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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



How Can You Choose
A GOOD RELIGION?

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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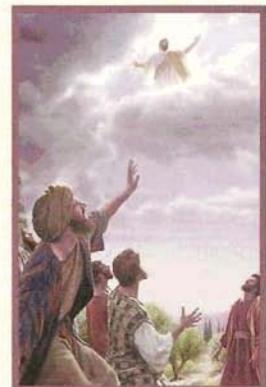
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Are All Religions Good?

WE LIVE in a world of staggering religious diversity. One recent survey identified 19 major faiths and some 10,000 smaller religions worldwide. This variety offers people unprecedented religious choice. So does it matter which religion you choose?

Some people say that different religions are like different roads leading up a mountain. To them, it does not matter which road they choose, since all roads lead to the same place. They reason that there is only one Almighty God, so all religions must ultimately lead to him.

Do All Roads Lead to God?

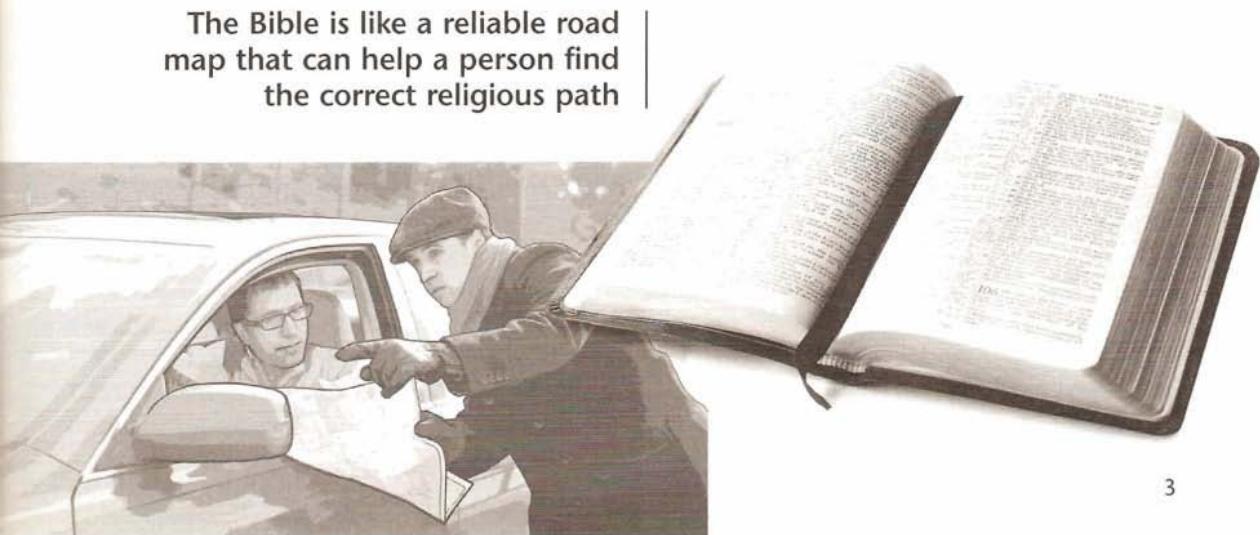
What did Jesus Christ, one of the most respected religious teachers in history, say on this subject? "Enter through the narrow gate," he told his disciples. Why? "For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to

destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."—Matthew 7:13, 14, *The Holy Bible—New International Version*.

Was Jesus really saying that some religions lead "to destruction"? Or was he teaching that only unbelievers are on the broad road, whereas those who believe in God—no matter what their religion—are on the narrow road that leads to life?

Immediately after stating that there are only two roads, Jesus said: "Be careful of false prophets. They come to you looking gentle like sheep, but they are really dangerous like wolves." (Matthew 7:15, *New Century Version*) Later he said: "Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do." (Matthew 7:21, *Today's English Version*) If

The Bible is like a reliable road map that can help a person find the correct religious path



someone is called a prophet or claims that Jesus is his "Lord," it is reasonable to say that he is a religious person, not an unbeliever. Clearly, then, Jesus was warning that not all religions are good and not all religious teachers should be trusted.

Is It Possible to Identify the Narrow Road?

Since not all roads lead to God, how can you find among the thousands of options the narrow road that leads to life? Consider this illustration: Imagine that you are lost in a big city. You decide to ask for help. One person confidently tells you to go east. Another urges you to head west. Yet another suggests that you choose whatever direction feels best to you. Finally, a fellow traveler takes out a reliable map and shows you the correct route. He then gives you the map so that you can refer to it along the way. Would you not feel more confident of reaching your destination?

So, too, when it comes to choosing the right religious road, we need a reliable spiritual road map. Does one exist? Yes, it does. That map is the Bible, which declares: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,

for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."—2 Timothy 3:16, *King James Version*.

You likely have available in your language a translation of the Bible that you can use as a spiritual road map. The publishers of this journal, Jehovah's Witnesses, produce a reliable Bible translation known as the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. However, if you are not one of Jehovah's Witnesses, you may prefer to use other translations when considering the subject of identifying good and bad religion. Therefore, this series of articles quotes from a number of Bible translations that are widely respected by other religious denominations.

As you read the following articles, compare what you know with what the Bible says. Keep in mind Jesus' words regarding how we can distinguish good religion from bad. He said: "A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit." (Matthew 7:17, 18, *Contemporary English Version*) Consider just three of the good fruits that the Bible says would identify the "good tree."



Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Jehovah's Witnesses, using one of the addresses below. For a complete list of addresses, see www.watchtower.org/address.

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GOOD RELIGION PROMOTES High Moral Standards

GOOD religion elevates our thinking and shows us how to improve our conduct. It supports us in the struggle to do what is right and brings out the best in us. How do we know that good religion does that?

Notice what the apostle Paul wrote to first-century Christians who lived in Corinth, Greece. That ancient city was notorious for its immoral lifestyle. Paul warned: "Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." Then Paul added: "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, *The Holy Bible—New International Version*) Imagine—good religion helped some who were formerly without moral standards to become clean and upright servants of God!

By contrast, the Bible warns: "The time will come when people will not listen to sound doctrine, but will follow their own desires and will collect for themselves more and more teachers who will tell them what they are itching to hear."—2 Timothy 4:3, *Today's English Version*.

How do the religions that you know of measure up in this regard? Do they uphold the Bible's high moral standards? Or do they water down the clear counsel found in God's Word, telling people only "what they are itching to hear"?

To help you determine whether a particular religion is producing good fruit, why not take the time to answer the following questions?

TOPIC: Marriage.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES: "Marriage should be honored by everyone, and husband and wife should keep their marriage pure. God will judge as guilty those who take part in sexual sins."—Hebrews 13:4, *New Century Version*.

QUESTION: Does this religion require that among its members, couples who live together be legally married?

TOPIC: Divorce.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES: When asked whether there was ever any grounds for divorce, Jesus said: "Whoever puts away his wife, except for immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."—Matthew 19:9, *New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible*.

QUESTION: Does this religion respect Jesus' direction and allow divorce and remarriage—but only on the grounds of immorality?

TOPIC: Sexual morality.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES: "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body."—1 Corinthians 6:18, *NIV*.

"Even the women pervert the natural use of their sex by unnatural acts. In the same way the men give up natural sexual relations with women and burn with passion for each other. Men do shameful things

with each other, and as a result they bring upon themselves the punishment they deserve for their wrongdoing.”—Romans 1:26, 27, TEV.

QUESTION: *Does this religion teach that sexual immorality either between a man and a woman or between a couple of the same sex is a sin?*

TOPIC: Courageously upholding Bible standards among its members.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES: “You must not associate with those who call themselves believers in Christ but who sin sexually, or are greedy, or worship idols, or abuse others with words, or get drunk, or cheat people. Do not even eat with people like that.” (1 Corinthians 5:11, NCV) What should happen to those who claim to be Christian but who are unrepentant sinners? “Expel the wicked man from among you,” states God’s Word.—1 Corinthians 5:13, NIV.

QUESTION: *Does this religion remove from its membership roll any who unrepentantly ignore Bible standards?*



Which religion has a reputation for upholding the Bible’s high moral standards?

GOOD RELIGION PROMOTES Brotherly Love

“**H**E WHO does not love does not know God; for God is love,” states the Bible. (1 John 4:8, *New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible*) Good religion, therefore, should promote brotherly love.

Many religions do an admirable job of caring for the sick, the elderly, and the poor.

They encourage their members to apply the counsel of the apostle John, who wrote: “Suppose someone has enough to live and sees a brother or sister in need, but does not help. Then God’s love is not living in that person. My children, we should love people not only with words and talk, but by our ac-

tions and true caring.”—1 John 3:17, 18, *New Century Version*.

What happens, though, when nations go to war? Should God’s command to “love thy neighbour as thyself” be applied in times of peace but be suspended when a politician or a king chooses to fight a neighbor nation?—Matthew 22:39, *King James Version*.

Jesus said: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35, *New International Version*) As you answer the following questions, ask yourself, ‘Do members of this religion display love toward all men at all times not only with words but also with actions?’

TOPIC: War.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES: Jesus commanded his disciples: “I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.”—Matthew 5:44, NCE.

When soldiers came to arrest Jesus, the apostle Peter drew a weapon to defend him. However, Jesus said: “Put your sword back in its place. All who use swords will be killed with swords.”—Matthew 26:52, NCV.

The apostle John wrote: “You can tell God’s children from the devil’s children, because those who belong to the devil refuse to do right or to love each other. From the beginning you were told that we must love each other. Don’t be like Cain, who belonged to the devil and murdered his own brother.”—1 John 3:10-12, *Contemporary English Version*.

QUESTION: Does this religion encourage its members to participate in warfare?

TOPIC: Politics.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES: After witnessing Jesus’ ability to perform miracles, some wanted him to become involved in local

politics. His response? “Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.”—John 6:15, NIV.

When Jesus was arrested and falsely accused of being a political agitator, he replied: “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.”—John 18:36, *English Standard Version*.

When praying to God about the disciples, Jesus said: “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.”—John 17:14, *New Revised Standard Version*.

Which religion teaches its members to overcome political, racial, and economic barriers that divide people?



QUESTION: *Does this religion follow Jesus' example and avoid becoming involved in politics, even if that means that its members will be hated by some politicians?*

TOPIC: Prejudice.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES: When the first uncircumcised non-Jews became Christians, the apostle Peter remarked: "God doesn't show favoritism, but in every nation the person who fears Him and does righteousness is acceptable to Him."—Acts 10:34, 35, *Holman Christian Standard Bible*.

Writing to first-century Christians, James said: "My friends, if you have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, you won't treat

some people better than others. Suppose a rich person wearing fancy clothes and a gold ring comes to one of your meetings. And suppose a poor person dressed in worn-out clothes also comes. You must not give the best seat to the one in fancy clothes and tell the one who is poor to stand at the side or sit on the floor. That is the same as saying that some people are better than others, and you would be acting like a crooked judge."—James 2:1-4, CEV.

QUESTION: *Does this religion teach that all people are equal in God's sight and that members of the religion should not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race or economic standing?*

GOOD RELIGION PROMOTES Respect for God's Word

JESUS promoted respect for God's Word, the Bible. This fact is evident from the way he replied when tempted by the Devil. (Matthew 4:4-11) For example, how did Jesus react when Satan challenged him to turn some stones into loaves of bread? Jesus rejected the temptation by quoting Moses' inspired words, which you can read at Deuteronomy 8:3. And when the Devil offered Jesus rulership over all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for just one act of worship, how did Jesus reply? He refused the offer by referring to a Scriptural principle that you can find at Deuteronomy 6:13.

Just think! Even though he was God's own Son, Jesus relied on the Bible as his authority when teaching. And he cer-

tainly never ignored God's Word in favor of human tradition. (John 7:16-18) However, many of the religious leaders of Jesus' day did not share his respect for God's Word. Why not? They had allowed human tradition to overshadow the Sacred Scriptures. Jesus bluntly told those religious men: "You have revoked God's word because of your tradition. Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said: 'These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. They worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commands of men.'"—Matthew 15:6-9, *Holman Christian Standard Bible*.

Many of the world's religions, Christian and non-Christian alike, claim to respect

the Bible. Nevertheless, how many religions do you know of that discard human traditions when these clash with clear teachings found in God's Word? Consider just two examples.

TOPIC: Religious titles.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES: Jesus condemned the religious leaders of his day for their love of titles and their desire for prominence. He said that those men loved "the first places at suppers and the front seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the market place, and to be called by men 'Rabbi.'" Jesus then told his disciples: "Do not you be called 'Rabbi'; for one is your Master, and all you are brothers. And call no one on earth your father; for one is your Father, who is in heaven."—Matthew 23:1-10, *New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible*.

QUESTION: *Do leaders of this religion like to be called by honorific titles and seek prominence in the community, or do they obey Jesus' command to avoid doing so?*

TOPIC: Use of images in worship.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them."—Exodus 20:4, 5, *English Standard Version*.

The apostle John wrote to Christians: "You must stay away from idols."—1 John 5:21, *Contemporary English Version*.

QUESTION: *Does this religion obey the Bible's clear command to avoid the use of images and idols in the worship of God?*

You Can Find the Right Path

Despite the bewildering number of religious paths available today, you can find the one that leads to life. There are many

identifying marks of the "religion that is pure and undefiled before God." (James 1:27, *New Revised Standard Version*) The scriptures discussed in these articles can act as signposts that help direct you to that religion.

Why not ask Jehovah's Witnesses to explain their answers to the questions raised in these articles? As you examine what they say, follow the good example of those who lived during the first century in the city of Beroea. After hearing the apostle Paul preach, "they studied the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was really true." (Acts 17:11, *Today's English Version*) If, like the Beroeans, you respect God's Word and diligently study it, you will find the path to life. Whether you then walk down that path is a choice you will have to make.



Which religion encourages people to study the Scriptures to see if what they are learning is really true?



Managing Money

He says: "I think my wife, Laura,* spends money on unnecessary items—at least on things that I don't think we need.

And she seems to be unable to save! This becomes a real problem when we have unexpected expenses. I've often said that if my wife has money in her pocket, she'll spend it."

She says: "Maybe I'm not the best at saving, but my husband has no idea how much things cost—food, furnishings, household expenses—and I'm the one who's at home the most. I'm aware of what we need, and I buy it even if it leads to another 'discussion' about money."



MONEY can be one of the most difficult subjects for a couple to discuss calmly. No wonder that it often tops the list as the most common cause of marital arguments.

Couples who have an unbalanced view of money might suffer stress, conflict, and emotional—even spiritual—damage. (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) Parents who fail to resolve money issues may be forced to work more, depriving their children and each other of emotional and spiritual support. They also teach their children to be unreasonable about money.

"Money is for a protection," acknowledges the Bible. (Ecclesiastes 7:12) But money will protect your marriage and family only if you learn not just how to control it but also how to talk to your spouse about it.[#] In fact, rather than being contentious, discussions about money matters can actually strengthen the bond between marriage mates.

* Names have been changed.

[#] The Bible says that "a husband is head of his wife," so he bears both the principal responsibility for how the family's money will be used and the obligation to treat his wife in a loving, unselfish manner.—Ephesians 5:23, 25.

Why, though, does money cause so many problems in a marriage? And what practical steps can you take to make money a constructive topic rather than a contentious one?

What Are the Challenges?

Often, disagreements over money are not really about cash or credit but about trust or fear. For example, a husband who demands that his wife account for every cent she spends might really be saying that he has little faith in her ability to manage family finances. And a wife who complains that her husband saves too little could actually be expressing her fear that some future event will cause the family financial harm.

Couples also face another challenge—their backgrounds. "My wife comes from a family where money was managed well," says Matthew, who has been married for eight years. "She does not have the hang-ups that I do. My father was an alcoholic and a chain-smoker and was out of work for extended periods of time. We often had to do without

essential items, and I developed a real fear of being in debt. At times, this fear makes me unreasonable with my wife about money matters." Whatever the reason for the tension, what can you do to make your money work for your marriage, not against it?

Four Keys to Success

The Bible is not a financial handbook. But it does contain practical wisdom that can help a couple to avoid money problems. Why not consider its advice and try the suggestions listed below?

1. Learn to talk calmly about money. "With those consulting together there is wisdom." (Proverbs 13:10) Depending on your background, you may feel awkward when consulting others, especially your mate, about money matters. Even so, wisdom dictates that you learn to discuss this important subject. For example, why not describe to your spouse how you think you might have been affected by your parents' attitude toward money? Also, try to understand how your mate's background has influenced his or her attitude.

You do not have to wait until a problem arises before you talk about money. One Bible writer asked: "Will two walk together unless they have met by appointment?" (Amos 3:3) How does this principle apply? If you set a specific time to talk about financial issues, you lessen the likelihood of conflict resulting from misunderstandings.

TRY THIS: Pick a regular time to talk about family finances. You could have the conversation on the first day of each month or each week on a set day. Keep the discussion brief, possibly lasting about 15 minutes or less. Choose a time when you are both likely to be relaxed. Agree not to talk about money at certain times, such as at the meal table or when relaxing with the children.

2. Agree on how income will be viewed. "In showing honor to one another take the lead." (Romans 12:10) If you are the only one who earns a wage, you can honor your spouse by viewing your income, not as your personal money, but as family money. —1 Timothy 5:8.

If you and your spouse both earn money, you can honor each other by disclosing your income and major expenditures to each other. If you hide either from your mate, you may well undermine trust and cause damage to your relationship. You do not necessarily have to consult your mate before spending every cent. But if you discuss larger purchases, you prove that you value your mate's opinion.

TRY THIS: Agree on an amount that each of you can spend without having to consult the other, be it \$20, \$200, or some other figure. Always consult your mate if you want to spend more than that amount.

3. Put your plans on paper. "If you plan and work hard, you will have plenty." (Proverbs 21:5, *Contemporary English Version*) One way to plan for the future and avoid wasting your hard work is to create a family budget. Nina, who has been married for five years, says: "Seeing your income and expenses on paper is a real eye-opener. It's difficult to argue with the facts."

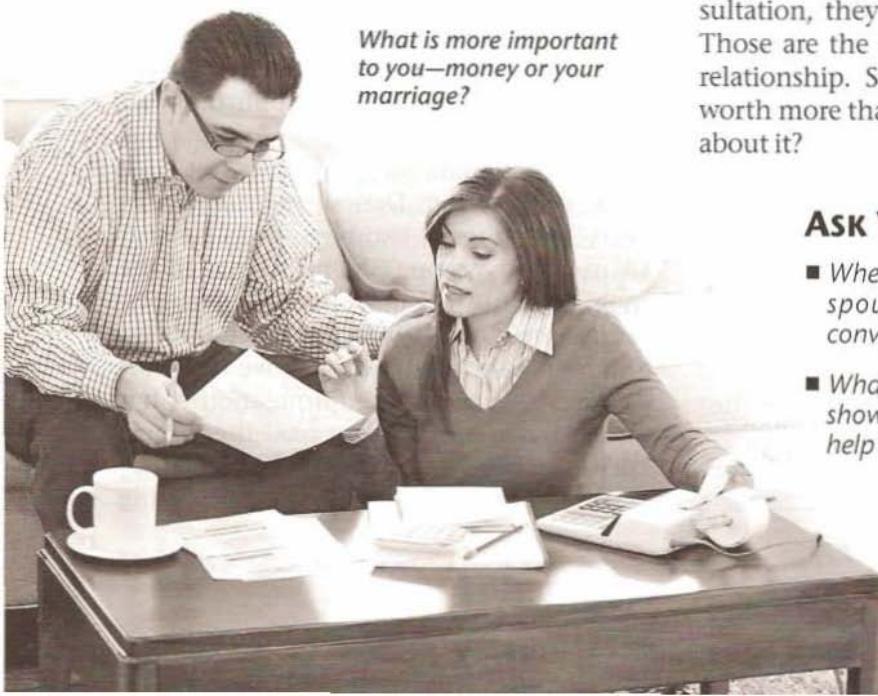
Your method of budgeting does not need to be complicated. Darren, married for 26 years and father of two boys, says: "At first, we used an envelope system. We placed the money for the week into different envelopes. For example, we had food, entertainment, and even haircut envelopes. If we ran short in one area, we borrowed from another but always made sure that we paid the money back into that envelope as soon as we could." If you rarely pay your bills with cash, using

either electronic banking or a credit card, it is especially important that you have a plan and keep track of your expenses.

TRY THIS: Write down all your fixed expenses. Agree on what percentage of your income should be saved. Then list your variable expenses, such as for food, power, and phone bills. Next keep track of your actual expenses for several months. If needed, adjust your lifestyle so that you do not sink into debt.

4. Agree on who will do what. "Two people are better than one, because they get more done by working together." (*Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10, New Century Version*) In some families, the husband cares for the finances. In others, the wife capably cares for this responsibility. (*Proverbs 31:10-28*) Many couples, though, choose to share the load. "My wife looks after the bills and smaller expenses," says Mario, who has been married for 21 years. "I care for the taxes, contracts, and rent. We keep each other informed and work as partners." Whatever your method, the key is to work together as a team.

What is more important to you—money or your marriage?



TRY THIS: Taking into consideration each other's strengths and weaknesses, discuss who will care for what responsibility. Review the arrangement after a couple of months. Be willing to make adjustments. To help you appreciate the work that your spouse does, such as paying bills or shopping, you might want to swap roles occasionally.

The Real Message in Money Discussions

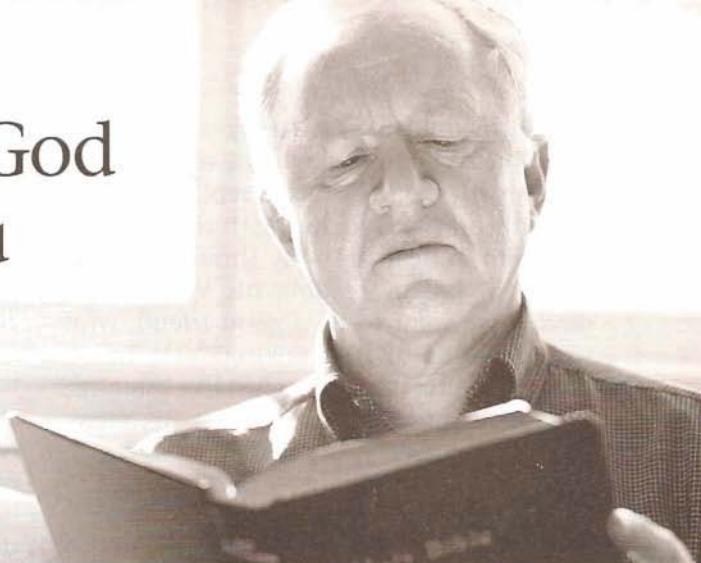
Your money discussions need not stifle love. Leah, who has been married for five years, found this to be true. She says: "My husband and I have learned to have open and honest conversations about money. As a result, we now work as a team, and our love has grown."

When couples discuss how they want to spend money, they share their hopes and dreams and confirm their commitment to the marriage. When they consult together before making large purchases, they show respect for each other's opinions and feelings. When they allow each other freedom to spend a specific amount without consultation, they express trust in each other. Those are the ingredients of a truly loving relationship. Such a relationship is surely worth more than mere money, so why argue about it?

ASK YOURSELF . . .

- *When was the last time that my spouse and I had a calm conversation about money?*
- *What can I say and do that will show appreciation for the financial help my spouse gives the family?*

Do You Allow God to Speak to You Every Day?



HOW often do you look at yourself in a mirror? For most of us, this is a daily practice—perhaps something we do several times every day. Why? Because we are concerned about our appearance.

Reading the Bible can be likened to peering into a mirror. (James 1:23-25) The message recorded in God's Word has the power to allow us to see ourselves as we really are. It "pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit." (Hebrews 4:12) In other words, it divides what we appear to be on the outside from what we really are on the inside. It shows us where adjustments are needed, just as a mirror does.

The Bible not only reveals where adjustments need to be made but also helps us to make those adjustments. The apostle Paul wrote: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Notice, of the four benefits highlighted, three of them—reproofing, setting things straight, and disciplining—involve adjustments in our attitude and actions. If we need to look regularly in a mirror to ensure that our appearance is acceptable, how

much more so must we read God's Word, the Bible, on a regular basis!

Upon appointing Joshua to lead the nation of Israel, Jehovah God told him: "This book of the law should not depart from your mouth, and you must in an undertone read in it day and night, in order that you may take care to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way successful and then you will act wisely." (Joshua 1:8) Yes, to be successful, Joshua needed to read God's Word "day and night," on a regular basis.

The first psalm likewise extols the benefits of regular Bible reading when it states: "Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones, and in the way of sinners has not stood, and in the seat of ridiculers has not sat. But his delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night. And he will certainly become like a tree planted by streams of water, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither, and everything he does will succeed." (Psalm 1:1-3) Surely we want to be like such a man.

Many people make it a daily habit to read the Bible. When asked why he reads the Bible every day, one Christian replied: "If I repeatedly pray to God during the day and expect him to hear me, why shouldn't I also listen to God by reading his Word every day? If we want to be a good friend, why would we do all the talking?" He has a point. Reading the Bible is just like listening to God because we thereby get his viewpoint on matters.

Meeting the Challenge

Perhaps you have already tried to start a Bible reading program. Have you read the entire Bible from cover to cover? That is an excellent way to become more familiar with its contents. However, some have started many times to read the entire Bible, only to find that their program gets interrupted. Have you faced this challenge? What can you do to reach the goal of reading the entire Bible? Why not try the following two suggestions?

Can you set aside time each day for Bible reading?



Schedule Bible reading into your daily routine. Select a time each day when you will most likely be able to do your Bible reading. Also plan a backup strategy. If for some reason you are unable to do your Bible reading at your preferred time, have another time selected so that you never let a day go by without reading God's Word. In this way you will imitate the example of the ancient Bereans. Of them, we are told: "They received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures *daily* as to whether these things were so."—Acts 17:11.

Have a specific goal in mind. For example, if you read from three to five chapters of the Bible every day, you can read the entire Bible in just one year. The chart on the following pages shows how this can be done. Why not make it your resolve to try this program? Under the heading "Date," plan out when you will read each set of chapters. Then, in the box provided, check off the sections as you read them. Doing so will help you keep track of your progress.

Once you have read the entire Bible, why stop there? You can use the same schedule to read the entire Bible every year, perhaps starting each time from a different section. Or if you would like to complete your reading of the Bible at a slower pace, you can take two or three days to read each of the scheduled readings.

Each time you read the Bible, you will find new things that apply to your life—things that you have never noticed before. Why? "The scene of this world is changing," and our lives and circumstances are changing constantly too. (1 Corinthians 7:31) Make it your firm determination, then, to look daily in the mirror of God's Word, the Bible. In this way, you can be sure that you allow God to speak to you every day. —Psalm 16:8.



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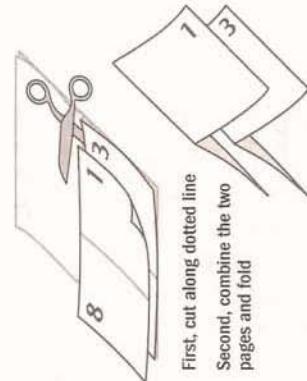
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/	2 TIMOTHY 1:4	/	<input type="checkbox"/>

Bible Reading SCHEDULE

DIRECTIONS. Fill in the dates that you plan to read each group of chapters listed. Check them off as you complete each section. You can read the Bible books in order or select topics based on the categories shown. If you read one set of chapters each day, you will have read the entire Bible in one year.

- ♦ Read days marked with a RED diamond to gain a historical overview of God's dealings with the Israelites.

- Read days marked with a BLUE dot to gain a chronological overview of the development of the Christian congregation.



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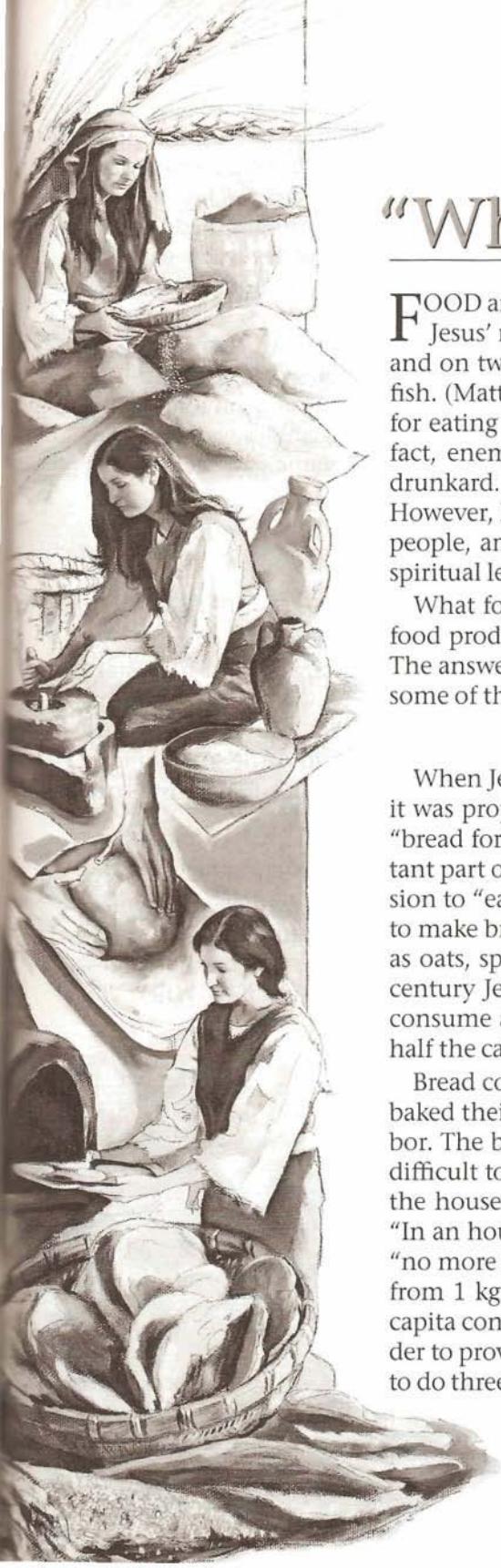
THE WRITINGS OF MOSES

DATE	CHAPTER	GENESIS	1-3	4-7	8-11	◆ 12-15	◆ 16-18	◆ 19-22	◆ 23-24	◆ 25-27	◆ 28-30	◆ 31-32	◆ 33-34	◆ 35-37	◆ 38-40	◆ 41-42	◆ 43-45	◆ 46-48	◆ 49-50	EXODUS	◆ 1-4	◆ 5-7	◆ 8-10	◆ 11-13	◆ 14-15	◆ 16-18	◆ 19-21	◆ 22-24	◆ 25-27	◆ 28-30	◆ 31-32	◆ 33-36	DEUTERONOMY	1-2	◆ 3-4	◆ 5-7	◆ 8-10	◆ 11-13	◆ 14-15	◆ 16-18	◆ 19-21	◆ 22-25	◆ 26-28	◆ 29-30	◆ 31-33	ACTS	1-3	4-6	7-8	9-11																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																						
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		WHEN THE KINGS RULED ISRAEL		CHAPTER	
		DATE	/	1 SAMUEL	◆ 1-2
43-44	/	14-16	◆ 17-19		
45-48	/	20-22	◆ 23-26		
49-50	/	23-26	◆ 27-28		
51-52	/	27-28	◆ 29-31		
LAMENTATIONS	1-2	◆ 29-31	◆ 32		◆ 3-6
3-5	/	◆ 32	◆ 33-34		◆ 7-9
EZEKIEL	1-3	◆ 33-34	/		◆ 10-12
4-6	/	/	/		◆ 13-14
7-9	/	/	/		◆ 15-16
10-12	/	/	/		◆ 17-18
13-15	/	/	/		◆ 19-21
16	/	/	/		◆ 22-24
44-47	/	/	/		
48-50	/	/	/		
51-55	/	/	JOSHUA	◆ 1-4	
56-58	/	/		◆ 5-7	
59-62	/	/		◆ 8-9	
63-66	/	/		◆ 10-12	
JEREMIAH	1-3	/		◆ 13-15	
4-5	/	/		◆ 16-18	
6-7	/	/		◆ 19-21	
8-10	/	/		◆ 22-24	
11-13	/	/	JUDGES	◆ 1-2	
14-16	/	/		◆ 3-5	
17-20	/	/		◆ 6-7	
21-23	/	/		◆ 8-9	
24-26	/	/		◆ 10-11	
27-29	/	/	DANIEL	◆ 12-13	
30-31	/	/		◆ 14-16	
32-33	/	/		◆ 17-19	
34-36	/	/		◆ 20-21	
37-39	/	/		RUTH	◆ 1-4
40-42	/	/			◆ 11-12

THE BIBLE					
1 KINGS (cont.)	♦ 13-14	/	15-18	/	21-24
/	♦ 15-17	/	19-22	/	25-29
/	♦ 18-19	/	23-25	/	30-31
/	♦ 20-21	/	26-28	/	32-34
/	♦ 22	/	29-30	/	35-38
2 KINGS	♦ 1-3	/	31-33	/	39-42
/	♦ 4-5	/	34-36	/	/
/	♦ 6-8	/	♦ 9-10	/	/
/	♦ 11-13	/	♦ 14-15	/	BOOKS OF SONGS AND PRACTICAL WISDOM
/	♦ 16-17	/	♦ 16-17	/	CHAPTER
/	♦ 18-19	/	♦ 1-3	/	DATE
/	♦ 20-22	/	♦ 4-7	/	PSALMS
/	♦ 23-25	/	♦ 8-10	/	CHAPTER
1 CHRONICLES	1-2	/	NEHEMIAH	/	CHAPTER
/	3-5	/	♦ 1-3	/	DATE
/	6-7	/	♦ 4-6	/	DATE
/	8-10	/	♦ 7-8	/	DATE
/	11-12	/	♦ 9-10	/	DATE
/	13-15	/	ESTHER	/	DATE
/	16-17	/	♦ 11-13	/	DATE
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/	32-35	/	ECCLESIASTES	/	DATE
/	36-38	/	43-47	/	DATE
/	39-42	/	48-52	/	DATE
/	53-58	/	53-58	/	DATE
/	59-64	/	SONG OF SOLOMON	/	DATE
/	65-68	/	9-12	/	DATE
/	69-72	/	1-8	/	DATE
/	73-77	/	THE PROPHETS	/	DATE
/	78-79	/	ISAIAH	/	DATE
/	80-86	/	1-4	/	DATE
/	87-90	/	5-7	/	DATE
/	91-96	/	8-10	/	DATE
/	97-103	/	104-105	/	DATE



"What are we to eat?"

FOOD and drink—the topic cropped up time and again during Jesus' ministry. His first miracle was to turn water into wine, and on two occasions he fed multitudes with a few loaves and fish. (Matthew 16:7-10; John 2:3-11) Jesus was known not only for eating with the poor but also for feasting with the rich. In fact, enemies of Jesus accused him of being a glutton and a drunkard. (Matthew 11:18, 19) Of course, Jesus was neither. However, he knew that food and drink were of vital concern to people, and he masterfully used these items to illustrate deep spiritual lessons.—Luke 22:14-20; John 6:35-40.

What food and drink were common in Jesus' day? How was food produced? And how much effort went into preparing it? The answers to those questions will help you better understand some of the events and expressions mentioned in the Gospels.

Give Us "Our Bread for This Day"

When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he revealed that it was proper to ask God to provide the necessities of life—the "bread for this day." (Matthew 6:11) Bread was such an important part of the diet that in both Hebrew and Greek, the expression to "eat a meal" literally meant to "eat bread." Cereals used to make bread, such as wheat and barley, as well as others, such as oats, spelt, and millet, made up a large portion of the first-century Jewish diet. Researchers estimate that a person would consume about 500 pounds of cereals a year, providing about half the calories the individual needed.

Bread could be bought in the marketplace. But most families baked their own—a task involving a considerable amount of labor. The book *Bread, Wine, Walls and Scrolls* explains: "As it is difficult to keep flour for a long time, the milling was done by the housewife every day." How long would this process take? "In an hour of hard labor using a handmill," states the author, "no more than 0.8 kg [almost two pounds] of flour is produced from 1 kg [more than two pounds] of wheat. As the daily per capita consumption of wheat was about 1/2 kg [a pound], in order to provide for a family of five or six, the homemaker needed to do three hours of milling."

Now think about Mary, Jesus' mother. In addition to her other household chores, she had to provide enough bread to feed a husband, five sons, and at least two daughters. (Matthew 13:55, 56) Without a doubt, Mary, like other Jewish women, worked hard to help prepare the "bread for this day."

"Come, Take Your Breakfast"

After Jesus was resurrected, he appeared to some of his disciples early one morning. The disciples had been fishing all night, without success. "Come, take your breakfast," Jesus called to his tired friends. He then served them fresh fish and bread. (John 21:9-13) Although this is the only mention in the Gospels of a breakfast meal, it was common for people to begin their day with a meal of bread, nuts, and raisins or olives.

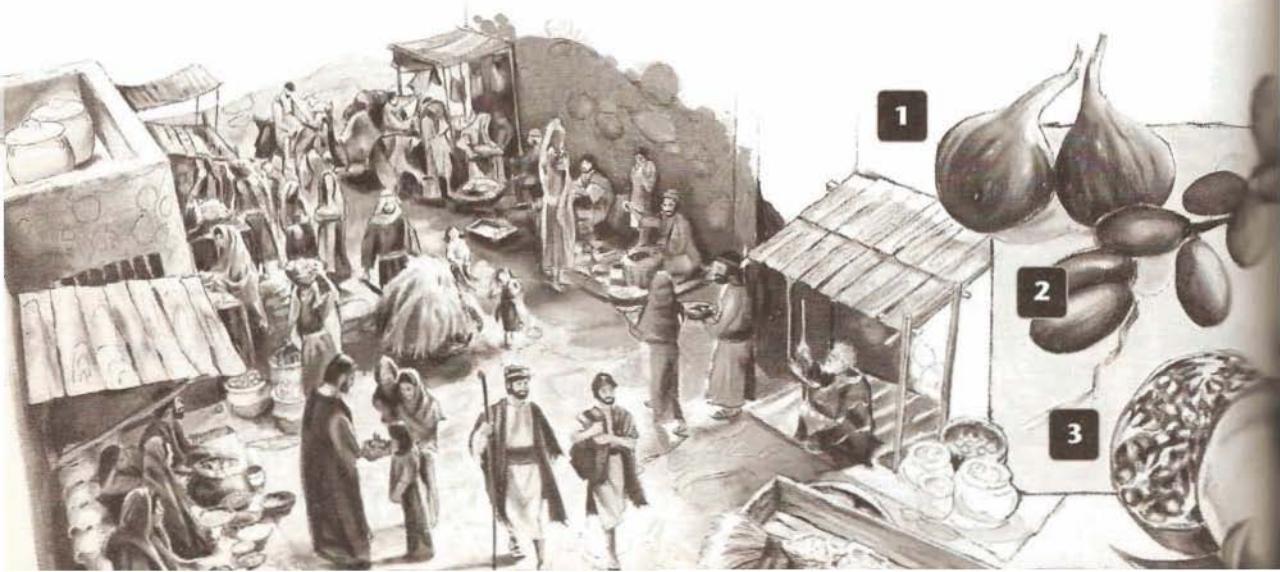
What about the midday meal? What would the working class eat? The book *Life in Biblical Israel* says: "The midday meal was light, composed of bread, grain, olives, and figs." Those were the items that the disciples may well have been carrying when they returned from Sychar to find Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman at the well. The hour "was about the sixth," or midday, and the disciples had "gone off into the city to buy foodstuffs."—John 4:5-8.

In the evening, families assembled for the main meal of the day. Describing this meal, the book *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries C.E.* says: "Most people ate bread or porridges made of barley, various cereals and legumes, or more rarely wheat. They supplemented them usually with salt and oil or olives, occasionally a strong sauce, honey, or sweet fruit juices." Milk, cheese, vegetables, and fresh or dried fruits may also have been on the menu. About 30 kinds of vegetables were available at the time—onions, garlic, radishes, carrots, and cabbage, to name a few—and more than 25 varieties of fruits, such as (1) figs, (2) dates, and (3) pomegranates, were grown in the area.

Can you visualize some of these ingredients on the table when Jesus shared an evening meal with Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary? Now imagine the aroma that filled the room as Mary greased Jesus' feet with "genuine nard"—the smell of food mingling with the scent of the costly perfumed oil.—John 12:1-3.

"When You Spread a Feast"

On another occasion, while eating a meal in "the house of a certain one of the rulers of the Pharisees," Jesus taught those present a valuable lesson. He said: "When you



spread a feast, invite poor people, crippled, lame, blind; and you will be happy, because they have nothing with which to repay you. For you will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous ones." (Luke 14:1-14) If the Pharisee followed Jesus' advice, what food might he have served at such a feast?

A rich man may have offered fancy bread, baked in various shapes and enhanced with wine, honey, milk, and spices. Butter and hard cheese would likely be on the table. Fresh olives, preserved olives, or olive oil would no doubt be featured. According to the book *Food in Antiquity*, "every person consumed twenty kilos [40 pounds] of olive oil per year as food, and an additional quantity for cosmetics and for illumination."

If the Pharisee lived near the sea, he and his guests would likely eat freshly caught fish. Those living inland usually ate fish that was preserved by being pickled or salted. The host may also have offered meat—a rare treat for a poor guest. A more familiar sight would have been an egg dish of some sort. (Luke 11:12) The flavor of these ingredients may have been enhanced with herbs and spices, such as mint, dill, cumin, and mustard. (Matthew 13:31; 23:23; Luke 11:42) Later, the guests may have enjoyed a dessert of roasted wheat prepared with almonds, honey, and spices.

Those at a feast would likely have been offered grapes—fresh, dried, or in the form of wine. Thousands of winepresses have been found in Palestine, testifying to the popularity of the drink. At one location in Gibeon, archaeologists discovered 63 cellars cut into the rock that could store about 25,000 gallons of wine.

"Never Be Anxious"

As you read the Gospels, note how many times Jesus mentions food or drink in his illustrations or the way he teaches some important lesson while at a meal. Certainly, Jesus and his disciples enjoyed eating and drinking, especially when in the company of good associates, but they did not make these things the main pursuit in life.

Jesus helped his disciples to maintain a balanced view of food and drink when he said: "Never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' For all these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things." (Matthew 6:31, 32) The disciples took this lesson to heart, and God cared for their needs. (2 Corinthians 9:8) True, your diet may be different from that of those who lived in the first century. But you can be sure that God will care for you if you put his interests first in life.—Matthew 6:33, 34.



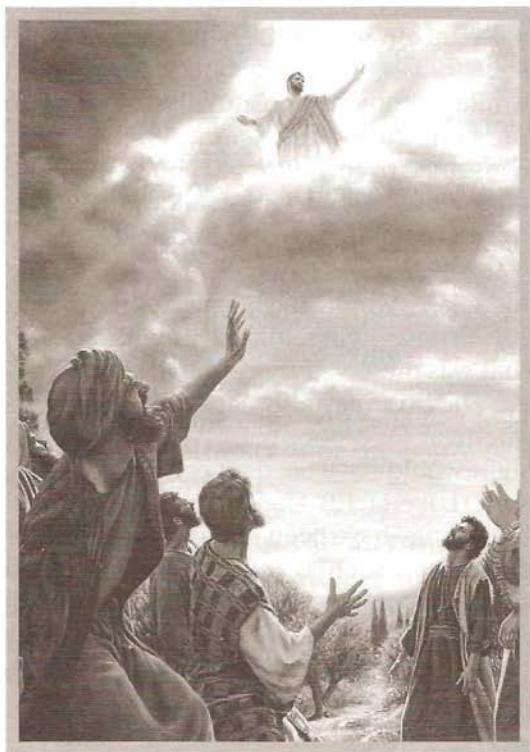
About Mankind's Future

Did Jesus promise life in heaven?

Yes, he did! Jesus himself was resurrected, and he ascended to heaven to be with his Father. But before his death and resurrection, he told his 11 faithful apostles: "In the house of my Father there are many abodes. . . . I am going my way to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2) However, those who would receive this privilege would be few. Jesus made this fact plain when he said to his disciples: "Have no fear, little flock, because your Father has approved of giving you the kingdom."—Luke 12:32.

What will the "little flock" do in heaven?

The Father wants this small group to be part of a government in heaven with Jesus. How do we know? After he was resurrected, Jesus revealed to the apostle John that some faithful ones would "rule as kings over the earth." (Revelation 1:1; 5:9, 10) This is good news. One of mankind's greatest needs is good government. What will this government ruled by Jesus achieve? Jesus said: "In the *re-creation*, when the Son of man sits down upon his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also yourselves sit upon twelve thrones." (Matthew 19:28) The rule by Jesus and his followers will result in "the re-creation," or renewal, of the perfect conditions that the first human couple enjoyed on earth before they sinned.



**For more information, see chapters 3 and 7 of the book
*What Does the Bible Really Teach?****

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

What hope did Jesus offer the rest of mankind?

Mankind was created for life on earth, in contrast with Jesus, who was created for life in heaven. (Psalm 115:16) Thus, Jesus said: "You are from the realms below; I am from the realms above." (John 8:23) Jesus spoke of a wonderful future for mankind on earth. Once, he said: "Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5) He was alluding to the inspired psalm that says: "The meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace. The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Psalm 37: 11, 29.

So the "little flock," who go to heaven, are not the only ones to receive everlasting life. Jesus also spoke of a hope that is open to the whole world of millions of mankind. He said: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—John 3:16.

How will God relieve mankind of suffering?

Jesus spoke of relief from two sources of oppression when he said: "Now there is a judging of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out." (John 12:31) First, ungodly men who cause suffering will be judged and destroyed. Second, Satan will be cast out and will no longer mislead mankind.

What about those throughout history who lived and died without having a chance to learn about God and Christ and exercise faith in them? Jesus told an evildoer who suffered death at His side: "You will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) That person, along with millions of others, will have an opportunity to learn about God when Jesus raises him from the dead in a paradise on earth. He will then have the chance to be among the meek and righteous ones who receive everlasting life on earth.—Acts 24:15.

"The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."

—Psalm 37:29



Rahab Listened to the News

LET'S pretend that it is about 3,500 years ago. We are in the city of Jericho, in the land of Canaan. A girl named Rahab lives in this city. She was born after Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and then through the Red Sea on *dry land!* There are no radios, televisions, or Internet, but Rahab knows about this miracle—even though it occurred a long way from where she lives. Do you know how she learned about it?—*

Travelers no doubt have told the story about these miracles. As she grows up, Rahab remembers what Jehovah did for his people. She then hears other amazing things about the Israelites. After 40 years in the wilderness, they have entered Canaan, and God has been helping them defeat any who oppose them. Now Rahab learns that the Israelites are camped just across the Jordan River from Jericho!

One evening, two strangers come to Rahab because they know that she works at a place where visitors can stay. So she takes them in. During the night, the king of Jericho learns that Israelite spies have come into Jericho and that they have gone to the house where Rahab works. So the king sends messengers to Rahab, who tell her to bring out the men who have come to her. Do you know what Rahab has already learned and what she has done about it?—

Well, even before the king's messengers arrived, Rahab learned that her visitors are Israelite spies. So she hid them on the roof, and now she tells the king's messengers: "Yes, the men did come to me . . . And it came about at the closing of the gate by dark that the men went out." Rahab urges them: "Chase after them."

Why, do you think, has Rahab protected the spies?—She explains why, telling them: "I do know that Jehovah will certainly give you the land . . . For we have heard how Jehovah dried up the waters of the Red Sea from

* If you are reading with children, the dash provides a reminder to stop and direct the question to them.

before you when you came out of Egypt." She has also heard about other victories God has given Israel over their enemies.

Jehovah was certainly pleased that Rahab protected the spies, as the Bible tells us at Hebrews 11: 31. He was also pleased when she begged the spies: 'I have been kind to you, so promise me, please, that when Jericho is captured you will save my father and mother and my brothers and sisters.' The spies promise to do that if Rahab will follow their instructions. Do you know what these are?—

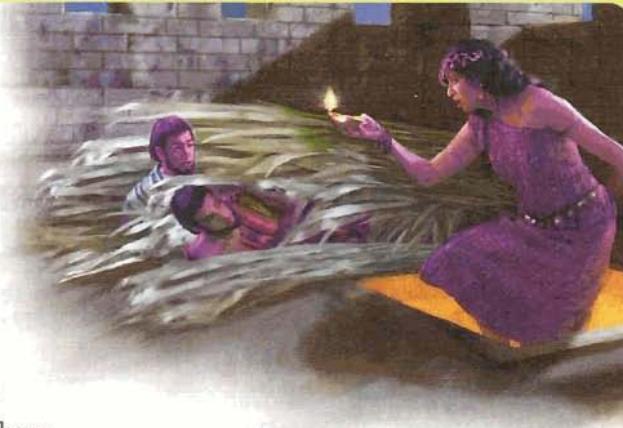
'Take this red cord and tie it in your window,' the spies say, 'and gather all your relatives with you into your house. If you do, everyone there will be safe.' Rahab does exactly as the spies tell her. Do you know what happens then?—

The Israelites arrive outside the walls of Jericho. For six days they march once each day around the city in silence. On the seventh day, they march around seven times and then give a big shout. The wall comes down—except where the red cord is hanging in the window! Rahab and her family are saved.—Joshua 2:1-24; 6:1-5, 14, 15, 20-25.

What can we learn from what Rahab did?— Well, she not only listened to the news about things God was doing to protect his people but also helped them when she had the opportunity. Yes, Rahab chose to serve Jehovah with his people! Will you do the same?— We pray that you will.

Questions:

- What important news did Rahab hear when she was young?
- How did she treat the Israelite spies, and why?
- What did Rahab have the spies promise?
- How do we know that Jehovah was pleased with Rahab, and how can you be like her?



Jehovah Values Meekness

Numbers 12:1-15

PRIDE, jealousy, ambition. Such traits are common among those who manage to get ahead in this world. But do characteristics like that bring us close to Jehovah God? On the contrary, Jehovah values meekness in his worshippers. This is evident from the account found in Numbers chapter 12. The setting is the wilderness of Sinai, following Israel's deliverance from Egypt.

Miriam and Aaron, the older siblings of Moses, "began to speak against" their younger brother. (Verse 1) Rather than just speaking to Moses, they spoke *against* him, likely spreading their complaints in the camp. Miriam, who is mentioned first, apparently took the lead. The first ground for the murmuring was that Moses had married a Cushite woman. Was Miriam jealous that she might be eclipsed by this other woman—a non-Israelite at that?

The roots of the grumbling went deeper. Miriam and Aaron kept saying: "Is it just by Moses alone that Jehovah has spoken? Is it not by us also that he has spoken?" (Verse 2) Was the real motive for the murmuring a desire for more power and recognition?

In the account, Moses did not answer the complaints himself. Evidently, he quietly endured the abuse. His patient response affirmed the Bible's description of him as "the meekest of all the men" on the earth.* (Verse 3) Moses did not have to defend him-



self. Jehovah was listening, and he stood up for Moses.

Jehovah took the murmuring personally. After all, he had appointed Moses. Rebuking the murmurers, God reminded them that he had a unique relationship with Moses: "Mouth to mouth I speak to him." Jehovah then asked Miriam and Aaron: "Why, then, did you not fear to speak against ... Moses?" (Verse 8) By speaking against Moses, they were really guilty of speaking against God. For such gross disrespect, they would feel the heat of divine anger.

Miriam, the apparent instigator, was stricken with leprosy. Aaron immediately implored Moses to intercede for her. Just imagine—Miriam's welfare now depended on the intercession of the one they had wronged! Moses meekly did as he was asked. Speaking for the first time in this account, Moses earnestly entreated Jehovah in behalf of his sister. Miriam was healed, but she had to endure the shame of a seven-day period of quarantine.

This account gives us insight into the qualities that Jehovah values and the traits that he opposes. If we want to draw close to God, we must strive to uproot any traces of pride, jealousy, and ambition we might see in ourselves. It is the meek whom Jehovah loves. He promises: "The meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." —Psalm 37:11; James 4:6.

* Meekness is a strong quality that enables a person to endure injustice with patience and without vindictiveness.

The Bible Changes Lives

How did a man who began smoking marijuana and tobacco while young find the strength to break the habit? What enabled a violent gang member to control his anger and overcome racial hatred? Consider what each of them has to say.



PROFILE

NAME: **HEINRICH MAAR**

AGE: **38**

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: **KAZAKHSTAN**

HISTORY: **MARIJUANA AND TOBACCO ADDICT**



MY PAST: I was born in southern Kazakhstan, about 70 miles from the city of Tashkent. The area was dry and hot in summer, with temperatures reaching 110 degrees Fahrenheit, and in winter the temperature dropped to about 15 degrees—ideal conditions for growing both grapes and marijuana.

My parents were of German descent. Both were evangelical Christians but did not practice their religion. However, they did teach me to recite the Our Father from memory. When I was 14 years old, my mother and older sister studied the Bible for a while with Jehovah's Witnesses. Once, I listened in when the two Witnesses who studied with my mother showed her the divine name, Jehovah, in her own old Bible. That impressed me. Mother discontinued the study, and

my interest in spiritual things remained undeveloped. Even so, sometime later at school, our teacher repeated all sorts of false stories about the so-called sect of Jehovah's Witnesses. Since I had been to some meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses with my sister, I told my teacher that the things she was repeating were not true.

When I turned 15, I was sent to Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, Russia, to learn a trade. I shared with my roommates the little I had learned about Jehovah. However, I started to smoke. When visiting my home in Kazakhstan, it was easy for me to buy marijuana, even though it was illegal to do so. I also drank too much vodka and homemade wine.

I finished trade school and then enlisted in the Soviet army for two years. Nevertheless, some of the facts that I had learned

from the Bible when I was young stayed with me. As opportunities came up, I talked to my fellow soldiers about Jehovah and defended the Witnesses when lies were told about them.

After finishing military service, I moved to Germany. While in a camp for immigrants, I received a copy of a Bible study handbook produced by the Witnesses. I read it with great enthusiasm and decided that what it said was the truth. However, I was unable to break my addiction to tobacco and marijuana. After a while, I moved to the vicinity of the city of Karlsruhe. There I met one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and he began studying the Bible with me.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: For a long time, I had a feeling that the Bible was God's Word. And after reading the Bible study handbook I received, I was convinced that the Bible answered all the important questions in life. Still, it took me some time to change my habits. Eventually, I took to heart the Bible's counsel at 2 Corinthians 7:1 and made up my mind to cleanse myself

of "every defilement of flesh and spirit," which meant giving up marijuana and tobacco.

I was able to stop smoking marijuana almost immediately. But it took six long months to free myself of the tobacco habit. One day the Witness conducting the Bible study with me asked, "What is the purpose of your life?" That really got me thinking about my addiction to tobacco. Several times I had tried to stop smoking. Now, though, I decided to pray *before* I reached for a cigarette rather than ask God for forgiveness afterward. In 1993, I set a day when I would quit. With Jehovah's help, I haven't touched a cigarette since.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: Now that I am free of the expensive and damaging addiction to marijuana and tobacco, my health has improved. Today, I have the privilege of being a volunteer worker at the Germany branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses. I am so glad that I learned to apply the Bible's wisdom in my life! Knowing what the Bible teaches has given my life real purpose.



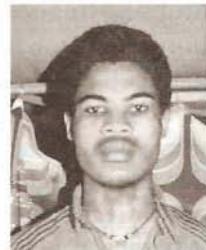
PROFILE

NAME: **TITUS SHANGADI**

AGE: **43**

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: **NAMIBIA**

HISTORY: **VIOLENT GANG MEMBER**



MY PAST: I grew up in a rural village in the Ohangwena region of northern Namibia. People in my village were beaten and killed during the war that was fought in this region during the 1980's. In my village, a boy was

considered manly only if he was a good fighter and could beat up other boys. So I learned to fight!

When I completed school, I went to live with my uncle in the coastal town of Swa-

kopmund. Soon after my arrival, I joined a gang of rebellious young men. We would go to places in town where black men were not welcome, such as hotels and bars, just to provoke fights. On several occasions, we fought with security guards and the police. Every night I equipped myself with a sharp, long knife or a panga, a machete, to be ready to attack anyone who got in my way.

One night while fighting with a rival gang, I was almost killed. An opposing gang member came at me from behind and was about to chop my head off when a fellow gang member knocked him unconscious. Despite this brush with death, violence continued to rule my life. If I got into an argument with anyone, man or woman, I would always be the one to strike the first blow.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: When I first met one of Jehovah's Witnesses, the woman read to me verses from Psalm 37 and then told me that the Bible book of Revelation held other wonderful promises for the future. But since she did not say where in the book these promises were, I got ahold of a Bible and read the whole of Revelation that night. I loved the promise I read at Revelation 21:3, 4 that "death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." When the Witnesses returned, I accepted the offer of a Bible study.

It was very difficult to change my way of thinking and acting. But I learned from Acts 10:34, 35 that "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." I also worked hard to apply Romans 12:18: "If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men."

In addition to learning to control my anger, I also had to break a strong addiction to tobacco. Often, with tears in my eyes, I

prayed to Jehovah to help me. But at first I obviously did things the wrong way, saying that I was smoking my "last" cigarette and then praying afterward. The Witness who conducted the Bible study with me helped me see the value of praying *before* I picked up a cigarette. I also needed to avoid being around others who were smoking. Further, I followed the suggestion to speak to my coworkers about how bad smoking was. This

"Often, with tears in my eyes, I prayed to Jehovah to help me"

really helped, for it cut off my access to free cigarettes—the other smokers at work would no longer offer them to me.

Eventually, I was able to quit smoking and broke away from my former lifestyle. After six months of learning and applying Bible principles, I qualified to be baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: I became convinced that Jehovah's Witnesses practice the true religion when I saw the love evident among them, no matter what their race or color. Even before I was baptized as a Witness, a white member of the congregation invited me to his house to share a meal. It was like a dream. I had never before sat down peacefully with a white person, let alone shared a meal in his home. Now I was part of a genuine international brotherhood.

In the past, security guards and the police had tried to force me to change my way of thinking and acting, but they did not succeed. Only the Bible had the power to help me change my personality and to become a happy man.

Our Readers Ask

HOW MUCH SHOULD I DONATE?

"God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7) Those words are known by millions throughout the world. However, some churchgoers may feel obligated to donate beyond their means. In fact, some religious denominations require that their members donate a fixed sum. The practice is called tithing, that is, giving 10 percent of one's income to the church.

Does the Bible really require that we offer a fixed sum as a donation? Put personally, how much *should* I donate?

Requirements and Voluntary Donations in the Past

The Bible contains clear instructions to the nation of Israel about the amount God required them to give. (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21, 24; Deuteronomy 12:4-7, 11, 17, 18; 14:22-27) These requirements were not excessive. Jehovah promised that in return for obedience to his laws, he would make the nation 'overflow with prosperity.'—Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, 11, 12.

In other instances, the Israelites could voluntarily donate as much or as little as they desired. For example, when King David planned to build a temple for Jehovah, his subjects donated "gold worth five thousand talents."* (1 Chronicles 29:7) Contrast this with what Jesus observed when he was on earth. He saw "a certain needy widow drop two small coins of very little value" into the temple treasury chests. How much did her donation amount to? Only 1/64 of a day's wages. Yet, Jesus said

that this small sum was acceptable.—Luke 21:1-4.

Are Christians Required to Give a Set Amount?

Christians are not under the Law covenant given to Israel. Thus, they are not obliged to give a set amount to God. However, in the true Christian congregation, giving is a source of much joy. Jesus Christ himself stated: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—Acts 20:35.

Jehovah's Witnesses support their worldwide preaching work through voluntary donations. These donations are used to print literature, such as the magazine you are reading, and to build and maintain their places of worship, known as Kingdom Halls. None of the funds collected are used to pay salaries. Some who devote themselves full-time to share in the disciple-making work do receive assistance to defray their transportation costs and other personal expenses. But no one demands such help. In fact, the vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses do not receive any financial assistance to support their preaching work. Instead, most work secularly to support themselves, just as Paul did when he worked as a tentmaker.—2 Corinthians 11:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:9.

If a person wants to make a donation toward the work accomplished by Jehovah's Witnesses, how much should he give? The apostle Paul wrote: "Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."—2 Corinthians 8:12; 9:7.

* In 2008, the average price of gold was \$871 an ounce, making this contribution worth some \$4,794,855,000.

Did You Know?



Who were the scribes who opposed Jesus?

During his ministry, Jesus encountered scribes not only in Jerusalem but also in smaller towns and villages. Outside of Jerusalem—and even in Jewish communities outside of Palestine—such men were minor officials, learned in the Law, who may have served as copyists or local judges.—Mark 2:6; 9:14; Luke 5:17-21.

In Jerusalem, scribes were closely associated with Jewish government. (Matthew 16:21) Their role there, says *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*,

"seems to be as associates of the priests, both in judicial proceeding and enforcement of Jewish custom and law, and ongoing business in the Sanhedrin." As high-ranking teachers of the Law, some of these scribes were actually members of the Sanhedrin, or Jewish high court. They served along with the chief priests and Pharisees.

Most often, the scribes appear as Jesus' religious opponents. However, some did not oppose him. For example, one scribe told Jesus: "I will follow you wherever you are about to go." Jesus said to another: "You are not far from the kingdom of God."—Matthew 8:19; Mark 12:28-34.

What did it mean for a person to be anointed?

In the Middle East in Bible times, greasing a person's head with oil was a sign of favor toward him or an act of hospitality toward a guest. Generally, the oil used was olive oil with perfume added to it. The Hebrews also poured oil on a person's head, or anointed him, when he was officially appointed to a spe-

cial position of authority. Aaron, for example, was anointed upon being appointed to serve as high priest. (Leviticus 8:12) In the case of King David, "Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him . . . , and the spirit of Jehovah began to be operative upon David from that day forward."—1 Samuel 16:13.

In the Hebrew language, the term used for such anointing is *ma-shach'*, from which the word *ma-shi'ach*, or Messiah, is derived. The corresponding Greek word is *khri'o*, from which comes *khristos'*, or Christ. Thus, Aaron and David each can be referred to as a messiah, or an anointed one. Moses too is called a christ, or an anointed one, in the sense that God appointed him to serve as His representative.—Hebrews 11:24-26.

Jesus of Nazareth was personally appointed by God to a position of great authority. Rather than being anointed with literal oil, Jesus was anointed with God's holy spirit. (Matthew 3:16) As Jehovah's chosen Anointed One, Jesus is properly referred to as the Messiah, or Christ.—Luke 4:18.

- Do all religions lead to God? See page 3.
- What does the Bible teach about divorce?
See page 5.
- Should religion be involved in politics?
See pages 7-8.
- What is one way that a married couple
can resolve differences over money?
See pages 11-12.
- Do all good people go to heaven?
See pages 22-23.
- How do Jehovah's Witnesses finance their
worldwide preaching work? See page 30.