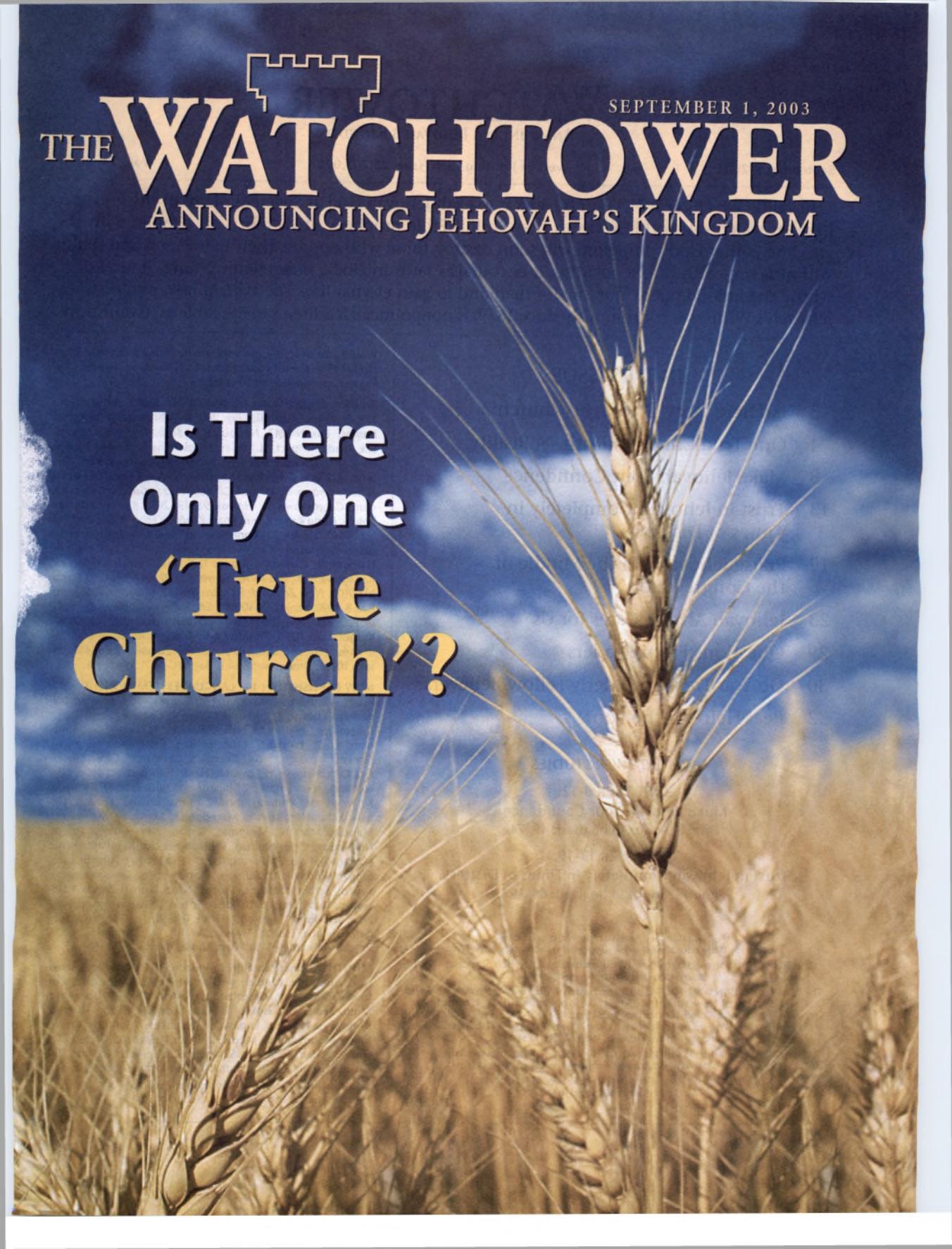


SEPTEMBER 1, 2003

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



A close-up photograph of a golden wheat ear in the foreground, with a field of wheat stretching into the distance under a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds.

Is There
Only One
‘True
Church’?



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

September 1, 2003

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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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Is There Only One ‘True Church’?

“**J**UST as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: ‘a single Catholic and apostolic Church.’”—*Dominus Iesus*.

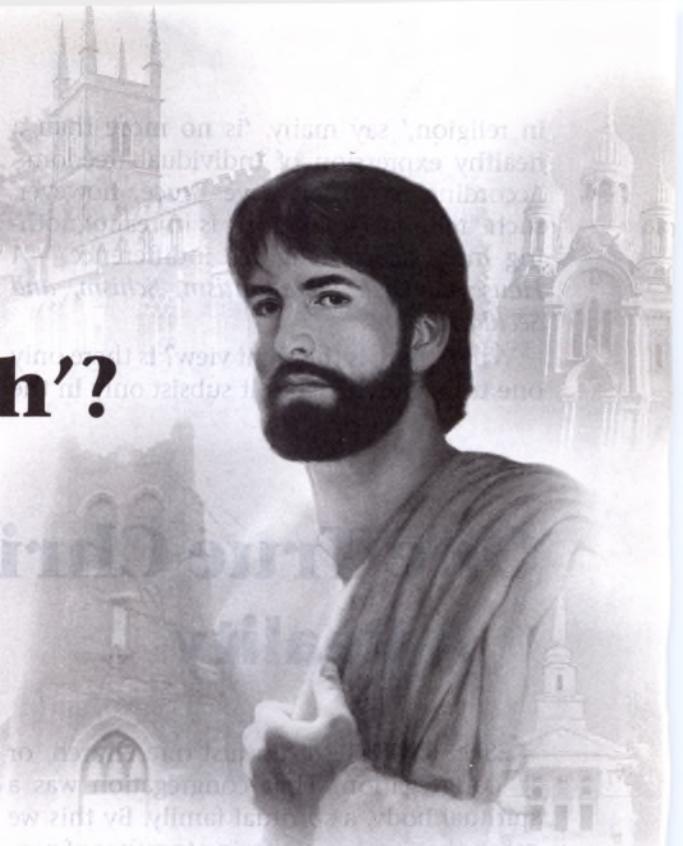
That is how a Roman Catholic cardinal, Joseph Ratzinger, set out his church’s teaching that there can be only one true church. That church, he said, is “a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church.”

“Not Churches in the Proper Sense”

Although Pope John Paul II insisted that the document *Dominus Iesus* contained “no arrogance towards, or disrespect for, other religions,” Protestant church leaders reacted strongly to it. For example, at the Presbyterian General Assembly in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in June 2001, one minister said that the document was the work of “a powerful faction in the Roman Catholic Church . . . scared silly by the spirit of openness introduced by Vatican II.”

Robin Eames, the Church of Ireland Primate, said that he would be “bitterly disappointed” if the document was “a throwback to pre-Vatican II.” In commenting on the Vatican’s claim that churches that reject certain Catholic doctrines “are not Churches in the proper sense,” Eames said: “That to me could be insulting.”

What prompted *Dominus Iesus*? It appears that the Roman Catholic Curia was disturbed by what has been called religious relativism.



According to *The Irish Times*, “the emergence of a pluralist theology—saying basically that one religion is as good as another . . . increasingly preoccupied Cardinal Ratzinger.” It seems that this viewpoint sparked his comments about one true church.

Does It Matter Which Church You Belong To?

Of course, to some, “religious relativism” or “pluralist theology” is much more reasonable and attractive than any suggestion that there can be only one true church. To them, religion should be purely a matter of personal preference. ‘In the end,’ they say, ‘it really does not matter which church you belong to.’

That may appear to be the more tolerant view—even though one effect of it has been the fragmentation of religion into myriads of differing denominations. ‘Such diversity

in religion,' say many, 'is no more than a healthy expression of individual freedom.' According to writer Steve Bruce, however, such "religious toleration" is in reality nothing more than "religious indifference."—*A House Divided: Protestantism, Schism, and Secularization*.

What, then, is the right view? Is there only one true church? Does it subsist only in the

Roman Catholic Church? Are other churches equally acceptable to God? Since these questions involve our relationship with our Creator, surely it is important to get his views on the matter. How can we do that? By looking into God's inspired Word, the Bible. (Acts 17: 11; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Let us consider what it has to say on this subject of one true church.

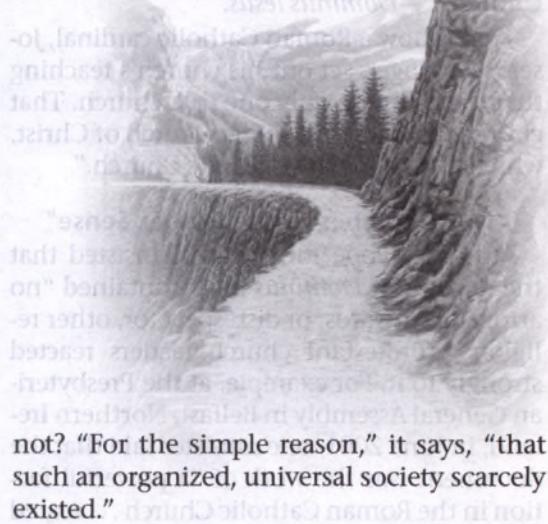
One True Christian Faith A Reality

JESUS CHRIST set up just one church, or congregation. That congregation was a spiritual body, a spiritual family. By this we mean that it was a gathering together of people chosen by God's holy spirit—all recognized by God to be his "children."—Romans 8:16, 17; Galatians 3:26.

Jesus taught that only one way was used by God to direct people to the truth and to life. To illustrate that important truth, Jesus compared the way to everlasting life to a road. He said: "Go in through the narrow gate; because broad and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are the ones going in through it; whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are the ones finding it."—Matthew 7:13, 14; John 14:6; Acts 4:11, 12.

A Unified Congregation

We should not think of that first-century congregation as "a world-wide, universal, organized society such as we mean nowadays when we talk about the catholic church," says *The New Dictionary of Theology*. Why



the early Christians did not organize their meetings into a single, worldwide society? "For the simple reason," it says, "that such an organized, universal society scarcely existed."

No one can rightly disagree with the fact that the early Christian congregation bore no resemblance to the institutionalized church systems we see today. But it was organized. Individual congregations did not operate independently of one another. They all recognized the authority of a governing body in Jerusalem. That body—consisting of the apostles and older men of the Jerusalem congregation—helped to preserve the unity of the congregation as the "one body" of Christ.—Ephesians 4:4, 11-16; Acts 15:22-31; 16:4, 5.

What happened to that one true congregation? Did it become the mighty Catholic Church? Did it evolve into the denominational, fragmented Protestant church system that we see today? Or did something else happen?

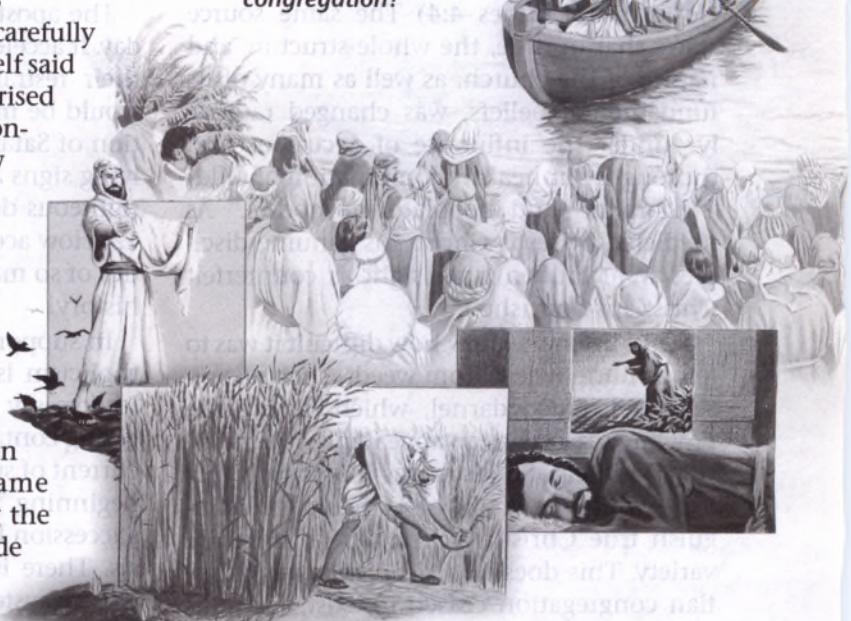
"Wheat" and "Weeds"

To find the answers, let us carefully consider what Jesus Christ himself said would happen. You may be surprised to learn that Jesus *expected* his congregation to disappear from view and that he would allow such a sad situation to continue for centuries.

Identifying his congregation with "the kingdom of the heavens," he said: "The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man that sowed fine seed in his field. While men were sleeping, his enemy came and oversowed weeds in among the wheat, and left. When the blade sprouted and produced fruit, then the weeds appeared also. So the slaves of the householder came up and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow fine seed in your field? How, then, does it come to have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy, a man, did this.' They said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go out and collect them?' He said, 'No; that by no chance, while collecting the weeds, you uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the harvest season I will tell the reapers, First collect the weeds and bind them in bundles to burn them up, then go to gathering the wheat into my storehouse.'" —Matthew 13:24-30.

Jesus explained that he was "the sower." "The fine seed" pictured his genuine disciples. His "enemy" was Satan the Devil. "The weeds" were counterfeit Christians who infiltrated

What does Jesus' illustration of the wheat and the weeds teach us about the true congregation?



the early Christian congregation. He said that he would let "the wheat" and "the weeds" grow together until "the harvest," which would come at "a conclusion of a system of things." (Matthew 13:37-43) What did all of this mean?

The Christian Congregation Corrupted

Soon after the death of the apostles, apostate teachers from within the congregation began to take control of it. They spoke "twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Acts 20:29, 30) As a result, many Christians 'fell away from the faith.' They were "turned aside to false stories." —1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.

By the fourth century C.E., says *The New Dictionary of Theology*, “Catholic Christianity had become the official . . . religion of the Roman Empire.” There was a “coalescence of ecclesial and civil society”—a merging of Church and State that was diametrically opposed to the beliefs of the early Christians. (John 17:16; James 4:4) The same source states that in time, the whole structure and nature of the church, as well as many of its fundamental beliefs, was changed radically “under the influence of a curious and thoroughly unhealthy combination of O[ld] T[estament] and neoplatonic models.” As predicted by Jesus Christ, his genuine disciples were hidden from sight as counterfeit Christians flourished.

Jesus’ listeners knew how difficult it was to tell genuine wheat from weeds, such as poisonous bearded darnel, which during the growing season has an appearance much like that of wheat. So Jesus was illustrating that for a while, it would be difficult to distinguish true Christians from the counterfeit variety. This does not mean that the Christian congregation ceased to exist, for Jesus promised to continue to guide his spiritual brothers “all the days until the conclusion of the system of things.” (Matthew 28:20) Jesus said that the wheat would continue to grow. Even so, through the ages, genuine Christians—individually or in groups—no doubt did their best to adhere to Christ’s teachings. But they no longer made up a clearly identifiable, visible body, or organization. They were certainly not identical with the visible apostate religious system that throughout history brought nothing but disgrace and dishonor to the name of Jesus Christ.—2 Peter 2:1, 2.

“The Man of Lawlessness Gets Revealed”

The apostle Paul foretold something else that would mark this counterfeit religious system. He wrote: “Let no one seduce you in

any manner, because [Jehovah’s day] will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness gets revealed.” (2 Thessalonians 2:2-4) This “man of lawlessness” is none other than the clergy class that exalted itself into a ruling position over the “Christian” congregation.*

The apostasy started in the apostle Paul’s day. It accelerated once the apostles died and their restraining influence disappeared. It would be marked, said Paul, by “the operation of Satan with every powerful work and lying signs and portents and with every unrighteous deception.” (2 Thessalonians 2:6-12) How accurately that describes the activities of so many religious leaders throughout history!

In support of their claim that Roman Catholicism is the one true church, Catholic leaders say that their bishops have “a life-giving contact with the original apostles by a current of succession which goes back to the beginning.” In truth, this claim of apostolic succession has no historical or Scriptural basis. There is no credible evidence that the church system that arose following the death of Jesus’ apostles was ever directed by God’s holy spirit.—Romans 8:9; Galatians 5:19-21.

And what of the other churches that sprang up following the so-called Reformation? Did they return to the model of the early Christian congregation? Did they restore the purity of the original Christian congregation? It is true that following the Reformation, the Bible became available to many of the common people in their own language. Yet, history shows that these churches continued to teach erroneous doctrines.[#]

—Matthew 15:7-9.

* Further information regarding the identity of “the man of lawlessness” can be found in *The Watchtower*, February 1, 1990, pages 10-14.

[#] See the chapter “The Reformation—The Search Took a New Turn” in the book *Mankind’s Search for God*, pages 306-28, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.



Does your church reflect the pattern set by first-century Christians in preaching and studying?

Note this, however. Jesus Christ definitely foretold that his one true congregation would be restored during what he called a conclusion of a system of things. (Matthew 13:30, 39) The fulfillment of Bible prophecies shows that we are now living in that time. (Matthew 24:3-35) That being true, each of us needs to ask, 'Where is that one true church?' It ought to become more and more clearly identifiable.

Maybe you feel that you have already

found that church, or congregation. It is important that you make sure. Why? Because as in the first century, there can be only one true church. Have you taken the time to make sure that your church closely conforms to the pattern set by the first-century Christian congregation and that it loyally adheres to the teachings of Jesus Christ? Why not examine this now? Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to help you to do just that.—Acts 17:11.

MAKE JEHOVAH YOUR CONFIDENCE

"You are my hope, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah, my confidence from my youth."

—PSALM 71:5.

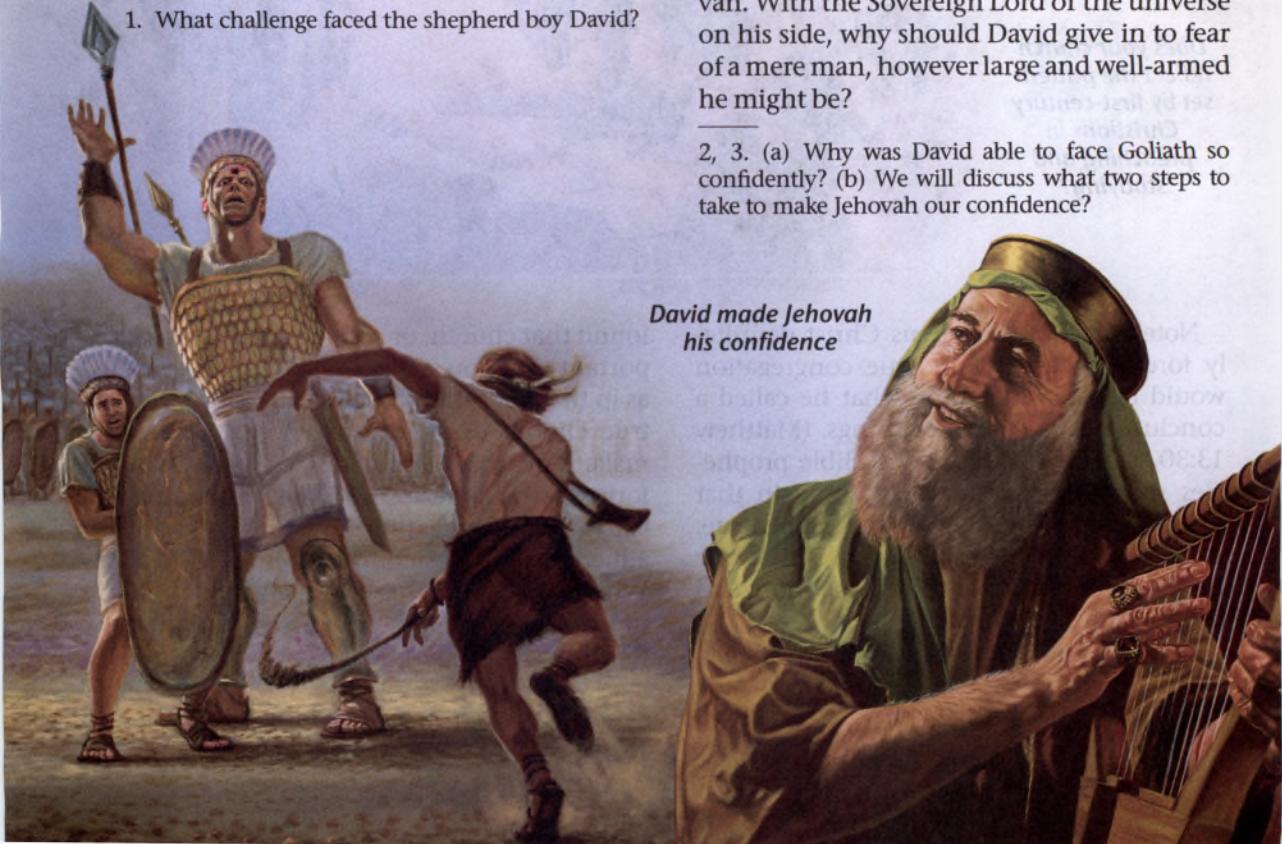
THE man stood well over nine feet tall. Little wonder that all the soldiers of the battle lines of Israel were afraid to face him! For weeks on end, every morning and every evening, the Philistine giant Goliath taunted the army of Israel, challenging them to send a champion out to fight him. Finally, the challenge was accepted, not by a soldier, but by a mere youth. The shepherd boy David was dwarfed by his opponent. Why, he may have weighed less than Goliath's armor and weapons! Still, the youth faced the giant and became an enduring symbol of courage.
—1 Samuel 17:1-51.

1. What challenge faced the shepherd boy David?

² What gave David such courage? Consider some words evidently written by David in his later years: "You are my hope, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah, my confidence from my youth." (Psalm 71:5) Yes, as a youth, David had trusted in Jehovah implicitly. He had faced Goliath, saying: "You are coming to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I am coming to you with the name of Jehovah of armies, the God of the battle lines of Israel, whom you have taunted." (1 Samuel 17:45) Whereas Goliath's confidence was in his great strength and in his weaponry, David's confidence was in Jehovah. With the Sovereign Lord of the universe on his side, why should David give in to fear of a mere man, however large and well-armed he might be?

- 2, 3. (a) Why was David able to face Goliath so confidently? (b) We will discuss what two steps to take to make Jehovah our confidence?

*David made Jehovah
his confidence*



³ As you read about David, do you find yourself wishing that your own confidence in Jehovah were stronger? Likely, many of us do. So let us examine two steps that we can take to make Jehovah our confidence. First, we need to gain and maintain mastery over a common hindrance to such confidence. Second, we need to learn just what is involved in trusting in Jehovah.

Overcoming a Common Obstacle to Confidence in Jehovah

⁴ What hinders people from putting their confidence in God? All too often, some are confused about why bad things happen. Many are taught that God is responsible for suffering. When a tragedy strikes, clergymen may say that God "took" the victims to be with him in heaven. Furthermore, many religious leaders teach that God long ago predestined every event—including every tragedy and wicked deed—that takes place in this world. It would be difficult to put confidence in such a hardhearted God. Satan, who blinds the minds of unbelievers, is eager to promote all such "teachings of demons."—1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Corinthians 4:4.

⁵ Satan wants people to lose confidence in Jehovah. That enemy of God does not want us to know the real causes of human suffering. And if we have learned the Scriptural reasons for suffering, Satan would like us to forget them. Therefore, it is good for us to review from time to time three basic reasons why there is suffering in the world. By doing so, we may reassure our hearts that Jehovah is not responsible for the troubles we face in life.—Philippians 1:9, 10.

⁶ One reason for human suffering is that Satan wants to break the integrity of Jehovah's faithful people. He tried to break Job's

integrity. Satan failed then, but he has not given up. As the ruler of this world, he seeks to "devour" Jehovah's faithful servants. (1 Peter 5:8) That includes each one of us! Satan wants to get us to stop serving Jehovah. Thus, he often foments persecution. Painful though such suffering is, we have good reason to endure. By doing so, we help to prove Satan a liar and thus delight Jehovah. (Job 2:4; Proverbs 27:11) As Jehovah strengthens us to endure persecution, our confidence in him grows.—Psalm 9:9, 10.

⁷ A second reason for suffering is found in this principle: "Whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap." (Galatians 6:7) Sometimes people sow by making bad choices and reap a measure of suffering as a consequence. They may choose to drive recklessly, resulting in an accident. Many choose to smoke cigarettes, leading to heart disease or lung cancer. Those who choose to engage in immoral sexual conduct risk suffering ruined family relationships, loss of self-respect, sexually transmitted diseases, and unwanted pregnancies. People may seek to blame God for such suffering, but they are actually the victims of their own bad decisions.—Proverbs 19:3.

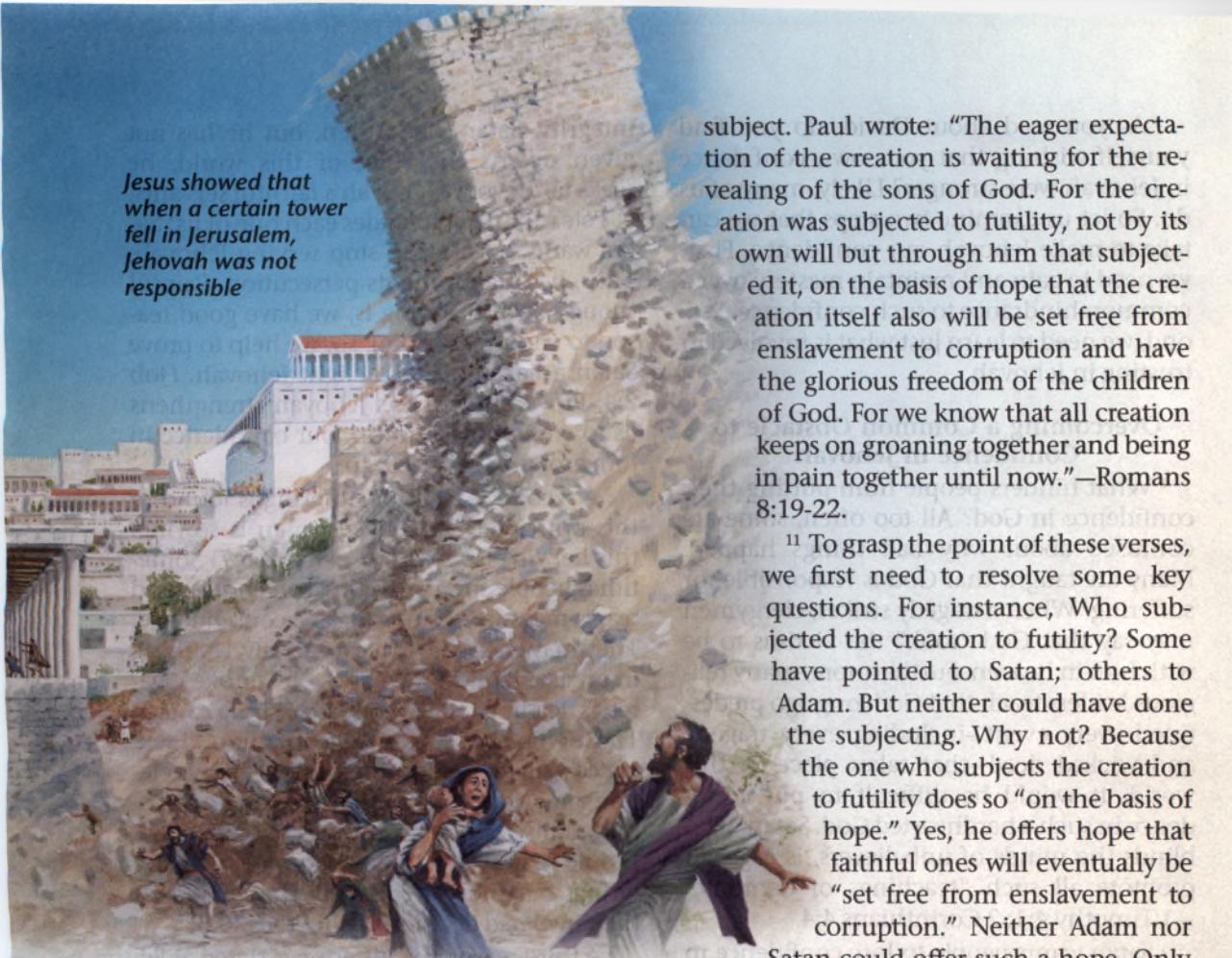
⁸ A third reason for suffering is stated at Ecclesiastes 9:11: "I returned to see under the sun that the swift do not have the race, nor the mighty ones the battle, nor do the wise also have the food, nor do the understanding ones also have the riches, nor do even those having knowledge have the favor; because time and unforeseen occurrence befall them all." Sometimes, people are simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Regardless of our personal strengths or weaknesses, suffering and death may overtake any of us unexpectedly at any time. For instance, in Jesus' day a tower in Jerusalem fell and killed

4, 5. Why do many people find it hard to put confidence in God?

6. How does 1 Peter 5:8 point out one reason for human suffering?

7. Galatians 6:7 helps us to recognize what reason for suffering?

8. According to Ecclesiastes 9:11, why do people suffer?



Jesus showed that when a certain tower fell in Jerusalem, Jehovah was not responsible

18 people. Jesus showed that God was not punishing them for prior sins. (Luke 13:4) No, Jehovah is not to blame for such suffering.

⁹ Understanding some of the causes of suffering is important. However, there is an aspect of the matter that many find difficult to understand. It is this: Why does Jehovah God allow suffering?

Why Does Jehovah Allow Suffering?

¹⁰ A passage in the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans sheds light on this important

9. What do many not understand about suffering?
10, 11. (a) According to Romans 8:19-22, what happened to "all creation"? (b) How may we determine who it was that subjected creation to futility?

subject. Paul wrote: "The eager expectation of the creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will but through him that subjected it, on the basis of hope that the creation itself also will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that all creation keeps on groaning together and being in pain together until now."—Romans 8:19-22.

¹¹ To grasp the point of these verses, we first need to resolve some key questions. For instance, Who subjected the creation to futility? Some have pointed to Satan; others to Adam. But neither could have done the subjecting. Why not? Because the one who subjects the creation to futility does so "on the basis of hope." Yes, he offers hope that faithful ones will eventually be "set free from enslavement to corruption." Neither Adam nor Satan could offer such a hope. Only Jehovah could. Clearly, then, it was he who subjected creation to futility.

¹² What, though, is "all creation" referred to in this passage? Some say that "all creation" refers to the entire natural world, including animals and vegetation. But do beasts and plants hope to attain "the glorious freedom of the children of God"? No. (2 Peter 2:12) "All creation," then, can refer only to mankind. This is the creation that is affected by sin and death because of the rebellion in Eden and that lives in desperate need of hope.—Romans 5:12.

12. What confusion has arisen as to the identity of "all creation," and how may this question be answered?

¹³ What, exactly, did that rebellion do to mankind? Paul describes its results with a single word: futility.* According to one reference work, this word describes "the futility of an object which does not function as it was designed to do." Humans were designed to live forever, working together as a perfect, united family in taking care of a paradisaic earth. Instead, they lead a short, painful, and often frustrating existence. As Job put it, "man, born of woman, is short-lived and glutted with agitation." (Job 14:1) Futility indeed!

¹⁴ Now we come to the key question: Why did "the Judge of all the earth" subject mankind to this painful, frustrating existence? (Genesis 18:25) Was he just in doing so? Well, remember what our first parents did. In rebelling against God, they took sides with Satan, who raised a sweeping challenge to Jehovah's sovereignty. By their actions, they supported the assertion that man is better off without Jehovah, ruling himself under the guidance of a rebel spirit creature. In sentencing the rebels, Jehovah, in effect, gave them what they asked for. He allowed man to rule himself under the influence of Satan. Under the circumstances, what decision could be more profoundly just than subjecting mankind to futility but on the basis of hope?

¹⁵ Of course, this was not creation's "own will." We are born as slaves to sin and corruption without any choice in the matter. But Jehovah in his mercy allowed Adam and Eve

to live out their lives and bear offspring. Though we, their descendants, are subjected to the futility of sin and death, we have the opportunity to do what Adam and Eve failed to do. We can listen to Jehovah and learn that his sovereignty is righteous and ideal, while human rule apart from Jehovah brings only pain, frustration, and futility. (Jeremiah 10:23; Revelation 4:11) And Satan's influence only makes matters worse. Human history testifies to these truths.—Ecclesiastes 8:9.

¹⁶ Clearly, Jehovah had just reasons for subjecting mankind to futility. Does that mean, though, that Jehovah is the cause of the futility and suffering that afflict each one of us today? Well, think of a judge who pronounces a just sentence upon a criminal. The convict may suffer considerably while he serves out his sentence, but can he rightly blame the judge for being the *cause* of his suffering? By no means! Furthermore, Jehovah is never the source of wickedness. James 1:13 says: "With evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone." Let us remember, too, that Jehovah pronounced this sentence "on the basis of hope." He has lovingly made arrangements for faithful descendants of Adam and Eve to see the end of futility and to delight in "the glorious freedom of the children of God." Throughout eternity, faithful mankind will never have to worry that all creation might again descend into a painful state of futility. Jehovah's just handling of things will have established the rightfulness of his sovereignty for all time.—Isaiah 25:8.

¹⁷ As we review these reasons for human suffering, do we see any basis for blaming wickedness on Jehovah or for losing our

16. (a) Why may we be certain that Jehovah is not responsible for the suffering we see in the world today? (b) What hope has Jehovah lovingly provided for faithful people?

17. How should we be affected by reviewing the reasons for suffering in the world today?

13. What did the rebellion in Eden do to mankind?
14, 15. (a) What evidence of justice do we find in Jehovah's sentence upon mankind? (b) Why did Paul say that creation was subjected to futility "not by its own will"?

confidence in him? On the contrary, such a study gives us reason to echo these words of Moses: "The Rock, perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4) By meditating on these matters, let us refresh our understanding of them from time to time. That way, when we face trials, we will resist Satan's efforts to sow doubts in our minds. What, though, of the second step mentioned at the outset? What is involved in trusting in Jehovah?

What It Means to Trust in Jehovah

¹⁸ God's Word urges us: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5, 6) Those are beautiful, reassuring words. Surely no one in all the universe is more trustworthy than our beloved heavenly Father. Nevertheless, it is easier to read those words in Proverbs than to put them into practice.

¹⁹ Many have mistaken ideas about what it means to trust in Jehovah. Some think of

18, 19. With what words does the Bible encourage us to trust in Jehovah, but in that regard, what mistaken ideas do some entertain?

How Would You Answer?

- How did David show that he had made Jehovah his confidence?
- What are three causes of human suffering today, and why is it good to review them from time to time?
- Jehovah pronounced what sentence upon humankind, and why was it a just sentence?
- What is involved in trusting in Jehovah?

such trust merely as a feeling, a kind of blissful emotion that should well up naturally in the heart. Others seem to believe that trusting in God means that we can expect him to shield us from every difficulty, to solve our every problem, to make every daily challenge turn out just as we hope—and right away! But such notions are unfounded. Trust is much more than a mere feeling, and it is not unrealistic. In adults, trust involves making conscious, reasoned decisions.

²⁰ Note again what Proverbs 3:5 says. It contrasts trusting in Jehovah with leaning on our own understanding, suggesting that we cannot do both. Does that mean that we are not allowed to use our powers of understanding? No, for Jehovah, who gave us those powers, expects us to use them in serving him. (Romans 12:1) But on what do we *lean*, or depend? If our thinking fails to harmonize with Jehovah's, do we accept his wisdom for what it is—infinitely superior to ours? (Isaiah 55:8, 9) To trust in Jehovah means to let his thinking guide our own.

²¹ To illustrate: Think of a small child sitting in the backseat of a car, with his parents in front. His father is at the wheel. When difficulties arise during the journey—a question about the proper route or perhaps a problem with the weather or the condition of the road—how does an obedient, trusting child react? Does he shout directions from the backseat, telling his father how to handle the car? Does he question his parents' decisions or resist when they remind him to stay buckled up in his seat? No, he naturally trusts his parents to handle such matters, imperfect though they are. In Jehovah, we have a perfect Father. Should we not trust in him implicitly, especially when we face challenging situations?—Isaiah 30:21.

20, 21. What is involved in trusting in Jehovah? Illustrate.

²² However, Proverbs 3:6 indicates that we should ‘take notice of Jehovah in all our ways,’ not only when we face difficult situations. So the day-to-day decisions we make in life should reflect our trust in Jehovah. When problems arise, we should not despair, panic, or resist Jehovah’s guidance regarding the best way to handle matters. We need to view

22, 23. (a) Why should we put our trust in Jehovah when we are faced with problems, and how may we do so? (b) What will be discussed in the following article?

trials as opportunities to support Jehovah’s sovereignty, to help prove Satan a liar, and to build obedience and other qualities that please Jehovah.—Hebrews 5:7, 8.

²³ We can show our trust in Jehovah no matter what obstacles may loom before us. We do so in our prayers and in the way we look to Jehovah’s Word and to his organization for guidance. Specifically, though, how can we display trust in Jehovah when faced with the problems that arise in today’s world? Our next article will take up that subject.

TRUST IN JEHOVAH COMPLETELY IN TIMES OF DISTRESS

“God is for us a refuge and strength, a help that is readily to be found during distresses.”—PSALM 46:1.

IT IS one thing to claim that we trust in God. It is quite another to show it by our actions. For example, the phrase “In God We Trust” has long appeared on U.S. paper currency and coins.* In 1956, the U.S. Congress passed a law declaring that expression the national motto of the United States. Ironically, many people—not just in that land but throughout the world—put greater trust in money and material wealth than they do in God.—Luke 12:16-21.

² As true Christians, we must do more than simply say that we trust in Jehovah. Just as “faith without works is dead,” so too any claim that we trust in God is meaningless unless we back it up by our actions. (James 2:26) In the preceding article, we learned that our trust in Jehovah is manifested when we turn to him in prayer, when we seek direction from his Word, and when we look to his organization for guidance. Let us now consider how we can take those three steps in times of distress.

* In a letter to the U.S. Mint, dated November 20, 1861, Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase wrote: “No nation can be strong except in the strength of God, or safe except in His defense. The trust of our people in God should be declared on our national coins.” As a result, the motto “In God We Trust” first appeared on a circulating U.S. coin in 1864.

1, 2. (a) What example shows that it is not enough to make the claim that we trust in God? (b) Why must we do more than simply say that we trust in Jehovah?

When a Job Is Lost or Income Is Meager

³ In these “critical times,” we as Christians face the same economic pressures that other people do. (2 Timothy 3:1) Hence, we may suddenly find ourselves laid off our job. Or

3. What economic pressures do Jehovah’s servants face in these “critical times,” and how do we know that God is willing to help us?

we may have little choice but to work long hours for meager wages. Under such circumstances, we might find it difficult to 'provide for those who are our own.' (1 Timothy 5:8) Is the Most High God willing to help us at such times? Most definitely! Of course, Jehovah does not shield us from all the hardships of life in this system of things. If we trust in him, however, the words of Psalm 46:1 will prove true in our case: "God is for us a refuge and strength, a help that is readily to be found during distresses." How, though, can we show that we trust in Jehovah completely in times of financial distress?

⁴ One way to demonstrate our trust in Jehovah is by turning to him in prayer. But what can we pray for? Well, confronted with financial problems, we may need practical wisdom now more than ever. By all means, then, pray for it! Jehovah's Word assures us: "If any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep on asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching; and it will be given him." (James 1:5) Yes, ask Jehovah for wisdom—the ability to put knowledge, understanding, and discernment to good use—so as to make sound decisions and right choices. Our loving heavenly Father assures us that he will listen to such prayers. He is ever willing to straighten the paths of those who trust in him with all their heart.—Psalm 65:2; Proverbs 3:5, 6.

⁵ Looking to God's Word for guidance is another way of showing that we trust in Jehovah. His wise reminders found in the Bible have proved "very trustworthy." (Psalm 93:5) Although completed over 1,900 years ago,

4. When confronted with financial problems, what can we pray for, and how does Jehovah respond to such prayers?

5, 6. (a) Why may we look to God's Word for help to cope with economic pressures? (b) What might we do to reduce anxiety when we are faced with the loss of a job?

that inspired book contains dependable advice and keen insight that can help us to cope better with economic pressures. Consider some examples of the Bible's wisdom.

⁶ Wise King Solomon observed long ago: "Sweet is the sleep of the one serving, regardless of whether it is little or much that he eats; but the plenty belonging to the rich one is not permitting him to sleep." (Ecclesiastes 5:12) It takes time and money to fix, clean, maintain, and protect our material possessions. So faced with the loss of a job, we might take the opportunity to reexamine our life-style, trying to distinguish needs from wants. To reduce anxiety, it may be wise to make some changes. For example, is it possible to simplify our life, perhaps moving to a smaller dwelling or eliminating unnecessary material possessions?—Matthew 6:22.

⁷ In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus counseled: "Stop being anxious about your souls as to what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your bodies as to what you will wear."* (Matthew 6:25) Jesus knew that imperfect humans are naturally concerned about obtaining basic necessities. How, though, can we "stop being anxious" about such things? "Keep on . . . seeking first the kingdom," said Jesus. No matter what problems we encounter, we must continue giving Jehovah's worship priority in life. If we do so, then all our daily necessities "will be added"

* The anxiety described here is said to be a "worried fear, which takes all the joy out of life." Some translations say "do not be anxious" or "do not be worried." But such renderings imply that we should not start being anxious or worried. One reference work says: "The Greek verb tense is a present imperative, implying a command to stop doing some action already in progress."

7, 8. (a) How did Jesus show awareness that imperfect humans have a tendency to be overly worried about material things? (See also footnote.) (b) What wise advice did Jesus offer about how to avoid undue anxiety?

to us by our heavenly Father. In one way or another, he will make it possible for us to keep going.—Matthew 6:33.

⁸ Jesus offered this further piece of advice: “Never be anxious about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties.” (Matthew 6:34) It is not wise to be unduly anxious about what tomorrow *may* bring. One scholar noted: “The future of reality is seldom as bad as the future of our fears.” Humbly heeding the Bible’s advice to keep our priorities in clear focus and to live one day at a time can help us to avoid undue anxiety.—1 Peter 5:6, 7.

⁹ When encountering financial distress, we can also show our trust in Jehovah by looking to the publications of “the faithful and discreet slave” for help. (Matthew 24:45) From time to time, the *Awake!* magazine has featured articles containing helpful tips and suggestions for dealing with economic challenges. The article “Out of a Job—What Are the Solutions?” in the August 8, 1991, issue outlined eight practical guidelines that have helped many to keep financially and emotionally stable when faced with a period of

9. When encountering financial distress, what help may we find in the publications of “the faithful and discreet slave”?

unemployment.* Of course, such guidelines must be balanced with a proper view of the true importance of money. This was discussed in the article “Something More Vital Than Money,” which appeared in the same issue.—Ecclesiastes 7:12.

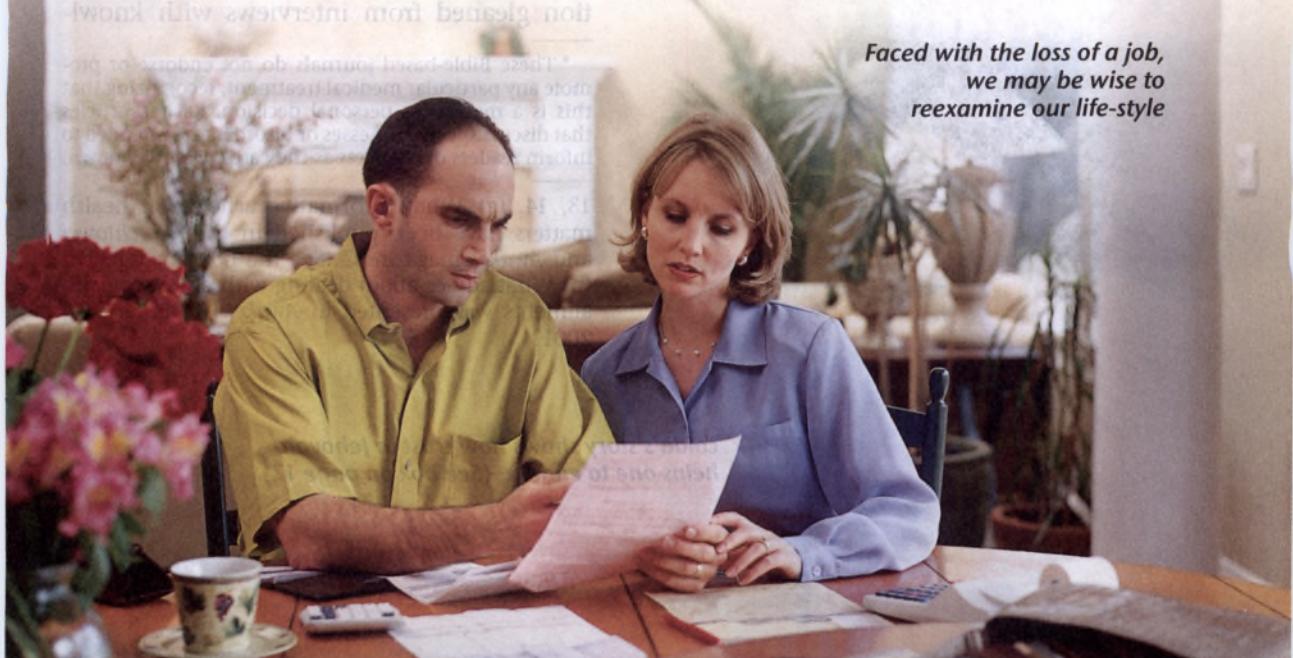
When Distressed by Health Problems

¹⁰ Is it realistic to trust in Jehovah in the face of serious illness? Absolutely! Jehovah feels for sick ones among his people. More than that, he is willing to help. Consider, for example, King David. He himself may have been seriously ill when he wrote of God’s dealings with an upright sick one. He said: “Jehovah himself will sustain him upon a divan of illness; all his bed you will certainly change during his sickness.” (Psalm 41:1, 3, 7, 8) David’s trust in God remained strong, and finally the king recovered from his illness. How, though, can we display trust in God when we are distressed by health problems?

* The eight points are as follows: (1) Do not panic; (2) think positively; (3) open your mind to new types of work; (4) live within your means—not someone else’s; (5) be careful with credit; (6) keep the family united; (7) keep your self-esteem; and (8) set up a budget.

10. How does the example of King David show that it is realistic to trust in Jehovah in the face of serious illness?

*Faced with the loss of a job,
we may be wise to
reexamine our life-style*



¹¹ When stricken by illness, one way to show our trust in Jehovah is by beseeching him in prayer for help to endure. We may ask him to help us use "practical wisdom" so that we may seek the level of health that our circumstances realistically allow. (Proverbs 3:21) We may also ask him to help us exercise patience and endurance so as to put up with the illness. Above all, we would want to ask that Jehovah sustain us, giving us the strength to keep faithful to him and not lose our balance, no matter what may happen. (Philippians 4:13) Maintaining our integrity to God is even more important than preserving our present life. If we keep our integrity, the Great Rewarder will give us an eternity of perfect life and health.—Hebrews 11:6.

¹² Our trust in Jehovah also moves us to look to his Word, the Bible, for practical guidance. The principles found in the Scriptures can help us to make wise decisions when it comes to medical treatment. For instance, knowing that the Bible condemns the "practice of spiritism," we would avoid any diag-

11. When stricken by illness, what may we ask of our heavenly Father?
12. What Scriptural principles can help us to make wise decisions when it comes to medical treatment?

nostic or therapeutic procedure that involves spiritism. (Galatians 5:19-21; Deuteronomy 18:10-12) Here is another example of the Bible's trustworthy wisdom: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps." (Proverbs 14:15) Hence, when contemplating medical treatment, we are wise to seek reliable information rather than putting "faith in every word." Such "soundness of mind" can help us to weigh our options carefully and to make an informed decision.—Titus 2:12.

¹³ We may also manifest our trust in Jehovah by searching the publications of the faithful slave. The *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines have occasionally published informative articles on a wide variety of specific health problems and diseases.* At times, these journals have featured articles by individuals who have successfully coped with various disorders, ailments, and disabilities. In addition, certain articles have offered Scriptural suggestions as well as practical advice on how to live with chronic health problems.

¹⁴ For example, the January 22, 2001, issue of *Awake!* featured the cover series "Comfort for the Sick." The articles presented helpful Bible principles as well as firsthand information gleaned from interviews with knowl-

* These Bible-based journals do not endorse or promote any particular medical treatment, recognizing that this is a matter for personal decision. Rather, articles that discuss specific illnesses or disorders are intended to inform readers of the facts as they are currently known.

13, 14. (a) What informative articles on health matters have been published in the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines? (See the box on page 17.) (b) What advice about dealing with chronic health ailments was presented in *Awake!* of January 22, 2001?



Loida's story shows how trust in Jehovah helps one to endure. (See box on page 17)

edgeable individuals who have lived with disabling illness for many years. The article "Living Successfully With Your Ailment—How?" offered the following advice: Learn as much as you reasonably can about your illness. (Proverbs 24:5) Set practical goals, including goals to help others, but realize that you may not be able to reach the same goals that others can. (Acts 20:35; Galatians 6:4) Avoid social isolation. (Proverbs 18:1) Make visiting you a pleasant experience for others. (Proverbs 17:22) Above all, maintain a close bond with Jehovah and with the congregation. (Nahum 1:7; Romans 1:11, 12) Are we not grateful for the trustworthy guidance Jehovah provides through his organization?

When a Fleshly Weakness Persists

¹⁵ "In my flesh, there dwells nothing good," wrote the apostle Paul. (Romans 7:18) Paul knew firsthand how difficult it can be to

15. How was the apostle Paul able to prevail in his battle against the weaknesses of the imperfect flesh, and what assurance can we have?

struggle against the desires and weaknesses of the imperfect flesh. However, Paul also had confidence that he could prevail. (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27) How? By trusting implicitly in Jehovah. That is why Paul could say: "Miserable man that I am! Who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death? Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24, 25) What about us? We too have a battle against fleshly weaknesses. As we struggle to deal with such weaknesses, it is easy to lose confidence, becoming convinced that we can never succeed. But Jehovah will help us if we, like Paul, truly rely on Him and not just on our own strength.

¹⁶ When a fleshly weakness persists, we can show that we trust in Jehovah by imploring him in prayer. We need to ask, even beg, Jehovah for the help of his holy spirit. (Luke 11:9-13) We can specifically ask for

16. When a fleshly weakness persists, what do we need to pray for, and what should we do if we have a relapse?

Do You Remember These Articles?

When we are distressed by challenges to our health, it is encouraging to read about others who have successfully coped with health disorders, ailments, or disabilities. Following are some articles that have been published in the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines.

"**Coping With My Weaknesses**" centered on dealing with negative thinking and depression.—*The Watchtower*, May 1, 1990.

"**Not Even an Iron Lung Could Stop Her Preaching.**"—*Awake!*, January 22, 1993.

"**A Bullet Changed My Life**" focused on dealing with paralysis.—*Awake!*, October 22, 1995.

"**You Do Not Know What Your Life Will Be Tomorrow**" discussed coping with bipolar disorder.—*The Watchtower*, December 1, 2000.

"**Loida's Journey out of Silence**" focused on dealing with cerebral palsy.—*Awake!*, May 8, 2000.

"**My Struggle With Endometriosis.**"—*Awake!*, July 22, 2000.

"**My Fight With Scleroderma.**"—*Awake!*, August 8, 2001.

"**I Won My Battle With Postpartum Depression.**"—*Awake!*, July 22, 2002.

self-control, which is part of the fruitage of God's spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) What should we do if we have a relapse? By all means, we should not give up. Let us never weary of praying humbly to our merciful God, asking his forgiveness and help. Jehovah will never reject, or turn away, a heart that is "broken and crushed" by the weight of a guilty conscience. (Psalm 51:17) If we supplicate him with a sincere, contrite heart, Jehovah will help us fight temptations.—Philippians 4:6, 7.

17 We can also show that we trust in Jehovah by searching his Word for help. Using a Bible concordance or the *Watch Tower Publications Index*, we can seek the answer to the question, 'How does Jehovah feel about the particular weakness that I am fighting?' Reflecting on how Jehovah feels about the matter can strengthen our desire to please him. Thus, we may come to feel as he feels, hating what he hates. (Psalm 97:10) Some have found it helpful to commit to memory Bible texts that apply to the specific weakness they are fighting. Are we struggling

17. (a) Why is it helpful to reflect on how Jehovah feels about the particular weakness we may be fighting? (b) What scriptures might we commit to memory if we are fighting to control a quick temper? to guard our tongue? to resist a tendency toward unwholesome entertainment?

Do You Recall?

- When confronted with economic problems, in what ways can we demonstrate that we trust in Jehovah?
- How can we display trust in God when we are distressed by health problems?
- When a fleshly weakness persists, how can we show that we are truly relying on Jehovah?



We need not be embarrassed to ask for help to overcome our weaknesses

to control a quick temper? Then we might memorize such texts as Proverbs 14:17 and Ephesians 4:31. Are we finding it difficult to guard our tongue? We might learn by heart such texts as Proverbs 12:18 and Ephesians 4:29. Do we have a tendency toward unwholesome entertainment? We might try to remember such verses as Ephesians 5:3 and Colossians 3:5.

18 Seeking help from spirit-appointed elders in the congregation is a further way to demonstrate our reliance on Jehovah. (Acts 20:28) After all, these "gifts in men" are a provision from Jehovah through Christ to protect and care for his sheep. (Ephesians 4:7, 8, 11-14) Granted, it may not be easy to ask for help in dealing with a weakness. We might be embarrassed, fearing that the elders will think less of us. But no doubt these spiritually mature men will respect us for having the courage to ask for help. Further-

18. Why should we not let embarrassment hold us back from asking the elders for help to overcome our weakness?

more, the elders endeavor to reflect Jehovah's own qualities in dealing with the flock. Their comforting, practical counsel and instruction from God's Word may be just what we need to strengthen our resolve enough to overcome our weakness.—James 5:14-16.

¹⁹ Never forget that Satan knows that his time is short. (Revelation 12:12) He wants to use the futility of life in this world to discourage us and make us give up. May we have full confidence in what is expressed at Romans 8: 35-39: "Who will separate us from the love of the Christ? Will tribulation or distress or per-

19. (a) In what way does Satan seek to use the futility of life in this system? (b) What does trust involve, and what should be our firm resolve?

secution or hunger or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . To the contrary, in all these things we are coming off completely victorious through him that loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor governments nor things now here nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creation will be able to separate us from God's love that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." What a statement of trust in Jehovah! Such trust, however, is more than just a feeling. Rather, it is trust that involves the reasoned decisions we make in our day-to-day life. Let us, then, make it our firm resolve to trust in Jehovah completely in times of distress.

PRAISE JEHOVAH "in the Middle of the Congregation"

CHRISTIAN meetings are a provision from Jehovah to keep his people spiritually strong. By regularly attending meetings, we show our appreciation for Jehovah's provisions. Moreover, we are enabled "to incite [our brothers] to love and fine works," which is an important way of demonstrating love for one another. (Hebrews 10:24; John 13:35) How, though, can we incite our brothers at meetings?

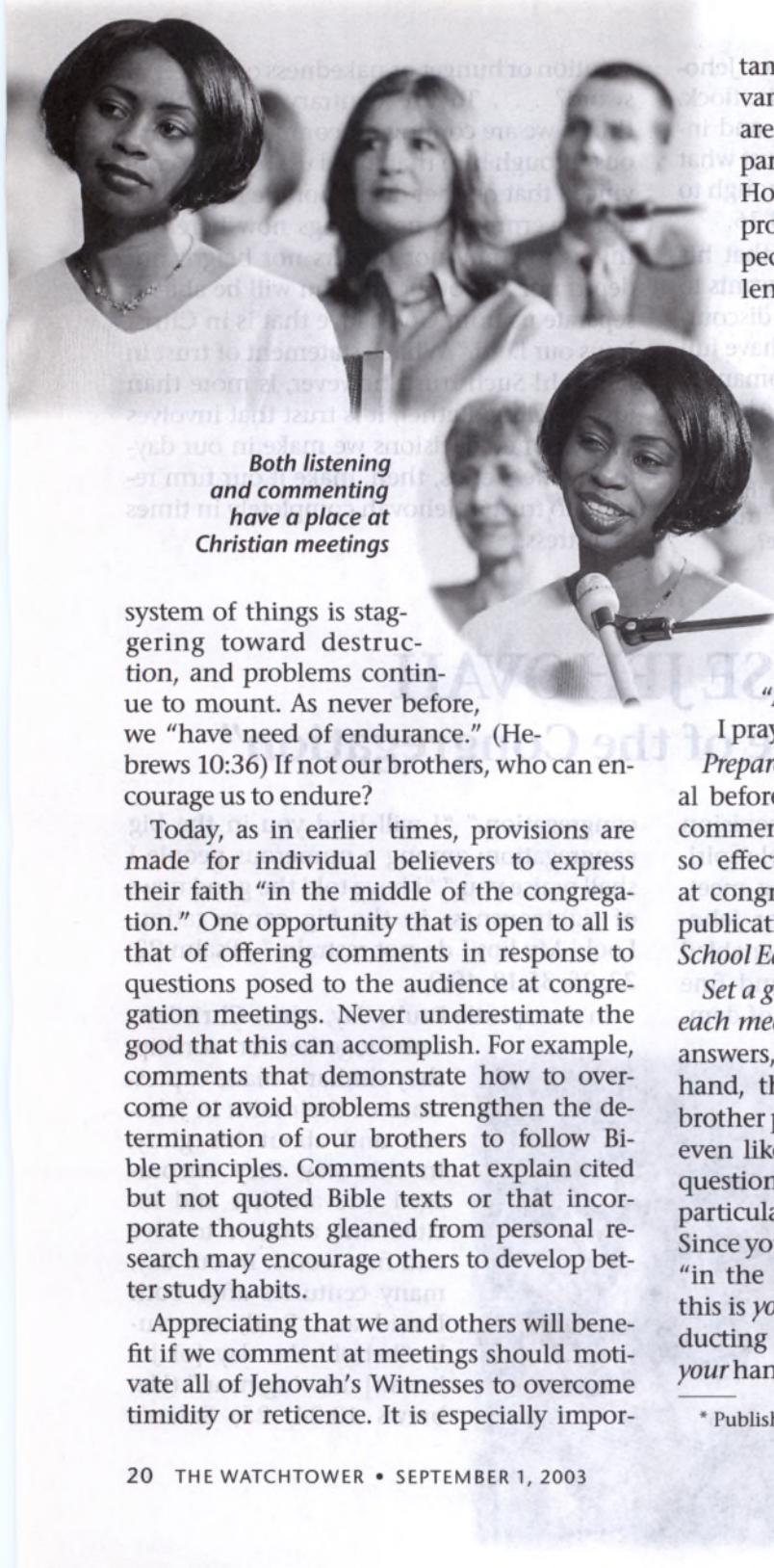
Make Public Expressions

King David wrote about himself: "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the middle of the congregation I shall praise you. From you my praise will be in the large

congregation." "I will laud you in the big congregation; among a numerous people I shall praise you." "I have told the good news of righteousness in the big congregation. Look! My lips I do not restrain."—Psalm 22: 22, 25; 35:18; 40:9.

In the apostle Paul's day, when Christians came together for worship, they similarly made expressions of their faith in Jehovah and about his glory. In this way they encouraged one another and incited one another to love and fine works. In our day, many centuries after both David and Paul, we truly "behold the day [of Jehovah] drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Satan's





**Both listening
and commenting
have a place at
Christian meetings**

system of things is staggering toward destruction, and problems continue to mount. As never before, we "have need of endurance." (Hebrews 10:36) If not our brothers, who can encourage us to endure?

Today, as in earlier times, provisions are made for individual believers to express their faith "in the middle of the congregation." One opportunity that is open to all is that of offering comments in response to questions posed to the audience at congregation meetings. Never underestimate the good that this can accomplish. For example, comments that demonstrate how to overcome or avoid problems strengthen the determination of our brothers to follow Bible principles. Comments that explain cited but not quoted Bible texts or that incorporate thoughts gleaned from personal research may encourage others to develop better study habits.

Appreciating that we and others will benefit if we comment at meetings should motivate all of Jehovah's Witnesses to overcome timidity or reticence. It is especially impor-

tant that elders and ministerial servants comment at meetings, since they are expected to take the lead in meeting participation, as well as in attendance. How, though, can an individual improve if he finds that this particular aspect of his Christian activity is a challenge?

Suggestions for Improving

Remember that Jehovah is involved. A Christian sister who lives in Germany explains how she views her comments. "They are my own personal answer to Satan's attempts to keep God's people from expressing their faith." A newly baptized brother who associates with the same congregation says:

"As far as commenting is concerned, I pray a lot."

Prepare well. If you fail to study the material beforehand, you will find it difficult to comment and your comments will not be so effective. Suggestions for commenting at congregation meetings are given in the publication *Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education*, page 70.*

Set a goal of giving at least one comment at each meeting. This means preparing several answers, since the more often you raise your hand, the greater the likelihood that the brother presiding will call on you. You might even like to tell him ahead of time which questions you are prepared to answer. This is particularly helpful if you are a beginner. Since you may be hesitant to raise your hand "in the large congregation," knowing that this is *your* paragraph and that the one conducting the meeting will be watching for *your* hand will encourage you to comment.

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

The one conducting shows genuine interest in every comment

Comment early. A difficult task does not get easier by putting it off. Making a comment early in the meeting can be helpful. You will be surprised at how much easier it is to comment a second or third time once you have passed the hurdle of making that first comment.

Choose an appropriate seat. Some find it easier to comment when they sit toward the front of the Kingdom Hall. There are fewer distractions, and the one conducting is less likely to overlook them. If you try this, remember to speak loud enough for everyone to hear, especially if the congregation does not use roving microphones.

Listen carefully. This will help you to avoid repeating what someone else has just said. Also, comments made by others may remind you of a scripture or of a point that can build on the thought just expressed. Occasionally, a brief experience may illustrate the point under discussion. Such comments are very helpful.

Learn to answer in your own words. Reading a comment from the study material may indicate that you have found the right answer, and it may be a good way to get started commenting. But progressing to answer in your own words shows that you understand the point. Our publications need not be quoted verbatim. Jehovah's Witnesses do not simply repeat what their publications say.

Stay on the subject. Comments unrelated to the subject or that distract from the main thoughts under consideration are inappropriate. This means that your comments should be pertinent to the subject under discussion. Then they will contribute to a spiritually upbuilding discussion of the theme being developed.



Aim to encourage. Since a significant reason for commenting is to encourage others, we must try to avoid saying things that might discourage them. Further, do not cover the paragraph so thoroughly that there is little or nothing left for others to say. Long or complicated answers tend to obscure the meaning. Short answers consisting of just a few words can be very effective, and they will encourage new ones to offer their short answers.

The Role of Those Conducting Meetings

As far as being encouraging is concerned, the one conducting a meeting bears a heavy responsibility. He shows genuine interest in every comment given by listening carefully and by looking politely at the one commenting rather than busying himself with something else. How inappropriate it would be if he did not listen carefully and, as a result, needlessly repeated what had just been said or asked a question that had just been answered!

It would also be discouraging if the one conducting regularly repeated in slightly different words a comment that had just been made, as if to suggest that the comment was somehow inadequate. On the other hand, how encouraging it is when comments contribute to further discussion of a significant point. 'How can we apply this in

our congregation?' or, 'Which scripture in the paragraph supports what was just said?' are the kind of questions that encourage positive comments, which make a valuable contribution.

Of course, new ones or shy ones should especially be commended when they make a comment. This may be done on a one-to-one basis after the study in order to avoid possible embarrassment and to give the conductor an opportunity to offer suggestions when appropriate.

In ordinary conversation, a person who monopolizes a discussion discourages communication. His listeners feel no need to express themselves. They are resigned to listening halfheartedly if at all. Something similar may occur when the one conducting monopolizes the discussion by commenting too often. However, the one conducting a meeting may occasionally draw out those in attendance and stimulate their thinking on the subject by means of supplementary questions. Such questions should be used sparingly.

The one conducting will not necessarily call on the first person who raises his hand. This could discourage those who need a little time to formulate their thoughts. By waiting briefly, he will give someone who has not already commented the chance to do so. He will also show discernment by not calling on small children to answer questions dealing with subjects that are beyond their comprehension.

What if an incorrect answer is given? The one conducting should avoid embarrassing the person who gave the answer. Comments, even when incorrect, often contain elements of truth. By tactfully picking up on something that may be correct, by rephrasing the question, or by asking an additional one, the one conducting can set matters straight without undue awkwardness.

To encourage commenting, the one conducting a meeting will do better to avoid general questions, such as, 'Does anyone else have a comment?' The question, 'Who has not yet commented? This is your last chance!' may be well-meant, but it will hardly encourage a person to express himself openly. Brothers should not be made to feel guilty for not having commented earlier in the study. Rather, they should be encouraged to share what they know because sharing is an expression of love. In addition, after the one conducting calls on someone to give a comment, it would be better not to say, "After him, we will hear the comment of Brother So-and-so and then Sister So-and-so's comment." The one conducting should first listen to the comment and then determine if an additional comment is needed.

Commenting Is a Privilege

Attending Christian meetings is a spiritual necessity; commenting at them is a privilege. To the extent that we participate in this unique way of praising Jehovah "in the middle of the congregation," to that extent we are following David's example and taking seriously Paul's counsel. Our participation at meetings proves that we love our brothers and that we are part of Jehovah's large congregation. Where else would you want to be as "you behold the day drawing near"?—Hebrews 10:25.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

How to Strengthen Your Marriage

Spiritual Conversations Build Up

Martin Luther—The Man and His Legacy



JEHOVAH ALWAYS CARES FOR US

AS TOLD BY
ENELESI MZANGA

It was 1972. Ten young men, members of Malawi's Youth League, broke into our house, grabbed me, and dragged me into a nearby sugarcane field.

There, they beat me and left me for dead.

Numerous Witnesses of Jehovah in Malawi suffered vicious attacks such as this one. Why were they persecuted? What helped them to endure?

Please allow me to tell you my family's story.

I WAS born on December 31, 1921, into a religious family. My father was a pastor of the Church of Central African Presbyterian. I grew up in Nkhoma, a small town near Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi. When I was 15 years old, I became the wife of Emmas Mzanga.

One day a friend of my father, also a pastor, visited us. He had noticed that Jehovah's Witnesses lived near our home and warned us not to become involved with them. He told us that the Witnesses were demonized

and that if we were not careful, we too could become demon possessed. That warning alarmed us so much that we moved to another village, where Emmas found a job as a shopkeeper. But we soon found out that our new home also happened to be located near Jehovah's Witnesses!

Before long, however, Emmas' deep love for the Bible moved him to speak with one of the Witnesses. After getting convincing answers to his many questions, Emmas accepted the Witnesses' offer to study

My husband, Emmas, was baptized in April 1951

the Bible with him. At first the Bible study was conducted at the store where he worked, but later the weekly study was held in our house. Each time Jehovah's Witnesses came, I left the house because I was afraid of them. Nevertheless, Emmas continued to study the Bible. About six months after he started, he was baptized, in April 1951. However, he did not tell me about it because he feared that the news would end our marriage.

Difficult Weeks

One day, though, my friend Ellen Kadzalero told me that my husband was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I was boiling with rage! From that day on, I did not speak to him or prepare food for him. I also stopped fetching and heating water for his bath—a task that according to our customs is considered a wife's duty.

After enduring this treatment for three weeks, Emmas kindly asked me to sit down with him, and he then told me why he had made the decision to become a Witness. He read and explained several scriptures, such as 1 Corinthians 9:16. I was deeply moved and felt that I too needed to share in preaching the good news. So I decided to start a study of the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. That very evening, much to the relief of my loving husband, I prepared a fine meal for him.

Sharing the Truth With Family and Friends

When our parents heard that we were associating with Jehovah's Witnesses, they severely opposed us. My family wrote us a letter telling us not to visit them anymore. Their reaction saddened us, but we trusted in Jesus' promise that we would have many spiritual



brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers.—Matthew 19:29.

I quickly progressed in my Bible study and was baptized in August 1951, just three and a half months after my husband. I felt compelled to share the truth with my friend Ellen. Happily, she accepted my offer of a Bible study. In May 1952, Ellen was baptized and became my spiritual sister, which strengthened our bond of friendship. Today, we are still the best of friends.

In 1954, Emmas was appointed to visit congregations as a circuit overseer. At that time, we already had six children. In those days, a traveling overseer who had a family spent one week visiting a congregation and then stayed home the next week with his wife and children. However, when Emmas was traveling, he always made sure that I conducted our family Bible study. We tried to make the study with our children enjoyable. We also spoke with heartfelt conviction about our love for Jehovah and for the truth from his Word, and we shared in the preaching work as a family. This spiritual training program strengthened our children's faith and served to prepare them for the persecution we were about to face.

Religious Persecution Begins

In 1964, Malawi became an independent nation. When officials of the ruling party learned of our neutral stand on politics, they tried to force us to buy party membership cards.* Because Emmas and I refused to do so, members of the Youth League destroyed our field of maize—our main food supply for the coming year. While Youth League mem-

* For more information on the history of Jehovah's Witnesses in Malawi, see the 1999 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pages 149-223, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

bers chopped down the maize, they were singing: "Of all who refuse to buy Kamuzu's [President Banda's] card, termites will eat their green maize and these people will cry for it." Yet, despite this loss of food, we did not despair. We felt Jehovah's care. He lovingly strengthened us.—Philippians 4:12, 13.

Late one night in August 1964, I was home alone with the children. We were asleep, but I was awakened by the distant sound of singing. It was the Gulewamkulu, a feared secret society of tribal dancers who attack people and pretend to be the spirits of dead ancestors. The Youth League had sent the Gulewamkulu to attack us. I quickly woke up the children, and before the attackers reached our house, we fled into the bush.

From our hiding place, we saw a bright light. The Gulewamkulu had set fire to our grass-roofed house. It burned to the ground, along with all our possessions. As the attackers walked away from the smoldering rubble of our home, we heard them say, "We made a nice fire for that Witness to warm himself up." How thankful we were to Jehovah that we had got away safe! True, they destroyed all our property, but they did not destroy our determination to trust in Jehovah rather than men.—Psalm 118:8.

We learned that the Gulewamkulu had done the same terrible thing to five other families of Jehovah's Witnesses in our area. How happy and thankful we were when the brothers in neighboring congregations came to our rescue! They rebuilt our homes and supplied us with food for several weeks.

Persecution Intensifies

In September 1967 a campaign to round up all of Jehovah's Witnesses swept across the country. To find us, ruthless and predatory young men—members of the Youth League and Malawi Young Pioneers, armed

with machetes—searched for Witnesses from door to door. When they found them, the men offered to sell them political party cards.

Arriving at our house, they asked if we had a party card. I said: "No, I haven't bought one. I am not going to buy it now, and neither am I going to buy one in the future." Then they grabbed hold of my husband and me and took us to the local police station, leaving us no chance to take anything with us. When our younger children came home from school, they did not find us, and they became very worried. Fortunately, our older son, Daniel, came home a short time later and found out from a neighbor what had happened. Immediately, he took his younger siblings and headed for the police station. They arrived just as the police were loading us into trucks to take us to Lilongwe. The children went along.

In Lilongwe a mock trial was held at police headquarters. The officers asked us, "Will you continue to be Jehovah's Witnesses?" We answered, "Yes!" although this answer automatically meant a sentence of seven years in prison. For those who "managed" the organization, the sentence was 14 years.

After we spent a night without food and rest, the police took us to Maula Prison. There the cells were so overcrowded that we could not even find a place to sleep on the floor! The toilet facility consisted of only one bucket in each crowded cell. Food rations were meager and poorly prepared. After two weeks, the prison officials realized that we were peaceful people and allowed us to use the outdoor prison exercise yard. With so many of us together, we had daily opportunities to encourage one another and to give a fine witness to other prisoners. To our surprise, after serving about three months of our prison sentence, we were released because of international pressure exerted on Malawi's government.

The police officers urged us to go back to our homes, but they also told us that Jehovah's Witnesses had been banned in Malawi. This ban lasted from October 20, 1967, to August 12, 1993—almost 26 years. Those were difficult years, yet with Jehovah's help we were able to maintain our strict neutrality.

Hunted Like Animals

In October 1972, a government decree triggered a new wave of violent persecution. The decree directed that all of Jehovah's Witnesses were to be dismissed from their places of employment and that all Witnesses living in villages were to be chased away from their homes. Witnesses were hunted like animals.

At that time, a young Christian brother came to our house with an urgent message for Emmas, 'The Youth League is plotting to behead you, put your head on a pole, and take it to the local chiefs.' Emmas quickly left home, but not before he had made arrangements for us to follow him as soon as possible. Hurriedly, I sent off the children. Then, just as I was about to leave, ten members of the Youth League appeared, looking for Emmas. They broke into our house but discovered that Emmas was gone. Angrily, the men dragged me into a nearby sugarcane field, where they kicked me and beat me with sug-

arcane stalks. Then they left me for dead. After regaining consciousness, I crawled back home.

That night, under the cover of darkness, Emmas risked his life by returning to our house to look for me. When he found me badly beaten up, Emmas and a friend who owned a car gently put me in the vehicle. Then we drove to the home of a brother in Lilongwe, where I slowly recovered from the attack and Emmas started making plans to escape from the country.

Refugees With No Place to Go

Our daughter Dinesi and her husband had a five-ton truck. They employed a driver who was once a Malawi Young Pioneer but who had become sympathetic to our situation. He volunteered to help us and other Witnesses. For several evenings the driver picked up Witnesses from prearranged hiding places. Then he donned his Malawi Young Pioneer uniform and drove the loaded truck through several police roadblocks. He risked much to help hundreds of Witnesses to cross the border into Zambia.

After a few months, the Zambian authorities repatriated us to Malawi; yet, we could not return to our home village. All the possessions we had left behind had been sto-



A group
of brave
couriers

len. Even the metal roofing sheets had been stripped from our house. With nowhere safe to go, we fled into Mozambique and stayed in the Mlangeni refugee camp for two and a half years. In June 1975, however, a new government in Mozambique closed down the camp and forced us to go back to Malawi, where conditions had not changed for Jehovah's people. We had no choice but to flee into Zambia for a second time. There we reached the Chigumukire refugee camp.

Two months later a convoy of buses and military trucks parked along the main road, and hundreds of heavily armed Zambian soldiers invaded the camp. They told us that nice houses had been built for us and that they were providing transportation to help us get there. We knew that this was not true. The soldiers began to push people onto the trucks and buses, and panic broke out. The soldiers began firing in the air with their automatic weapons, and thousands of our brothers and sisters scattered in terror.

In the confusion, Emmas was accidentally knocked down and trampled, but one of the brothers helped him to his feet. We thought that this was the beginning of the great tribulation. All refugees ran back toward Malawi. While still in Zambia, we reached a river, and the brothers formed several human chains to help everyone to cross safely. On the other side of the river, though, we were rounded up by Zambian soldiers and forcibly repatriated to Malawi.

Back in Malawi once more, we did not know where to go. We learned that at political rallies and in the newspapers, people had been warned to watch out for "new faces" arriving in their villages, referring to Jehovah's Witnesses. So we decided to go to the capital city, where we would not stand out as much as in a village. We succeeded in renting a small house, and Emmas resumed his secret visits to the congregations as a traveling overseer.

Attending Congregation Meetings

What helped us to remain faithful? Congregation meetings! In the refugee camps of Mozambique and Zambia, we freely attended meetings held in rustic, grass-roofed Kingdom Halls. Gathering for the meetings in Malawi was dangerous and difficult—yet always worth the effort. To avoid detection, we usually held meetings late at night in out-of-the-way places. So as not to draw attention to our gatherings, we did not applaud to express our appreciation for a speaker but simply rubbed our hands together.

Baptisms were carried out late at night. Our son Abiyudi was baptized on such an occasion. Following the baptism talk, he and the other baptism candidates were led in the darkness to a swampy area where a shallow hole had been dug. There, they were baptized.

Our Small Home a Safe Haven

During the later years of the government ban, our home in Lilongwe was used as a safe house. Mail and literature from the Zambia branch office were secretly delivered to our home. Brothers who served as bicycle couriers came to our home to pick up the shipment from Zambia and transport the mail and literature to all parts of Malawi. The *Watchtower* magazines that were distributed were thin because they were printed on Bible paper. This allowed the couriers to transport twice as many magazines as would have been possible had the magazines been printed on regular paper. The couriers also distributed *Watchtower* minimagazines, which featured study articles only. A minimagazine was easy to hide in a shirt pocket because it consisted of one sheet of paper.

These couriers risked their freedom and life when they cycled through the bush, sometimes in the dark of night, with cartons of banned literature piled high on their

bicycles. Despite police roadblocks and other hazards, they traveled hundreds of miles in all types of weather to deliver spiritual food to their brothers. How brave those dear couriers were!

Jehovah Cares for Widows

In December 1992, while giving a talk during a circuit visit, Emmas suffered a stroke. Afterward, he was no longer able to speak. Some time later he suffered a second stroke, leaving one side of his body paralyzed. Although coping with his loss of health was hard for him, the loving support we received from our congregation dispelled my despair. I was able to care for my husband at home until he died in November 1994, at the age of 76. We were married for 57 years, and Emmas saw the end of the ban before he died. But I still mourn the loss of my faithful companion.

After I became a widow, my son-in-law took it upon himself to provide not only for his wife and five children but also for me. Sadly, after a short illness, he died in August 2000. How was my daughter to find food and accommodations for us? Again I found that Jehovah cares for us and is truly "a father of fatherless boys and a judge of widows." (Psalm 68:5) Jehovah, through his servants on earth, provided a beautiful new house. How did that come about? When the

brothers and sisters in our congregation saw our plight, they built a house for us in just five weeks! Brothers from other congregations who were bricklayers came to help. The love and kindness shown by all these Witnesses overwhelmed us because the home they built for us is better than the homes in which many of them live. This display of love by the congregation gave a fine witness in our neighborhood. As I go to sleep at night, I feel as if I were in Paradise! Yes, our beautiful new home is made from bricks and mortar, but as so many have observed, it is a house that was truly built with love.—Galatians 6:10.

Jehovah's Continuing Care

Though I have at times been on the brink of total despair, Jehovah has been good to me. Seven of my nine children are still alive, and my family now numbers 123. How grateful I am that the vast majority of them are faithfully serving Jehovah!

Today, at the age of 82, I am filled with joy when I see what God's spirit has accomplished in Malawi. In the last four years alone, I have seen the number of Kingdom Halls increase from one to over 600. We also now have a new branch office in Li-longwe, and we enjoy an unrestricted flow of fortifying spiritual food. I truly feel that I have experienced the fulfillment of God's

promise found at Isaiah 54:17, where we are assured: "Any weapon whatever that will be formed against you will have no success." After serving Jehovah for more than 50 years, I am convinced that whatever trials we may face, Jehovah always cares for us.



A house built with love

Questions From Readers

In many parts of the world, it is customary to give wedding gifts. What Scriptural principles should we consider when giving or receiving such gifts?

The Bible approves of gift-giving when it is done with the right motive and on the right occasion. In the matter of giving, the Bible encourages true Christians to imitate their generous Provider, Jehovah. (James 1:17) The apostle Paul urged fellow Christians: "Do not forget the doing of good and the sharing of things with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Thus, Christians are encouraged to be generous.—Hebrews 13:16; Luke 6:38.

What about using a gift registry, a common practice in the United States? In England, it is referred to as a wedding list. Typically, a couple with an upcoming wedding registers at a store by reviewing the store's merchandise and making a list of items that they would like to receive as gifts. Relatives and friends of the couple are directed to the appropriate store to purchase an item from the couple's registry list. From a practical standpoint, a gift-registry list frees the giver from spending hours browsing for a gift, while the recipients are spared the inconvenience of returning unwanted gifts to the store.

Whether a couple who are getting married wish to use a gift registry is a matter for personal decision. However, a Christian would want to be careful to avoid any practices that might violate Bible principles. For instance, what if an engaged couple were to make up a list containing very costly items? In such a case, those on a limited budget may be unable to provide a gift, or they may feel that it would be better to decline the invitation to attend the wedding so as to spare themselves the embarrassment of bringing an inexpensive present. One Christian woman wrote: "It is becoming over-

whelming. I have tried to be generous, but lately all the happiness that I used to find in giving is lost." How sad it would be if a wedding were to become a source of discouragement!

Certainly, givers should not be made to feel that in order for their gift to be acceptable, it must be purchased at a certain store or fall within a particular price range. After all, Jesus Christ indicated that what is most precious in God's sight is a giver's heart attitude, not the material value of the gift. (Luke 21:1-4) Similarly, regarding gifts of mercy to the needy, 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 9:7.

Biblically speaking, there is nothing wrong with identifying oneself as the giver of a gift, perhaps by including a note with a present. However, in some places, it is the custom to identify the giver to all those who are present. This custom can lead to problems. Those giving a present may want to remain anonymous in order to avoid attracting undue attention to themselves. Such individuals act according to the principle found at Matthew 6:3, where Jesus states: "But you, when making gifts of mercy, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing." Others may feel that gift-giving is a personal matter that should remain private between the giver and the recipient. Moreover, identifying the givers could lead to comparisons of gifts, "stirring up competition." (Galatians 5:26) Christians surely would want to avoid making anyone feel uncomfortable or embarrassed by publicly announcing the names of the givers.—1 Peter 3:8.

Yes, by acting in harmony with principles found in God's Word, gift-giving will remain a source of happiness.—Acts 20:35.

Do You Treasure Elderly Fellow Believers?

WHEN the people of ancient Israel were in a covenant relationship with God, they were commanded: "Before gray hair you should rise up, and you must show consideration for the person of an old man, and you must be in fear of your God." (Leviticus 19:32) Thus, respect for the aged was a sacred duty, linked to being in subjection to God. Although Christians today are no longer under the Mosaic Law, it reminds us that Jehovah views the elderly who serve him as valuable and precious. (Proverbs 16:31; Hebrews 7:18) Do we reflect Jehovah's view? Do we treasure our elderly Christian brothers and sisters?

He Treasured His Older Friend

One Bible account that highlights the showing of respect for older ones is found in the book of Second Kings. It contains a description of how the prophet Elijah was succeeded by the younger prophet Elisha. Consider what took place on Elijah's last day as a prophet in the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel.

That day, the elderly prophet was directed by Jehovah to travel from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, and from Jericho to the Jordan River. (2 Kings 2:1, 2, 4, 6) During that trip of nearly 30 miles, Elijah three times urged Elisha to stop following him. However, just as young Ruth centuries earlier had firmly refused to leave Naomi, so Elisha refused to leave the older prophet.

Elisha desired to serve with Elijah as long as possible

(Ruth 1:16, 17) Elisha stated three times: "As Jehovah is living and as your soul is living, I will not leave you." (2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6) At that point, Elisha had already assisted Elijah for some six years. Yet, he desired to serve with Elijah as long as possible. In fact, the account adds: "It came about that as they were walking along, speaking as they walked, why, look! . . . Elijah went ascending." (Verse 11) Elijah and Elisha were conversing until the very last moment of Elijah's ministry in Israel. The younger prophet apparently was eager to absorb as many words of instruction and encouragement as possible from the older, more experienced prophet. Clearly, he treasured his older friend.

'As Fathers and Mothers'

It is not hard to see why Elisha loved the older prophet as a friend—even as a spiritual



Younger ones greatly benefit from elderly Christians

father. (2 Kings 2:12) Just before Elijah's assignment in Israel ended, he said to Elisha: "Ask what I should do for you before I am taken from you." (Verse 9) So to the very end, Elijah showed concern for the spiritual welfare of his successor and for the continuation of God's work.

Today, it is heartwarming to note the same fatherly and motherly concern in our older Christian brothers and sisters as they freely share their knowledge and wisdom with younger ones. For instance, longtime volunteers serving at the branch offices of Jehovah's Witnesses willingly help new members of the Bethel family to acquire the skills they need to perform their service. Likewise, traveling overseers and their wives who have been visiting congregations for many years happily share their wealth of experience with those who are being trained to serve as traveling ministers. Moreover, in congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses around the globe, there are older brothers and sisters who have been serving Jehovah faithfully for decades and who gladly share their practical wisdom and experience with newer members of the congregation.—Proverbs 2:7; Philippians 3:17; Titus 2:3-5.

The heartfelt concern shown by these dear older Christians makes the showing of respect to such older ones truly a pleasure. Therefore, we want to imitate Elisha's example in deeply appreciating elderly fellow believers. As the apostle Paul reminds us, let us



continue to treat "an older man . . . as a father" and "older women as mothers." (1 Timothy 5:1, 2) By doing so, we greatly contribute to the proper functioning and progress of the Christian congregation throughout the world.

Real Help for the Poor

WHEN Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was on earth, he showed genuine interest in helping the poor. Regarding Jesus' ministry, an eyewitness observed: "The blind are seeing again, and the lame are walking about, the lepers are being cleansed and the deaf are hearing, and the dead are being raised up, and the poor are having the good news declared to them." (Matthew 11:5) However, what about the many millions of poor people today? Is there any good news available for them? Yes, there is a message of hope!

Although poor people are often ignored and forgotten by the world in general, God's Word, the Bible, promises: "Not always will the poor one be forgotten, nor will the hope of the meek ones ever perish." (Psalm 9:18) These consoling words will have their fulfillment when God's Kingdom, a real heavenly government, replaces all human rule. (Daniel 2:44) As King of that heavenly government, Jesus "will feel sorry for the lowly one and the poor one, and the souls of the poor ones he will save. From oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul, and their blood will be precious in his eyes."—Psalm 72:13, 14.

What will be the living conditions when Christ rules over the earth? Those living under Christ's world rule will enjoy the fruits of their labor. The Bible says at Micah 4:3, 4: "They will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making

them tremble; for the very mouth of Jehovah of armies has spoken it." God's Kingdom will even solve the problems of sickness and death. (Isaiah 25:8) What a different world that will be! We can believe these Bible promises because they are inspired by God himself.



In addition to giving a message of hope, the Bible helps us to cope with daily challenges, such as how to overcome the lack of self-respect, which may be caused by being poor. A needy Christian knows from his study of the Bible that he is just as precious in God's eyes as a Christian who is wealthy. The Bible book of Job observes that God "has not given more consideration to the noble one than to the lowly one, for all of them are the work of his hands." (Job 34:19) God loves both equally.—Acts 10:34, 35.