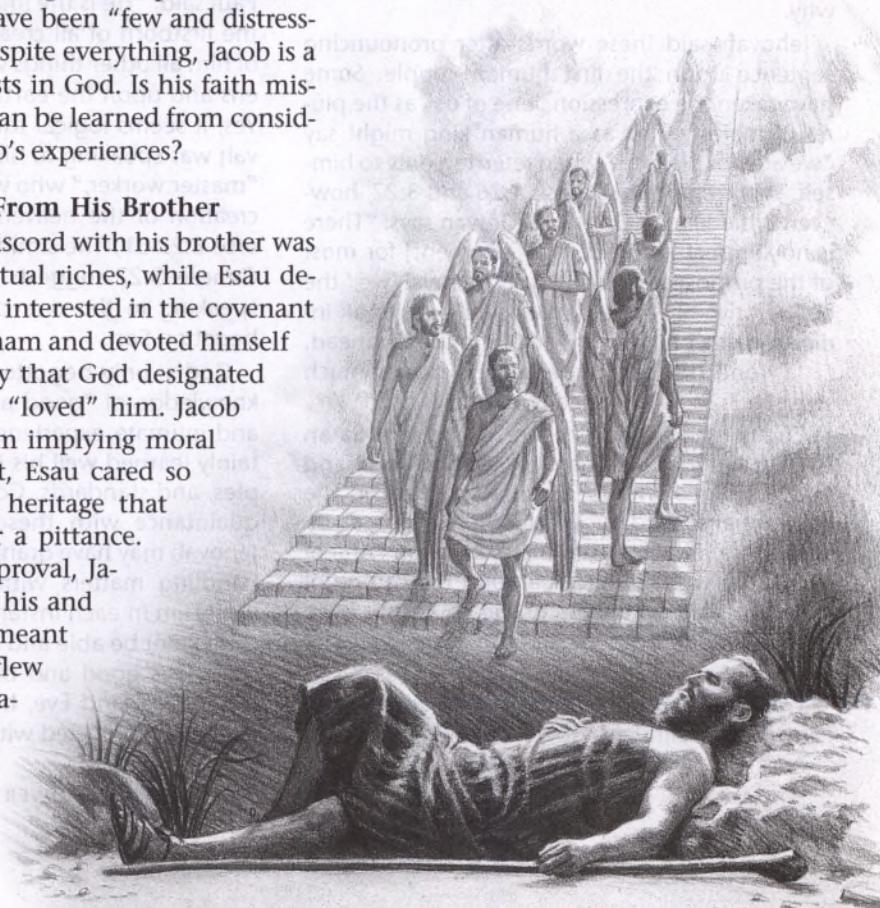
JACOB'S life is marked by strife and calamity. His twin brother's murderous anger forces Jacob to flee for his life. Instead of getting the girl he loves, he is tricked into marrying someone else first and ends up with four wives and many resulting problems. (Genesis 30:1-13) For 20 years he works for a man who exploits him. He wrestles with an angel and suffers permanent damage. His daughter is raped, his sons provoke a massacre, and he weeps over the tragic loss of his favorite son and wife. Forced to emigrate in old age to escape famine, he admits that his days have been "few and distressing." (Genesis 47:9) Despite everything, Jacob is a spiritual man who trusts in God. Is his faith misplaced? What lessons can be learned from considering just some of Jacob's experiences?

So Different From His Brother

The reason for the discord with his brother was that Jacob valued spiritual riches, while Esau despised them. Jacob was interested in the covenant promise made to Abraham and devoted himself to caring for the family that God designated as heirs. Jehovah thus "loved" him. Jacob was "blameless," a term implying moral excellence. By contrast, Esau cared so little for his spiritual heritage that he sold it to Jacob for a pittance. When, with divine approval, Jacob claimed what was his and obtained the blessing meant for his brother, Esau flew into a vengeful rage. Jacob then left behind

all he loved, but what followed surely revived any sagging spirits.—Malachi 1:2, 3; Genesis 25:27-34; 27:1-45.

In a dream, God showed Jacob angels ascending and descending a ladder, or a "rising flight of stones," between heaven and earth and stated that he would protect Jacob and his seed. "By means of you and by means of your seed all the families of the ground will certainly bless themselves. And here I am with you and I will keep you in all the way you are going and I will return you to this ground, because I am not going to leave you until I have actually done what I have spoken to you."—Genesis 28:10-15; footnote.



How reassuring! Jehovah confirmed that promises given to Abraham and Isaac would spiritually enrich Jacob's family. Jacob was made aware that angels can minister to those having God's approval, and he was assured of divine protection. In grateful recognition, Jacob vowed to be faithful to Jehovah.—Genesis 28:16-22.

In no way did Jacob usurp Esau's inheritance. Before the boys were born, Jehovah said that 'the older would serve the younger.' (Genesis 25:23) 'Would it not have been easier if God had caused Jacob to be born first?' someone might ask. What followed taught important truths. God does not reserve blessings for those who feel that they have a claim on them, but he does show undeserved kindness to those whom he chooses. The birthright thus went to Jacob, not to his older brother, who did not appreciate it. Similarly, because the natural Jews as a nation showed the same attitude as Esau, they were replaced by spiritual Israel. (Romans 9:6-16, 24) Good relations with Jehovah today never come by effortless inheritance, even if one is born into a God-fearing family or environment. All who would have divine blessings must strive to be godly, truly appreciating spiritual things.

Welcomed by Laban

On arriving in Paddan-aram to seek a wife among his relatives, Jacob met his cousin Rachel, Laban's daughter, at a well and moved its heavy stone cover to water the animals she was shepherding.* Rachel dashed home to announce Jacob's arrival, and Laban hastened to meet him. If Laban was recalling the riches his family received from Abraham's servant, he was disappointed, for Jacob was

* The encounter resembled the time Jacob's mother, Rebekah, watered Eliezer's camels. Then Rebekah ran home with news of the stranger's arrival. On seeing the articles of gold his sister had received as a gift, Laban ran to welcome Eliezer.—Genesis 24:28-31, 53.

empty-handed. But Laban evidently did see something he could exploit—an industrious laborer.—Genesis 28:1-5; 29:1-14.

Jacob related his story. It is not clear whether he mentioned the ruse used to obtain the birthright, but after hearing "all these things," Laban said: "You are indeed my bone and my flesh." One scholar said that this phrase could be taken as a warm invitation for Jacob to stay or an admission that kinship obliged Laban to protect him. Whatever the case, Laban soon contemplated how he could exploit his nephew.

Laban introduced what would become a bone of contention over the next 20 years. "Are you my brother, and must you serve me for nothing?" he asked. "Tell me, What are your wages to be?" Though Laban played the part of the benevolent uncle, he reduced his blood relationship with Jacob to a service contract. Since Jacob was in love with Rachel, he replied: "I am willing to serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter."—Genesis 29:15-20.

Betrothal was effected by the payment of a bride-price to the bride's family. The Mosaic Law later set at 50 silver shekels the price for virgins who had been seduced. Scholar Gordon Wenham believes that this was "the maximum marriage gift" but that most were "much lower." (Deuteronomy 22:28, 29) Jacob could not arrange for a payment. He offered Laban seven years' service. "Since casual laborers received between one-half and one shekel a month in old Babylonian times" (from 42 to 84 shekels in seven full years), continues Wenham, "Jacob was offering Laban a very handsome marriage gift in exchange for Rachel's hand." Laban readily accepted.—Genesis 29:19.

Seven years seemed like "some few days" to Jacob, so great was his love for Rachel. Thereafter, he claimed his veiled bride, little suspecting Laban's treachery. Imagine his shock

the next morning to find that he had slept, not with Rachel, but with her sister Leah! Jacob demanded: "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? So why have you tricked me?" Laban replied: "It is not customary to do this way in our place, to give the younger woman before the firstborn. Celebrate to the full the week of this woman. After that there shall be given to you also this other woman for the service that you can serve with me for seven years more." (Genesis 29:20-27) Defenseless and trapped, Jacob could do little but accept those terms if he wanted Rachel.

Unlike the first seven years, the next were bitter. How could Jacob overlook Laban's mean trick? And what of Leah, who played along with it? Of course, Laban was not in the least interested in the turbulent future he prepared for Leah and Rachel. Self-interest was his concern. Jealousy was added to resentment when Leah bore four sons in quick succession, while Rachel remained barren. Then Rachel, desperate for children, resorted to offering her maid as a surrogate mother, and out of rivalry, Leah did the same. Jacob found himself with 4 wives, 12 children, and anything but a happy family. Yet, Jehovah was making Jacob into a great nation.—Genesis 29:28-30:24.

Enriched by Jehovah

Despite trials, Jacob saw that God was with him as promised. Laban saw it too, for the few animals he had on Jacob's arrival grew to a multitude under his nephew's care. Reluctant to let Jacob go, Laban bid him to name his wages for further service, at which Jacob asked for the unusually colored animals born to Laban's flocks. It is said that in that region, sheep were generally white and goats were black or dark brown; only a minority was parti-colored. So thinking he was getting a bargain, Laban readily agreed and promptly moved all his animals with unusual mark-

ings a distance away in order to avoid contact with the flocks remaining in Jacob's care. He obviously believed that Jacob would gain little out of the agreement, certainly not the 20 percent of newborn kids and lambs that ancient shepherds typically received as wages. But Laban was wrong, for Jehovah was with Jacob.—Genesis 30:25-36.

Under divine guidance, Jacob bred sturdy animals of the desired coloration. (Genesis 30:37-42) His ideas on stockbreeding were not valid. Nonetheless, "scientifically, the required results could be achieved by the successive interbreeding of . . . single-colored animals that carried recessive genes for spottedness," explains scholar Nahum Sarna, and "such animals are detectable by . . . [their] hybrid vigor."

Noting the results, Laban tried to alter the agreement about which animals belonged to his nephew—striped, spotty, color-patched, or speckled. He was seeking his own profit, but no matter how Laban modified the contract, Jehovah saw to it that Jacob always prospered. Laban could only gnash his teeth. Jacob soon amassed great wealth, flocks, servants, camels, and asses, not because of his own ingenuity, but because of Jehovah's backing. He later explained to Rachel and Leah: "Your father has trifled with me and he has changed my wages ten times, but God has not allowed him to do me harm. . . . God kept taking the herd of your father away and giving it to me." Jehovah also assured Jacob that He saw all that Laban was doing but that Jacob need not worry. "Return to your land and to your relatives," God said, "and I will deal well with you."—Genesis 31:1-13; 32:9.

After finally ridding himself of double-dealing Laban, Jacob headed home. Although 20 years had passed, he still feared Esau, and all the more so when word came that Esau was advancing with four hundred

men. What could Jacob do? Always the spiritual person trusting in God, he acted in faith. He prayed, acknowledging that he was unworthy of Jehovah's generosity and appealing to God on the basis of His promises that he and his family be delivered from Esau's hand.—Genesis 32:2-12.

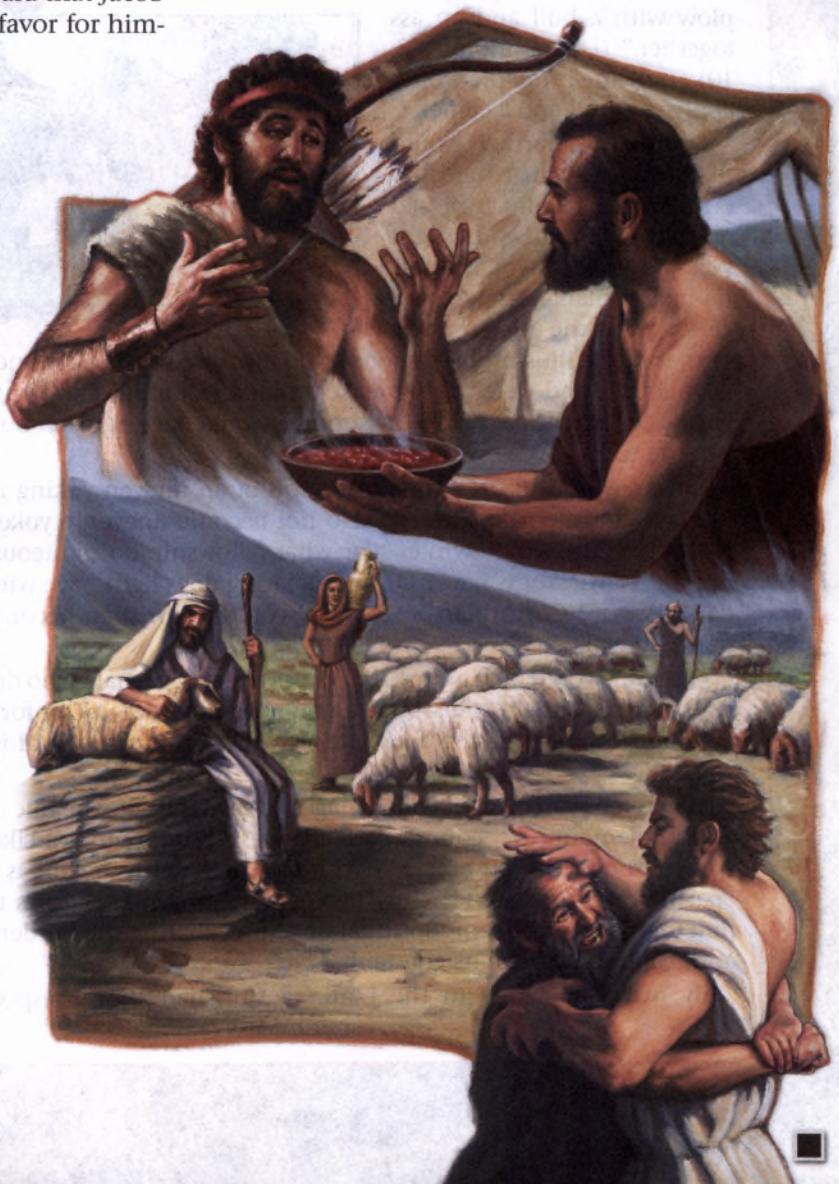
Then the unexpected occurred. A stranger, who turned out to be an angel, grappled with Jacob by night, and with one touch he put Jacob's thigh out of joint. Jacob refused to let go unless the angel first blessed him. The prophet Hosea later said that Jacob "wept, that he might implore favor for himself." (Hosea 12:2-4; Genesis 32:24-29) Jacob knew that previous angelic appearances concerned the outworking of the Abrahamic covenant through his seed. So he exerted himself in vigorous wrestling and obtained a blessing. At this time, God changed his name to Israel, meaning "Contender (Perseverer) With God," or "God Contends."

Are You Willing to Wrestle?

Wrestling with an angel and reunion with Esau were not the only crises that Jacob had to overcome. Yet, the events considered here illustrate the sort of man he was. Whereas Esau would not endure a little hunger for the sake of his birthright, Jacob struggled all his life to obtain blessings, even wrestling with an angel. As God promised, Jacob received

divine guidance and protection, becoming the progenitor of a great nation and the forefather of the Messiah.—Matthew 1:2, 16.

Are you willing to exert yourself to gain Jehovah's favor, wrestling for it, as it were? Life today is full of difficulties and challenges for those who want to do God's will, and sometimes it is a struggle to make the right decisions. However, the fine example of Jacob offers strong incentive for us to hold on to the hope of the reward that Jehovah sets before us.



All his life Jacob struggled to obtain blessings

"Do Not Become Unevenly Yoked"

AS YOU can see here, the camel and the bull that are plowing together look very uncomfortable. The yoke linking them together—intended for two animals of similar size and strength—makes both beasts suffer. Concerned about the welfare of such draft animals, God told the Israelites: "You must not plow with a bull and an ass together." (Deuteronomy 22: 10) The same principle would apply to a bull and a camel.

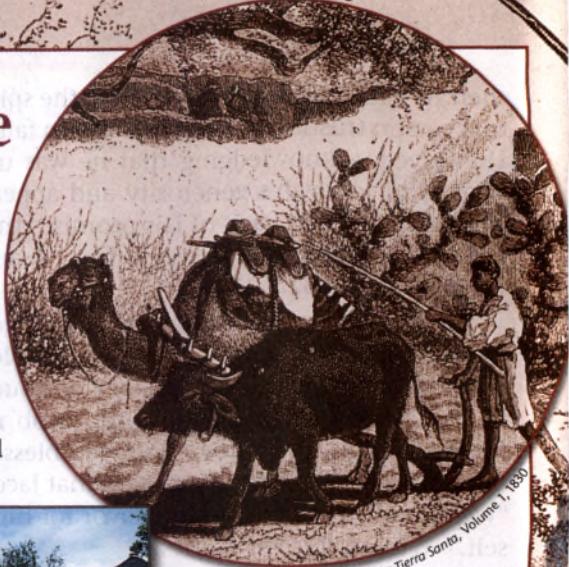
Normally, a farmer would not impose such a hardship on his animals. But if he did not have two bulls, he might yoke together two animals he had available. Apparently, this is what the 19th-century farmer in the illustration decided to do. Because of the difference in their size and weight, the weaker animal would have to struggle to keep up the pace, and the stronger would have a greater burden to bear.

The apostle Paul used the illustration of an uneven yoking to teach us an important lesson. "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers," he wrote. "For what fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what sharing does light have with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14) How could a Christian become unevenly yoked?

One way would be if a Christian chose a marriage mate who did not share his or her beliefs. Such a union would prove uncomfortable for both parties, the couple disagreeing on fundamental issues.

When Jehovah originated marriage, he gave the wife the role of "a complement," or "counterpart." (Genesis 2:18; footnote) Likewise, through the prophet Malachi, God referred to a wife as a "partner." (Malachi 2:14) Our Creator wants married couples to pull together in the same spiritual direction, sharing the burdens and reaping the benefits equitably.

By marrying "only in the Lord," a Christian shows respect



Camel and ox: From the book *La Tierra Santa*, Volume 1, 1850

for our heavenly Father's counsel. (1 Corinthians 7: 39) This lays a foundation for a united marriage, which can bring praise and honor to God as both spouses serve him as 'genuine yokefellows' in a special sense.—Philippians 4:3.