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THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



A SOURCE
of UNFAILING COMFORT

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Who Does Not Need Comfort?**
- 4 Comfort in Time of Grief**
Where can you turn for sure comfort on losing a loved one in death?
- 6 Living with Infirmities**
Some persons are able to remain cheerful in the face of serious afflictions. What has enabled them to endure?
- 9 When Children Become Wayward**
What can encourage parents whose children become wayward?
- 13 Bearing the Burden of Injustice**
The seeming success of wicked men has troubled many of God's servants in the past. What helped them to bear the burden of injustice?
- 18 The Suffering That Can Benefit You**
No one likes to suffer unjustly. Yet the Bible shows that such suffering is a beneficial form of discipline. Why is this the case?
- 23 A Wise Proverb**
- 24 Insight on the News**
- 25 The Apostle John's Fight Against Apostate Elements**
- 27 The Sermon on the Mount —"Stop Judging"**
- 29 First Chronicles—A Record of Meaningful Names**
- 30 Questions from Readers**
- 32 Trinity—from What Source?**

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AT ONE time or another, we sorely need comfort and encouragement. This is because there are so many things in life that can bring sadness.

Parents may work hard and try to provide well for their children. But as sons and daughters get older, they may become rebellious and cause untold grief and worry for their father and mother.

At his place of employment, a man may become the object of misrepresentation or injustice. Despite his honesty and diligence, he may not be promoted because his conscience does not allow him to play politics. Incompetent persons may even tell him how to do his job. The man may dread going to work, finding it hard to put up with a multitude of irritations.

An active adult may be laid low by a debilitating disease or a crippling accident. No longer can the individual do the things that contributed greatly to his happiness. He may be forced to dull intense pains with powerful drugs.

And who of us has not experienced deep sadness over the death of a close friend or a relative? We may have felt totally helpless, lonely and depressed.

In such situations, where can we turn for comfort? It would indeed be encouraging to find a source that would tell us how others have dealt with these problems successfully and what sustained them during the time of their affliction. The Bible does just that. It provides a candid record regarding what befell certain individuals and how they endured these trials without becoming bitter.

We read of King David, whose son Amnon became guilty of incestuous rape and

Who does not need comfort?



whose son Absalom became involved in murder and conspiracy for the throne. During his lifetime, David also endured scathing denunciation from his eldest brother, was forced to live as an outlaw for a number of years while being hunted like an animal by jealous King Saul, was repeatedly slandered, had a trusted counselor turn traitor, and became sick and feeble.

Wise King Solomon set forth the following hard facts of life: "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." "I have seen servants on horses but

princes walking on the earth just like servants."—Eccl. 9:11; 10:7.

Of course, not all men and women who are mentioned in the Bible wrestled with the same problems. However, from the time that Abel's life was violently cut short by his brother Cain, humans have known what it means to lose a loved one in death. Abraham bewailed the death of his beloved wife Sarah. (Gen. 23:2) When Jacob died, "Joseph threw himself on his father, crying and kissing his face." (Gen. 50:1, *Today's English Version*) David

lamented his friend Jonathan's death with the words: "I am distressed over you, my brother Jonathan, very pleasant you were to me. More wonderful was your love to me than the love from women."—2 Sam. 1:26.

Despite bitter experiences and hardships, David, Naomi, Hannah, Abraham, Joseph and many others who are mentioned in the Bible did not become overwhelmed by feelings of sadness. Their confidence in God sustained them.

THE death of a loved one can indeed be the most upsetting experience of a lifetime. A young woman from southern Texas relates: "While I was pregnant with my second child, my husband was killed. This tragic experience led to great depression. Adding to my trauma, my baby was born and died. I lost communication with everyone, including my young son. Also disturbing to me was the fact that, though my son was old enough to talk, he never uttered a word. At the time I was too introverted to realize that, if I never talked to him, he would never learn to express himself." How desperately this woman needed comfort! Happily, she did receive encouragement when a fellow worker began talking to her about the Holy Scriptures.

Just what hope does the Bible offer to persons who experience the grief that death can bring? The Scriptures make it clear that we have no reason to worry about the dead nor to be overwhelmed by sorrow. This is because, in God's due time,

COMFORT in time of Grief



dead loved ones will be restored to life. "I have hope toward God," said the Christian apostle Paul, "that there is going to be a resurrection." (Acts 24:15) Those who are raised to life will have the prospect of never again being subjected to misery, sickness or death. (Rev. 21:3-5) All the sadness experienced by human-kind will be so totally offset by the

changed conditions that will exist after their resurrection that "the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart." —Isa. 65:17.

Because first-century Christians believed in the resurrection, the loss of loved ones was much easier for them to bear. They did not give way to the extreme, unrestrained expressions of sorrow characteristic of persons without any hope. (1 Thess. 4:13) But how can one be sure that there will be a resurrection?

It is noteworthy that the apostle Paul's hope was based on his faith in God. Since the Almighty is the One who created humankind, he must also have the wisdom and the power to raise the dead, to re-create them. In fact, what the Bible tells us about the creation of the first man Adam can aid us to understand the miracle of the resurrection.

Adam was formed from the elements of the ground. Of course, these elements have no personality and are incapable of conscious activity or thought. However, when God organized these elements into a harmonious body and energized that body with a life-force, a distinct personality came into being—a man having the ability to think and to reason as well as to transmit life through procreation.—Gen. 2:7.

Note that what made Adam an individual was not the substance making up his body. Rather, it was what God did to the elements of the ground. Therefore, the resurrection does not depend on the preservation or the reconstruction of the mol-



ecules in the individual's body prior to his death. Even during our lifetime, the molecules making up our bodies constantly undergo change. Thus the molecules making up your body today are completely different from what they were about seven years ago. Nevertheless, you are still the same person. Likewise, whether a person is raised to human or spirit life, his body will carry within it all the God-given characteristics that make him the same individual who died. He will possess the full identity of his former life.—1 Cor. 15:36-49.

Besides setting forth the hope of a resurrection, the Bible provides the basis for this hope. From the Scriptures we learn that restoring the dead to life is not something new, something that has never happened before. To the contrary, the Bible presents specific cases of men, women and children who were resurrected. (1 Ki. 17:21-23; 2 Ki. 4:32-37; Mark 5: 41-43; Luke 7:11-15; John 11:38-45; Acts 9:36-42; 20:9-12) The most outstanding

resurrection was that of Jesus Christ. Upward of 500 witnesses saw him after his being raised from the dead. (1 Cor. 15:6) This event was so well established that the apostle Paul could say that denial of the resurrection meant rejection of the Christian faith as a whole. We read: "If, indeed, there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised up. But if Christ has not been raised up, our preaching is certainly in vain, and our faith is in vain. Moreover, we are also found false witnesses of God, because we have borne witness against God that he raised up the Christ, but whom he did not raise up if the dead are really not to be raised up. For if the dead are not to be raised up, neither has Christ been raised up. Further, if Christ has not been raised up, your faith is useless."—1 Cor. 15: 13-17.

For the apostle Paul and millions of others, unshakable faith in the resurrec-

Living with Infirmities

KING DAVID was seriously ill, and his foes were hoping that he would die. While eagerly looking for any sign of deterioration in the state of the king's health, visitors would hypocritically wish him well. Afterward they would delight in passing on their negative observations to others. "A malignant disease fills his frame," they would say. "Now that he lies ill, he will not rise again." Even an intimate friend, the trusted counselor

tion of the dead was a source of unfailing comfort. It continues to be such even today. True, some persons may scoff at the thought of a resurrection, saying that they never have seen anyone come back from the dead. But does their unbelief put them in a better position to face death? By denying the historical evidence of past resurrections, what comfort can they offer to the bereaved? When they themselves lose dear relatives or friends in death, does their unbelief aid them to be less sorrowful? The facts speak for themselves.

Hence, in times of mourning, continue to draw comfort from God's sure promise of a resurrection as set forth in the Bible. There is no other hope. Do not let go of it. Also, find satisfaction in bringing genuine comfort to mourning ones by sharing with them the Bible's message about the resurrection.

Ahithophel, turned traitor.—Ps. 41:6-10, *The New American Bible*.

What helped David to endure this time of terrible affliction? He did not lose hope and yield to crippling fear. His trust in God remained strong, for he declared: "Jehovah himself will sustain [his servant] upon a divan of illness; all his bed you will certainly change during his sickness." (Ps. 41:3) Finally David did recover from his illness.

But how does the Most High sustain his afflicted servants? By means of his spirit, Jehovah God brings to the mind of the sick one thoughts that are comforting and that strengthen hope. What God does in this respect plays a vital part in recuperation. Hence, David could say that Jehovah changes the afflicted one's bed, transform-

ing it from a bed of sickness into a bed of recuperation.

It is noteworthy that modern physicians have come to recognize the value of hope in recovery from illness. For example, in his book *The Vital Balance*, Dr. Karl Menninger writes: "Our present scientific knowledge is not sufficient to recognize or identify or properly credit all the forces working for recovery any more than we know in any case all the forces against which we are working. And this we know: Sometimes hope fails, and death ensues, while sometimes hope endures, and the impossible happens."

Regarding the hurtful effect of hopelessness and fear, *The Encyclopedia Americana* states: "The operation of fear on the mind is often, if uncorrected, attended with the most serious consequences, especially where sickness is present or disease threatened. On many persons the influence of fear is far more serious in its effect than the worst form of any dreaded malady. In epidemic diseases the terror they inspire is often as fatal as the infection—paralyzing the system, and robbing the body of the natural elasticity of its nervous stamina, and the mind of the buoyancy of hope, making victims of those who, from age and strength, had the best probability of escaping. Fear is a mental poison, and the most potent of all antagonists to health and medicine."

The person with unshakable faith in God and in the promises of his Word is protected against succumbing to such destructive fear. He finds comfort in the fact that any affliction will eventually come to its end. Even if that end proves to be death, he is not overwhelmed by fear, because God's promise of a resurrection from the dead sustains him. While undergoing the distress, he appeals to Jehovah God for help to endure. And

God's spirit or active force supplies the needed strength. Additionally, the sick one looks forward with confidence to the fulfillment of the Bible's promise: "[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." —Rev. 21:4.

The hope that this grand promise engenders can aid a person to maintain a cheerful outlook in the face of the great distress resulting from sickness or accident. Take the case of 43-year-old Robert who was stricken with terminal cancer of the spine. Doctors told him that he had only about a week to live. But some four months later, despite his serious sickness, he arranged to attend an assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses. While lying on his bed,



he was able to listen to a number of the convention sessions. Medical specialists simply could not believe that he could keep his spirits so high. 'Hope in the new system that Jehovah has promised keeps me going,' Robert would say. He also persisted in prayer, appealing to the Most High for strength to endure.

The same promise changed the life of Yuko, a young woman in Japan. At the age of 31, she was stricken with *Kogenbyo*, a disease that hardens the skin, causing the body to stiffen just like a mummy, and brings on a slow death as it spreads. At first her right hand stiffened and the fingers curled up. Since there is no known cure, Yuko became extremely depressed, especially when she thought about the future of her three children. While in the hospital, she became anemic, and the muscles of her mouth and chin became so stiff that she could no longer talk freely. It became necessary to place Yuko on a liquid diet.

But what happened after she began to study the Bible? It brought her great comfort to learn about Jehovah's new order in which people would not get sick and die. Yuko relates: "For the first time I had found a sure hope. Eventually I came to have a strong desire to express my beliefs to others in a similar condition, so that they, too, could learn to leave

all things in Jehovah's hands. Fearing my anemia, the doctor did not want me to go out and expose myself to the sun. But I felt impelled to share what I had learned. What was the result? I have had no further problems with anemia. My going out to tell others about the Bible gave me a good appetite so that I gained weight. Also, the muscles of my mouth started to move freely. When considering the miraculous improvement in my state of health, the doctor just shakes his head in amazement, not understanding what could bring about such a change."

A like transformation was experienced by a young man afflicted with multiple sclerosis. Half of his body was paralyzed, and he would spend his time sitting in a wheelchair in a private room of a nursing home. With one hand, he would operate his wheelchair, moving forward and backward, to the right and to the left. Having lost all hope, he was looking forward to dying. After a period of Bible study with one of Jehovah's Witnesses, however, this man began to take a greater interest in life. He made attempts to walk by holding onto his furniture. In time he became quite adept in using a walker. Instead of continuing to live in a nursing home, he moved into his own apartment, began preparing his own meals and even cleaned his living quarters. Instead of continuing to look forward to dying, this young man began to look forward to the fulfillment of the Bible's promise regarding a world without sickness.

Thus down to our very day, the Bible's message has provided comfort and encouragement to the aged, the infirm and those suffering because of accident or sickness. By learning to lean on Jehovah God for strength and making the hope that he offers their own, these persons have been able to endure great distress. What a fine testimony this is to the Bible's being a source of unfailing comfort!

In Coming Issues

- Assembling to Promote Victorious Faith
- Prove Yourself Faithful
- The Proud Rebel Korah

When children become wayward

A HUSKY teen-ager sits listlessly on a couch in a New York city apartment. He pays no attention to his mother's repeated urgings to help her with some heavy work. As she keeps on pressuring him, the boy flares up in anger. He rips the telephone off the wall, smashes furniture and breaks the lock off the door leading into the apartment. All the while he screams: "I'm going to kill you!" Finally, the outburst of uncontrollable rage subsides.

This wayward teen-ager has no respect for his father nor for his mother. In fact, he has no regard for any authority as he prowls the streets with other hooligans, carrying an unregistered gun.

Many parents in a similar situation ask: "How could this happen? Where did we fail?"

THE VALUE OF PROPER TRAINING

At times parental failure may be involved. If parents are negligent about training their children by word and example, they cannot expect to have good results. The Bible says: "The rod and reproof are what give wisdom; but a boy left on the loose will be causing his mother shame." (Prov. 29:15) Right training must start as early as possible, from infancy. Because he received early training, David could say in one of his psalms: "Upon you [Jehovah] I have been thrown from the womb; from the belly of my



mother you have been my God." (Ps. 22:10) Similarly, Timothy knew the holy writings "from infancy." From his earliest recollections in life, he could not think of a time when he had no acquaintance with the Sacred Word.—2 Tim. 3:15.

As children get older, real effort is required to help them to appreciate that obedience to the lofty principles of the Scriptures leads to the very best way of life. Especially is this so in these difficult "last days." (2 Tim. 3:1, 2) The Bible book of Proverbs can be a real aid to parents in imparting instruction with motivating power. Not only does this book warn against the danger of corrupting associations, sexual immorality, gluttony, alcohol abuse, and the like, but it also provides encouragement to follow a right course. (Prov. 1:10-19; 4:14-27; 5:3-14; 7:1-27; 23:20-35) The kind of positive motivation that parents might include when imparting moral teaching to older children

is illustrated in the words of Proverbs 3:1-6:

"My son, my law do not forget, and my commandments may your heart observe, because length of days and years of life and peace will be added to you. May loving-kindness and trueness themselves not leave you. Tie them about your throat. Write them upon the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and good insight in the eyes of God and of earthling man. 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."

WHEN THERE HAS BEEN PARENTAL NEGLECT

Of course, if there has been past neglect or failure, parents may find it extremely difficult and trialsome to provide moral teaching. It may be necessary for parents to explain to their children why they are so concerned about doing what they formerly neglected to do. This may include humbly acknowledging their past failings. Time and patience will then be needed to win the confidence of teen-age sons and daughters, to assure them of genuine parental love and interest. The results at first may be very disappointing, even frustrating. But parents should not be quick to give up, as this would call into question their interest and concern. A teen-ager may reason: 'If my parents really cared, they would still be trying to help me.' Hence, when parents permit their initial efforts to be dampened by their children's unresponsiveness, they may actually contribute toward their sons' and daughters' distrust. That is why it is especially important for parents to persevere. The concern of a parent may stir up a child's conscience, bringing out his better qualities. Marta, who once headed a gang of girls, admitted: "It would hurt me to see my mother worry so much about me,

but I would never show it and let her know how I felt."

A good example will often have a more powerful effect on rebellious children than do many words. While firmness for what is right must be maintained, parents should guard against losing self-control and resorting to screaming or abusive speech. The Scriptures counsel: "Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you along with all badness." —Eph. 4:31.

Even if child training has been woefully neglected for many years, there may still be hope. A young Mexican relates his own experience:

"At the age of seven, I left my parents. Home became the sidewalk, abandoned automobiles or, at times, railroad freight cars. In association with other youngsters, I began to steal. Many times we would be caught by the police and taken to jail. When asked where our parents were, we would say that we didn't know. When I was 10, we joined a band of drug smugglers. Many times I was at the point of losing my life. When I was 12, we went to the United States illegally and continued our lawless activities. One day the leader of our gang threatened to kill me for not dividing up the spoils from a robbery that I had committed. I was beaten up, and he took the 28,000.00 pesos from me.

"I was very sad and wanted to go back home or to commit suicide. Then I remembered my grandmother who lived in Ciudad Juárez, but I did not know where. I started to look for her. When I finally found her, she was getting ready to attend an assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses, and she invited me to accompany her."

Based on what this boy heard at the assembly, he began to think seriously about his life. He began to study the Bible and, to the joy of his parents, reformed and returned home.

REBELLION DESPITE GOOD TRAINING

But what if children become wayward despite good training? Parents can take comfort in the fact that they were conscientious in discharging their responsibilities. They can also entertain the hope that in the future the efforts of proper training will bring straying children back to their senses. This hope can be very encouraging.

Proper training definitely can have a lasting impact on children. The Bible states: "Train up a boy according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it." (Prov. 22:6) While as a general rule properly trained children do not become debauched persons, some do go astray but then come to their senses. Their experience may be similar to that of the prodigal son in an

illustration that Jesus Christ gave. We read:

"A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the part of the property that falls to my share.' . . . Later, after not many days, the younger son gathered all things together and traveled abroad into a distant country, and there squandered his property by living a debauched life. When he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred throughout that country, and he started to be in need. He even went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to herd swine. And he used to desire to be filled with the carob pods which the swine were eating, and no one would give him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many hired men of my father are abounding with bread, while I am perishing here from famine! I will rise and journey to my father and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son." Give me one of your hired men as well, so that I may remain with you.'"



father and say to him: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Make me as one of your hired men." —Luke 15:11-19.

MAINTAINING THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

How did the father react? Since he had not begun to harbor ill will toward his son, he responded with compassion and tender affection. Jesus' illustration continues:

"While he was yet a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was moved with pity, and he ran and fell upon his neck and tenderly kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Make me as one of your hired men.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quick! bring out a robe, the best one, and clothe him with it, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fattened young bull, slaughter it and let us eat and enjoy ourselves, because this my son was dead and came to life again; he was lost and was found.' And they started to enjoy themselves."—Luke 15:20-24.

In harmony with the spirit of this illustration, parents need to guard against becoming bitter and callous toward a wayward son or daughter. Otherwise, it may be very hard for a child to change, as did the prodigal son of Jesus' illustration.

The good effect of love and kindness is well illustrated in the case of a girl in Ohio whose parents are Jehovah's Witnesses. Believing that she was not allowed enough freedom, 15-year-old Vickie began to rebel against parental authority. Finally, at the age of 17, she moved into her own apartment in a town where her mother's family lived. While these relatives did not condone what Vickie was doing, they tried to encourage her. What finally happened? The girl relates:

"I was very depressed, almost to the point of committing suicide, and was dis-

gusted with the world and people in it. So I moved in with my mother's family. They never berated me or made me uncomfortable. I was very apprehensive about attending meetings at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, but I did. The love and kindness that everyone showed was overwhelming. They'll never realize how much I appreciated it, and how much easier they made it for me to abandon my wrong way of life."

So, when children become wayward, parents should not be quick to give up hope. While hating badness, they should avoid becoming hard and embittered toward their children. Most importantly, parents should strive to set a fine example and to keep their faith in God strong.

This is what King David did. He suffered a great deal on account of family problems. One of his sons turned completely against him, seeking both his throne and his life. But David did not let this discourage him from continuing to serve God. In fact, when old and feeble, he encouraged his son Solomon: "Know the God of your father and serve him with a complete heart and with a delightful soul; for all hearts Jehovah is searching, and every inclination of the thoughts he is discerning. If you search for him, he will let himself be found by you; but if you leave him, he will cast you off forever."—1 Chron. 28:9.

Even if one's own children were to become disloyal, Jehovah God would never abandon his devoted servants. As the Most High sustained David in time of trial and grief, so he will strengthen his people today to bear distress, including the pain resulting when children become delinquent. In fact, if all bonds of natural affection were to break down, the individual would still not be alone, hopelessly forsaken. Said David: "In case my own father and my own mother did leave me, even Jehovah himself would take me up." —Ps. 27:10.

Bearing The Burden Of Injustice

"Violence and oppression are before me; strife and contention keep on rising. In the presence of this, the law is slack and justice is not at all applied; for the wicked encircle the righteous, hence justice goes forth perverted."—Hab. 1:3, 4, "The New Berkeley Version."

OPPRESSION, injustice and favoritism are very common in this world. A multitude of defective things simply cannot be straightened out, and the flaws in human affairs are without number. One of the wisest rulers of ancient times, King Solomon, said: "That which is made crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot possibly be counted."—Eccl. 1:15.

DISTRESSING EFFECTS FROM WITNESSING INJUSTICES

² On account of their sense of justice, many people find it very distressing to witness the seeming success of those who are dishonest and have no regard for God or for fellowmen. Like the Hebrew prophet Habakkuk, other lovers of righteousness have at times asked: "Why does not God do something?"—Hab. 1:2-4.

³ So disturbing has it been for them to face injustice that some of God's servants have found themselves giving way to serious doubts about the value of an upright life. This is what happened to

Asaph,* a prominent Levite musician during the reign of King David. He wrote compositions that were used for many centuries in public worship. (2 Chron. 29:30) Along with Heman and Jeduthun, Asaph 'prophesied with the harps, with the stringed instruments and with the cymbals.' (1 Chron. 25:1) Evidently such prophesying involved their rendering praise and thanks to God while accompanying themselves with instrumental music. Likely Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun did this with the feeling and intensity characteristic of the prophets. Furthermore, their expressions, set to music, conveyed vital messages to the Israelites. Truly, Asaph was highly favored. Yet, during a certain period of his life, he came to be in grave spiritual danger. In one of his inspired songs, Psalm 73, Asaph admits: "My feet had almost turned aside, my steps had nearly been made to slip."—Vs. 2.

⁴ The name "Asaph" appears in the superscriptions of Psalm 50 and Psalms 73 to 83. Since Psalms 79 and 80 mention events that took place after the time of the Levite musician Asaph, some of these psalms must have been written by his descendants. Hence, the name "Asaph" is evidently to be understood as including the whole line of descent that started with him. There being no indication in the contents of Psalm 73 that it came from a later period, we may conclude that the writer was the Levite musician himself, a contemporary of King David.

1. How does Ecclesiastes 1:15 well describe the situation in human affairs?
2. What have lovers of righteousness sometimes asked, and why?
3. (a) How have some reacted to the seeming prosperity of wicked men? (b) Who was Asaph? (c) What did he acknowledge about a particular period in his life?

⁴ What did Asaph see that had such an unbalancing effect on him? The answer is found in the words of Psalm 73:3-9. When Asaph observed the prosperity of the wicked, envy was stirred up within him. Unscrupulous men would boast about the wealth that they had accumulated by fraudulent means. Despite their lawlessness, things seemed to go very well for them. Outward appearances gave every indication that they were enjoying peace and security. In fact, despite their vile way of life, 'they had no deathly pangs'; even their life appeared to come to a peaceful end, without horrible pangs of death. They had enough food, and no particular health problems interfered with their enjoyment of meals. Their eyes were not sunken from lack of nourishment but "bulged from fatness." These men shamelessly continued in their wicked ways. Their arrogance or haughtiness was like an ornament to them, "a necklace." So many were their violent deeds that they were 'covered with them as with a garment.' At all times they were dressed in violence. Being successful in their unrighteous scheming, they 'surpassed the imaginations of their hearts.' This encouraged them to speak about their fraudulent practices "in an elevated style," in an arrogant manner. "They would put their mouths in the heavens and their tongue would walk about in the earth." No regard did they have for anyone in heaven or on earth. Their tongue was left unbridled, and their mouths spewed forth what their tongue pleased.

⁵ Asaph apparently was not alone in being adversely affected by what he witnessed. He goes on to say: "Therefore he brings his people back hither, and the waters of what is full are drained out

for them. And they have said: 'How has God come to know? And does there exist knowledge in the Most High?'" (Ps. 73:10, 11) When thinking about the way in which the wicked appear to get by with their lawlessness, the righteous find this very disturbing. They cannot put it out of their mind. Again and again they return to it. The effect on them is comparable to their having to drink a bitter potion. This moves them to ask: 'How can God tolerate these things? Does he not see what is going on?'

⁶ Comparing his own lot with the prosperous condition of the wicked, Asaph exclaimed: "Surely it is in vain that I have cleansed my heart and that I wash my hands in innocence itself. And I came to be plagued all day long, and my correction is every morning." (Ps. 73:12-14) Thus the psalmist actually began to think that it was useless to lead an upright life. While the wicked were enjoying prosperity, he was plagued constantly. He felt that God was correcting or reproving him every morning. The wicked, however, appeared to be getting by with the grossest of wrongdoing.

⁷ Nevertheless, Asaph realized that it was wrong for him to give in to such thinking. He said: "Had I let myself talk on in this fashion, I should have betrayed the family of God. So I set myself to think this out but I found it too hard for me." (Ps. 73:15, 16, *The New English Bible*) Yes, the psalmist recognized that his viewing service to God as vain would actually mean his being disloyal to the

* The Hebrew text may also be understood in a different sense. Because the wicked one appears to be successful, some among God's servants adopt a corrupt way of thinking. They are brought back to the same line of thought and the same condition as the lawless man. Those who are thus led astray, in effect, say: 'God is unaware of what is taking place. He is not going to act against lawlessness.'

4. According to Psalm 73:3-9, what did Asaph see that he found distressing?

5. How do the words of Psalm 73:10, 11 show that Asaph was not alone in being adversely affected by seeing the wicked getting by with lawlessness?

6. What caused Asaph to think that serving Jehovah was in vain?

7. What shows that the psalmist recognized the wrongness of viewing service to God as being futile?

faithful ones. Then, too, his giving way to public expression of doubt could have undermined the faith of some. Though he tried to straighten out his thinking, Asaph simply could not reconcile how the wicked could get by with their wrongdoing, while righteous persons were suffering.

HOW TO AVOID BEING THROWN OFF BALANCE

⁸ What did the psalmist do to readjust his thinking? Asaph went to the sanctuary. There among the assembled worshipers, he came to appreciate just what was in store for the wicked. (Ps. 73:17) Similarly, if you find yourself disturbed by what you see, seek to find the answers from those who are trying to be wholehearted in their service to God. What did Asaph come to appreciate? We read: "Surely on slippery ground is where you [Jehovah] place them. You have made them fall to ruins. O how they have become an object of astonishment as in a moment! How they have reached their end, have been brought to their finish through sudden terrors! Like a dream after awaking, O Jehovah, so when arousing yourself you will despise their very image."—Ps. 73:18-20.

⁹ These words of the psalmist reveal a vital point that can help us to bear the injustices of an ungodly system. The seeming prosperity of the wicked is but temporary. Because their life centers solely around corruptible material possessions, they are standing "on slippery ground" and are in constant danger of experiencing a terrible crash, suddenly and without warning. At the latest, death will overtake them in old age, and their ill-gotten gain will be of no value in securing for them a longer life. (Ps. 49:6-12)

8. (a) Where did the psalmist go to readjust his thinking? (b) What should we do when we become unduly disturbed about the things that we see?

9. According to Psalms 49:6-12 and 73:18-20, what should we recognize about the apparent prosperity of the wicked?

Their prosperity will be like a dream that quickly passes. It may even be that justice will catch up with them long before they reach old age. The unchangeable law of God may go into effect against them: "Whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap." (Gal. 6:7) Since they have turned their backs on the Most High, the only One who could help them, the full impact of the disaster comes crashing down on them. They are left completely helpless, without hope and comfort. When Jehovah thus arouses himself against them, he will view their "image," their pomp and position, with contempt, as something worthless.

¹⁰ Therefore, during the time that injustice, lawlessness and oppression seem to be flourishing, we must never forget that the wicked are not really getting away with anything. Jehovah God is taking note of what is happening, and he is allowing matters to work out in harmony with his grand purpose. At times, when individuals take a wrong course and experience suffering as a result, they come to their senses and turn to the Creator in sincere repentance. (2 Pet. 3:9) On the other hand, if they harden themselves in their evil ways, it becomes clear to all observers that the execution of God's judgment against them is justified, completely righteous.—Compare Romans 9:14-24.

¹¹ To us, it may seem that it takes a long time for justice to be executed against those who merit punishment. But it is a very short time in the sight of the eternal God. The Bible says: "A thousand years are in your eyes but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch during the night." (Ps. 90:4) How long does yesterday seem to you today? Perhaps you did have a

10. In connection with the seeming success of the wicked, what should we keep in mind regarding God's purpose?

11. What viewpoint of time will aid us to wait patiently on Jehovah God to rectify injustices?

The enjoyment that even corrupt persons seem to get out of life raises the question: Is it worth while to live an upright life?



trying day, and it may have seemed that the day would never end. Now that it is over, does it not appear as if that day hardly existed? To the Creator, a thousand years are like this, in fact, even as brief as a four-hour watch during the night. Hence, the human life-span of but 70 or 80 years is virtually nonexistent in God's sight. "We have finished our years just like a whisper," wrote the prophet Moses. (Ps. 90:9) Yes, our brief life-span may be compared to a breath that passes our lips in a whisper. When we consider that Jehovah God promises to give his loyal servants an eternity of happy living in peace and security, even a lifetime of extreme suffering is nothing at all. This viewpoint can help us to be patient when we are troubled by having to face injustice, oppression and favoritism.

¹² There is yet another factor that comes into the picture. The great adversary of mankind, Satan the Devil, maintains that those who serve God are motivated by selfishness. This is evident from the charge that Satan leveled against Job: "Everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul. For a change, thrust out your hand, please, and touch as far as his bone and his flesh and see whether he will not curse you to your very face." (Job 2:4, 5) Hence, by our maintaining loyalty to God in the face of injustices, we can demonstrate our proper heart motivation, as Job did.

¹³ If we ourselves are the victims of injustice because of prejudice or our refusal to play politics, we must be careful not to react to God's permission of injustices merely on the basis of feelings or sensations like an unreasoning animal. This could make us bitter deep within us and unbalance our thinking, causing us to

view things strictly from our own viewpoint and to blind ourselves to God's purpose. This is what happened to Asaph. He admits: "My heart was soured and in my kidneys I was sharply pained, and I was unreasoning and I could not know; I became as mere beasts from your standpoint."—Ps. 73:21, 22.

¹⁴ Regardless of what we may personally face, we should strive hard to safeguard our relationship with Jehovah God, for our exaltation will come from him. This is what the psalmist came to appreciate. We read: "I am constantly with you; you have taken hold of my right hand. With your counsel you will lead me, and afterward you will take me even to glory. Whom do I have in the heavens? And besides you I do have no other delight on the earth. My organism and my heart have failed. God is the rock of my heart and my share to time indefinite. For, look! the very ones keeping away from you will perish. You will certainly silence every one immorally leaving you. But as for me, the drawing near to God is good for me. In the Sovereign Lord Jehovah I have placed my refuge, to declare all your works."—Ps. 73:23-28.

¹⁵ We should remember that under no circumstances will Jehovah God abandon us if we remain faithful to him. He is always with us. The Most High will take us by the hand, to conduct and to support us. The counsel or advice of Jehovah will be our guide to a secure and happy future. While we may suffer humiliation for a time, Jehovah will bring about a reversal and lead us to glory or honor. Like Asaph, we have no one but our heavenly Father on whom we can lean for comfort.

¹⁶ Our being in an approved standing before Jehovah should be our greatest

14. What relationship should we strive to safeguard?

15. How will Jehovah lead us to glory?

16. (a) In what sense is God the rock of one's heart?

(b) How can Jehovah be our "share"? (c) What should we strive to do in connection with Jehovah's wonderful works?

12. (a) What is Satan's contention regarding humans? (b) How can this help us to bear the burden of injustice?

13. How can we avoid reacting to unfavorable circumstances in the manner described at Psalm 73:21, 22?

delight. Even if our organisms and our hearts fail, Jehovah will strengthen us. He will give stability to our hearts so that we will not lose hope and courage in the face of adversity. Truly, the privilege of enjoying an intimacy with our heavenly Father and being able to serve him is a most delightful portion, a possession of priceless value. May we never let go of it, as that would spell calamity for us, along with all those who abandon Jehovah. Like the psalmist, may we draw close to Jehovah, committing all our cares to him. This is good, for it will promote our happiness and well-being. Furthermore,

may we relate Jehovah's wonderful works to others, thereby strengthening any who have doubts.

¹⁷ Truly, we today can benefit greatly from what the psalmist recorded from his own experience. While the injustices seen in this system may be disturbing, we can bear this burden successfully by centering our life around service to God. If we do, our reward is certain. (Heb. 6:10) In fact, so grand will be the reward that, by comparison, any trial or tribulation that we may have to face will be but "momentary and light."—2 Cor. 4:17.

17. What should become the focal point of our life, and how will this aid us to put up with injustices?

The Suffering That Can Benefit You

¹⁸ "In this fact you are greatly rejoicing, though for a little while at present, if it must be, you have been grieved by various trials, in order that the tested quality of your faith, of much greater value than gold that perishes despite its being proved by fire, may be found a cause for praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."—1 Pet. 1:6, 7.

THEY were ridiculed, beaten and imprisoned. Their homes were invaded and their possessions plundered. Some of their loyal friends and relatives perished at the hands of angry mobs or were sentenced to death by judicial decree. They had committed no crime to justify such brutal treatment. They lived in an exemplary way and had real love for fellow humans. But they incurred the hatred of many. Why? Because they were disciples of Jesus Christ.—Acts 8:1-3; Heb. 10:32-34.

A FORM OF BENEFICIAL DISCIPLINE

² Was the terrible suffering that Chris-

tians underwent beneficial? A person might be quick to answer, No. The Bible, however, presents the matter of a person's being forced to undergo mistreatment as something highly profitable. Christianized Jews in the first century were told: "In carrying on your contest against that sin you have never resisted as far as blood, but you have entirely forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not belittle the discipline from Jehovah, neither give out when you are corrected by him; for whom Jehovah loves he disciplines; in fact, he scourges every one whom he receives as a son.'"—Heb. 12:4-6.

³ The opposition directed against Christianized Jews was indeed severe. But their

1. What mistreatment did Christians face in the early days of the congregation?
2. 3. (a) Why were certain Christianized Jews getting tired in the race for life? (b) What had they forgotten?

struggling against the easily entangling sin—loss of faith—had not come to the point of having their blood spilled. Many of them possibly were halfhearted in the race for life and so were not carrying on the contest against this sin in a way that would be needed for them to succeed in ‘resisting it as far as blood.’ They were getting tired of having to face the reproaches of godless people. (Heb. 12:3) They failed to realize that the harsh treatment from opposers served as discipline from Jehovah and confirmed that he loved them deeply as his sons. They had forgotten the Scriptural exhortation found at Proverbs 3:11, 12. Amplifying the application of this passage, the letter to the Hebrews continues:

“It is for discipline you are enduring. God is dealing with you as with sons. For what son is he that a father does not discipline? But if you are without the discipline of which all have become partakers, you are really illegitimate children, and not sons. Furthermore, we used to have fathers who were of our flesh to discipline us, and we used to give them respect. Shall we not much more subject ourselves to the Father of our spiritual life and live? For they for a few days used to discipline us according to what seemed good to them, but he does so for our profit that we may partake of his holiness. True, no discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but grievous; yet afterward to those who have been trained by it it yields peaceable fruit, namely, righteousness.”—Heb. 12:7-11.

“In harmony with this inspired counsel, how should Christians view the suffering that Jehovah God permits to befall them? We should regard it as a form of *discipline* or training given to us by a Father who has deep love for us and is interested in our eternal welfare. The fact that such discipline is received proves undeniably that we are being treated like sons and not like unwanted and unloved

illegitimate children. Since Jehovah God permits Christians to experience this severe treatment, we should humbly submit to it. This also agrees with the apostle Peter’s admonition: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; while you throw all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you.”—1 Pet. 5:6, 7.

“It is only right that we accept this discipline without rebelling against it, without seeking to get out from under the hand of God. A man who has love and concern for his children will discipline them when he deems it necessary to do so. Being imperfect, he may misjudge matters. Hence, in administering ‘discipline according to what seems good to him,’ he may not always do what is right and beneficial during the relatively “few days” of their childhood. Yet such a father is shown respect by children who love him. This is indeed fitting, as they are indebted to him for their life. On the other hand, Jehovah God never makes a mistake, and he is responsible for more than our having life. The Most High is called, according to the literal Greek of Hebrews 12:9, “the Father of the spirits,” evidently indicating that he is responsible for the spiritual life of Christians as well as their eternal life. Surely, then, there is even stronger reason to submit to the heavenly Father’s discipline than there is to respect an imperfect earthly father.

BENEFITS THAT COME FROM SUFFERING

“Furthermore, the discipline that comes in the form of suffering is always profitable or beneficial to God’s servants. It can have a refining effect, revealing personality flaws that must be corrected. These might include pride, stubbornness, impatience, selfishness, worldliness and love

4. How should we view the harsh treatment that may be given us by men?

5. Why is it right to accept discipline in the form of mistreatment?

6. How can suffering help us to become partakers of God’s holiness?

of ease or pleasure. When the Christian makes the needed improvements, he becomes purer or more holy in his conduct. By 'becoming holy as Jehovah God is holy,' he becomes 'a partaker of God's holiness.' (1 Pet. 1:14-16) Thus, the objective of the discipline is realized.

⁷ From affliction a person may also learn things that can better equip him for God's service. This is illustrated in the case of Jesus Christ. By having to undergo extreme suffering in the flesh, he gained the needed experience to be a compassionate and sympathetic high priest. This has made it possible for us to make our approach to God through Christ with the greatest freeness of speech, confident that Jesus understands our situation and will plead in our behalf as a merciful high priest.—Heb. 4:15, 16.

⁸ Of course, the mistreatment may be very difficult to bear. There certainly can be no feeling of exhilarating pleasure or elation about having to undergo severe pain. The experience is a grievous one. However, if we submit to it and let it help us to see wherein we must make improvements, the trial can be good training for us. The final result of that training then will be "peaceable fruit, namely, righteousness." Or, as James Moffatt renders the words of Hebrews 12:11: "Discipline always seems for the time to be a thing of pain, not of joy; but those who are trained by it reap the fruit of it afterwards in the peace of an upright life."

⁹ It may well be that you have come to appreciate the good effect that such discipline can have from association with faithful Christian brothers and sisters. They may have undergone years of trial under oppressive dictators or in concentration camps and in prisons. Often, how-

ever, their integrity shines through their entire personality. A person realizes that he is in the presence of those whose faith has been molded by discipline, and the calm, joyous expression of that faith can be an inspiration to others to walk likewise in integrity.

¹⁰ Hence, when we experience any kind of trial—sickness, disappointment, injustice, tragedy or persecution—we should view it as discipline from our loving heavenly Father and allow the trial to have a good effect on us, to make us better servants of his. But how can we remain faithful while enduring the affliction so that we will afterward profit from the training?

HOW TO ENDURE

¹¹ It is especially important to look to Jehovah God to give us the wisdom to deal with trialsome situations. We should appeal to him for help, never doubting that he will help us by means of his holy spirit. Note the fine counsel that the disciple James gave on this:

"Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet with various trials, knowing as you do that this tested quality of your faith works out endurance. But let endurance have its work complete, that you may be complete and sound in all respects, not lacking in anything. So, 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. But let him keep on asking in faith, not doubting at all, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and blown about. In fact, let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from Jehovah; he is an indecisive man, unsteady in all his ways."—Jas. 1:2-8.

¹² Jesus Christ certainly set an outstanding example in leaning on his heavenly

7. As illustrated in the case of Jesus Christ, what can be learned from affliction? (Heb. 5:8)

8, 9. As shown at Hebrews 12:11, how can a period of discipline in the form of mistreatment affect us while it is continuing and then after it is over?

10. What viewpoint should we take of any kind of trial, and so what question might be raised?

11. What counsel of the disciple James should we follow when undergoing a trialsome experience?

12. What do we learn from Hebrews 5:7?

**"No discipline seems
for the present
to be joyous."**



Father. Though he was perfect, Jesus prayed with great intensity while undergoing suffering. The Bible reports: "In the days of his flesh Christ offered up supplications and also petitions to the One who was able to save him out of death, with strong outcries and tears, and he was favorably heard for his godly fear." (Heb. 5:7) Because Jesus had a reverential fear, his Father gave a favorable hearing to his cries for aid. The Son of God, with the help of the holy spirit, maintained integrity and, therefore, died as one approved by his Father. He was then delivered from death's grip by a resurrection.

¹³ Another factor that assisted Jesus Christ to remain faithful was his keeping ever before him the grand reward that his Father held out. At Hebrews 12:2 this reward is evidently referred to as "the joy." We read: "For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." We, too, by looking ahead to the reward of eternal life with its associate blessings, can maintain faithfulness under trial. Like a prize just beyond the finish line, this reward can stimulate us to run the

13. According to Hebrews 12:2, what aided Jesus Christ to remain faithful under suffering?

race for life with endurance, dismissing any wrong desires that could wreck our faith.—Heb. 12:1.

¹⁴ No matter how desperate our situation may become, we should not allow ourselves to begin thinking that the Most High does not care about us. When we are faced with great hardships, the words of Lamentations 3:20, 21 can be of real comfort to us: "Without fail your soul [Jehovah] will remember and bow low over me. This is what I shall bring back to my heart. That is why I shall show a waiting attitude." In expression of his own humility, Jehovah God will "bow low" or stoop down to give us favorable attention. He will lift us up from our afflicted state, as he did the repentant Jews in the sixth century B.C.E. However, while the period of affliction is continuing, we should patiently and with unwavering faith wait for Jehovah God to act in our behalf.

¹⁵ The very fact that we are still alive is an evidence of God's loving-kindness, his active compassionate concern. This stands as a guarantee that the Most High will show mercy to his afflicted people. At Lamentations 3:22, 23, we read: "It is the acts of loving-kindness of Jehovah that we have not come to our finish, because his mercies will certainly not come to an end. They are new each morning. Your faithfulness is abundant."

¹⁶ Because Jehovah's faithfulness, his dependability, his trustworthiness, is abundant, we can rely on his mercy. The expressions of divine mercy or compassion toward us will never be weak or ineffectual. Jehovah's mercies are "new each morning," at all times available in full strength to his loyal servants. For this reason, we can be certain that the Almighty sees our distresses and that he

will compassionately give us the needed help.

¹⁷ However, if he permits a yoke of discipline to be placed on us, we should accept it uncomplainingly and not broadcast our troubles. Lamentations 3:28, 29 recommends: "Let him sit solitary and keep silent, because [God] has laid something upon him. Let him put his mouth in the very dust," lying prostrate in an attitude of total submission.

¹⁸ Meanwhile we can take comfort in the fact that the trial is but temporary and that Jehovah God finds no pleasure in our having to undergo distress. "Not to time indefinite will Jehovah keep on casting off," the Bible says. "For although he has caused grief, he will also certainly show mercy according to the abundance of his loving-kindness. For not out of his own heart has he afflicted or does he grieve the sons of men." (Lam. 3:31, 32) Rather, it is Jehovah's purpose that the training we get through suffering will secure our eternal welfare.

¹⁹ Those who are responsible for making life hard for God's servants, though, are not excused for their hateful course. Also, Jehovah's permission of this rough treatment does not reflect unfavorably on him. Why not? Because, although he permits the abuse so that it might have a beneficial effect on his people, he does not countenance man's inhumanity to man. His Word condemns such mistreatment. The Bible tells us: "To trample underfoot any prisoner in the land, to deprive a man of his rights in defiance of the Most High, to pervert justice in the courts—such things the Lord has never approved." (Lam. 3:34-36, *The New English Bible*) Men who mistreat fellow humans will have to render an account to Jehovah

14. When we are in a distressing situation, how can the words of Lamentations 3:20, 21 encourage us?

15. According to Lamentations 3:22, 23, what is shown by the fact that we are still alive?

16. Why can we rely on Jehovah's mercy?

17. How should we react when a yoke of discipline is placed on us?

18. How does Jehovah view the distress that his servants must bear?

19. Why does Jehovah's permission of injustice and suffering not reflect unfavorably on him?

God. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah." (Rom. 12:19) Therefore, we must be careful not to become embittered against the Almighty for the badness that is practiced by men who disregard divine law.

²⁰ At times the circumstances in which God's servants come to be as a result of sickness, accident or mistreatment are truly pathetic. Our hearts may be stirred with deep emotion toward the blind, the maimed, the crippled and the deformed. This is only proper. But never, no never, should even the worst of human suffering cause us to turn our backs on Jehovah God. He alone can undo all the hurt that has come on mankind through sin and imperfection. Note what Jesus Christ said concerning a man born blind: "It was in order that the works of God might be made manifest in his case." (John 9:3) What glory it will bring to the Most High when the eyes of the blind are opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, and when the lame will walk, jump and run! (Rev.

20. What should even the most pathetic cases of human suffering not cause us to do, and why not?

21:3-5) If such afflictions had not existed, we would never have come to know the grand things that Jehovah God can do for mankind. And, in view of the reward of eternal life, human suffering in this system of things simply will come to mean nothing. It will be as if there had never been affliction.

²¹ If the suffering we may yet undergo makes us kinder, more sympathetic and compassionate toward fellow humans and results in our conforming more closely to the righteous requirements set forth in the Bible, this form of discipline will indeed serve a beneficial purpose. For this to be the case, we must have the kind of implicit trust in our heavenly Father that a young child has in its earthly father. We need unshakable faith that whatever Jehovah God permits to come upon us will eventually work for our eternal welfare and happiness. May we, therefore, always keep before us the words of Romans 8:28: 'God makes all things cooperate together for the good of those who love him.'

21. (a) When will suffering benefit us? (b) What must we have to profit from adversity?

A Wise Proverb

"Do not leave your own companion or the companion of your father, and do not enter the house of your own brother on the day of your disaster. Better is a neighbor that is near than a brother that is far away."—Prov. 27:10.

This Biblical proverb highlights the importance of having a true friend and being one, especially in time of need. First, it deals with being such a friend. In a day of calamity or disaster, you should not "leave" or desert those who have been

your friends, or your family's friends. You should not be just a "fair-weather friend," one who makes himself absent when he is really needed. Consider, then, the reverse. At a time of need, rather than having to travel a long way to the house of your fleshly brother to see if he might help, it is better to have a friend nearby who is ready, yes, willing to aid you. As another proverb states it: "There exists a friend sticking closer than a brother." —Prov. 18:24.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

● Although the United Nations has been in operation for 32 years, it has been unable to

United Nations a Failure

achieve any goals contained in its charter. This view was expressed by Pierre Gaxotte, a member of the French Academy, in an article appearing in the Paris daily "Le Figaro." One reason for this failure was held to be admittance into the UN of nations that "scorn such fundamental principles as 'the peoples' right to self-determination' and 'respect for human rights for all, without distinction for sex, language or religion.'"

Gaxotte also stated that the member nations of the UN include more than 100 dictatorships. He pointed out that over 50 members are at war with each other, are practicing intertribal genocide or are maintaining terrorist training camps. The article also indicates that this is not a way to "reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person" in keeping with the UN charter.

Doubtless many will agree that such factors have been among those resulting in the failure of the UN to attain its charter goals. But the chief reason is that the organization does not enjoy the approval and backing of Almighty God. (Rev. 17:8) And "unless Jehovah himself builds the house, it is to no avail that its builders have worked hard on it."—Ps. 127:1.

● During the recent 1978 general convention of Swiss Bible Societies, Ole van Luyn, Euro-

"Seldom Read" in Your Home?

pean regional secretary of the World Council of Bible Societies, stated that, although the demand for Bibles is great in Africa, Asia and South America, interest in the Scriptures needs to be rekindled in Europe. Confirming this point, Dr. S. Meurer, general secretary of the German Evangelical Bible Society, spoke of the Bible as "one of the cheapest books on the European market," but said that it is "a book that is seldom read."

Dr. Meurer contends that the churches and the Bible societies are responsible for this circumstance, saying that they have held too long to traditional translations no longer understandable to the reader. Also, he holds that the Scriptures must be made available to the populace "in a new format, in a new language and in a new way."

The value of having the Bible in understandable language is acknowledged by sincere students of the Scriptures. But regardless of the translation available in an individual's native tongue, it is wise to ask: Is the Bible "seldom read" in my home? If there is proper appreciation of the Holy Scriptures, they will be viewed with wholehearted appreciation "as the word of God" and will be read and studied regularly.—1 Thess. 2:13.

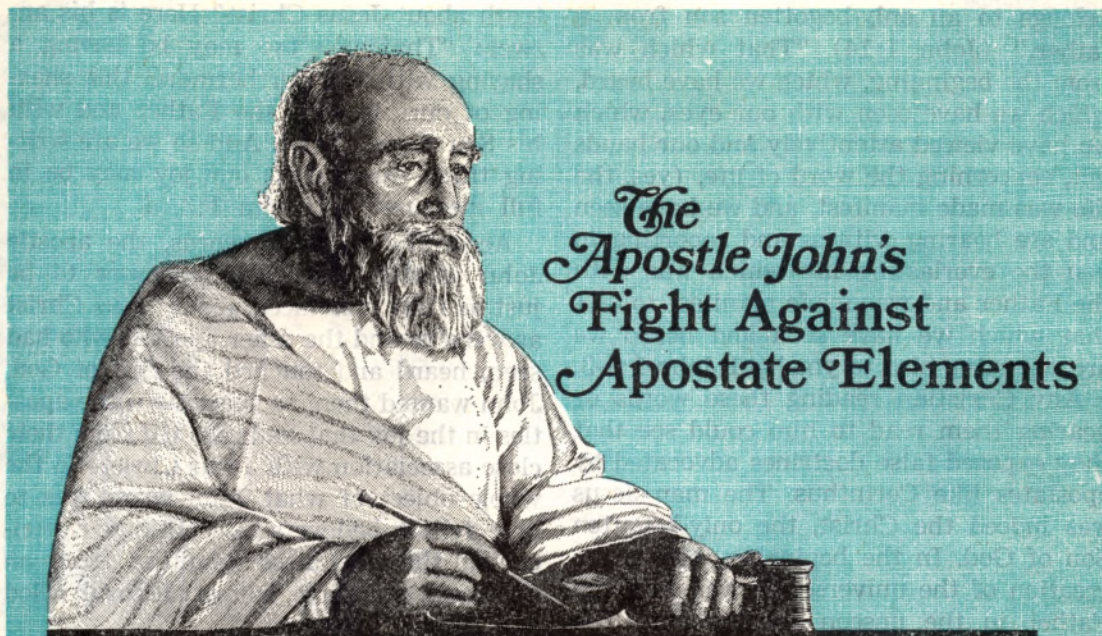
● Why do some teen-agers use illicit drugs? (1) Curiosity, (2) availability, and (3) conformity were the most

Does Your Child Take Drugs?

common reasons cited during a recent survey in the state of Victoria, Australia. According to the Melbourne "Herald," the study by three officers of the Mental Health Authority involved over 5,000 youths between 15 and 20 years of age.

Reportedly, the relationships of the young drug users with their parents were "usually good." However, 40 percent of these parents did not know that their children were using marijuana, amphetamines or more potent drugs.

Obviously, then, parents need to communicate freely with their children so that the relationship between them truly is a good and an honest one. While individual parents may be able to do little to limit the availability of illegal drugs, they can curb youthful curiosity by providing factual information, especially about the harmful effects of narcotics. Also, Christian parents can combat pressures toward conformity that lead some youths into drug use. How? By helping their sons and daughters to avoid bad associations and by aiding them not to be "fashioned after this system of things."—Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 15:33.



The Apostle John's Fight Against Apostate Elements

NOT long after the Christian congregation came into existence on the day of Pentecost in the year 33 it had to contend with false teachers. The apostles, however, served as a restraining force, keeping in check any revolt against sound Christian doctrine and practice. Nevertheless, as early as about 51, apostate elements were manifesting themselves. The Christian apostle Paul then wrote to fellow believers at Thessalonica: "The mystery of this lawlessness is already at work."—2 Thess. 2:7.

Toward the close of the first century, the last surviving apostle, John, witnessed apostate elements in far greater number within the congregation than existed back in 51. In his inspired letter, written about 98, he said: "It is the last hour, and, just as you have heard that antichrist is coming, even now there have come to be many antichrists; from which fact we gain the knowledge that it is the last hour." (1 John 2:18) The apostolic period was about to end. The apostasy against true Christianity would spring into the open.

Just what did the aged apostle John face in that "last hour"? One of the errors that he had to expose related to the manner in which Jesus Christ had come. There was, for example, a Jew named Cerinthus who taught the following: 'Jesus was not born of a virgin but was the natural son of Joseph by Mary. Yet he was wiser, more righteous and more discerning than other men. At the time of his baptism, the Christ, in the form of a dove, came down on him from the Supreme One. Then, when the Christ left him, Jesus suffered death and was raised to life. But the Christ, being spiritual, suffered no harm.' In this way, Cerinthus denied that Christ had come from heaven and had become flesh to redeem mankind.

It is noteworthy, therefore, that in his Gospel and also in his first inspired letter, the apostle John emphasized that the Word, the Son of God, the Christ, did indeed become flesh. We read: "The Word [who had been with God in heaven] became flesh and resided among us, and we had a view of his glory, a glory such as

belongs to an only-begotten son from a father." (John 1:14) "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have viewed attentively and our hands felt, concerning the word of life, (yes, the life was made manifest, and we have seen and are bearing witness and reporting to you the everlasting life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us,) that which we have seen and heard we are reporting also to you."—1 John 1:1-3.

Any Christian reading these words or hearing them read to him could see that they exposed false doctrines advocated by apostates like Cerinthus. The man Jesus was indeed the Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. In the beginning, before the creation of the universe, he was with the Father in the unseen spirit realm. The aged apostle was writing from personal experience. John knew that the Christ was not someone whose presence could not be ascertained by the senses. The apostle had personally been with the "word of life," the one whom the Father had granted to have life-giving power and through whom eternal life is possible.

The apostle John had heard Jesus Christ's voice and had observed him day after day. John had walked with him, eaten meals with him and had seen him at rest. Hearing and seeing can, of course, be involuntary, without deliberate choice on the part of the person whose senses are stimulated. This may be why John took the matter of seeing a step farther, indicating that he had viewed the "word of life" attentively. Yes, the apostle chose to look upon the Son of God, doing so earnestly, attentively, and saw him with pleasure. What John had heard and seen was no apparition. He had with his own hands felt the Son of God.—Compare Luke 24:39; John 20:25, 27.

What was the apostle John's objective in fighting apostasy by setting forth the

truth about Jesus Christ? Here is his answer: "That you too may be having a sharing with us. Furthermore, this sharing of ours is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And so we are writing these things that our joy may be in full measure."—1 John 1:3, 4.

According to these words, the apostle John wanted his fellow believers to be just as fully convinced about Jesus Christ as were he and the other apostles who had seen, heard and touched the Son of God. John wanted them to share with the apostles in the joy that had resulted from their close association with Jesus Christ. So the whole object of what John wrote was to help fellow believers to continue experiencing the happiness resulting from an approved standing before Jehovah God and Jesus Christ.

Apostate elements, on the other hand, would have robbed Christians of that joy. Rightly, then, the apostle John exposed them by setting forth undeniable evidence that the Christ had come in the flesh.

This forcefully illustrates that purity in Christian doctrine should never be minimized. A distorted view of Jesus Christ and of his Father makes it impossible to experience the joy that comes from having a close relationship with them. And persons lacking an approved standing before God and Christ come under condemnatory judgment. (2 Thess. 1:6-10) This should impress on all professing Christians the importance of examining their beliefs and activity in the light of the Scriptures to make sure that they have not been influenced by apostate teachers such as those who began to flourish after the apostles died. Then, in imitation of the apostle John, genuine believers must continue to defend the truth and expose religious error. Their lives and the lives of those who listen to them depend on this.—1 Tim. 4:16.

FOLLOWING his counsel about the need to seek God's kingdom first, Jesus admonished his hearers to desist from a very harmful practice. He said: "Stop judging that you may not be judged." (Matt. 7:1) According to Luke, Jesus added: "Stop condemning, and you will by no means be condemned. Keep on releasing, and you will be released. Practice giving, and people will give to you. They will pour into your laps a fine measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing."—Luke 6:37, 38.



"STOP JUDGING"

During the first century C.E., the Pharisees tended to judge others harshly according to the false standards of non-Biblical traditions. Any of Jesus' listeners who were in that habit were to "stop" it. Instead of continually finding fault with others, they should "keep on releasing," that is, forgiving and overlooking the shortcomings of their fellowman. (Compare Luke 6:37, *Authorized Version*.) Doing so, they would impel others to reciprocate with the same forgiving attitude.

In addition to pardoning others and treating them mercifully, Jesus' disciples were to "practice giving." This would result in the disciples' receiving into their laps "a fine measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing." According to *Word Studies in the New Testament*, the Greek word for "laps" literally means "bosom" and denotes "the gathered fold of the wide upper garment, bound together with the girdle, and thus forming a pouch. In the Eastern markets at this day vendors may be seen pouring the contents of a measure into the bosom of a purchaser." (Compare Ruth 3:15; Isaiah 65:7; Jeremiah 32:18.) The more a per-

son practices generosity, the more he encourages others to respond in kind.

Pointing to an important general principle, Jesus stated: "For with what judgment you are judging, you will be judged; and with the measure [way of dealing with people] that you are measuring out, they will measure out to you." (Matt. 7:2) As to their treatment of others, people 'reap what they sow,' so to speak. This will prove to be true, not only in what they reap from fellow humans, but, more importantly, in what they reap from God.—See Matthew 5:7; 6:14, 15.

To emphasize the danger of imitating the overcritical Pharisees, Jesus gave a twofold illustration: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Both will tumble into a pit, will they not? A pupil is not above his teacher, but everyone that is perfectly instructed will be like his teacher."—Luke 6:39, 40.

It would be ridiculous for a literally blind person to try guiding another blind one over unfamiliar terrain. If there was a pit along the way, surely both would fall into it. When it came to judging their fellowman, the Jewish religious leaders were figuratively "blind." (Compare Matthew 15:14; 23:16, 24.) They refused to take note of good qualities in the humble common people. On one occasion the Pharisees exclaimed: "This crowd that does not know the Law are accursed people." (John 7:49) Anyone imitating such a condemnatory attitude is headed for dangerous pitfalls.

Too, just as "a pupil" who imbibes the thinking patterns of his teacher becomes "like his teacher," so all who imitated the Pharisees would end up being like them—out of God's favor and in danger of los-

ing their lives. Hence, Jesus said on another occasion:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut up the kingdom of the heavens before men; for you yourselves do not go in, neither do you permit those on their way in to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you traverse sea and dry land to make one proselyte, and when he becomes one you make him a subject for Gehenna [eternal destruction] twice as much so as yourselves."—Matt. 23:13-15.

Pointing to the foolishness of being overcritical, Jesus asked: "*Why, then, do you look at the straw in your brother's eye, but do not consider the rafter in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Allow me to extract the straw from your eye'; when, look! a rafter is in your own eye?*"—Matt. 7:3, 4; compare Luke 6:41, 42a.

Jesus is not speaking merely of individuals who pay attention to the faults of others while having greater ones themselves, though this is a common human failing. Instead, he refers to someone who would take note of a minor defect in his brother's "eye." The critic would claim that his brother had impaired faculties of moral perception and judgment. Even if the fault was a minor one, like a "straw," a sliver of wood or a speck of dust, the one criticizing would make an issue of it and hypocritically offer to "extract the straw," that is, to aid the individual to see matters more clearly, enabling him to render more acceptable judgments.

The Jewish religious leaders were especially prone to criticize the judgment of others. For example, when a person whom Jesus healed from congenital blindness declared that Jesus must have come from God, the Pharisees retorted: "You were altogether born in sins, and yet are you teaching us?" (John 9:34) However, when

it came to clear spiritual vision and ability to judge, the Pharisees had, as it were, "a rafter" in their own eye. They were altogether blind.

Hence, Jesus exclaimed: "*Hypocrite! First extract the rafter from your own eye, and then you will see clearly how to extract the straw from your brother's eye.*"—Matt. 7:5; Luke 6:42b.

Did this mean that disciples of Jesus were to use no discernment at all in connection with other people? No, for Jesus next said: "*Do not give what is holy to dogs, neither throw your pearls before swine, that they may never trample them under their feet and turn around and rip you open.*"—Matt. 7:6.

According to the Mosaic law, dogs and pigs were unclean. (Lev. 11:7, 27) It was permissible to throw to the dogs flesh of an animal torn by a wild beast. (Ex. 22:31) But Jewish tradition forbade giving to dogs "holy" flesh, that is, meat of animal sacrifices. *The Mishnah* states: "Animal-offerings [Hebrew, *qodashim*: "holy things"] may not be redeemed in order to give them as food to the dogs." Throwing literal pearls "before swine" would be something else quite inappropriate. Likely the swine would mistake them for peas, acorns or other items in their diet. Finding them inedible, the pigs would trample them underfoot and, becoming enraged, could harm the one who threw the pearls.

In a figurative sense, "what is holy" and "pearls" refer to precious Scriptural truths regarding God's Messianic kingdom. Disciples of Jesus were to share these truths with everyone. (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20) But if individuals showed themselves to be without appreciation of spiritual things, like dogs or swine, Christians were to seek out more receptive ears.—See Matthew 10:14; Luke 9:5; 10:11; Acts 13:45, 46; 18:6.

First Chronicles

-A Record Of

Meaningful Names

TO MANY people today, the opening nine chapters of First Chronicles are simply extensive listings of meaningless names. However, that was not the case when this Bible book was compiled in the fifth century B.C.E. The genealogical material served to link the Jews with their past history and provided the basis for establishing family inheritances, royal descent and authorization to fulfill official duties at the temple. Especially important was the genealogy of the Davidic line, since it was to lead to the promised Messiah.

For us, the genealogies prove that true worship has its foundation in fact and not in myth, for the names and places mentioned confirm the record to be factual and real. The following items are just a sample of what we can glean from the first chapter: The entire human race descended from Adam through Noah and his three sons Shem, Ham and Japheth. A grandson of Ham, Nimrod, distinguished himself as a "mighty one," that is, as a hunter and a warrior. Men ceased to speak one language in the days of Peleg, for it was during the lifetime of this descendant of Shem that "the earth was divided." The Edomites, who descended from Esau, had kings long before the Israelites, who sprang from Esau's twin brother Jacob.

At times the genealogies provide information that cannot be found elsewhere in the Bible. How many of David's seven brothers, for example, can you name without the help of First Chronicles? First Samuel 16:6-9 provides the names of only three—Eliab, Abinadab and Shammah (Shimea[h], Shimei). But the Chronicles account lists three more by name—Nethanel, Raddai and Ozem. Since only seven of Jesse's eight sons are named, it is probable that one died before fathering any offspring and, therefore, was omitted from the genealogy.—1 Chron. 2:13-15.

Occasionally, the genealogies include mention of something truly outstanding about certain individuals. Jabez, in the line of Judah, distinguished himself as more honorable than his brothers. On account of his fervent prayer, he was granted divine blessing and protection

as he went about enlarging his hereditary possession. (1 Chron. 4:9, 10) Similarly, because they looked to Jehovah for aid, the tribes living east of the Jordan defeated the Hagarites.—1 Chron. 5:18-22.

The genealogy of Zerubbabel is of note, as it has been used by many to support a late date for writing Chronicles. At 1 Chronicles 3:19-24, the renderings of many translations take the line of Zerubbabel to the 10th generation. Since he returned to Jerusalem in 537 B.C.E., there would not have been enough time for so many generations to have been born by 460 B.C.E., when Ezra is thought to have committed the record to writing. However, the Hebrew text is incomplete in this section, as indicated by the fact that, in an attempt to make the passage understandable, translators have repeated the names "Jeshiah," "Rephaiah," "Arnan" and "Obadiah." Hence, because it cannot be determined how most of the men listed at 1 Chronicles 3:19-24 were related to Zerubbabel, there is no reason to reject the traditional view that Ezra compiled the account.

From chapter 10 onward, the record relates events about the death of Saul and the reign of King David. Lists of names continue to be prominent. We find the names of outstanding warriors associated with David, and the names of priests and Levites, including musicians and gatekeepers, who shared in the procession that brought the sacred Ark to Mount Zion. (1 Chron. 11:11-12:20; 15:4-16:6) Starting with the first verse of chapter 23 and concluding with the last verse of chapter 27, First Chronicles provides information regarding David's organizational arrangements of priests, Levites and government officials and gives the names of individuals involved.

The emphasis in First Chronicles on matters of worship also enabled the Israelites to identify themselves with the past. While kingship in the line of David did not resume after the exile, temple services did, with Levites and Aaronic priests officiating. So it must have been very encouraging for the Israelites to have a historical record that focused on the reason for their return from Babylonian exile, namely, the restoration of Jehovah's worship at Jerusalem.

Our reading the inspired account with the ancient background in mind can make it much more interesting. Yes, for us also, First Chronicles may then be a record of names full of meaning.

QUESTIONS from READERS

● Did the apostle Paul disagree with the first-century governing body about eating meat offered to idols, as some conclude from comparing Acts 15:28, 29 with 1 Corinthians chapter 8?

No, for the evidence proves that Paul was in full agreement with the decree of the apostles and elders.

In the year 49, Paul and Barnabas brought to the Jerusalem body of elders and apostles the question of whether Gentile converts must get circumcised. Based on the Scriptures and God's dealings, and guided by the holy spirit, the council determined that converts did not need to keep the Law. But, among other things, they did have to "keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols."—Acts 15:1-29.

About 55, Paul wrote to the Corinthians about eating food that had been sacrificed to idols. He said that an idol is really nothing. So a Christian could eat meat that had been sacrificed to an idol, and that later as surplus was taken out and sold in a meat market or in a public restaurant connected with the temple. If, however, someone who previously worshiped the idol would stumble at the Christian's eating such meat, Paul advised that it would be best to avoid doing so in order that the other person's faith would not be damaged.—1 Cor. 8:7-13; 10:25-33; Rom. 14:14, 19-23.

In view of this, some Bible commentators have contended that Paul was refusing to go along with the council's decree or that there was a continuing division on the matter. For example, Professor E. Blaiklock says: "In 1 Cor. viii. 4 Paul himself publicly adopts a more liberal attitude than that which the decree lays down." Heinrich A. Meyer writes about Paul's supposed "self-subsistent position—wholly independent of the authority of all the other apostles." And Dr. Meyer comments that in First Corinthians chapter 8 Paul "makes no reference to the decree of the apostles either here or elsewhere, which is in keeping with his consciousness of his own direct

and independent apostolic dignity. . . . Moreover, this very chapter, along with chap. x., shows plainly that, in virtue of his independent position as an apostle, he had early enough shaken himself clear of all applications of the temporary agreement come to at Jerusalem."

Such reasoning is insidious, dangerous and contrary to God's inspired Word. It reflects the idea that Bible books present personal and contradictory human opinions and are not all inspired and beneficial. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) And, at least in some cases, it reflects a desire to label the decree of Acts 15:28, 29 as temporary and now unnecessary. This, though, conflicts with the Bible and with the historical evidence that Christians in the second century and beyond recognized the decree as binding.

What actually was Paul's position on the matter of "abstaining from things sacrificed to idols"?

Far from taking exception to that decree, Paul and Barnabas participated in the council that reached that decision. Then they publicized the decision, as Acts 16:4 reports: "Now as they traveled on through the cities they would deliver to those there *for observance* the decrees that had been decided upon by the apostles and older men who were in Jerusalem." This built up the congregations.

Did Paul change his stand by the time he wrote First Corinthians (c. 55) or Romans (c. 56)? Not at all. In fact, it was *after* writing both of those letters that he went to Jerusalem the last time. (1 Cor. 16:8; Acts 19:1; Rom. 15:25) While there, he met with James and the older men, who referred back to the decree of Acts 15:28, 29 as still valid and binding on Christians. Paul did not disagree.—Acts 21:17-26.

Hence, we have good reason to expect that any *seeming* conflict between the council's decree and what Paul wrote can be resolved. And that certainly is so.

What the decree in Acts 15:28, 29 forbade was a Christian's being part of a formal, religious ceremony or his committing an act of idolatry. Those who sacrificed an animal to an idol got some of the meat to eat. Their doing so was clearly a religious act; it was considered sharing in a meal with the pagan god. (Ex. 34:15; Deut. 32:17; 1 Cor. 10:18-21) Christians absolutely could not do that. The decree of the Christian governing body had

forbidden it, and Paul was in full agreement. He wrote: "Therefore, my beloved ones, flee from idolatry."—1 Cor. 10:14; 1 Thess. 1:9.

So, in writing what he did in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 and Romans 14, Paul was not granting permission to share in an idolatrous act or feast in honor of an idol, as the Israelites had done and incurred God's wrath. (Num. 25:1-4; Rev. 2:14) Rather, he was dealing with simply eating, as a customary meal, meat from an idol temple that had been sold to the public in general. Such meat was not unclean or defiled simply because of its background.

● How should a Christian view attending a religious ceremony, such as a Jewish Bar Mitzvah or the feast that follows it?

Christians desirous of pleasing Jehovah would want to avoid such religious events.

Various religions have special rites to mark a person's becoming a member. It may be a baptismal ceremony, ritual circumcision or, with Jewish boys, the Bar Mitzvah.

An encyclopedia of the Jewish religion says that Bar Mitzvah means "an adult male Jew obligated to perform the commandments." By extension the term also applies to "the ceremony at which a 13-year-old boy becomes an adult member of the [Jewish] community for ceremonial purposes."

Often such religious events have two phases, the rite itself, usually held in a religious building, and then an associated feast or party. For instance, this encyclopedia says about Bar Mitzvah that there is "the religious ceremony in the synagogue and the subsequent social celebration." Relatives and friends of the family may be invited to both of these, or even just to the celebration or feast.

In thinking about such events, the Christian may be helped by considering what is the point of the entire affair. Is it merely an acknowledgment that someone has become an adult? Or is it, rather, a special religious ceremony? And is the feast or party just a normal gathering of family and friends, or is it a celebration over someone's having gone through the ritual by which he has become a member of that religion?

With these questions in mind, consider what Jesus told a Samaritan woman: "God is a

Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) Hence, can you imagine that Jesus would voluntarily go into a Roman temple because some relative or acquaintance was there to be initiated into that religion? Also, would Jesus have chosen to join in the celebrating of such initiation at a party afterward? Hardly, for that would be in conflict with the inspired view: "What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what portion does a faithful person have with an unbeliever? And what agreement does God's temple have with idols? . . . "Therefore get out from among them, and separate yourselves," says Jehovah, "and quit touching the unclean thing."—2 Cor. 6:15-17.

Some relatives might be offended if a Christian declined their well-meant invitation. Being aware of that possibility, the Christian who chose not to attend would want to explain his decision kindly, mildly. (Prov. 15:23; Eccl. 12:10) He could explain that his not being there should in no way be mistaken as a lack of family affection. He might mention that just as he respects the relative's conscience, he hopes that the relative will understand and respect his sincere, conscientious feelings.

Sometimes an unbelieving husband or father may insist that his Christian wife or child accompany him to such a feast. This may present a problem. The Christian desires to keep separate from other religions, and yet the Bible urges respect for the husband's or father's headship in the family. (Eph. 5:22, 23; 6:1-3) Each Christian thus has to resolve personally what course to follow. One wife, for example, might conclude that as long as she herself would not have to engage in any religious rites, she could comply with her husband's request to be present; that, in effect, is where he is providing the family meal. But another wife might discern in this a determined effort to get her to compromise her religious principles. So she might decide not to attend, though continuing to respect her husband as head of the family.—Col. 3:18.

While recognizing that such situations often involve deep feelings on the part of relatives and acquaintances, the Christian needs to keep uppermost in mind the importance of faithfulness to Jehovah God. This will make it easier to decide properly when invited to celebrate someone's becoming a member of another religion.

Trinity—from What Source?

A principal teaching of the majority of the churches of Christendom is the Trinity doctrine, the unity and equality of the Father, the Son (the Word or Logos) and the holy ghost. Modern adherents to this doctrine often claim that it is based on the Scriptures and that it thus was a Christian doctrine from the earliest period of church history.

However, Alvan Lamson, D.D., examined the evidence for this view and in particular whether Justin Martyr and other early writers accepted and taught that doctrine. Dr. Lamson observes:

"For the original and distinctive features of the doctrine of the Logos, as held by the learned Fathers of the second and third centuries, we must look, not to the Jewish Scriptures, nor to the teachings of Jesus and his apostles, but to Philo [the Jewish philosopher of the first century C.E.] and the Alexandrine Platonists. In consistency with this view, we

maintain that the doctrine of the Trinity was of gradual and comparatively late formation; that it had its origin in a source entirely foreign from that of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; that it grew up, and was ingrafted on Christianity, through the hands of the Platonizing Fathers; that in the time of Justin [c. 100-165 C.E.], and long after, the distinct nature and inferiority of the Son were universally taught; and that only the first shadowy outline of the Trinity had then become visible."—*The Church of the First Three Centuries*, p. 34.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

November 26: Bearing the Burden of Injustice.

Page 13. Songs to Be Used: 97, 7.

December 3: The Suffering That Can Benefit

You. Page 18. Songs to Be Used: 106, 115.

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