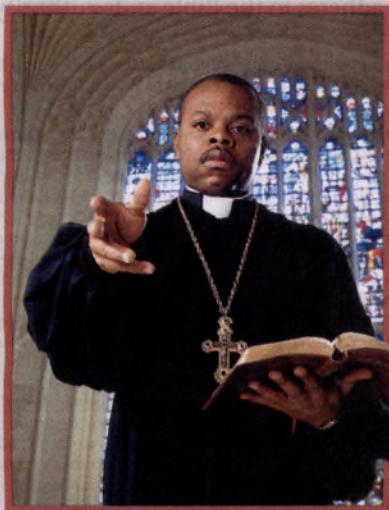


THE WATCHTOWER

JUNE 1, 2001

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Whose Standards Can You Trust?

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

June 1, 2001

Average Printing Each Issue: 23,042,000

Vol. 122, No. 11

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.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Standards Changed, Trust Betrayed
- 4 Whose Standards Can You Trust?
- 7 Strengthen Your Trust in Jehovah
- 11 Kingdom Proclaimers Report
- 12 "If God Is for Us, Who Will Be Against Us?"
- 17 Moving Ahead to Final Victory!
- 23 Joyous and Thankful Despite Heart-breaking Loss
- 28 Confession That Leads to Healing
- 30 Questions From Readers
- 32 Bible Study—Is It for You?

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

JULY 9-15:

"If God Is for Us, Who Will Be Against Us?"
Page 12. Songs to be used: 125, 80.

JULY 16-22:

Moving Ahead to Final Victory!
Page 17. Songs to be used: 104, 112.

Publication of *The Watchtower* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. The Bible translation used is the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*, unless otherwise indicated.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589.

Changes of address should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

© 2001 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.
All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

Semimonthly

ENGLISH

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Watch Tower, using the appropriate address below.

America, United States of: Wallkill, NY 12589. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Bahamas:** Box N-1247, Nassau, N.P. **Barbados, W.I.:** Crusher Site Rd., Prospect, St. James. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **Germany:** Niederselters, Am Steinfels, D-65618 Selters. **Ghana:** P. O. Box GP-760, Accra. **Guyana:** 50 Brickdam, Georgetown 16. **Hawaii 96819:** 2055 Kam IV Rd., Honolulu. **Hong Kong:** 4 Kent Road, Kowloon Tong. **India:** Post Bag 10, Lonavla, Pune Dis., Mah. 410 401. **Ireland:** Newcastle, Greystones, Co. Wicklow. **Jamaica:** P. O. Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **Japan:** 1271 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa Pref., 243-0496. **Kenya:** P.O. Box 47788, 00100 Nairobi. **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 75-142, Manurewa. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City, Edo State. **Philippines, Republic of:** P. O. Box 2044, 1060 Manila. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago, Republic of:** Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** P. Bag A-6113, Avondale.

NOW PUBLISHED IN 140 LANGUAGES. SEMIMONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cebuano,* Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Ci-bemba, Croatian, Czech,** Danish,** Dutch,** East Armenian, Efik, English** (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,** French,** Ga, Georgian, German,** Greek,* Gujаратி, Gun, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,* Igbo, Iloko,* Indonesian, Italian,** Japanese** (also Braille), Kannada, Kinyarwanda, Korean** (also Braille), Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Myanmar, Nepali, New Guinea Pidgin, Norwegian,* Pangasinan, Papiamento, Polish,** Portuguese** (also Braille), Punjabi, Rarotongan, Romanian,* Russian,* Samar-Leyte, Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Silozi, Sinhala, Slovak,* Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,** Sranaonto, Swahili, Swedish,** Tagalog,* Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Tongan, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian,* Urdu, Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

MONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL: Azerbaijani, Cambodian, Chitonga, Gilbertese, Greenlandic, Hausa, Icelandic, Isoko, Kaonde, Kazakh, Kiluba, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Kwanyama/Ndonga, Luganda, Luvale, Marshallese, Monokutuba, Moore, Niuean, Ossetian, Otetela, Palauan, Persian, Ponapean, Sango, Seychelles Creole, Tatar, Tiv, Trukese, Tumbuka, Tuvaluan, Umbundu, Yapese, Zande

* Study articles also available in large-print edition.

** Audiocassettes also available.

Standards Changed, TRUST BETRAYED

In the days of King Henry I of England (1100-1135), one yard was taken to be "the distance from the tip of the King's nose to the end of his outstretched thumb." How accurate were the yardsticks of King Henry's subjects? An audience with the monarch was presumably the only way to be sure.

M EASUREMENTS today are more accurately defined in terms of standards. Thus, the meter is defined as the distance light travels in a vacuum in one second divided by 299,792,458. To be precise, this light is of a fixed wavelength and is emitted by a special type of laser. If they have the equipment that reproduces the standard, people anywhere can check that their measurement of length is the same as everyone else's.

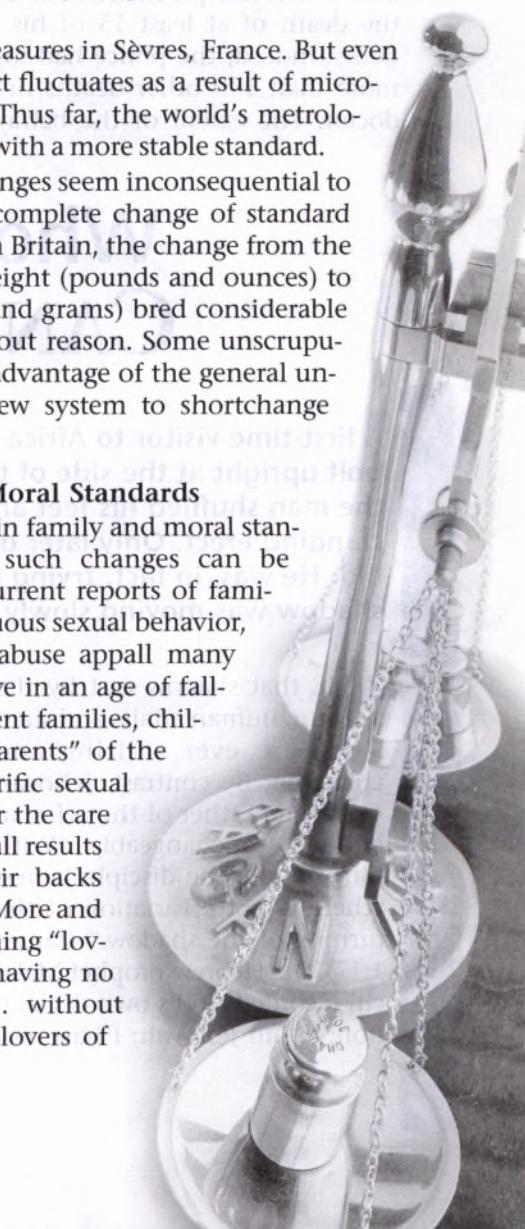
Changes in standards of measurement, however slight, can cause uncertainty, and great efforts are put forth to safeguard the standards. For instance, in Britain the standard for measuring mass is a bar of platinum and iridium alloy that weighs one kilogram. This bar is kept at the National Physical Laboratory. Air pollution from traffic and passing aircraft makes the kilogram standard gain weight every day. This metal bar, or cylinder, however, is a copy of the world standard kept under three bell jars in an underground vault at the International Bu-

reau of Weights and Measures in Sèvres, France. But even the weight of this object fluctuates as a result of microscopic contamination. Thus far, the world's metrologists have not come up with a more stable standard.

Although minute changes seem inconsequential to the average person, a complete change of standard can be disconcerting. In Britain, the change from the imperial measure of weight (pounds and ounces) to the metric (kilograms and grams) bred considerable mistrust—and not without reason. Some unscrupulous storekeepers took advantage of the general unfamiliarity with the new system to shortchange their customers.

Family and Moral Standards

What about changes in family and moral standards? The effect of such changes can be far more damaging. Current reports of family breakdown, promiscuous sexual behavior, and widespread child abuse appall many and confirm that we live in an age of falling standards. One-parent families, children brought up by "parents" of the same sex, and the horrific sexual abuse of children under the care of local authorities are all results of people turning their backs on accepted standards. More and more, people are becoming "lovers of themselves, . . . having no natural affection, . . . without love of goodness, . . . lovers of



pleasures rather than lovers of God," as the Bible foretold some two thousand years ago.—2 Timothy 3:1-4.

The decline of moral standards goes hand in hand with a callous betrayal of trust. Recently, blatant lapses from the high standards of the medical profession came to light in Hyde, a town in northern England, where residents confided in their "respected and trusted" family doctors. But their trust was sadly betrayed. How? Trial reports revealed that a medical practitioner actually caused the death of at least 15 of his female patients. Indeed, the police had to reexamine more than 130 other deaths involving the doctor. The extent of the betrayal of trust

was underlined when the doctor was convicted and sentenced to prison. Two prison officers whose mother might have been murdered by this doctor were given other duties so that they would not have to care for the infamous prisoner. Little wonder that a report of the case in *The Daily Telegraph* described the guilty general practitioner as the "‘Devil’ doctor."

In view of the changeable and deteriorating standards in so many areas of life, in whom can you confidently put your trust? Where can you find unchangeable standards, backed by an authority that has the power to uphold them? The following article addresses these questions.

Whose Standards CAN YOU TRUST?

A first-time visitor to Africa was intrigued by the sight of a man standing bolt upright at the side of the road. He noticed that every few minutes, the man shuffled his feet and moved ever so slightly to one side while still standing erect. Only later did the visitor realize why the man moved as he did. He was, in fact, trying to keep in the shade of a telegraph pole. The shadow was moving slowly as the afternoon sun shifted position.

LIKE that shadow cast by the sun, human affairs and standards are ever shifting and changing. By contrast, Jehovah God, "the Father of the celestial lights," is unchangeable. "With him," wrote the disciple James, "there is not a variation of the turning of the shadow." (James 1:17) The Hebrew prophet Malachi recorded God's own declaration: "I am Jehovah; I have not

changed." (Malachi 3:6) To the nation of Israel in the days of Isaiah, God said: "Even to one's old age I am the same One; and to one's gray-headedness I myself shall keep bearing up. I myself shall certainly act." (Isaiah 46:4) Hence, the passage of time does not alter the confidence we can have in the Almighty's promises.

A Lesson From the Law

Just as Jehovah's promises are reliable and unchangeable, so are his standards of right and wrong. Would you trust a merchant who uses two sets of weights, only one of which is accurate? Certainly not. Likewise, "a



Today, there is a betrayal of trust in commerce, politics, religion, and family relationships

cheating pair of scales is something detestable to Jehovah, but a complete stone-weight is a pleasure to him." (Proverbs 11:1; 20:10) In the Law that he gave the Israelites, Jehovah included this command: "You must not commit injustice in judging, in measuring, in weighing or in measuring liquids. You should prove to have accurate scales, accurate weights, an accurate ephah and an accurate hin. Jehovah your God I am, who have brought you out of the land of Egypt."—Leviticus 19:35, 36.

Obeying that command brought the Israelites God's favor as well as many material benefits. Similarly, adherence to Jehovah's unchanging standards, not only in weights and measures but in all areas of life, results in blessings for the worshiper who trusts in him. God declares: "I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk."—Isaiah 48:17.

Why Today's Falling Standards?

The Bible points out the reason for today's falling standards. The last book of the Bible, Revelation, describes a war in heaven, the outcome of which has affected all humans down to this day. The apostle John wrote: "War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled but it did not prevail, neither was a place found for them any

longer in heaven. So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him."—Revelation 12:7-9.

What was the immediate effect of that war? John continued: "On this account be glad, you heavens and you who reside in them! Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time."—Revelation 12:12.

"Woe for the earth" came when World War I broke out in 1914 and brought to an end an era of standards very different from those of today. "The Great War of 1914-18 lies like a band of scorched earth dividing that time from ours," observes historian Barbara Tuchman. "In wiping out so many lives which would have been operative on the years that followed, in destroying beliefs, changing ideas, and leaving incurable wounds of disillusion, it created a physical as well as psychological gulf between two epochs." Fellow historian Eric Hobsbawm agrees: "There has, since 1914, been a marked regression from the standards then regarded as normal in the developed countries . . . It is not easy to grasp the extent of the, unfortunately accelerating, return to what our nineteenth-century ancestors would have called the standards of barbarism."

In his book *Humanity—A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*, author Jonathan Glover notes: “One feature of our time is the fading of the moral law.” Although he is skeptical of a moral law from an external source because of the decline of religion in the Western world, he cautions: “Those of us who do not believe in a religious moral law should still be troubled by its fading.”

The present-day betrayal of trust—whether in commerce, politics, or religion or even in personal and family relationships—and the dire consequences are part of the Devil’s wicked scheme to bring woe on earth’s inhabitants. Satan is bent on waging his war to the finish and on bringing down with him all those who endeavor to live by God’s standards.—Revelation 12:17.

Is there a way out, a solution to the preponderant betrayal of trust? The apostle Peter answers: “There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to [God’s] promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.” (2 Peter 3:13) That promise we can trust because not only does God have the power to accomplish his purpose but he also guarantees its fulfillment. Regarding any ‘word that goes forth from his mouth’ Jehovah declares: “It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it.” A trustworthy promise indeed!—Isaiah 55:11; Revelation 21:4, 5.

Living by God’s Standards

In a world of wavering and deteriorating standards, Jehovah’s Witnesses endeavor to live by the standards of conduct that the Bible offers. As a result, they stand apart from the majority, and this has often attracted the attention—and scorn—of others.

At a convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses in London, a spokesman was asked by a TV re-

porter whether Jehovah’s Witnesses are really Christians. He answered: “Yes, very much so because Jesus is our model. There’s a lot of selfishness in the world, and we focus on Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. We believe that he is the Son of God, not a part of a Trinity, so our understanding of the Bible is different from that of standard religion.”

When the interview was aired on BBC television, the reporter concluded the program by saying: “I’ve learned a lot more about why Jehovah’s Witnesses come knocking on our door. And I don’t think I’ve seen 25,000 people so well dressed and so well behaved all together in one place at the same time.” Fine testimony indeed from an outside observer to the wisdom of abiding by God’s unchangeable standards!

While some may be put off by the idea of living by standards not of their own making, we encourage you to look into your Bible and learn what God’s standards are. But do not be satisfied by a surface examination. Follow the admonition of the apostle Paul: “Quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:2) Visit the Kingdom Hall in your community, and get to know the Witnesses there. You will find that they are ordinary folk who put their trust in the Bible’s promises and who demonstrate their confidence in God by trying to live by his standards.

Adhering to God’s unchanging and trustworthy standards in your personal life will assuredly bring you blessings. Heed God’s own invitation: “O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”—Isaiah 48:18.

Strengthen Your Trust in JEHOVAH

A murderous plot is afoot. All the high officials of the land have consulted together and have come up with a proposal for a new law. They want to make it a capital offense for anyone to engage in worship that is not approved by the State.

DOES this sound familiar? History is full of examples of people who resorted to framing mischief by law. The above instance took place in the Persian Empire in the days of the prophet Daniel. The law, which King Darius did enact, stipulated: "Whoever makes a petition to any god or man for thirty days except to [the] king should be thrown to the lions' pit."—Daniel 6:7-9.

What would Daniel do under the threat of death? Would he continue to trust in his God, Jehovah, or would he compromise and do as the king dictated? The record tells us:

"Daniel, as soon as he knew that the writing had been signed, entered into his house, and, the windows in his roof chamber being open for him toward Jerusalem, even three times in a day he was kneeling on his knees and praying and offering praise before his God, as he had been regularly doing prior to this." (Daniel 6:10) The rest of the account is well-known. Daniel was thrown into the lions' den for his faith, but Jehovah "stopped the mouths of lions" and rescued his loyal servant.—Hebrews 11:33; Daniel 6:16-22.



Time for Self-Examination

Today, Jehovah's servants are living in a hostile world, facing many threats to their physical and spiritual welfare. For example, in the brutal outburst of racial hatred in certain countries, many Witnesses have been killed. Elsewhere, Jehovah's servants have faced food shortages, economic hardships, natural disasters, serious sickness, and other life-threatening situations. In addition, they have had to deal with persecution, pressures from work, and various temptations to do wrong, all of which may threaten their spirituality. Indeed, the great Adversary, Satan, is bent on destroying Jehovah's servants by whatever means may prove successful.—1 Peter 5:8.

Faced with such circumstances, what can we do? While it is natural to experience fear when one's life is threatened, we can keep in mind the apostle Paul's reassuring words: “[Jehovah] has said: ‘I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you.’ So that we may be of good courage and say: ‘Jehovah is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:5, 6) We can be confident that Jehovah feels the same about his servants today. However, it is one thing to know Jehovah's promise but quite another to be convinced that he will act in our behalf. It is therefore vitally important that we examine the basis on which trust in Jehovah is built and that we do everything we can to strengthen and maintain that trust. If we do that, “the peace of God that excels all thought will guard [our] hearts and [our] mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7) Then when trials do come, we will be able to think clearly and deal with them wisely.

Basis for Trust in Jehovah

We certainly have many reasons to trust in our Creator, Jehovah. First among them is the fact that Jehovah is a loving God who genuinely cares for his servants. There are in-

numerable instances recorded in the Bible that tell of Jehovah's loving care for his servants. Describing Jehovah's dealings with his chosen people, Israel, Moses wrote: “He came to find him in a wilderness land, and in an empty, howling desert. He began to encircle him, to take care of him, to safeguard him as the pupil of his eye.” (Deuteronomy 32:10) In modern times, Jehovah continues to take good care of his servants, both as a group and as individuals. For example, when some Witnesses experienced extreme food shortage during the civil war in Bosnia, Jehovah saw to it that they received much-needed supplies through the courageous effort of their brothers from Croatia and Austria, who risked their lives to travel through extremely dangerous territory to bring relief material to their brothers.*

Since Jehovah God is the Almighty, he is certainly capable of protecting his servants under any circumstance. (Isaiah 33:22; Revelation 4:8) But even when Jehovah allows some of his servants to prove faithful right unto death, he still sustains them and helps them to maintain their integrity, enabling them to remain steadfast, joyful, and calm right to the end. We can therefore have the same confidence as the psalmist: “God is for us a refuge and strength, a help that is readily to be found during distresses. That is why we shall not fear, though the earth undergo change and though the mountains totter into the heart of the vast sea.”—Psalm 46:1, 2.

The Bible also reveals that Jehovah is a God of truth. This means that he is always true to his promises. In fact, the Bible describes him as a God “who cannot lie.” (Titus 1:2) Since Jehovah reiterated time and again his willingness to protect and save his servants, we can be absolutely sure that he is not only able but also ready to fulfill his promises.—Job 42:2.

* For details, see *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1994, pages 23-7.

Ways to Strengthen Our Trust

Although we have every reason to put our trust in Jehovah, we must not take the matter for granted. This is because the world in general has little faith in God, and such an attitude can easily weaken our trust in Jehovah. Therefore, we must put forth strenuous effort to strengthen and maintain that trust. Jehovah is well aware of this, and he has provided the means by which we can do so.

First of all, he has provided his written Word, the Bible, which records numerous mighty deeds he performed in behalf of his servants. Just think, how much confidence can you have in someone if all you know is his name? Probably very little, if any. You need to know his ways and his deeds to have confidence in him, do you not? As we read and meditate on such Bible accounts, our knowledge of Jehovah and his wonderful ways deepens, and we come to appreciate more and more how trustworthy he is. Thus our confidence in him is strengthened. The psalmist set an excellent example when he said in fervent prayer to God: "I shall remember the practices of Jah; for I will remember your marvelous doing of long ago. And I shall certainly meditate on all your activity, and with your dealings I will concern myself."—Psalm 77:11, 12.

In addition to the Bible, we have a rich source of spiritual food in the Bible publications produced by Jehovah's organization. Among other things, these publications often contain moving accounts of God's servants in modern times, showing how Jehovah was able to provide help and relief when they fell into desperate situations. For example, Martin Poetzinger, who later became a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, fell seriously ill while serving as a pioneer in areas of Europe away from his homeland. He had no money, and no

Reading accounts of faithful servants of Jehovah, like Martin Poetzinger, is faith strengthening

doctor was willing to see him. But Jehovah did not abandon him. Finally, the senior consultant of the local hospital was contacted. Being a firm believer in the Bible, this kind man cared for Brother Poetzinger as he would for a son, doing so free of charge. Reading such personal stories can certainly strengthen our trust in our heavenly Father.

Another invaluable aid that Jehovah provides to strengthen our trust in him is the precious privilege of prayer. The apostle Paul lovingly tells us: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God." (Philippians 4:6) "Everything" can include our feelings, needs, fears, and anxieties. The more frequent and heartfelt our prayers are, the stronger our trust in Jehovah will be.

When Jesus Christ was on earth, he sometimes went to a lonely place by himself to pray undisturbed. (Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35) Before making weighty decisions, he even spent all night praying to his Father. (Luke 6:12, 13) It is not surprising that Jesus' trust in Jehovah was so strong that he was able to endure the most gruesome test that has come upon anyone. His last words on the torture stake were: "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit." That expression of confidence demonstrated that to the end his trust in his Father was undiminished, even though Jehovah did not intervene to save him.—Luke 23:46.



Still another means to build our trust in Jehovah is regular association with those who trust in him wholeheartedly. Jehovah commanded his people to congregate regularly to learn more about him and to encourage one another. (Deuteronomy 31:12; Hebrews 10:24, 25) Such association strengthened their trust in Jehovah, enabling them to endure crucial tests of faith. In an African country where the preaching work was banned, Jehovah's Witnesses were denied police protection, travel documents, marriage certificates, hospital treatment, and jobs. When civil war broke out in one area, 39 members, including children, of a nearby congregation lived for about four months under a low bridge in the desert in order to escape the shelling in their town. Under such extreme hardship, their daily discussion of a Bible text and other meetings gave them great strength. Thus they were able to endure the ordeal with their spirituality intact. This experience clearly shows the value of meeting regularly with Jehovah's people.

Finally, to strengthen our trust in Jehovah, we must keep active in the Kingdom-preaching work, always ready to share the good news with others. This was demonstrated by the moving experience of a zealous young publisher in Canada who was terminally ill with leukemia. Despite her serious sickness, she wanted to become a regular pioneer, that is, a full-time minister. During a brief remission of her illness, she was well enough to spend one month in the ministry as an auxiliary pioneer. Then her condition worsened, and she died a few months later. Yet, she remained spiritually strong right to the end, her trust in Jehovah never wavering for a moment. Her mother recalled: "To the end, she was more concerned about others than about herself. She would encourage them to study the Bible, telling them, 'We will be together in Paradise!'"

Proving Our Trust in Jehovah

"As the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (James 2:26) What James said about faith in God can also be said of our trust in Him. No matter how much we say we trust in God, it is meaningless unless we demonstrate that trust by our actions. Abraham trusted implicitly in Jehovah and proved that trust by unquestioning obedience to his commands, even to the extent of being prepared to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Because of such outstanding trust and obedience, Abraham became known as Jehovah's friend.—Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19; James 2:23.

We do not have to wait for some severe test to come upon us before we show our trust in Jehovah. Jesus told his disciples: "The person faithful in what is least is faithful also in much, and the person unrighteous in what is least is unrighteous also in much." (Luke 16:10) We should learn to trust in Jehovah in all our daily activities, obeying him even in matters that may seem insignificant. When we observe the benefits that come from such obedience, our trust in our heavenly Father is strengthened, enabling us to face larger or more formidable trials.

As the world approaches its catastrophic end, Jehovah's people are bound to experience more trials and dangers. (Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12) By building up strong and implicit trust in Jehovah now, we can look forward to survival into his promised new world—either by living through the great tribulation or by receiving a resurrection. (2 Peter 3:13) May we never allow any lack of trust on our part to damage our precious relationship with Jehovah. Then, what was said of Daniel after he was delivered from the lions' den can also be said of us: "There was no hurt at all found on him, because he had trusted in his God."—Daniel 6:23.

His Spiritual Needs Were Satisfied

CYPRUS is an island in the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea. In Bible times, Cyprus was renowned for its copper and fine timber. Paul and Barnabas proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom there during their first missionary journey. (Acts 13:4-12) Today, the good news is still having a positive effect on the life of many Cypriots. Certainly this is true of Lucas, a man in his 40's. He relates:

"I was born into a family of seven children on a cattle farm. From early childhood, I had an appetite for reading. My favorite book was a pocket-sized edition of the Christian Greek Scriptures. When I was ten years of age, some friends and I formed a small Bible study group. It did not last long, however, because some of the older people in the village called us heretics.

"Later, while going to school in the United States, I met people from many religious backgrounds. That rekindled my desire for spiritual things. I spent many days in the university library studying different religions. I also visited a number of churches, but in spite of my efforts, I was still not satisfied spiritually.

"After finishing my studies, I returned to Cyprus and accepted a job as the director of a medical laboratory. An elderly man named Antonis,

one of Jehovah's Witnesses, used to visit me at my workplace. His visits, though, did not go unnoticed by the Greek Orthodox Church.

"Soon, a theologian came to see me and discouraged me from talking to Jehovah's Witnesses. Since I was taught from childhood that the Greek Orthodox Church had the truth, I relented and stopped visiting with Antonis and started discussing the Bible with the theologian. I also visited many monasteries in Cyprus. I even traveled to northern Greece and visited Mount Athos, which is considered to be the most holy mountain in the Orthodox Christian world. Still, my Bible questions remained unanswered.

"Then I prayed to God to help me find the truth. Shortly thereafter, Antonis again came to visit me at my place of work, and I felt that this was an answer to my prayer. So I stopped seeing the theologian and began studying the Bible with Antonis. I continued to make progress, and in October 1997, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah by water baptism.

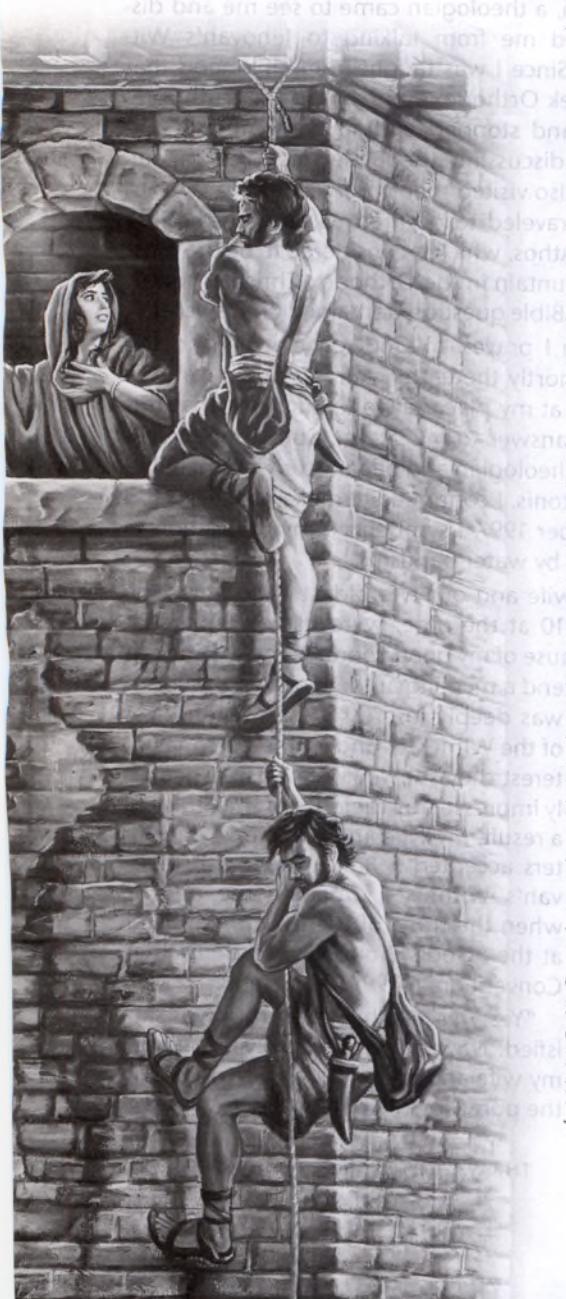
"My wife and our two oldest daughters, age 14 and 10 at the time, were initially opposed. But because of my good conduct, my wife decided to attend a meeting at the Kingdom Hall. She was deeply impressed by the kindness of the Witnesses and by the personal interest they showed. She was particularly impressed by their use of the Bible. As a result, my wife and two oldest daughters accepted a Bible study with Jehovah's Witnesses. Imagine my delight when the three of them were baptized at the "God's Prophetic Word" District Convention in 1999!

"Yes, my search for the truth was satisfied. Now our entire family, including my wife and four children, are united in the pure worship of Jehovah."



"IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO WILL BE AGAINST US?"

"What, then, shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who will be against us?"—ROMANS 8:31.



WHEN the Israelites headed for freedom after spending 215 years in Egypt, much of that time in slavery, "a vast mixed company also went up with them." (Exodus 12:38) These non-Israelites had experienced ten awesome plagues that wrought havoc upon Egypt and made a laughingstock of its false gods. At the same time, they had observed—especially from the fourth plague onward—Jehovah's ability to protect his people. (Exodus 8:23, 24) Although limited in their knowledge of Jehovah's purposes, they were sure of one thing: The gods of Egypt had failed to protect the Egyptians, whereas Jehovah had proved himself strong in behalf of the Israelites.

² Forty years later, just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Moses' successor, Joshua, sent two men to spy out the land. There they met Rahab, an inhabitant of Jericho. From what she had heard about Jehovah's powerful acts to protect the Israelites during the 40 years since their leaving Egypt, she knew that if she wanted God's blessing, she must support his people. Because of her wise decision, she and her household were spared destruction when the Israelites later captured the city. The miraculous way in which they were saved was in itself unmistakable evidence that God was with them. Thus, Rahab's confidence in the God of the Israelites was not misplaced.—Joshua 2:1, 9-13; 6:15-17, 25.

³ Fifteen centuries later, Jesus Christ healed a blind beggar near the rebuilt city of Jericho. (Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43) This man begged Jesus to show him mer-

1. Who left Egypt with the Israelites, and what led them to do so?
2. Why did Rahab support the Israelite spies, and why was her confidence in their God not misplaced?
3. (a) What miracle did Jesus perform near the rebuilt city of Jericho, and how did the Jewish clergy react? (b) What did some Jews, and later many non-Jews, come to realize?

cy, indicating that he recognized that Jesus had God's backing. The Jewish religious leaders and their followers, on the other hand, generally refused to accept the miracles Jesus performed as proof that he was doing God's work. Instead, they found fault with him. (Mark 2:15, 16; 3:1-6; Luke 7:31-35) Even when confronted with the fact that Jesus was resurrected after they had put him to death, they were unwilling to admit that this was of God's doing. Rather, they took the lead in persecuting Jesus' followers, trying to hinder their work of "declaring the good news of the Lord Jesus." But some Jews, and later many non-Jews, took note of these events and evaluated them correctly. To them it was obvious that God had rejected the self-righteous Jewish leaders and was backing the humble followers of Jesus Christ.—Acts 11:19-21.

Who Today Have God's Backing?

⁴ On the question of true religion, one clergyman said in a recent TV interview: "I would insist a religion is true if it makes a person a better person when he or she lives by it." Granted, true religion does make people better. But does the fact that a religion produces better people in itself prove that it has God's backing? Is that the sole criterion for determining if a religion is true?

⁵ Everyone appreciates being able to make personal choices, including the choice of religious affiliation. But having the freedom to choose does not guarantee that a person will make the right choice. Some people, for example, choose a religion on the basis of its size, wealth, ceremonial pageantry, or their family ties. None of these things are in any way decisive in determining whether a religion is the true one or not. The pivotal question in this matter is: Which religion urges its

4, 5. (a) How do some people feel about choosing a religion? (b) When identifying the true religion, what is the pivotal question?

followers to do God's will and gives solid evidence of divine backing, so that its adherents can say with confidence, "God is for us"?

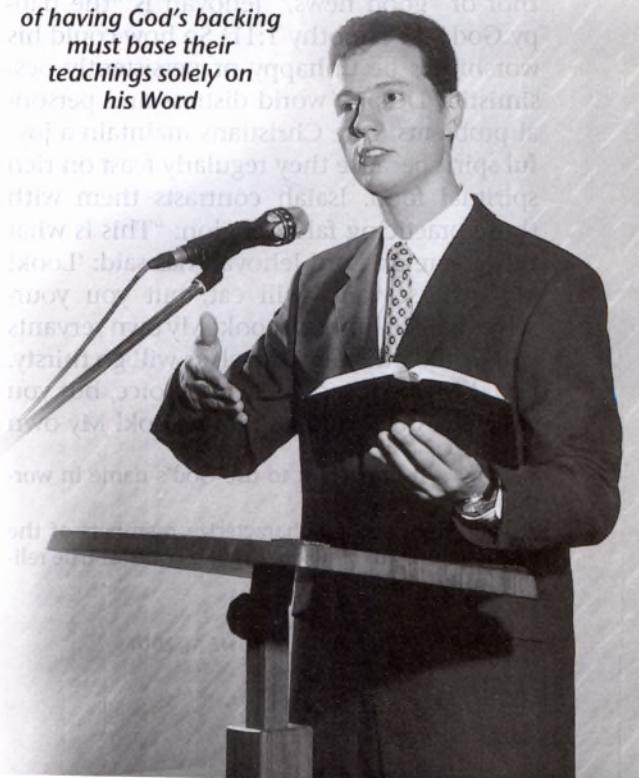
⁶ Jesus laid down the rule for distinguishing true worship from false when he said: "Be on the watch for the false prophets that come to you in sheep's covering, but inside they are ravenous wolves. *By their fruits you will recognize them.*" (Matthew 7:15, 16; Malachi 3:18) Let us review some of the "fruits," or identifying marks, of true religion so that we in all honesty can determine who today has divine backing.

Identifying Marks of Those Having God's Backing

⁷ *They base their teachings on the Bible.* Jesus said: "What I teach is not mine, but belongs to him that sent me. If anyone desires

6. What words of Jesus shed light on the matter of true and false religion?
7. What does it mean to teach only what is based on the Bible?

*Those desirous
of having God's backing
must base their
teachings solely on
his Word*



to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching whether it is from God or I speak of my own originality." And also: "He that is from God listens to the sayings of God." (John 7:16, 17; 8:47) Logically, to enjoy God's backing, one must teach only what God reveals in his Word and reject teachings based on human wisdom or tradition.—Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:3-9; Colossians 2:8.

⁸ *They use and publicize God's name, Jehovah.* Isaiah foretold: "In that day you will certainly say: 'Give thanks to Jehovah, you people! Call upon his name. Make known among the peoples his dealings. Make mention that his name is put on high. Make melody to Jehovah, for he has done surpassingly. This is made known in all the earth.' " (Isaiah 12:4, 5) Jesus taught his followers to pray: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified." (Matthew 6:9) Therefore, whether Jew or non-Jew, Christians were to serve as "a people for [God's] name." (Acts 15:14) God is obviously pleased to back those who are proud to be "a people for his name."

⁹ *They reflect God's joyful personality.* As author of "good news," Jehovah is "the happy God." (1 Timothy 1:11) So how could his worshipers be unhappy or persistently pessimistic? Despite world distress and personal problems, true Christians maintain a joyful spirit because they regularly feast on rich spiritual food. Isaiah contrasts them with those practicing false religion: "This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said: 'Look! My own servants will eat, but you yourselves will go hungry. Look! My own servants will drink, but you yourselves will go thirsty. Look! My own servants will rejoice, but you yourselves will suffer shame. Look! My own

8. Why is it important to use God's name in worship?
9. (a) Why does joy characterize members of the true religion? (b) How does Isaiah contrast true religion with false?

servants will cry out joyfully because of the good condition of the heart, but you yourselves will make outcries because of the pain of heart and you will howl because of sheer breakdown of spirit.' "—Isaiah 65:13, 14.

¹⁰ *They base their conduct and their decisions on Bible principles.* "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding," the writer of Proverbs advises us, "in all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5, 6) God backs those who look to him for direction rather than to the contradictory theories of humans who ignore godly wisdom. To the extent that a person is willing to pattern his life after God's Word, he will avoid having to learn by trial and error.—Psalm 119:33; 1 Corinthians 1:19-21.

¹¹ *They are organized in the manner of the first-century Christian congregation.* Jesus set out the principle: "Do not you be called Rabbi, for one is your teacher, whereas all you are brothers. Moreover, do not call anyone your father on earth, for one is your Father, the heavenly One. Neither be called 'leaders,' for your Leader is one, the Christ. But the greatest one among you must be your minister." (Matthew 23:8-11) A congregation of brothers precludes having a proud clergy class that honors itself with high-sounding titles and elevates itself above a laity. (Job 32:21, 22) Those shepherding the flock of God are told to do so "not under compulsion, but willingly; neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; neither as lording it over those who are God's inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:2, 3) Genuine Chris-

10. How do those having the true religion avoid having to learn by trial and error?
11. (a) Why can members of the true religion not be divided into a clergy and a laity class? (b) What example are those taking the lead among God's people to set for the flock?

tian shepherds refrain from trying to make themselves masters over the faith of others. As fellow workers in God's service, they simply strive to set a fine example.—2 Corinthians 1:24.

¹² *They are submissive to human governments and yet remain neutral.* He who fails to be "in subjection to the superior authorities" cannot expect to have God's backing. Why? Because "the existing authorities stand placed in their relative positions by God. Therefore he who opposes the authority has taken a stand against the arrangement of God." (Romans 13:1, 2) However, Jesus recognized the possibility of a conflict of inter-

12. What balanced position regarding human governments does God require of those desiring to have his backing?

Christian elders serve as examples for the flock



ests when he said: "Pay back Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God." (Mark 12:17) Those desiring to have God's backing must "keep on . . . seeking first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness," while at the same time obeying the laws of the land that are compatible with their higher responsibilities to God. (Matthew 6:33; Acts 5:29) Jesus stressed neutrality when he said of his disciples: "They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world." He later added: "My kingdom is no part of this world."—John 17:16; 18:36.

¹³ *They are impartial in working "what is good toward all."* (Galatians 6:10) Christian love knows no partiality, accepting all people regardless of their skin color, economic or educational status, nationality, or language. The working of what is good toward all and especially toward those related to them in the faith helps to identify those having God's backing. Jesus said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves."—John 13:35; Acts 10:34, 35.

¹⁴ *They are willing to suffer persecution for doing God's will.* Jesus forewarned his followers: "If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also; if they have observed my word, they will observe yours also." (John 15:20; Matthew 5:11, 12; 2 Timothy 3:12) Those having God's backing have always been unpopular, as was Noah, who condemned the world through his faith. (Hebrews 11:7) Today, those desiring God's backing dare not water down God's word or compromise godly principles so as to avoid persecution. As long as they faithfully serve God, they know that people will be "puzzled and go on speaking abusively" of them.—1 Peter 2:12; 3:16; 4:4.

13. What part does love play in identifying God's people?

14. Do people having God's approval necessarily find universal acceptance? Explain.

Time to Evaluate the Facts

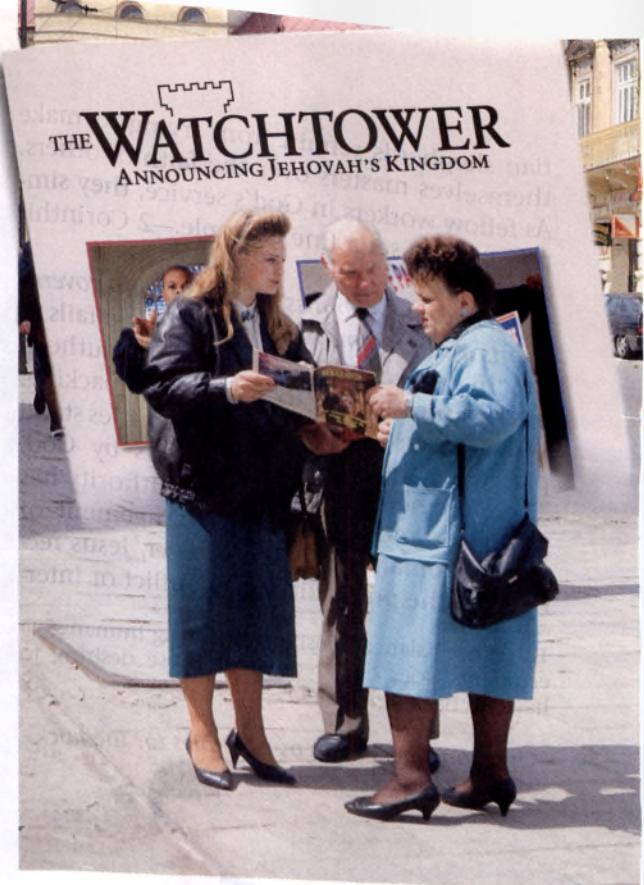
¹⁵ Ask yourself, 'What religious group is noted for sticking closely to God's Word, even when its teachings differ from the beliefs of most people? Who stress the importance of God's personal name, even using it to identify themselves? Who optimistically point to God's Kingdom as the only solution to all human problems? Who uphold Bible standards of conduct, at the risk of being considered old-fashioned? What group is noted for having no paid clergy, all of its members being preachers? Who are praised for being law-abiding citizens, even though they refrain from taking part in politics? Who lovingly spend time and money in helping others to learn about God and his purposes? And despite all of these positive things, who are still looked down on, ridiculed, and persecuted?'

¹⁶ Millions of people throughout the world have evaluated the facts and have become convinced that Jehovah's Witnesses alone are practicing the true religion. They have reached this conclusion on the basis of what Jehovah's Witnesses teach and how they conduct themselves, as well as on the basis of the benefits their religion has brought. (Isaiah 48:17) Millions are, in effect, saying, as foretold at Zechariah 8:23: "We will go with you peo-

15, 16. (a) What questions will help us identify the religious group that enjoys God's backing? (b) What conclusion have millions of people reached, and why?

Can You Answer?

- What are some ancient examples of people having God's backing?
- What are some identifying marks of the true religion?
- Why are you personally convinced that Jehovah's Witnesses have God's backing?



ple, for we have heard that God is with you people."

¹⁷ Is it presumptuous of Jehovah's Witnesses to point out that they alone have God's backing? Actually, no more so than when the Israelites in Egypt claimed to have God's backing in spite of the Egyptians' belief, or when first-century Christians claimed to have God's backing to the exclusion of Jewish religionists. The facts speak for themselves. In 235 lands Jehovah's Witnesses are doing the work Jesus foretold that his true followers would be doing in the time of the end: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." —Matthew 24:14.

17. Why is it not presumptuous of Jehovah's Witnesses to point out that they have the true religion?

¹⁸ Jehovah's Witnesses will continue to carry out this commission, never allowing persecution or opposition to impede their activity. Jehovah's work must and will be done. Every attempt others have made during the past century to hinder the Witnesses from accomplishing God's work has ended in ultimate failure, for Jehovah promised: "Any weapon whatever that will be formed against you will have no success, and any tongue at all that

18, 19. (a) Why is there no reason for Jehovah's Witnesses to desist from doing their preaching work, even though they are opposed? (b) How does Psalm 41:11 support the fact that the Witnesses have God's backing?

will rise up against you in the judgment you will condemn. This is the hereditary possession of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness is from me."—Isaiah 54:17.

¹⁹ That Jehovah's Witnesses are stronger and more active now than ever before—and this in the face of worldwide opposition—is proof that Jehovah finds pleasure in what they are doing. King David said: "By this I do know that you have found delight in me, because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me." (Psalm 41:11; 56:9, 11) Never will God's enemies be able to shout in triumph over Jehovah's people, for their Leader, Jesus Christ, is moving ahead to final victory!

MOVING AHEAD TO FINAL VICTORY!

"Look! a white horse; and the one seated upon it had a bow; and a crown was given him, and he went forth conquering and to complete his conquest."

—REVELATION 6:2.

BY DIVINE inspiration the apostle John was able to look some 1,800 years into the future and describe the enthronement of Christ as King. John needed faith to believe what he saw in vision. We today have clear evidence that this foretold enthronement took place in 1914. With eyes of faith, we see Jesus Christ going "forth conquering and to complete his conquest."

² Following the birth of the Kingdom, Satan was evicted from heaven, causing him to fight

1. What future events did John see in vision?
2. How did the Devil react to the Kingdom's birth, and of what is this an evidence?





Conventions are a manifestation of the forward movement of Jehovah's people

harder and with greater fury but in no way improving his chances of success. (Revelation 12:7-12) His anger has caused world conditions to grow ever more critical. Human society seems to be disintegrating. To Jehovah's Witnesses this is clear evidence that their King is moving forward "to complete his conquest."

A New World Society in the Making

³ Once the Kingdom was born, it was time to bring the restored Christian congregation—now with increased Kingdom responsibilities—more closely in line with the pattern of the first-century Christian congregation.

3, 4. (a) What organizational changes have been made in the Christian congregation since the Kingdom's birth, and why were they necessary? (b) Of what benefit have these changes been, as foretold by Isaiah?

Thus, in its issues of June 1 and 15, 1938, *The Watchtower* examined how the Christian organization should operate. Later, the issue of December 15, 1971, more clearly identified the modern-day Governing Body in the article "A Governing Body as Different From a Legal Corporation." In 1972, bodies of elders were appointed to provide help and direction for the local congregations.

⁴ The restoration of proper oversight greatly strengthened the Christian congregation. Also contributing to this were the provisions made by the Governing Body to instruct the elders in their duties, including the training of them in judicial matters. The gradual developments involving God's earthly organizational arrangement and their positive results were foretold at Isaiah 60:17: "Instead of the copper I shall bring in

gold, and instead of the iron I shall bring in silver, and instead of the wood, copper, and instead of the stones, iron; and I will appoint peace as your overseers and righteousness as your task assigners." These positive changes reflected divine blessing and evidenced God's approval of those who had come out in zealous support of his Kingdom.

⁵ The loving attention and guidance God gave his people after the birth of the Kingdom did not go unnoticed by Satan. For example, in 1931 this small group of Christians went on public record that they were more than just Bible Students. In accordance with Isaiah 43:10, they were Jehovah's Witnesses! Coincidentally or not, the Devil unleashed a wave of unprecedented persecution around the globe. Even in lands normally known for religious liberty, such as the United States, Canada, and Germany, the Witnesses were repeatedly forced to fight legal battles to retain their freedom of worship. By 1988, the U.S. Supreme Court had reviewed 71 cases involving Jehovah's Witnesses, two thirds of which were decided in their favor. Today, throughout the world, legal battles continue so that, as in the first century, there can be a "defending and legally establishing of the good news."—Philippians 1:7.

⁶ During the 1930's, in the days leading up to World War II, dictatorial governments placed bans or restrictions upon the work of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany, Spain, and Japan, to name only three. But in the year 2000, these three countries alone had almost 500,000 active proclaimers of God's Kingdom. That was almost ten

5. (a) How did Satan react to Jehovah's blessing on His people? (b) In harmony with Philippians 1:7, how have Jehovah's people reacted to Satan's anger?

6. Did bans and restrictions prevent Jehovah's people from moving ahead? Illustrate.

times the number of Witnesses in the entire world in 1936! Clearly, bans and restrictions cannot prevent Jehovah's people from moving ahead under their victorious Leader, Jesus Christ.

⁷ What a manifestation it was of this forward movement when, in 1958, New York City saw the largest convention that Jehovah's Witnesses had ever had, the Divine Will International Assembly, with a peak attendance of 253,922. By 1970 their work had opened up in the three countries mentioned above, except in what was then known as East Germany. But the Witnesses were still under ban in the huge Soviet Union and in its allied nations in the Warsaw Pact. Today, in these former Communist nations, there are well over half a million active Witnesses.

⁸ Jehovah's Witnesses have been blessed with increase because they have continued "seeking first the kingdom and [God's] righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) In a literal way, Isaiah's prophecy has already seen fulfillment: "The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time." (Isaiah 60:22) And the end is not yet. Just during the past decade, the number of active proponents of Kingdom rule increased by over 1,750,000 persons. These have voluntarily become part of a group about which a 1950 *Watchtower* made this observation: "God is now getting ready a new world society. . . . This nucleus will go through Armageddon, . . . the first on the field of action in the 'new earth' . . . , organized theocratically, knowing organization

7. What outstanding event took place in 1958, and what dramatic change has taken place since?

8. What has been the result of Jehovah's blessing on his people, and what did *The Watchtower* in 1950 have to say about this?

procedures." The article concluded: "Onward, then, steadily, all of us together, as a new world society!"

⁹ Along the way, this ever-growing new world society has acquired know-how that has proved invaluable today and perhaps even will during post-Armageddon restoration work. For example, the Witnesses have learned to organize large conventions, to offer fast emergency relief, and to construct buildings quickly. This activity has caused many to look upon Jehovah's Witnesses with admiration and respect.

Correcting Wrong Impressions

¹⁰ Still, there are people who accuse Jehovah's Witnesses of being out of step with human society. This is mainly because of

9. How have the things that Jehovah's Witnesses have learned over the years proved beneficial?
- 10, 11. Illustrate how wrong impressions about Jehovah's Witnesses have been corrected.

Witness neutrality during World War II is still bringing praise to Jehovah

the Witnesses' Bible-based position on such matters as blood transfusions, neutrality, smoking, and morals. But the public is increasingly beginning to admit that the views of the Witnesses have merit. For example, a doctor in Poland phoned the administrative office of Jehovah's Witnesses and said that she and her colleagues at the hospital had for several hours been debating the subject of blood transfusions. The discussion was triggered by an article that appeared that day in the Polish daily *Dziennik Zachodni*. "I personally regret that blood is overused in the medical field," the doctor admitted. "This must be changed, and I am happy someone has broached the subject. I would like more information."

¹¹ During a conference held last year, medical authorities from Canada, Europe, Israel, and the United States discussed material designed to help doctors treat patients without



the use of blood. It was pointed out at this meeting, held in Switzerland, that contrary to popular opinion, the mortality rate of patients who received blood transfusions is actually higher than that of patients who did not. Witness patients were generally able to leave the hospital sooner than those treated with blood, which in turn usually cut down the cost of treatment.

¹² Many positive comments have also been made about the neutral stand taken by Jehovah's Witnesses before and during World War II when they bore up under the Nazi onslaught. The video *Jehovah's Witnesses Stand Firm Against Nazi Assault*, produced by Jehovah's Witnesses and appropriately premiered at the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany on November 6, 1996, has elicited many favorable comments. At the opening of a similar presentation at the notorious concentration camp in Bergen-Belsen on April 18, 1998, the director of the Center for Political Education in Lower Saxony, Dr. Wolfgang Scheel, admitted: "One of the embarrassing truths of history is that Jehovah's Witnesses rejected National Socialism with far greater determination than did the Christian churches. . . . No matter how we may feel about the teachings and religiousness of Jehovah's Witnesses, their steadfastness during the Nazi regime commands respect."

¹³ When prominent individuals or court decisions come out in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses on controversial issues, it may

12. Give an example of how prominent individuals have praised the stand taken by Jehovah's Witnesses as regards political neutrality.

13, 14. (a) What judicious observation in behalf of the early Christians came from an unexpected source? (b) Give examples of favorable comments that have been made in behalf of God's people today.

break down prejudices and cause the Witnesses to be viewed in a more positive light. This often opens the way for them to speak with people never before willing to listen. Such actions are therefore welcome, and Jehovah's Witnesses truly appreciate them. This reminds us of what happened in the first century in Jerusalem. When the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court, wanted to do away with the Christians because of their zealous preaching, Gamaliel, "a Law teacher esteemed by all the people," sounded a warning and said: "Men of Israel, pay attention to yourselves as to what you intend to do respecting these men. . . . Do not meddle with these men, but let them alone; (because, if this scheme or this work is from men, it will be overthrown; but if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them;) otherwise, you may perhaps be found fighters actually against God."—Acts 5:33-39.

¹⁴ Like Gamaliel, prominent individuals have recently spoken out in favor of religious freedom for Jehovah's Witnesses. For example, the former chairman of the International Academy for Freedom of Religion and Belief argued: "The religious rights of a religion should not be denied simply because its convictions are viewed by society as unacceptable or unconventional." And a professor of the scientific study of religion at the university of Leipzig posed a pertinent question as regards a German government commission set up to investigate so-called religious sects, asking: "Why should only religious minorities come under scrutiny but not the two large churches [the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church]?" For an answer we need look no further than to the words of a former German official, who wrote: "There can be no doubt that behind the scenes, church zealots

dictated the political course the government commission took.”

To Whom Do We Look for Relief?

¹⁵ What Gamaliel said merely highlights the fact that a work with divine backing cannot possibly fail. The early Christians doubtlessly benefited from his words to the Sanhedrin, but they did not forget that Jesus' words about his followers being persecuted were also true. Gamaliel's action put a stop to the religious leaders' plans to do away with them, but that did not eliminate persecution altogether, for we read: “At this they gave heed to him, and they summoned the apostles, flogged them, and ordered them to stop speaking upon the basis of Jesus' name, and let them go.”—Acts 5:40.

¹⁶ When Jesus was on trial, Pontius Pilate, finding no fault in him, tried to release Jesus. But he was unsuccessful. (John 18:38, 39; 19:4, 6, 12-16) Even two members of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimat-

^{15, 16.} (a) Why was Gamaliel's action limited in its effectiveness? (b) How were three other influential individuals limited in what they could do in behalf of Jesus?

Can You Explain?

- What has Jehovah done to strengthen the Christian congregation since the Kingdom's birth?
- What has Satan done to try to stop Christ from completing his conquest, and with what results?
- What balanced view should we have of favorable action by non-Witnesses?
- What will Satan shortly do, and with what outcome?

thea, who were favorable to Jesus, were limited in what they could do to prevent the court from taking action against Jesus. (Luke 23:50-52; John 7:45-52; 19:38-40) The relief that humans achieve when they stand up in defense of Jehovah's people—for whatever reason—is limited at best. The world will continue to hate Christ's true followers, even as they hated him. Complete relief can come only from Jehovah.—Acts 2:24.

¹⁷ Realistically, Jehovah's Witnesses expect persecution to continue. Opposition will cease only when Satan's system has gone down in final defeat. Yet, this persecution, even though unpleasant, does not cause the Witnesses to refrain from fulfilling their commission to preach the Kingdom. Why should it, since they have divine backing? They look to their courageous Leader, Jesus Christ, as the proper example.—Acts 5:17-21, 27-32.

¹⁸ From its very beginning, true religion has faced strong opposition. Shortly, it will be the object of an all-out attack by Gog, Satan in his debased condition since his ouster from heaven. But true religion will survive. (Ezekiel 38:14-16) “The kings of the entire inhabited earth,” under the guidance of Satan, “will battle with the Lamb, but, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, the Lamb will conquer them.” (Revelation 16:14; 17:14) Yes, our King is moving ahead to final victory and will soon “complete his conquest.” What a privilege to be moving along with him, knowing that shortly no one will ever again contradict Jehovah's worshipers when they say: “God is for us”! —Romans 8:31; Philippians 1:27, 28.

17. What realistic view do Jehovah's Witnesses take, but why are they not weakened in their resolve to continue preaching the good news?

18. What difficulty still lies ahead for Jehovah's people, but of what outcome are they convinced?



JOYOUS AND THANKFUL DESPITE HEARTBREAKING LOSS

AS TOLD BY
NANCY E. PORTER

It was June 5, 1947, a warm evening in the Bahamas, islands off the southeast coast of the United States. An immigration officer paid me and my husband, George, an unexpected visit. He handed us a letter that said that our presence in the islands was no longer welcome and that we were "to leave the colony forthwith!"

GEORGE and I were the first missionaries of Jehovah's Witnesses to come to Nassau, the largest city in the Bahamas. Upon graduating from the eighth class of Gilead, a missionary school in upstate New York, we were assigned here. What had we done to bring about such a strong reaction after only a three-month stay? And how is it that well over 50 years later, I am still here?

Training for the Ministry

My father, Harry Kilner, was a strong influence on the way my life has turned out. He set an excellent example for me, making many sacrifices to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Though his health was not the best, he went preaching nearly every weekend, zealously putting Kingdom interests first. (Matthew 6:33) We were very limited



In street work in Victoria, B.C., in 1944

financially, but his shoe shop was a center of spiritual activity in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, in the 1930's. My earliest memories are of full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses, called pioneers, visiting our home and sharing experiences.

In 1943, I began my pioneer service near Fort Macleod and Claresholm, Alberta. By then our preaching work was banned in Canada as a result of misrepresentation by opposers during World War II. Our territory stretched 30 miles in opposite directions, but being young and energetic, we thought nothing of riding bicycles or walking to reach the small communities and farms in the area. During this time, I had the opportunity to visit with some graduates of Gilead, and their experiences stirred within me the desire to become a missionary.

In 1945, I married George Porter, who was from Saskatchewan, Canada. His parents had been zealous Witnesses since 1916, and he too had chosen the full-time ministry as his career. Our first assignment was beautiful

Lynn Valley in North Vancouver, Canada. Not long afterward we were invited to Gilead.

I have spoken with graduates of various theological seminaries over the years and have seen how their theological training eroded their faith in God and in his Word, the Bible. In contrast, what we learned at Gilead sharpened our ability to think and above all strengthened our faith in Jehovah God and his Word. Our classmates were assigned to China, Singapore, India, countries in Africa, South America, and elsewhere. I can still remember the excitement when we learned that our assignment was the tropical islands of the Bahamas.

How We Were Able to Stay

Compared with trips taken by fellow classmates, our journey to the Bahamas was short. Before long we were enjoying the warm weather, the blue skies, the turquoise water, the pastel buildings, and the countless bicycles. My deepest early impressions, however, are of the small band of five Witnesses who awaited us when our boat arrived. We soon learned that the culture here was vastly different from what we were used to. My husband, for example, was asked to desist from calling me sweetheart in public, since that expression is usually reserved for an extramarital relationship.

Shortly the clergy, apparently feeling threatened by our moving freely among

George and I attended Gilead School in 1946



the people, falsely accused us of being Communists. As a result, we received the order to leave the country. But the Witnesses—there were fewer than 20 in the islands in those days—immediately obtained thousands of signatures on a petition that we be permitted to stay. Thus, the expulsion order was overturned.

To a New Territory

Bible truth sprouted rapidly in hearts that loved God, so more Gilead missionaries were sent to the Bahamas. Then, in 1950, a branch office was established. Ten years later, Milton Henschel, a member of the headquarters staff in Brooklyn, New York, visited the Bahamas and asked the missionaries if anyone was willing to go and open up the preaching work on another island of the Bahamas. George and I volunteered, and thus began what turned out to be an 11-year stay on Long Island.

This island, one of the many that make up the Bahamas, is 90 miles long and 4 miles wide, and back then, it had no real towns. The capital, Clarence Town, had about 50 homes. Life was quite primitive—no electricity, running water, or indoor cooking or plumbing. So we had to adjust to so-called out-island life. Here people's health was a favorite topic of conversation. We learned not to include in our greeting the question, "How are you doing today?" since the answer would often be a lengthy account of a person's complete medical history.



*With George in front
of the missionary home
in Nassau, Bahamas, in 1955*

Most of our witnessing was done from kitchen to kitchen because people could usually be found in their outdoor kitchen with its thatched roof and wood-burning hearth. The communities were mainly made up of poor but very kind farmers or fishermen. Most of them were not only religious but also very superstitious. Unusual occurrences were commonly interpreted as signs.

The clergy thought nothing of walking into people's homes uninvited and tearing up the Bible literature that we had left there. They would thus frighten timid ones, but not everyone cowered before them. For example, a spunky 70-year-old woman refused to be bullied. She wanted to understand the Bible for herself, and eventually she became a Witness along with a number of others. As we found more interest among the people,

George had to drive 200 miles some Sundays, helping such ones to attend our meetings.

During the early months when there were no other Witnesses, George and I maintained our spirituality by holding all the regular Christian meetings. In addition, we followed a diligent program every Monday night of studying the lesson in the *Watchtower* magazine and doing our Bible reading. We also read all issues of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* as soon as we received them.

My father died while we were on Long Island. The following summer, 1963, we

arranged for Mother to come and live adjacent to us. Though she was advanced in years, she adjusted reasonably well and lived on Long Island until her death in 1971. Today, Long Island has a congregation with a brand-new Kingdom Hall.

A Heartbreaking Challenge

In 1980, George discerned that his health was beginning to deteriorate. Thus began one of the most painful experiences of my life—watching my beloved husband, coworker, and companion succumb to Alzheimer's disease. His whole personality changed. The final and most devastating part lasted for about four years prior to his death in 1987. He accompanied me in the ministry and to the meetings as long as he could, although many days the effort left me in tears. The outpouring of love from our Christian brothers has been genuinely comforting, but I still miss him very much.

One of the most precious aspects of my marriage to George was our frequent and pleasant communication. Now that George is gone, I am more grateful than ever that Jehovah invites his servants to "pray incessantly," to "persevere in prayer," and to make use of

"every form of prayer." (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18) It is so comforting to know that Jehovah is concerned about our welfare. I truly feel like the psalmist who sang: "Blessed be Jehovah, who daily carries the load for us." (Psalm 68:19) Taking one day at a time, accepting my limitations, and being thankful for the blessings each day brings, just as Jesus advised, is indeed the best way to live.—Matthew 6:34.

Joyous Rewards of the Ministry

Keeping busy in the Christian ministry has helped me not to dwell excessively on the past. Thus I am able to overcome the kind of emotions that can lead to depression. Teaching others Bible truth has been a special source of joy. It provides an orderly spiritual routine that has given structure and stability to my life.—Philippians 3:16.

Once, I received a call from a lady with whom I shared the Kingdom message some 47 years earlier. She was the daughter of one of the first Bible students we had when we arrived in the Bahamas in 1947. Her mother, father, and all of her brothers and sisters became Jehovah's Witnesses as did most of their children and grandchildren. In fact,



*The missionary home
in Deadman's Cay,
where we served
from 1961 to 1972*

more than 60 members of this woman's family are Witnesses. But she never accepted Bible truth herself. Now, though, she was finally ready to become a servant of Jehovah God. What a joy it has been to observe the handful of Witnesses who were in the Bahamas when George and I arrived increasing to over 1,400!

Sometimes people ask me if I miss not having had children of my own. Of course, having children can be a blessing. Yet, the love that is constantly shown to me by my spiritual children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren is something probably not experienced by all biological parents. Truly, those who "work at good" and are "rich in fine works" are the happiest people. (1 Timothy 6:18) That is why I keep as busy in the ministry as my health permits.

One day at the dentist's office, a young woman approached me and said, "You don't know me, but I know you, and I just want to let you know that I love you." She then went on to relate how she had come to know the truth from the Bible and how grateful she was that we missionaries had come to the Bahamas.

On another occasion when I returned from vacation, I found a single rose in the door where I now live at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nassau. It had a note, "It's good to have you home." My heart overflows with thankfulness, and it makes me love Jehovah so much when I see the kind of people his Word, organization, and spirit have produced! Truly, Jehovah's sustaining hand is often expressed through those around us.

Overflowing With Thankfulness

My life has not always been easy, nor are aspects of it easy now. But I have so much for which to be thankful—the joys of the ministry, the love and affection of so many Christian brothers and sisters, the loving care of Jehovah's organization, the beautiful truths

from the Bible, the hope of being with loved ones when they are resurrected, and the memories of 42 years of marriage to a faithful servant of Jehovah. Before we were married, I had prayed that I might always be a help to my husband to remain in the full-time ministry, which he loved so much. Jehovah graciously answered that prayer. So I want to express my thankfulness to Jehovah by always being faithful to him.

The Bahamas are a popular destination for tourists, who spend thousands of dollars to come and enjoy the tropical delights. Having made the choice to serve Jehovah wherever his organization directs, I have had the joyful experience of traveling from one end of these islands to the other, proclaiming the good news of God's Kingdom. But more important, I have come to know and to treasure the love of the finest of the friendly Bahamians.

I am so thankful to those who brought the truth to my parents, who in turn implanted in my young mind and heart a keen desire to seek first God's Kingdom. Young servants of Jehovah today can likewise receive many blessings if they enter the "large door" that leads to grand opportunities of an expanded ministry. (1 Corinthians 16:9) You too will overflow with thankfulness if you use your life to honor "the God of gods," Jehovah.—Deuteronomy 10:17; Daniel 2:47.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

How Can You
Keep a Balanced View of Money?

Do Not Become Forgetful Hearers

The Hasmonaeans and Their Legacy

CONFESSTION That Leads to HEALING

“WHEN I kept silent my bones wore out through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My life's moisture has been changed as in the dry heat of summer.” (Psalm 32:3, 4) Those poignant words may have reflected the deep emotional pain felt by King David of ancient Israel, pain that he had brought upon himself by concealing rather than confessing a serious sin.

David was a man of outstanding abilities. He was a valiant warrior, a skilled statesman, a poet, and a musician. Yet, he relied, not on his abilities, but on his God. (1 Samuel 17:45, 46) He was described as a man whose heart was “complete with Jehovah.” (1 Kings 11:4) But one sin he committed was especially reprehensible, and he may have alluded to it in Psalm 32. We can learn much by examining the circumstances that led to his sin. We will discern pitfalls to avoid as well as see the need to confess our sins in order to restore our relationship with God.

A Loyal King Fell Into Sin

The Israelite nation was engaged in a military campaign against the Ammonites, but David was residing in Jerusalem. One evening while strolling on the rooftop of his palace, he noticed a beautiful woman bathing at a neighboring home. He failed to exercise restraint but began to desire her passionately. Learning that she was Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah, a soldier in his army, David summoned her, and he committed adultery with



her. In due course Bath-sheba sent word to David that she was pregnant.
—2 Samuel 11:1-5.

David was trapped. If their sin was exposed, the penalty for both of them was death. (Leviticus 20:10) So he devised a plan. He called Bath-sheba's husband, Uriah, back from the battle. After questioning him at length about the war, David instructed Uriah to return home. David hoped that this would make it appear that Uriah was the father of Bath-sheba's child.—2 Samuel 11:6-9.

To David's chagrin, Uriah did not visit his wife. Uriah said that it was unthinkable for him to return home while the army was enduring the rigors of battle. When an Israelite army was engaged in a military campaign, the men refrained from sexual intercourse, even with their own wives. They had to remain ceremonially clean. (1 Samuel 21:5) David then invited Uriah for a meal and got him drunk, but he still would not go home to his wife. Uriah's faithful conduct condemned David's gross sin.—2 Samuel 11:10-13.

The snare set by his own sin was drawing tighter around David. In desperation he saw only one way out. He sent Uriah back to the battle with a note to the army general, Joab. The intent of the brief note was clear: “Put Uriah in front of the heaviest battle charges, and you men must retreat from behind him, and he must be struck down and die.” By the stroke of a pen, the powerful king seemed to have covered his tracks, sending Uriah to his death.—2 Samuel 11:14-17.

As soon as Bath-sheba's mourning period for her husband was over, David married her.

Time passed, and their child was born. Through all of this, David remained silent about his sins. Perhaps he was trying to justify his actions to himself. Did Uriah not die honorably in battle as others had? Further, had he not disobeyed his king by refusing to go to his wife? The 'treacherous heart' will use all sorts of reasonings to try to justify sin.—Jeremiah 17:9; 2 Samuel 11:25.

Missteps That Lead to Sin

How could David, a lover of righteousness, stoop to adultery and murder? The seeds of his sin were evidently sown over a period of time. We may wonder why David was not with his men, supporting them in their military campaign against Jehovah's enemies. On the contrary, David was taking his ease at his palace, where the realities of warfare were too far away to blot out his wrong desire for the wife of a faithful soldier. Today, it is a protection for true Christians to be actively involved in spiritual pursuits with their congregations and to share regularly in the evangelizing work.—1 Timothy 6:12.

The Israelite king was instructed to make a copy of the Law and to read it daily. The Bible gives the reason for this: "In order that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God so as to keep all the words of this law and these regulations by doing them; that his heart may not exalt itself above his brothers and that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right or to the left." (Deuteronomy 17:18-20) It seems possible that David was not following that instruction at the time he committed these grave sins. Regular study and meditation on God's Word will surely help to safeguard us from wrongdoing in these critical times.—Proverbs 2:10-12.

Furthermore, the last of the Ten Commandments specifically stated: "You must not desire your fellowman's wife." (Exodus 20:17) By this time David had a number of wives and concubines. (2 Samuel 3:2-5) But

that did not protect him from desiring another attractive woman. This account reminds us of the seriousness of Jesus' words: "Everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5: 28) Rather than entertain such improper desires, let us be quick to dismiss them from our mind and heart.

Repentance and Mercy

The Bible's candid account of David's sin is surely not there to satisfy someone's prurient interest. The record affords an opportunity for us to witness an active and moving expression of one of Jehovah's outstanding qualities—his mercy.—Exodus 34:6, 7.

After Bath-sheba had given birth to a son, Jehovah sent the prophet Nathan to confront David. This was an act of mercy. If David had not been approached and had remained silent, it is possible that he would have become hardened in a course of sin. (Hebrews 3:13) Happily, David responded to God's mercy. Nathan's skillful but clear words prodded David's conscience, and he humbly acknowledged that he had sinned against God. In fact, Psalm 51, which addresses David's sin in connection with Bath-sheba, was composed after he repented and confessed his grave sin. May we never allow our heart to be hardened if we should be overtaken by serious sin.—2 Samuel 12:1-13.

David was forgiven, but he was not spared discipline or the consequences of his sin. (Proverbs 6:27) How could it be otherwise? If God were simply to overlook everything, his standards would be compromised. He would be ineffectual like High Priest Eli, who gave a mild rebuke to his wicked sons and then let them carry on with their bad deeds. (1 Samuel 2:22-25) Yet, Jehovah does not shut the contrite one off from His loving-kindness. His mercy, like refreshing, cool water, will help the erring one endure the consequences of

sin. The warmth of divine forgiveness and the upbuilding association with fellow worshipers are restorative. Yes, on the basis of Christ's ransom, the repentant one can come to taste "the riches of [God's] undeserved kindness."—Ephesians 1:7.

"A Pure Heart" and "a New Spirit"

After David confessed, he did not regress to a negative sense of worthlessness. His expressions in the psalms that he wrote about confessions show the relief he felt and his determination to serve God faithfully. Look, for example, at Psalm 32. In verse 1, we read: "Happy is the one whose revolt is pardoned, whose sin is covered." No matter how serious the sin, a happy outcome is possible if a person is sincere in his repentance. One way to show this sincerity is by accepting full responsibility for one's actions, as David did. (2 Samuel 12:13) He did not try to justify himself before Jehovah or attempt to pass the blame on to others. Verse 5 says: "My sin I finally confessed to you, and my error I did not cover. I said: 'I shall make confession over my transgressions to Jehovah.' And you yourself par-

doned the error of my sins." Genuine confession brings relief, so that a person no longer needs to be plagued by his conscience over past wrongs.

After begging for Jehovah's forgiveness, David requested: "Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one." (Psalm 51:10) Requesting "a pure heart" and "a new spirit" shows that David was aware of the sinful tendency in him and that he needed God's help in cleansing his heart and making a new start. Rather than succumbing to self-pity, he was determined to press on with his service to God. He prayed: "O Jehovah, may you open these lips of mine, that my own mouth may tell forth your praise."—Psalm 51:15.

What was Jehovah's reaction to David's sincere repentance and determined effort to serve him? He gave David this heartwarming reassurance: "I shall make you have insight and instruct you in the way you should go. I will give advice with my eye upon you." (Psalm 32:8) Here is assurance of Jehovah's personal attention to the repentant one's feelings and needs. Jehovah undertook to give

Questions From Readers

In view of Jehovah's willingness to forgive sins by the merit of the ransom sacrifice, why is it necessary for Christians to confess to the older men in the congregation?

As can be seen in the case of David and Bath-sheba, Jehovah forgave David's sin, grave though it was, because of David's genuine repentance. When the prophet Nathan approached him, David openly confessed: "I have sinned against Jehovah."—2 Samuel 12:13.

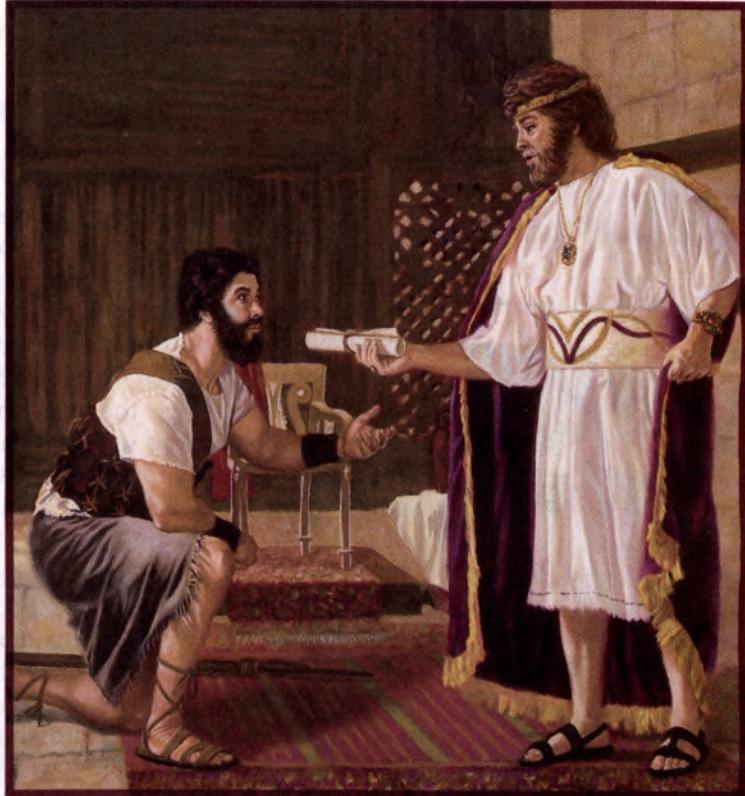
However, Jehovah not only accepts a sinner's sincere confession and extends forgiveness but he also makes loving provisions to help the err-

ing one progress to spiritual recovery. In David's case, the help came through the prophet Nathan. Today, in the Christian congregation, there are spiritually mature older men, or elders. The disciple James explains: "Is there anyone [spiritually] sick among you? Let him call the older men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, greasing him with oil in the name of Jehovah. And the prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well, and Jehovah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him."—James 5:14, 15.

Skillful elders can do much to ease the pain of heart that is felt by the remorseful sinner. They

David more insight, the ability to see beyond the surface appearance of matters. If faced with temptation in the future, he would be able to perceive the outcome of his actions and their effect on others, and he would be able to act discreetly.

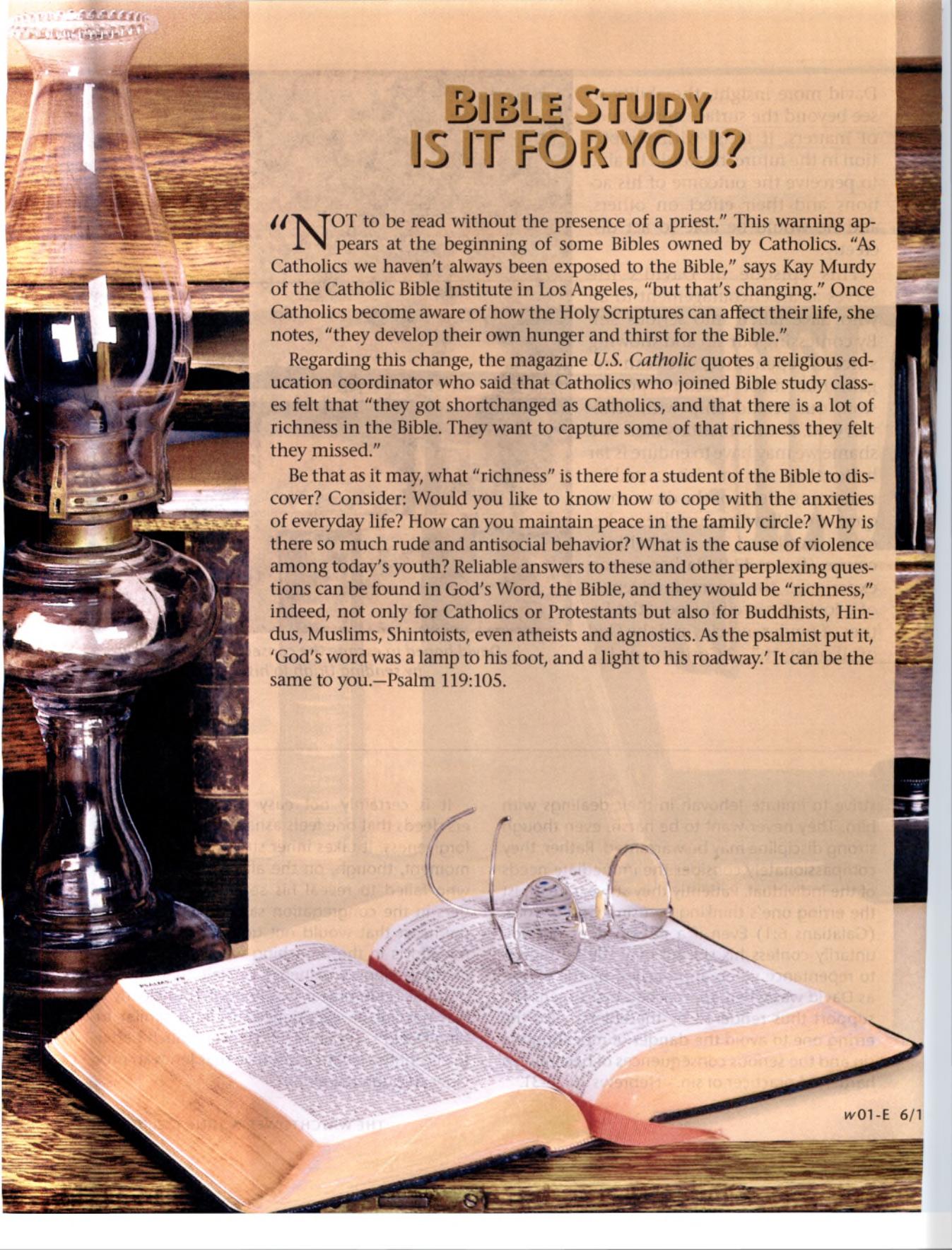
This episode in David's life serves as an encouragement to all who have fallen into serious sin. By confessing our sin and showing sincere repentance, we can regain our most precious possession, our relationship with Jehovah God. The momentary pain and shame we may have to endure is far better than the anguish caused by remaining silent, or the dire consequence of allowing ourselves to become hardened in a rebellious course. (Psalm 32:9) Rather, we can experience the warm forgiveness of a loving, merciful God, "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort."—2 Corinthians 1:3.



David hoped to escape the consequences of his sin by sending Uriah to his death

strive to imitate Jehovah in their dealings with him. They never want to be harsh, even though strong discipline may be warranted. Rather, they compassionately consider the immediate needs of the individual. Patiently they strive to readjust the erring one's thinking by using God's Word. (Galatians 6:1) Even if a person does not voluntarily confess his sin, he may still be moved to repentance when approached by the elders, as David was when approached by Nathan. The support thus rendered by the elders helps the erring one to avoid the danger of repeating the sin and the serious consequences of becoming a hardened practitioner of sin.—Hebrews 10:26-31.

It is certainly not easy to confess to others deeds that one feels ashamed of and to seek forgiveness. It takes inner strength. Reflect for a moment, though, on the alternative. One man who failed to reveal his serious sin to the elders in the congregation said: "I felt a pain in my heart that would not go away. I increased my efforts in the preaching work, but the sickening feeling remained." He felt that confession to God in prayer was enough, but clearly it was not, for he experienced feelings similar to King David's. (Psalm 51:8, 11) How much better to accept the loving assistance that Jehovah provides through the elders!



BIBLE STUDY IS IT FOR YOU?

NO T to be read without the presence of a priest." This warning appears at the beginning of some Bibles owned by Catholics. "As Catholics we haven't always been exposed to the Bible," says Kay Murdy of the Catholic Bible Institute in Los Angeles, "but that's changing." Once Catholics become aware of how the Holy Scriptures can affect their life, she notes, "they develop their own hunger and thirst for the Bible."

Regarding this change, the magazine *U.S. Catholic* quotes a religious education coordinator who said that Catholics who joined Bible study classes felt that "they got shortchanged as Catholics, and that there is a lot of richness in the Bible. They want to capture some of that richness they felt they missed."

Be that as it may, what "richness" is there for a student of the Bible to discover? Consider: Would you like to know how to cope with the anxieties of everyday life? How can you maintain peace in the family circle? Why is there so much rude and antisocial behavior? What is the cause of violence among today's youth? Reliable answers to these and other perplexing questions can be found in God's Word, the Bible, and they would be "richness," indeed, not only for Catholics or Protestants but also for Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Shintoists, even atheists and agnostics. As the psalmist put it, 'God's word was a lamp to his foot, and a light to his roadway.' It can be the same to you.—Psalm 119:105.