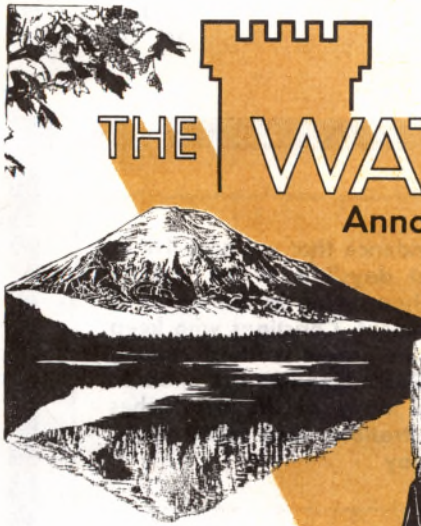


JUNE 1, 1979

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



BREAK FREE

TO WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT



IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 What Is Happening to Entertainment?
- 5 You No Longer Walk Just as the Nations Walk
- 10 Go On Walking as Children of Light
- 16 Recreation That Genuinely Refreshes
- 20 Insight on the News
- 21 Witnessing in a Nigerian Village
- 25 Job—A Pattern of Godly Conduct

Clear evidence that we now live in the "last days" is to be seen in what is happening in the world of entertainment. Christians who keep busy in the urgent work of making known God's kingdom are enabled to avoid many of the heartaches and frustrations that afflict mankind today

- 29 God Delivers the Considerate One
- 32 Quest for Truth Rewarded

A WATCHTOWER enables a person to look far into the distance and announce to others what is seen. Likewise, this magazine, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, aids the reader to see what the future holds. Since it began publication in 1879, "The Watchtower" has held faithfully to God's Word as its authority. It stays clear of all political involvement. It points to the Bible prophecies showing that Jesus Christ is God's means for restoring peace and harmony to this globe. It shows that this Son of God, on the basis of his shed blood, will release mankind from sin and death to enjoy eternal life in happiness on a paradise earth. Because Jehovah God will accomplish all this soon through his kingdom by Jesus Christ, "The Watchtower" announces that kingdom as the real hope for mankind.

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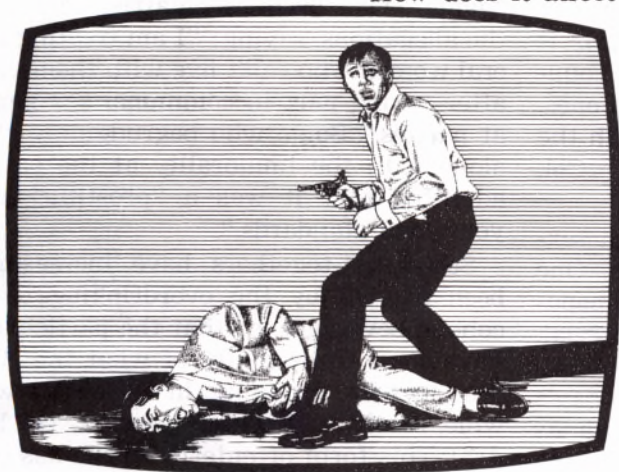
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WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ENTERTAINMENT?

Why are recent trends disturbing?
How does it affect you?



"Mankind has always recognized the importance of entertainment and its value in rebuilding the bodies and souls of human beings. But it has always recognized that entertainment can be of a character either HELPFUL or HARMFUL to the human race."
—"Code of Production" by Motion Picture Industry

WHO of us has not at some time been refreshed by a wholesome form of entertainment? But have you not at times found your entertainment somewhat disappointing? Even the Production Code of the motion-picture industry warned of "harmful" entertainment that tends "to degrade human beings, or to lower their standards of life and living."

Many have decried the 'degrading' effect of some of today's movies, television shows and social life. For instance, while seeking entertainment, have you not found some of your moral standards challenged by such amusement?

As a case in point, one movie theater, brimming with average moviegoers, became vibrant with squeals of laughter, and eventually hearty cheers from the attentive audience. What was on the screen? A chilling scene where two men attack and rape a helpless woman in the presence of her defenseless husband. How tragic! Most of us recoil at the thought of such an act. Yet, obviously, those people considered it entertainment—an evi-

dence of the degradation that had seeped into their standards of life.

So serious has the situation become today that many are asking: "What is happening to entertainment?" Movies that feature scenes of appalling violence and graphic sex are now box-office successes. They form the staple of today's films. In one year, in the United States alone, over one billion movie tickets were sold.

VIOLENCE AND SEX

Film violence has made dramatic advances in recent years. One newspaper staff writer stated:

'Justifiable homicide has been one of the more potent lures to movies and one of the easiest ways to manipulate audiences. This is manipulation of the simplest kind.

'Audiences not only fall for it but participate gladly, even anticipating it. Over the years, we know long before we enter the theater that we will be crying for the blood of someone. We don't know precisely whose, nor specifically why.

'So what does this all say about moviegoers? Are they bloodthirsty descendants of the ancient Roman, hungry for bread and circuses?

'For a couple of hours in movie after movie after movie, we are ardent, sometimes gleeful accomplices.'

The effects of some of these shocking films have been telling. Scores of persons, rather than being

refreshed, have fainted or vomited in the theater. At least in one instance, a viewer died of a heart seizure during one gory scene. Some children have been carried out from the theater screaming hysterically.

Does this seem right to you? Should the sufferings and the explicit brutalizing of others be considered entertainment? Is it proper fare for Christians who are counseled by the Bible: "As God's chosen ones, holy and loved, clothe yourselves with the *tender affections of compassion*"?—Col. 3:12; see also Proverbs 17:5.

Coupled with this violence, explicit sexual acts are pictured on the screen. One country after another has noted the popularity of films that feature erotic material. However, some persons have become so disenchanted by what is flashed on today's screen that they have done as thousands of Australian families, who "wiped the silver screen off their family outing list."

The small screen, television, is only a few paces behind the sex and gore of the movies. Recent TV productions have included themes highlighting homosexuality, male and female prostitution, incest, rape, pre- and extra-marital sex. How many times have you turned on the TV at random only to find yourself flinching before a scene of sex or sharp violence?

ENTERTAINING SOCIAL GATHERINGS?

Tastes in entertainment vary. One poll found that a chief form of entertainment in America is participating in 'social activities such as dancing and giving or attending parties.'

However, the situations that often accompany such occasions cause some to moan again: "What is happening to entertainment?" Many who wish to enjoy some relaxing association have found themselves in circumstances where they were confronted with temptations to compro-

mise or lower their own standards of morality.

A report from South Africa indicates an increased concern about parties where allegedly "sex games" are featured. Those at the party freely engaged in sexual immorality as a part of some organized "game." One local psychiatrist confirmed the allegations, saying: "I am treating several women who can't live with themselves after taking part in communal sex games at parties." Some who begrudgingly went along with the immorality at the parties admitted that it was a "prostitution of your own standards."

Social get-togethers have increasingly been marred by the overdrinking of alcoholic beverages, so that the participants have come to be guilty of what the Bible describes as engaging in "excesses with wine, revelries, drinking matches." (1 Pet. 4:3) This form of entertainment has contributed to epidemics of alcoholism in country after country. Especially has there been an upsurge of such activity among today's youth. One survey found:

"Drinking teenagers . . . are socially and group oriented kids who do not like to be alone and want to be with friends in most of their social activities, and for them, drinking is very much a social activity."

Have you found yourself distressed by what has gone on at social gatherings for recreation? Have you even felt subtle pressure to 'prostitute your own standards'? Many persons sadly answer "yes."

Certainly all movies, TV presentations and social gatherings are not like this. But the fact remains that many are. What can be done by you personally to prevent an erosion of moral principles that you hold dear? What should be a Christian's attitude toward entertainment that is morally degrading? What alternatives are there for those who desire to please God? It is hoped that you will read with interest the articles that follow.

YOU NO LONGER WALK JUST AS THE NATIONS WALK

"You no longer go on walking just as the nations also walk . . . while they are in darkness mentally."—Eph. 4:17, 18.



The moral condition earth wide is worsening drastically. Forms of entertainment that, several years ago, would have been considered appalling are now very much accepted by the masses. Such influence is threatening even the Christian congregation. What can be done to resist such trends? The following articles will provide some meaningful answers.

² "You are the light of the world," de-

1. Why is the following information important?
2, 3. (a) To what did Jesus and Paul liken the conduct of Christians? (b) What is the reputation of Jehovah's Witnesses in general, yet what has happened to some individuals?

clared Jesus Christ. A Christian's conduct is to shine brightly in a morally dark world. Paul charged all disciples "living in a warped and diseased world" to remain

“shining . . . lights in a dark place.” Yet those early disciples, though associated with Jesus and the apostles, were still imperfect humans. If not careful they could be influenced by the moral atmosphere of a “warped and diseased world” and in a moment of temptation could forsake their Christian morality. In fact, some returned completely to works of darkness.—Matt. 5:14; Phil. 2:15, Phillips’ translation; Phil. 3:18, 19.

³ So, too, in our time the pressure is on to make us return to the darkness of this world. Regrettably, some Christians have yielded to the pressure. Though by and large Jehovah’s Witnesses are known world wide for their honest and moral lives, individually some have ceased walking as “children of light” and have had to be removed from the congregation. Their conduct is no longer exemplary. What could be contributing to such unpleasant occurrences?—1 Cor. 5:13; Eph. 5:8.

PRESSURE FROM THE WORLD

⁴ Obviously the worldwide moral environment has worsened. Many in the world have “come to be past all moral sense.” (Eph. 4:19) This is apparent in the forms of entertainment that thrive today. Why single out entertainment? Because we can learn much about a person’s inclinations from what he does after his regular working hours, when he can do what he *wants* to do. What a person does with his free time, when he is “off duty,” as it were, tells much about what he is really like. Judging from the notoriously bad forms of entertainment that are popular today, the moral quality of today’s world is quite low. But is such baseness affecting you?

⁵ Remember, we are not the first Christians to live during a period of sunken morality. The description of persons “past

4. What has happened to the morals of the world, and how do the popular forms of entertainment verify this?
5. Why is it timely that we consider counsel from the book of Ephesians?

all moral sense” applied to some who lived in the Mideastern city of Ephesus during the infancy of Christianity. The apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesian Christians should be of utmost importance to us, for in it he gets to the bottom of what it means to walk as “children of light.” His counsel is truly relevant in these critical “last days” when many professed Christians are “lovers of pleasures.”—2 Tim. 3:1-7, 13.

HOW THE NATIONS WALK

⁶ At Ephesians 4:17 Paul urged his fellow Christians “no longer [to] go on walking just as the nations also walk in the unprofitableness of their minds.” How were people of the nations then “walking”? A first-century eyewitness confessed:

“Men seek pleasure from every source. No vice remains within its limits; . . . We are overwhelmed with forgetfulness of that which is honourable. Man . . . is now slaughtered for jest and sport . . . it is a satisfying spectacle to see a man made a corpse.”*

Without any genuine goal in life many persons overemphasized amusement, seeking pleasure from *any* source.

⁷ Ancient Ephesus was well suited to provide for one’s recreational desires. It contained a massive 25,000-seat amphitheater and a stadium or racecourse that could offer spectacles to delight any fancy. These structures were products of the existing world empire, Rome, of which one historian said: “The moral condition of the empire is, indeed, in some respects one of the most appalling pictures on record.”

INSENSIBLE HEARTS

⁸ Paul described the people as being “in

* Lucius Seneca (4 B.C.E.?—65 C.E.) Epistle 95, ¶33.

6, 7. (a) At Ephesians 4:17, Christians are urged to cease to do what? (b) How were people of the nations “walking” in the first century?

8. (a) Ephesians 4:18 calls attention to persons with what kind of heart, and what did the Greek word originally mean? (b) Did such a condition develop suddenly?

darkness mentally, . . . because of the *insensibility of their hearts*." (Eph. 4:18) Their hearts were without feeling. The Greek word for "insensibility" can be traced back to the description of a stone that was harder than marble. The word was used in medicine to refer to the chalk stone that can gradually form in some joints of the body till all action is paralyzed. Slowly the hearts of such bedarkened ones had become dulled, insensitive, as hard as a stone. This did not happen overnight, but was a gradual process. Their choice of entertainment directly contributed to the process. How so?

⁹ Do you know what form of entertainment was the most popular at the time? The *gladiatorial games*, where man was often pitted against man or animal in a fight to the death. Imagine the scene: The stadium is packed with thousands of spectators, some sitting under the shade of a gorgeous silk awning. Delicate music and the aroma of perfumed water flowing through the aisles provides a pleasant background that covers the sounds and smells of death. Suddenly the whole throng rises in a frenzy of shouting: "Kill him! Lash him! Brand him! Why does he meet the sword in so cowardly a way? Why does he strike so feebly?" All this organized butchery was done, as one who attended the games said, for "some fun, wit, and relaxation."

¹⁰ Persons who could watch such violent encounters, whose eyes could gloat on such gore, found other forms of entertainment dull and insipid. As one historian summarized, it "destroyed the nerve of sympathy for suffering which distinguishes the human from the brute creation."

¹¹ An unbelievable condition, you might

9, 10. What was the most popular form of entertainment during the first century, and what effect did this have on the spectators?

11. True or false?—Since the gladiatorial games are no more, today's entertainment cannot produce persons with 'insensible hearts.' Why do you so answer?

say. But does not a comparable situation exist today? True, the gladiatorial contests are long gone, yet note the experience of one news reporter:

"Kill her! Let her have it again! On cue, the killer did 'let her have it.' He shot bullets into her. . . . Those ordering the execution—three persons sitting behind me in the theatre were, in every other respect, average moviegoers."

An isolated case? Hardly. The fact is that in many lands the most popular movies and television programs often are those that feature violence. Such entertainment has helped to produce heartless persons, who have "ceased to feel pain," or any stings of conscience.—Eph. 4:19, *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*.

GIVEN OVER TO LOOSE CONDUCT

¹² The apostle Paul adds that people of the nations not only had 'dulled hearts,' but also "gave themselves over to loose conduct to work uncleanness of every sort with greediness." (Eph. 4:19) He also spoke of "fornication" and of things too "shameful even to relate." (Eph. 5:3, 12) In the first century, again it was entertainment, this time the *stage* or *theater*, that contributed greatly to these practices. What could be viewed?

"The adventures of deceived husbands, adulteries and amorous intrigues formed the staple of the plots. Virtue was made a mock of, . . . everything sacred and worthy of veneration was dragged in the mire. In obscenity, . . . in impure speeches and exhibitions which outraged the sense of shame, these spectacles exceeded all besides. Ballet dancers threw away their dresses and danced half naked, and even wholly naked, on the stage. Art was left out of account, every thing was designed for mere sensual gratification."—*The Conflict of Christianity with Heathenism*, by Gerhard Uhlhorn, p. 120.

How shocking! It is the very epitome of

12. (a) Ephesians 4:19 gives what additional description of how people of the nations were walking? (b) What does "loose conduct" mean, and did the entertainment of that time reflect it?

"loose conduct," for the original Greek word conveys a readiness for any pleasure. It is a shameless disregard for decency where one ceases to care what people say or think.

¹³ Is it any different today? Sexual immorality has saturated the fare offered by the entertainment media. In some countries, pornographic movies have been shown even on the television screen, thereby reaching right into the home. Does the audience respond? In Italy, when a pornographic film was shown on TV, "the city all but came to a standstill while the show was on."

¹⁴ Describing the context of many movies and the attitude of people, one writer said:

"In a majority of the new films, naked sex scenes—heterosexual, incestuous, or homosexual—are staples, . . ." He concluded, "We have, in short, now reached a state in our society when anything goes, where all is permitted, and where no limits are placed on the appetites of the individual, on the gratification of his desires and fantasies."

¹⁵ Such individuals are, just as the apostle Paul describes, persons who "work uncleanness of every sort with greediness." Yes, "greediness" ("having more," *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*), an avaricious desire to glut one's appetite for the unseemly and to satisfy one's emotions at whatever the moral cost. (Eph. 4:19) Could not the viewing of such depraved material affect a Christian's thinking? One who watched several movies of this nature admitted:

"You never forget those scenes, [depicting sexual immorality] the more you think about them the more you find yourself wanting to do what you've seen . . . The movie makes you think you're really missing out on something." Another added:

13. Is similar "loose conduct" readily apparent in some of today's forms of entertainment?
14, 15. (a) What does "greediness" (Eph. 4:19) mean, and do forms of entertainment today create such? (b) Can dedicated Christians be affected by viewing as entertainment material that features sexual immorality?

"You start wondering what it would be like."

This may not be the experience of everyone, but the danger is there. Our minds can be subtly influenced.

A MORAL MIRACLE

¹⁶ What a contrast that is with the course of those in the first century who genuinely followed Christ! These had once walked under the influence of the system and its "ruler," Satan, and their very nature had been to do "the things willed by the flesh." But *they changed*. The elevated truths of Christianity opened up an entirely new outlook on life. Imagine, God was willing to sacrifice his own Son, his "loved one," so they could have their heavy debt of sin forgiven! What a great price! What mercy and undeserved kindness! "This [undeserved kindness] he [God] caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and *good sense*," stated the apostle Paul. So not only did they have knowledge of the truth, but they also were given the "good sense" to be able to deal successfully with the everyday problems of life.—Eph. 1:6-8; 2:1-5.

¹⁷ Theirs was a religion of *power*. God's spirit had raised Jesus from the dead to an exalted position far above every worldly authority. Now this same "power is toward [those] believers." (Eph. 1:19-21) What results it produced in the lives of those believers! By considering the matter of morals we can appreciate the power of first-century Christianity. The ancient world regarded sexual immorality as the norm. Cicero, an early Roman writer, even pleaded:

"If there is anyone who thinks that young men should be absolutely forbidden the love of courtesans [prostitutes], he is indeed extremely severe. . . . When indeed

16. According to Ephesians 1:6-8, what rich blessing had Christians received, and how did this affect their lives?

17. (a) What evidence is there that Christianity was a religion of power? (b) How was its moral power demonstrated?

was this not done? When did anyone ever find fault with it?"

Yet the "children of light" broke free and stayed free from such practices. There was nothing in all history to compare with the moral miracle that Christianity achieved.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT BEHAVE DIFFERENTLY

¹⁸ These disciples had a high standard to meet. Hence, Paul counseled: "Let fornication and uncleanness of every sort . . . *not even be mentioned* among you, just as it befits holy people." (Eph. 5:3) Not merely refrain from doing such things, but avoid even discussing them for the purpose of deriving some sensual pleasure. How far removed was his thinking from some today who feel, 'As long as you do not actually commit immorality, there is nothing wrong with watching it and discussing it as entertainment'!

¹⁹ How did those early Christians feel about the gladiatorial games and the theater, which were the "going thing" in the way of entertainment? Notice these comments of some professed Christian writers who lived during the second and third centuries:

"We [Christians] have nothing to do, in speech, sight or hearing, with the madness of the circus, the shamelessness of the theatre, the savagery of the arena . . . Why should we offend you, if we assume the existence of other pleasures?"—Tertullian.

"We, deeming that to see a man put to death is much the same as killing him, have abjured [solemnly renounced] such spectacles [gladiatorial games]."—Athenagoras.

"The corrupting influence of the stage is still more contaminating. For the subject of comedies are the dishonouring of virgins, or the loves of harlots; . . . What can young men or virgins do, when they see that these things are practised without

shame, and willingly beheld by all? They are plainly admonished of what they can do, and are inflamed with lust, which is *especially excited by seeing*."—Lactantius. [Italics ours]

"What does a faithful Christian do among these things, since he may not even think upon wickedness? Why does he find pleasure in the representations of lust . . . ? He is learning to do, while he is becoming accustomed to see. . . . We quickly get accustomed to what we hear and what we see."—Cyprian.

²⁰ Though these men lived some years after the first-century Christians, we can see how they understood the position of a Christian in these matters. They shunned such debased amusements. They could see the inconsistency for those who had been elevated out of darkness, who had removed obscene talk, violence and immorality from their lives, deliberately to sit and watch such things as entertainment. For the most part those Christians heeded Paul's counsel to "quit sharing with them in the unfruitful works that belong to darkness, but, rather, even be *reproving them*." Their daily lives of purity in the midst of a debased world were a constant 'reproof' to the people of the nations. No wonder these were labeled by the ungodly world as "enemies of mankind." Those disciples gladly showed that they were under a better influence than their carnal-minded neighbors. They demonstrated that they had been "made new in the force actuating [their] mind." And what a different "force" it was! Others could not help noticing. Are not these the kind of persons we want to be? Regardless of our profession, we either show the "fruitage of the light" or walk as the nations do.—Eph. 4:23; 5:9, 11.

²¹ What, then, about our choice of entertainment today? When we or our chil-

18. By what course would the early disciples show their appreciation for being "holy people"?

19. How did second- and third-century Christian writers feel about (a) the 'shamelessness of the theater and the savagery of the arena'? (b) the viewing of "a man put to death"? (c) that which can 'inflame one with passion or lust'? (d) How can one learn to do wrong things?

20. (a) Why did the early Christians avoid abased entertainment? (b) Why was their conduct noticeably different?

21. For what reason should we today take a realistic look at our choice of entertainment?

dren turn on the TV set or go to a movie, what is seen? Is there any real difference between what we choose to watch and the 'shamelessness of the Roman theater and the savagery of the arena'? Actual cases tell of how some Christians have been negligent and have become ensnared in immorality because of what they made it a habit to watch.

²² In contrast, what moral strength those early Christians displayed! Despite living in a world where men's hearts were so petrified they were not even aware that

22. (a) Was it easy for the first-century Christians to walk as children of light, yet what were they able to do? (b) What further questions need answering?

they were sinning and all sense of shame and decency was forgotten, they managed to keep their minds focused on things that were 'true, of serious concern, righteous, chaste, lovable, well spoken of, virtuous and praiseworthy.' (Phil. 4:8) How did they maintain such strength in the midst of an immoral atmosphere? Remember, they were just people of flesh and blood like us today. They had a basic need also for recreation. What were their "other pleasures"? How can we imitate even more closely such sterling examples of "children of light"? These are important questions to consider in the following article.

GO ON WALKING AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT

"You were once darkness, but you are now light in connection with the Lord. Go on walking as children of light."—Eph. 5:8.

THE man battled against the fierce wind. Straining with each step, he unflinching walked forward. Why all the effort? Why did he not merely turn around and walk with the wind? Because a short distance behind him loomed a deep dark chasm. He had no choice if he wanted to live. No wonder he struggled to walk against the wind.

² Today, like a vicious wind, the "spirit of the world," under the direction of Satan, is attempting to sweep all mankind in a course that will inescapably lead to a "chasm" of destruction, at the expression of God's wrath. (1 Cor. 2:12; Eph. 5:6) To avoid such wrath requires that a Christian, as it were, 'walk against the

wind.' He must struggle if he is to walk as a 'child of light,' and not as the 'nations walk' or conduct themselves.—Eph. 4:17; 5:8.

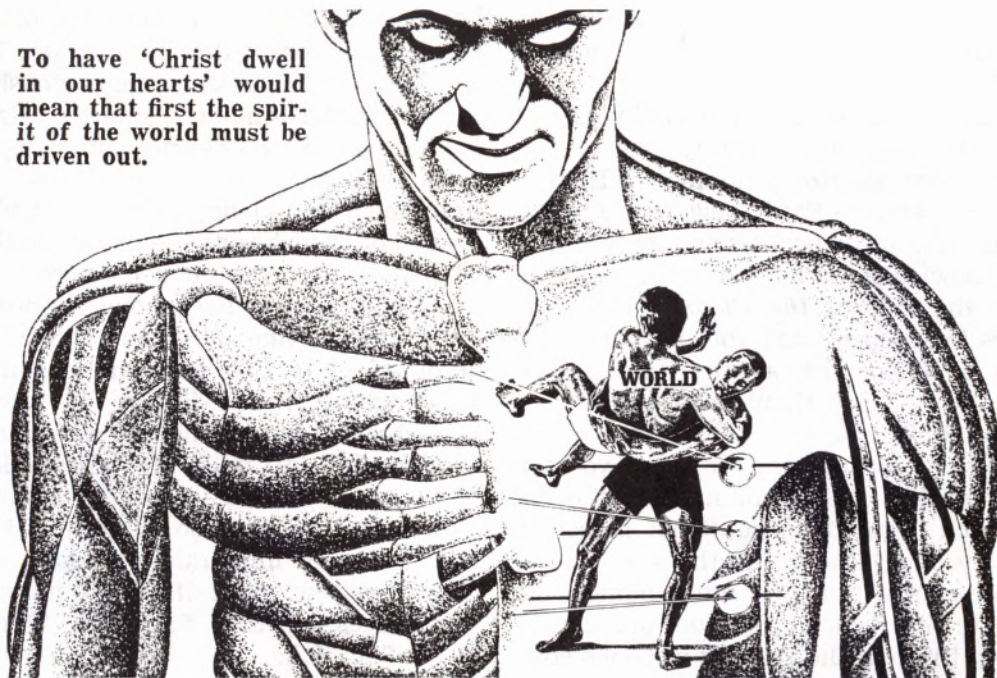
INNER STRENGTH NEEDED

³ Where must our efforts be directed for us to be victorious in this struggle? Paul answers by urging us "to be made mighty in the *man* [we] are *inside* with power through [God's] spirit." Here is the area that we must work on, namely, the 'inner man,' what we are inside, in the "secret person of the heart." This must be strengthened. How? The key is in the following verse: "To have the Christ dwell

1, 2. (a) In the illustration, why is it vital that the man walk against the wind? (b) Why must a Christian struggle to avoid walking as the nations?

3. (a) Where, according to Ephesians 3:16, must our efforts be directed in order successfully to avoid walking as the nations? (b) How do we strengthen our 'inner selves'?

To have 'Christ dwell in our hearts' would mean that first the spirit of the world must be driven out.



through your faith in your hearts with love.”—Eph. 3:16, 17; 1 Pet. 3:4.

⁴ To have ‘Christ dwell in our hearts’ would first mean that the spirit of the world must be driven out. How could Christ’s spirit saturate the ‘inner man’ if Satan, the “spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience,” still operated within us or started to creep back into our lives? (Eph. 2:2) So ask yourself: “In my heart do I still enjoy the Satanic spirit of this system? Am I entertained by things that reflect its complete lack of moral sense?” We can easily present one appearance to others, when, in reality, inside, we are quite a different person. Christ dwells in our hearts by letting his example and teachings affect our feelings and actions. For instance, Jesus said that his followers should not look at someone of the opposite sex with a passion for that one. In our thoughts do we obey these words? Do we earnestly avoid things that could

arouse such feelings? Consider: Would Jesus be caught up in the spirit of the form of amusement that we are pursuing? Do we have his spirit of not only ‘loving righteousness but *hating* lawlessness’? If so, we are letting the spirit of Christ fill our inner selves, we have the “same mental disposition” as the Christ.—Matt. 5:27, 28; Heb. 1:9; 1 Pet. 4:1.

⁵ Vital, then, are personal study of and meditation on the Bible if we are to be “rooted and established on the foundation, in order that [we] may be thoroughly able to *grasp mentally* with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth” of the truth of God’s Word, and particularly as it relates to the example of love provided by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. What is deeply rooted cannot easily be pulled up; what is established on a solid foundation cannot easily be moved away. So we must keep our spiritual ‘root and foundation’ strong

4. (a) What is involved in letting ‘Christ dwell in our hearts’? (b) What revealing questions should we individually consider?

5, 6. (a) Why are personal study and meditation vital to strengthen the ‘inner man’? (b) Is intellectual knowledge the complete answer; if not, what else is needed?

by letting the knowledge of Christ flow deep into the "man [we] are inside." —Eph. 3:17, 18.

⁶ However, never feel that having Christ dwell in your heart merely means studiously accumulating a number of Biblical facts. The apostle Paul knew very well the danger of a faith based solely on intellectual knowledge, so he continues: "And to know the *love of the Christ* which surpasses knowledge, that you may in everything be filled with all the fullness that God gives." More than 'head learning' is needed. It is true that the more you fellowship with a person, the more you understand that one's thinking. Yet it is not until you begin to *imitate* that person in his way of dealing with others or imitate his life course that you can genuinely appreciate his feelings. So, too, one cannot merely through the reading of books comprehend the love of Christ, but when one *becomes like Christ*, then, by sympathetic experience, one can know that which "surpasses knowledge." —Eph. 3:19.

⁷ What an exalted goal! What a high example for which to reach! True, it may sound like an enormous project, but with God's help *it can be done*, despite our imperfect abilities, for Paul says that God is able to "do more than superabundantly beyond all the things we ask or conceive." The question is, Are we doing our part? —Eph. 3:20; see also 1 Peter 2:21 and 1 Corinthians 11:1.

'STRIP OFF THE OLD PERSONALITY WITH ITS DECEPTIVE DESIRES'

⁸ So urged the apostle Paul at Ephesians 4:22. No, do not patch up the old personality, but 'strip it off,' get rid of it. (Col. 3:9) Why? Because its "deceptive desires," which linger in our "treacherous"

7. True or false?—Because Christ was perfect, it is too much to expect us to be like him. What is the Scriptural reason for your answer?

8. (a) According to Paul, what kind of desires can linger with the "old personality"? (b) How have some justified their choice of degrading forms of entertainment, and is such reasoning Scripturally sound?

heart, can 'corrupt' or make the old personality go from bad to worse. (Jer. 17:9) To justify their patronage of obviously degrading entertainment, some Christians have reasoned: 'It does not bother my conscience, so what is wrong?' Could it be that their conscience is wrong and the desires of their hearts are deceiving them? The mere fact that our conscience does not bother us is in itself no assurance that our course is fine. Even the apostle Paul admitted: "For I am not conscious of anything against myself. Yet by this I am not proved righteous, but he that examines me is Jehovah." (1 Cor. 4:4) The consciences of many in the early Corinthian congregation had become so desensitized that they tolerated immorality in their midst, even boasting about it. What misguided consciences!—1 Cor. 5:1, 2, 6; Titus 1:15; 1 Tim. 4:2.

⁹ It is easy to let our consciences *gradually* become defiled by "deceptive desires." From the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in a European land comes the following disturbing report:

"It is certain that about 10 years ago our brothers would not have looked at the majority of films now being played, because their sense of decency has been altered. There is no doubt that the tendencies of this world have in a certain measure influenced some of our brothers."

¹⁰ Ever so gradually Satan endeavors to have his depraved standards accepted. When the gladiatorial games were introduced in Palestine, they were initially received with "terror" by persons "unused to such sights," according to first-century historian Livy, who adds:

"Then by frequent repetitions, by sometimes allowing the fighters to go only as far as wounding one another . . . he made the sight familiar and even pleasing, and

9. What disturbing report shows how consciences can be gradually altered?

10. (a) How was acceptance of the gladiatorial games maneuvered in the first century? (b) What can be learned from this?

he roused in many of the young men a joy in arms."

Step by step their horror was softened. In time they no longer were shocked but became joyful participants. Satan's methods rarely change; so be alert that your Christian "sense of decency" is not slowly altered. Stop and think: How far has your conscience allowed you to go? Is it too far? In the field of entertainment, is your course little different from that of persons "beyond all moral sense"?

MAKE SURE WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE LORD

¹¹ Much that is morally rotten is paraded before us as if it were perfectly sound. That is why we must "keep on *making sure* of what is acceptable to the Lord." "On this account [because the days are wicked] cease becoming unreasonable, but go on perceiving what the will of Jehovah is."—Eph. 5:10, 17.

¹² So when it comes to entertainment provided by the world, *selectivity* is the key. Illustrating this, one person said: "The greater part of the movie is pretty good, but many always have the sex scenes, so if you want to see the rest of the movie, you have to watch the sex." But is viewing most of the "pretty good" movie worth the possible moral damage from the film's "sex scenes"? Such scenes depicting what is done in secret are now flashed before the viewers. If Paul said, "the things that take place in secret by [the nations] it is *shameful even to relate*," what should be our attitude toward watching any part of such as entertainment? (Eph. 5:12) Rather than consulting the Jews' Talmudic list of rules, a Christian must use his own "perceptive powers" and "cease becoming unreasonable [Greek: "senseless, lacking

moral intelligence"]." (Heb. 5:14) It may mean our avoiding completely certain movies or TV presentations that could otherwise have some very entertaining features. One of the professed Christian writers of the second century made an excellent point in his essay *The Shows*:

"Grant that you have there [at the shows] things that are pleasant, things both agreeable and innocent in themselves; even some things that are excellent. Nobody dilutes poison with gall [a bitter substance] . . . the accursed thing is put into condiments well seasoned and of sweetest taste."—Tertullian.

¹³ How good it is when individually we can encourage one another to pursue a course that is "acceptable to the Lord"! Commendable indeed is the expression of one youngster: "I think there is a tremendous effort among the spiritually mature teen-agers to try to stay away from immoral movies and also to encourage others to stay away from them." However, Paul warned the congregation that certain ones would play down the straightforward counsel of the Scriptures when he said: "Let no man deceive you with *empty words*, for because of the aforesaid things [fornication, uncleanness, obscene talk, and so forth] the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience." (Eph. 5:6) 'Empty talkers' could be a bad influence on others. With regard to persons who persist in walking disorderly, the apostle Paul recommends:

"But if anyone is not obedient to our word . . . , keep this one marked, stop associating with him, that he may become ashamed. And yet do not be considering him as an enemy, but continue admonishing him as a brother."—2 Thess. 3:14, 15.

True, do not treat him as an "enemy," but stop associating with him *socially* on

11, 12. (a) Why is the counsel at Ephesians 5:10 and 17 so vital now, and how can it be applied? (b) Does the fact that corrupt entertainment may have some beneficial features make it acceptable for a Christian?

13. How can one help a person who, with "empty words," plays down the counsel of the Bible?

his terms. Perhaps he may get the point that he needs to readjust his thinking.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CHILDREN OF LIGHT

¹⁴ All persons, young and old, crave some stimulus, some refreshment, a change of pace, to lift their spirits above the day-by-day routine. The common thing for worldly people in the first century was to find excitement or "refreshment" by getting drunk. Their social gatherings often became mere "drinking matches." How different it was to be with Christians! They had a fine source of refreshment. What was it? The apostle Paul tells us: "Also, do not be getting drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery, but keep getting filled with spirit." The influence of God's spirit would produce the greatest delight for Christians. Hence, their social get-togethers would not reflect the "debauchery" or "wild living" (Beck's translation) of the unbelievers. Since God's *holy* spirit filled their hearts, what came out of their mouths would differ greatly from the mouthings of persons "filled" with wine. Rather than indulge in obscene songs, often accompanied by lewd dancing, for which the nations were renowned, Christians would follow Paul's healthful advice: "Keep . . . speaking to yourselves with psalms and praises to God and spiritual songs, singing and accompanying yourselves with music in your hearts to Jehovah." These would be refreshed *inside*.—Eph. 5:18, 19; 1 Pet. 4:3.

¹⁵ How boring this all looked to those of the nations! But those early "children of light" were glad, because they really had a different spirit. They acted as one warm family, "the household of God," with each one using his "gift" for the

14, 15. (a) In the first century, what did many of the people of the nations do to provide some excitement in their lives? (b) What alternatives are mentioned for Christians at Ephesians 5:18, 19, and how would such be viewed by those of the nations?

building up of the congregational family.—Eph. 2:19; 4:7.

¹⁶ So today where such a warm "family" spirit exists in a congregation, there will be a natural desire to get together for meetings, as well as socially, for mutual upbuilding. Genuine love will prompt a spontaneous concern for all, young and old, and especially those who are "widows and orphans." (Jas. 1:27) However, social gatherings should not be allowed to deteriorate, as happened in the following instance:

"It had been a delightful wedding ceremony, with fine Scriptural counsel from the minister who gave the wedding talk. Then, the couple, with several hundred guests, went to a nearby hall for a reception. But how different the atmosphere! A professional band held the floor, playing wild, sensual music so loudly that several of the guests had to be excused. Intoxicating liquor flowed too freely. The dancing reflected a spirit of wild abandon. Many of the guests asked, Why spoil a happy theocratic wedding by bringing in the world to wrap it up?"

What can be done on occasions when Christians relax or engage in recreation? Many upbuilding things! Some things that others have found genuinely refreshing in the field of entertainment are noted in the following article. The point is that what is done should reflect that we are "children of light," and are under the influence of God's spirit, not the "spirit of the world."—1 Cor. 2:12.

ALL USE INFLUENCE FOR GOOD

¹⁷ With the pressure of the world increasing, vigilance is necessary to thwart its spirit in the congregation. The influence of the elders should promote the flow

16. (a) What effect will a warm "family" spirit have on a congregation, and why should the counsel at James 1:27 be remembered? (b) What is one possible danger that should be avoided at certain social get-togethers? (c) What should mark recreational activities that are engaged in at Christian social get-togethers? 17. How can elders and others with "spiritual qualifications" aid those who may be taking 'false steps' in the field of entertainment?

of God's spirit. At times this may require 'readjusting' the thinking of some who become unbalanced. Concerned about the infiltration of worldliness into the congregation, one elder wrote: "As elders we must share the blame because some of us are proving weak when it comes to giving counsel when needed and not standing up for what is right." However, not merely the elders, but all "who have spiritual qualifications ["spiritual ones," *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*]" should be willing to "readjust such a man [one who takes a "false step"] in a spirit of mildness." Such 'mild' counsel could perhaps prevent one "false step" from becoming a continued wayward course, leading to disaster.—Eph. 4:11-14; Gal. 6:1.

¹⁸ All should realize that tastes vary in the choice of entertainment. Rather than being extremely critical, perhaps bordering on 'over-righteousness,' encourage what is desirable. Use the standards set in the Bible. Let the force of God's Word touch the hearts of those taking 'false steps.'—Eccl. 7:16.

¹⁹ Parents especially are in a fine position to help their children. The apostle commands fathers: "Do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." The Greek word translated "bringing up" contains the thought of warmth for the child, for the root word can be applied to a "nursing mother [who] cherishes" her children.—Eph. 6:4; 1 Thess. 2:7.

²⁰ Such concern would prevent parents from being indifferent to their child's choice of entertainment. Deep love for the child would cause the parent to be firm at times, 'bringing the child up with dis-

cipline.' Especially because of peer pressure a child may object to some of the parent's restrictions, perhaps in the field of entertainment. One 21-year-old full-time preacher who was reared by godly parents reflected over her teen-age years, saying:

"Only years later did I realize the training I've got is to my advantage, although I thought at the time that I was the loser. In the case of parents, they may think they're losing their child by being firm. They're not losing him. They've got to look at things in the long term. You know it must be frightening for parents when their child says, 'Oh, mom, Susan can do it and she's still in the Truth, so what makes you think that I'm going out of the Truth?' It must be very difficult for parents to say, 'No.' But it's only after you're older, many years later, and you look back, that you can say, 'Thank you, Jehovah, that my parents had the courage to put their foot down.'"

²¹ But external force or discipline is not the complete answer. The apostle Paul spoke of the "mental-regulating of Jehovah." Literally, the original words mean putting the mind of Jehovah inside as a controlling or regulating influence. Work to aid your child to build a relationship with God so that he will come to reject degrading forms of entertainment as well as all wrong conduct. As one youngster who developed such a relationship said: "It's not so much between me and my parents but between me and Jehovah."

²² With all of us, it is between us and Jehovah. So let none of Jehovah's people forget who they are, namely, "children of light." Continue to walk as illuminators now, enjoying a happy and satisfying life, and entertain the prospect of an eternity of happiness in a soon-to-be-realized new system of stimulating moral brilliance.

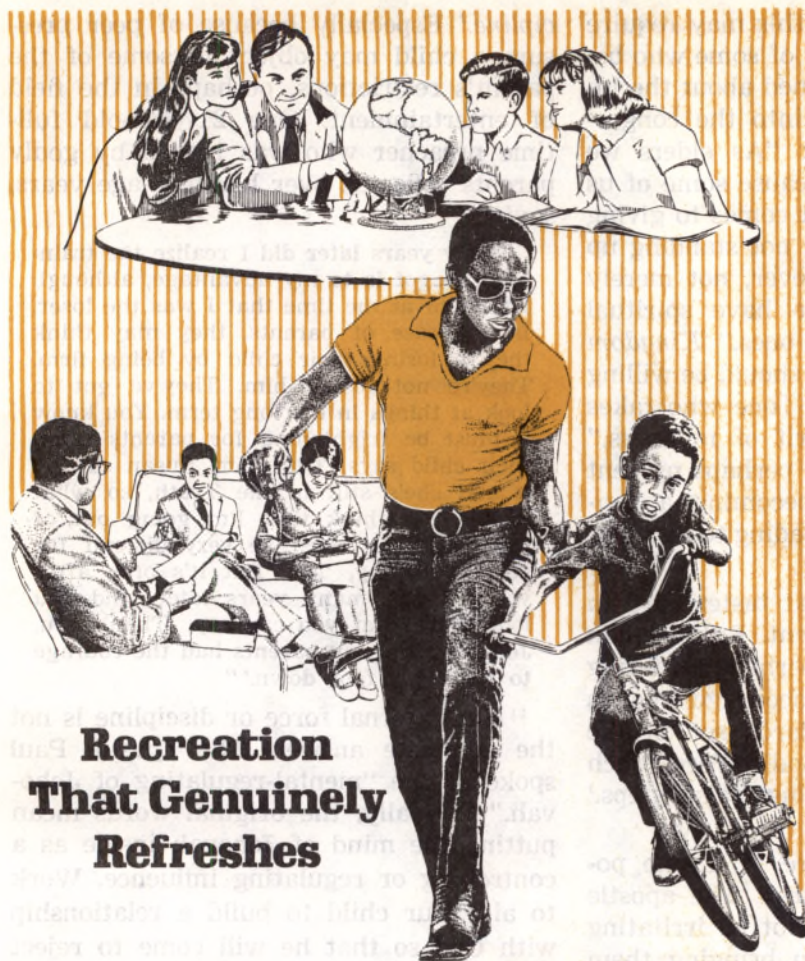
18. Why is balance needed?

19. How can parents use their influence for the good of their children?

20. (a) Why is there a need for discipline? (b) From the remarks of one young person, what should parents do, and will this later be appreciated by their children?

21. What cherished relationship should the parents help the child to build? Why?

22. By continuing to walk as children of light, what hope may we entertain?



Recreation That Genuinely Refreshes

“WE WORSHIP the gods with cheerfulness, with feasts, songs and games, but you [Christians] worship a crucified man who cannot be pleased by those who have all this enjoyment, who despises joy and condemns pleasures.” So spoke an enemy of second-century Christianity.* But what a misjudgment! Those early disciples did find genuine joy in life.

Their leader, Jesus Christ, the son of “the happy God,” is spoken of as being “overjoyed,” and as “the happy . . . Po-

* Spoken by a judge to the professed Christian Epipodius. The judge was interrogating him and attempting to make him compromise. This reportedly took place in France during the 17th year of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. (177 C.E.)

tentate” who, on earth, prayed that his followers may “have [his] joy in themselves to the full.”—1 Tim. 1:11; 6:15; Luke 10:21; John 17:13.

Their joy was not based on the temporary gaiety of a feast or a game. They knew well the ancient proverb (14:13): “Even in laughter the heart may be in pain; and grief is what rejoicing ends up in.” Their greatest delight was following the principles of Christianity. This joy reached their hearts. They now had a treasured relationship with Almighty God, and the companionship of their fellow Christians. They also had the heartwarming experience of helping others to learn the truth and of being able

to rear children that would be a source of delight to them.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR “LEISURE TIME”

Caring for their Scriptural responsibilities and sharing the Christian message with others, while most important, would not take all their waking hours. Their Master, by his own example, showed the propriety of having some time for rest and refreshment. After a full day of witnessing, Jesus said to his disciples: “‘Come, you yourselves, privately into a lonely place and *rest up* a bit.’ For there were many coming and going, and they had no *leisure time* even to eat a meal.”—Mark 6:31.

The same Greek verb for "rest up" (in the middle voice of the verb) is rendered, at Philemon 20, as "refresh" (in the active voice of the verb). So "leisure time" may be used to provide a change of pace from the regular routine or to find refreshment for continuing with one's customary work. These early Christians, while primarily active and zealous in proclaiming the Kingdom message, found time occasionally for a change of pace that genuinely refreshed.

No doubt they visited with one another and shared meals together. In addition, various forms of proper recreation were available that these disciples or their children may have enjoyed. Young men and others are referred to as playing musical instruments in pre-Christian times. (1 Sam. 16:18; 1 Ki. 1:40; Lam. 5:14; compare Luke 15:25.) Children are spoken of as playing games and dancing. (Matt. 11:16, 17) In contrast with whatever "bodily training" there was then available as being beneficial "for a little," godly devotion expressed in deeds was "beneficial for all things, as it holds promise of the life now and that which is to come." Whatever Christians did was kept in balance, not reflecting the wild abandon of those who were not Christians. It never overshadowed their "godly devotion," the real fountainhead of their joy.—1 Tim. 4:8.

WHAT SOME FAMILIES ARE NOW DOING

Today Christian families also enjoy refreshing times together. They find real joy and companionship in doing things with one another—primarily, in making God's kingdom known to others. And yet, there are other things that they do together, such as sharing in various forms of recreation. What kinds? Well, one father who successfully raised a large family spoke of a variety of upbuilding activities, and then added: "The most successful forms of recreation seem to be those

that use the child's energies and offer a challenge."

A Christian father with four teen-agers lived in an area apparently void of recreational opportunities. He was asked if he had a problem finding meaningful recreation for his family. He answered: "Providing recreation has never been difficult. The only obstacle to overcome is to see opportunities for it and find contentment with what one has. Enjoying *simple things*, such as swimming, hiking, entertaining guests and the sort, seem to be the most satisfying. We have learned that to refresh ourselves need not be the function of expensive recreational facilities or lavish equipment, but, rather, the taking advantage of what is open to all."

Many find that while engaging in the work of sharing Bible knowledge with others opportunities open up for recreation. This father of four wrote:

"Much of our recreational activities revolve around our theocratic activities and as long as we persist in these much recreation comes as a by-product. Witnessing in our rural territory often provides the opportunity to bring along a picnic lunch. On many occasions we have concluded a day of witnessing by enjoying ourselves someplace in the forest or at a campground."

Quite naturally each family's circumstances are different. No doubt there are a variety of things that people as a family find relaxing. Yet another father of four said: "It isn't the *kind* of recreation that keeps the youth content and happy, it is the *atmosphere* and association connected with it. The relationship with the family members is what makes the time spent a happy one." Another Christian added: "The thing that made it [recreation] all so special was that we *did it as a family*."

THE VALUE OF PARENTAL INTEREST

So parents would have to be conscious of their youngsters' need for some mean-

ingful activities to fill part of their leisure time. One mother, whose husband was not a believer, said: "You've got to create an atmosphere in the home that the children will not want to get away from, and if they temporarily leave, they'll want to come back." One father and mother who were successful in rearing their children were asked what their "secret" was. They replied: "We always tried to make life in the home with us more interesting than with the children's peers."

To make life at home "more interesting" for one's children requires a heartfelt concern on the part of parents. One mother pointedly said: "Chasing after toddlers works and stimulates the body, but teen-agers stimulate and work the mind." Yes, a concerned heart, coupled with mental effort, is needed by parents.

To make such an effort is easier said than done. "Being the parents of seven children, we found that it was a struggle to feed, provide clothing and shelter for them," wrote one father, who added, "therefore, our recreation was limited, although we would arrange some time for recreation." Oftentimes, there is just a single parent in the home who must carry the whole load.

It is understandably difficult after a hard day's work to come home and then start thinking about how to provide some

recreation for the family. Those parents that manage to care for all their Scriptural responsibilities and still provide some meaningful recreation for the family are to be *truly commended!* Difficult though it is, one mother, whose seven children all became dedicated Christians, said: "The joys surpass all the sacrifices and hard work."

Do children respond? A father was faced with the challenge of raising three teenage daughters without the help of a wife. All three girls became devoted Christians. Later one of the daughters said:

"We did things together. Sometimes when we couldn't afford any amusements we just walked, sometimes for blocks and blocks through the streets of the city. Dad was not afraid to let us know that he was human. If we had nowhere to go and it was raining, he would say, 'Let's go out and walk in the rain.' And we would just go out and walk in the rain; we had nowhere to go but it was so nice just to be with him. He took the time to be with us."

Certainly not everyone views walking in the rain as recreation, but the point is that it is not so much *what* is done but that *something is done as a family* to provide a "change of pace" to bring genuine refreshment.

A SPIRITUAL "FAMILY"

Those who become Christians enjoy precious association within another family, the congregation, which is truly comparable to a family complete with 'brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and children.' (Mark 10:28-30) For this reason it would seem only natural that members of the congregation would enjoy not only witnessing together in groups, but also spending further time in upbuilding association with one another.

Such social gatherings can be refreshing and also add to the warmth of the congregation. One Christian youth was asked what had been the most enjoyable

In Coming Issues

- Who Really Have the Truth?
- Free!—After 20 Years in Communist Prisons
- God's Kingdom—The Only Hope

gathering she remembered attending. Without hesitating she replied:

"It was when a few families in the congregation, parents and children, got together. After sharing a few snacks, nothing elaborate, we all sat around and talked. One of the brothers began to ask some of us how we became Jehovah's Witnesses or to relate an experience from our work of teaching others. Soon different ones told their story of becoming a Christian and the problems that they overcame. No one dominated the conversation, but many contributed. We were all encouraged by the experiences. It was an unforgettable time."

By the application of Bible principles, and if elders, ministerial servants or other mature ones who attend use their influence for good, such an occasion will be a source of genuine refreshment and not one that leaves a bad taste in the mouths of many because the conduct degenerated. Never should it be forgotten that our main commission is to be witnesses for Jehovah's name and kingdom. Even in the relaxed atmosphere of a Christian social gathering our conduct should bring glory to our Holy Father. As a second-century Christian writer said: "Nowhere is the Christian anything but a Christian."—Isa. 5:12; 43:10-12; 1 Cor. 10:31.

THE RELATIVE VALUE OF RECREATION

Healthful recreation can provide some pleasant diversion. It can refresh us so that we can press ahead with our normal work. Yet it is not the big thing in life. One well-balanced young sister, who is a full-time proclaimer of the "good news" in Europe, said:

"Entertainment was not the thing emphasized at home. To be honest, field service was the big thing in our home. Food, clothing, shelter, spiritual things, the meetings, were the important things. Yet when we had time we would enjoy some entertainment, perhaps going visiting other families in the congregation.

"Many times I've seen young ones going

to various places for amusement and I would think, 'Oh, well, I would just love to do that.' But, really, not constantly engaging in recreation never hurt me. It has never been to my disadvantage. I'm not worse off than all the other young people in my age group."

If entertainment were permitted to become a major part of our lives, it would hurt us spiritually and perhaps even in a physical way. Note the clear warning from Proverbs 21:17, which says: "*He that is loving merriment will be an individual in want; he that is loving wine and oil will not gain riches.*"

It was customary at social gatherings or feasts at that time for wine to be drunk and oil and other fragrant substances to be poured out on the head and clothes. (Prov. 27:9; Amos 6:6) Persons who *loved* such festivities would soon find that other activities in their lives suffered, to their detriment. A host of sad experiences has shown that, when purely recreational festivities are done on a regular basis, they have a tendency to gravitate toward worldliness. So real caution must be exercised.

Never forget that in various places in the world, many Christians do not have the availability of much of what is called "entertainment" by those in more industrialized nations. Yet they manage and, in fact, in many ways seem to be happier and more contented than those with such a wide variety of recreation. One elder who had observed carefully the international situation wrote: "Many persons feel that the *stress* put on entertainment and the decline in morals have gone hand in hand." Each Christian, then, must guard against such a danger and put the "stress" on his participation in the worship of our heavenly Father.

We must also face the fact that with an urgent commission to proclaim God's kingdom in these "last days," neither we as Christians nor our children will ever be able to spend more than a minimum

of time on entertainment. It is obvious, too, that Christians will never be able to do *all* the things that the world calls "entertainment." So recreation must be kept in its proper place. This necessitates our constantly maintaining a spiritual, not fleshly, outlook and our working to instill such a view in the hearts of our children.

So may every Christian keep a balanced view of recreation. May we build

our lives around the things that bring real joy and satisfaction to the heart, as we occasionally enjoy some upbuilding recreation. Above all, may we find our greatest happiness in living clean Christian lives and in zealously proclaiming to others the grand hope of the Kingdom that will soon help all mankind to live balanced, worthwhile lives, to the eternal praise of our God, Jehovah.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

- When millions of Germans recently viewed "Holocaust," a fictional television account of

"Holocaust" Questions

Hitler's extermination of the Jews, many were horrified. "Young people were appalled to be reminded that many of their elders had not protested the slaughter," reports "Newsweek" magazine. "How and why could this sort of thing happen?" asked one horrified young viewer. "Where were the churches?"

Canadian historian J. S. Conway raised the same question in his book "The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-1945." He asked: "How could so many reputable and responsible churchmen have lent their support, even if only passively, to the perpetration of such crimes as genocide? What fever seized so many millions of German Christians, both Evangelical [Lutheran] and Catholic, in those few short years of Nazi tyranny?" Conway's conclusion? "The Church was unprepared and totally unsuited to cope with the situation."

On the other hand, he reported: "In contrast with the compliance of the larger churches, the Jehovah's Witnesses maintained their doctrinal opposition to the point of fanaticism. . . . The resistance of the Witnesses was centered chiefly against any form of collaboration with the Nazis." What gave them such strength before Hitler's machine? Answers Historian Conway: "Basing their case on biblical commandment, they refused to take up arms . . . they were thus all practically brought under

sentence of death. Many in fact paid the penalty; . . . large numbers were transported to Dachau [concentration camp]." Hence, they became victims rather than becoming accomplices with Hitler in the "Holocaust."

- The Greek "Athens News" reports that two of Jehovah's Witnesses recently have been

Orthodox Intolerance

imprisoned for 10 and 18 years, respectively, "for refusing to serve in the military." "Athens News" called the latter "the worst such sentence in the recent history of the persecuted Christian sect here," and noted that such sentences were given "despite a 4-year maximum jail term for the offense recently established by the Greek government to pacify protests from the Council of Europe, various European Parliaments and Amnesty International."

How can such intolerance still exist despite international pressure for humane treatment of those imprisoned because of conscience? Indicating the answer, "The Word," a Greek Orthodox periodical published in the United States, recently reported: "ATHENS—The Hierarchy of the Orthodox Church of Greece issued a decree in which it termed the Jehovah's Witnesses sect as 'anti-religious, anti-national and subversive.' The Hierarchy also requested Defense Minister Evangelos Averof to suspend the law which provides for the exemption of Jehovah's Witnesses from the Army on the grounds that they are conscientious objectors." In view of these developments one wonders whether Greece will maintain its fine progress toward religious tolerance as one of Europe's freer societies, or whether it will yield to the pressures of religious bigots. Time will tell.



Witnessing in a Nigerian Village

GOSTA carefully turned the car into the open yard and parked under a mango tree. People began to emerge from the two mud-walled houses. An old man was sitting under another tree and we greeted him with “*Wa domo-o!*” (“Hello!”). He watched us intently for several moments. Then the expression on his wizened face softened and he said, “*Obokhian!*” (“Welcome!”).

Four of us had come to discuss the Bible’s message with the villagers. Since this first home was isolated from the rest of the village and provided a parking place for our car, we decided that all of us should share this first call and then split up to witness to other villagers, going from house to house.

Before setting out for the village, we had discussed Bible texts and topics for discussion. We had in mind the importance of helping the villagers to acquire an accurate knowledge of the true God. (John 17:3) To that end, we had prayed to Jehovah for his blessing and direction on our witnessing work.

THE WAY OF THE VILLAGERS

In the eastern and southeastern parts of Nigeria, we enjoy the hills and gently rolling countryside, the clear skies and the fresh air that gives some relief from the hot humidity in other parts of the country. Then there are the endless varieties of birds and the occasional monkeys that never fail to fascinate us. As a rule, in the villages the houses are not crowded together, as they are in the cities. There are individual homes or compounds of two or more houses built 50 to 100 meters (164 to 328 feet) from the road and approached by a narrow, well-swept path passing through the plantations of cassava, yams and coco. As we approach the houses, it is always pleasant to see colorful little flower gardens, shaded by umbrella trees, under which we can sit to discuss the Bible.

Before entering the compound, we stand at the entrance and clap our hands—the equivalent of knocking at the gate. The householder and three or four children soon appear. We are invited inside the

house and are greeted with handshakes. For real strangers, as we are, seats are provided immediately. Water and soap are brought for washing our hands. And food—perhaps fruits or boiled corn—is offered. We must eat first. Then the members of the household are prepared to listen to our message. Even if food is not offered, water always is, and, when the visitor is a real stranger or an older person, the householder hands the glass to him with both hands as a gesture of respect.

The people are always eager to listen to strangers. When we accompany native Witnesses from house to house in the preaching work, we find that the family will listen attentively to the discussion in their own language, then demand that the visitor, too, should speak. At that, the discussion starts all over again.

Much interest is added to such visits by the activities of chickens, goats, dogs and little children, the younger ones usually unclad. There seems to be no end to the vitality of these youngsters as they go romping around the houses with the playful dogs hard on their heels. Occasionally, they come and stare at us.

Toward the conclusion of our discussion, we offer Bible study literature. Since the people have little money, they give us yams, eggs, fish or even chickens in exchange. Then we say good-bye, shake hands with them again and leave for the next compound, attended by a crowd of exuberant children and some grown-ups as well. We have often had children follow us from house to house in growing numbers, and they take an active interest in introducing us and telling their neighbors that we have come to talk about God.

TELLING THEM ABOUT GOD

When we were welcomed by the old man in this village in mid-western Nigeria, we anticipated an interesting discussion.

After we had identified ourselves and explained our purpose, he signaled to others to bring us chairs, and we were soon seated under the tree. The family seemed eager to listen. They included the old man, two young women, two boys, two young men and another man whom we will call Joseph. He appeared to be intoxicated.

Joseph had desired that we be invited into the house; but this was overruled by the older man's instructions. An elderly man's word is treated with kind respect. We were glad to be seated outside, for a pleasant breeze fluttered the leaves of the tree and gently fanned us. The clear, blue afternoon sky and the rich green foliage provided just the right setting in which to talk about the Creator.

It was Nath who opened the discussion on the importance of knowing Jehovah. Gosta, Jeremiah and I sat back to enjoy the conversation, or, rather, to observe the reactions of the family. Well, Jeremiah could enjoy the conversation. They were speaking in his own Edo language. Gosta and I are Witness missionaries from Lagos and have not had an opportunity to learn that tongue. However, by carefully following the Bible texts that were read, we could get a good grasp of the discussion, and Nath later explained all that had been said.

Since Nath had grown up in this village, he knew the local customs. He took advantage of this knowledge and started off by drawing attention to the current yam harvest, saying: "This is a time when our people are very happy because, now that the yam is ripe for harvesting, they are looking forward to reaping the fruits of their labor." The old man replied: "That is true, and we are very thankful that we expect a good harvest."

"There is so much to be thankful for," Nath continued. "You do appreciate the need for proper seasons and the right conditions for planting, growth and har-

vesting of your crops. Isn't it very loving on God's part that he provided these things?"

"*Emwuanta-no!*" ("It is true!") murmured several in the group.

"Such a loving God is interested in our lives as humans," said Nath. "He provides the things we need to keep alive and happy now, and also the things we need in order to be able to gain everlasting life. It is to help you to know this loving God that we have come."

The old man remarked: "We are glad you have come," and he was joined by the others in expressions of appreciation. However, Joseph interrupted, held Gosta firmly by the knee and said: "We want to hear this man speak." Joseph's unfocused eyes roved around the group, and he tried to rise but collapsed again into his chair as someone laid a firm hand on his shoulder. From the beginning, we realized that he had drunk too liberally from a calabash of palm wine. The two young boys made exclamations of displeasure at this interruption, and Gosta calmed him with an assurance that he would speak later.

Nath continued: "To show how much we owe to God and depend on him, I would like to read what the Bible says here in Psalm 145:15, 16." While Jeremiah translated into Edo, Nath read in English: "To you [Jehovah] the eyes of all look hopefully, and you are giving them their food in its season. You are opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing." Nath went on to show how wonderfully Jehovah God has provided food, clothing and shelter and how marvelous he has made the earth to accommodate human life and make it pleasurable.

How appropriate our setting was for such a discussion! The sun was now low in the western sky and was beginning to produce delicate rays of light that filtered

through the trees as if the air was suffused with gold dust. The edges of the distant clouds were tinged with salmon pink. Beyond them the blue background of the sky completed a tableau that brought pleasure to the eyes. There was reason for real thankfulness that God has created in us an appreciation for such beauty.

AN OLD MAN'S APPRECIATION

While this discussion was going on, the two young women left to care for household duties, but returned later. Several passersby, including a motor cyclist, came to listen. This increased our audience to about 15 people from at least five different households. Then another elderly man, limping with a tremendous dip in his gait because of a badly deformed leg, came out of one of the houses and joined us. Immediately, he started to share in the discussion.

This was an unusual gesture of respect and interest. Customarily, an elderly Nigerian man does not come out of his house to meet visitors. They must be brought in to him. This is perhaps why Joseph at first insisted that we be invited inside. However, the other elderly man had already been sitting outside and had welcomed us.

When the second aged man arrived, Nath, aided by Jeremiah's illustrations, was explaining that mankind in general did not appreciate Jehovah's loving provisions. They did not seek to learn the truth about God so as to serve him "with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) This is why there is so much suffering and oppression on earth. However, Nath explained that we have reason to be happy. Why? Because God provides for all people liberally, assures protection for those who serve him, and will put an end to wickedness by removing practicers of unrighteousness "just as you remove the weeds that threaten to ruin your crops." He then read Psalm 145:20, which says: "Jehovah is

guarding all those loving him, but all the wicked ones he will annihilate.”

This was indeed good news for our listeners. They expressed satisfaction that Jehovah does give protection to his servants and will destroy wicked persons who cause trouble. “But,” asked one listener, “how can we know if God is going to protect us?”

GETTING TO KNOW GOD

In answer, Nath explained how important it is for us to come to know God accurately. He said: “The Bible contains all the teachings about God, and tells us why and how we should worship him. Notice here how God invites us to seek him and learn righteousness, if we are to have his protection. Zephaniah 2:3 states: ‘Seek Jehovah, all you meek ones of the earth, who have practiced His own judicial decision. Seek righteousness, seek meekness. Probably you may be concealed in the day of Jehovah’s anger.’”

This was followed by a lively discussion, during which it was pointed out that, just as the farmer observes the natural laws that govern season, soil condition and other things when cultivating his crops, we must also observe Jehovah’s laws regarding our conduct and our worship of him. We must “seek Jehovah.” “That means,” Nath concluded, “that we must study the Bible to learn about God and then endeavor to live in harmony with his will.”

At this, the first elderly man remarked: “All that you have said is true. But where we are going is nearer than where we have come from. We are too old now to begin to learn new things. But you can teach our children.”

The second elderly man agreed with this, then said: “It is not that we are not interested. Otherwise, I would not have left the house to come and join you. But we are old now and we cannot read. How can we learn all these things so as to know

God the way you have explained? We have been visited by Jehovah’s Witnesses before this, and we have even accepted books from them. It remains only for our children now to read and try to learn these things.”

Both Gosta and I were invited to speak. With translation, we explained how many old people started to study the Bible and learned so much that they were able to teach others. Some who were even older than 70, which we thought to be the approximate age of these two men, succeeded in learning to read and write in their old age.

Joseph paid more attention than ever as Gosta explained that Jehovah does not abandon people who have grown old. Rather, God helps willing ones to become qualified to have a share in making known his purposes. Gosta further explained: “Jehovah is keenly interested in us. When we meet together to talk about him, as we have been doing here, or when we are studying his Word or explaining it to others, he pays attention. You can be sure that he will remember your efforts to get to know and serve him because you will be following the course that shows you fear him and respect his name.”

Once again both elderly men spoke, expressing appreciation for our visit and manifesting a desire for assistance in studying the Bible. Different individuals in the group accepted the magazines, and we assured them that arrangements would be made for Jehovah’s Witnesses to visit and teach them regularly. Then, after shaking hands again with everyone, and to a chorus of “Okhiendehia!” (“Good-bye!”) we ended this most interesting visit.

This one call had filled our available time. As on other occasions, we returned home feeling happy and thankful for the privilege of witnessing to these humble village folk who have such deep respect for God and his Word.

JOB—A Pattern of Godly Conduct

THAT man has the patience of Job.’

It is not uncommon to hear this expression even today. The Biblical account about Job is known throughout the world, and with good reason. Of Job, God said: “There is no one like him in the earth, a man blameless and upright, fearing God and turning aside from bad.” (Job 1:8; 2:3) The Bible’s portrayal of Job furnishes a pattern of godly conduct well worth imitating.

Job lived in Uz, evidently a region in northern Arabia. Numerous passages in the book of Job indicate that he lived during patriarchal times, perhaps while Israel was enslaved in Egypt. As to Job’s situation in life, we read: “Seven sons and three daughters came to be born to him. And his livestock got to be seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels and five hundred spans of cattle and five hundred she-asses, along with a very large body of servants; and that man came to be

the greatest of all the Orientals.”—Job 1:1-3.

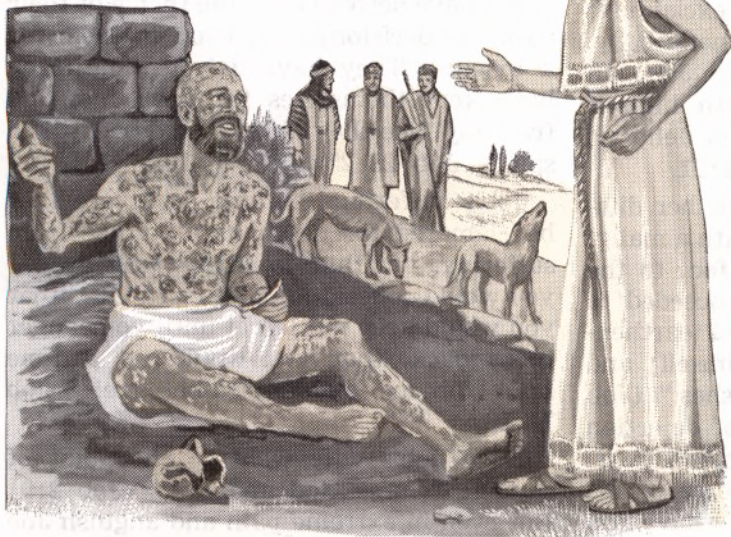
Behind Job’s blameless and upright course of conduct was purity of thoughts, motivations and desires. “A covenant I have concluded with my eyes,” said Job. “So how could I show myself attentive to a virgin?” (Job 31:1) Since the patriarch deeply loved his own wife, it was unthinkable for him to ‘lie in wait at the entranceway of his companion’ so as to commit adultery with that one’s wife. (Job 31:9-12) Though exceedingly wealthy, Job refused to put his confidence in riches. (Job 31:24, 25) Faithfulness to God left no room in his heart for the idolatrous worship of sun, moon and other heavenly bodies that was common in those days. —Job 31:26-28.

“I WOULD RESCUE THE AFFLICTED ONE”

As one of the elders who sat at the city gate to care for civic affairs, Job was above reproach. He relates:

“I would rescue the afflicted one crying for help, and the fatherless boy and anyone that had no helper. The blessing of the one about to perish—upon me it would come, and the heart of the widow I would make glad. Eyes I became to the blind one; and feet to the lame one I was. I was a real father to the poor ones; and the legal case of one whom I did not know—I would examine it. And I would break the jawbones of the wrongdoer, and from his teeth I would tear away the prey.”—Job 29:12, 13, 15-17.

Thus, Job displayed similar



benevolence in private dealings with individuals. His household servants received humane treatment. (Job 31:13-15) Impoverished ones, widows, orphans and those perishing from want of life's necessities found in Job a powerful means of support. (Job 31:16-21) Job would not retaliate or wish evil to those who treated him with hostility.—Job 31:29, 30.

However, Job is especially noted for another godly quality. Bible writer James pinpoints it, saying: "We pronounce happy those who have endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job." (Jas. 5: 11) How did Job prove to be a pattern of godly endurance?

CALAMITY STRIKES

Without forewarning, Job became enveloped in calamity. It came in wave after wave. The patriarch was unable to recover from one disaster before another struck. In succession, he lost cattle, she-asses, sheep and camels to bands of Sabeans, lightnings and Chaldeans. (Job 1:13-17) Then came the report that all his sons and daughters had been killed.—Job 1:18, 19.

How would you feel if similar disasters hit you one after another? Job's reaction is truly commendable. Rather than being embittered toward God, he exclaimed: "Naked I came out of my mother's belly, and naked shall I return there. Jehovah himself has given, and Jehovah himself has taken away. Let the name of Jehovah continue to be blessed."—Job 1:21.

But Job was to endure yet further difficulties. Next he was smitten "with a malignant boil from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he proceeded to take for himself a fragment of earthenware with which to scrape himself; and he was sitting in among the ashes." (Job 2:7, 8) This extreme posture of dejection was due to excessive suffering and grief. Pointing to the loathsome nature of his disease, Job exclaimed: "When I have lain

down I have also said, 'When shall I get up?' And when evening actually goes its measure, I have also been glutted with restlessness until morning twilight. My flesh has become clothed with maggots and lumps of dust; my skin itself has formed crusts and dissolves."—Job 7:4, 5.

"SHALL WE ACCEPT MERELY WHAT IS GOOD?"

Persons who formerly admired Job began turning away from him in utter rejection. "Those residing as aliens in my house; and my slave girls themselves reckon me as a stranger; a real foreigner I have become in their eyes." (Job 19:15) Regarding his wife and brothers, Job declared: "My breath itself has become loathsome to my wife, and I have become foul-smelling to the sons of my mother's belly."—Job 19:17.

Even criminals and outcasts reviled Job. Indicating the sharp contrast to his former state of prosperity, Job declared: "I was sitting as head; and I resided as a king among his troops, as one who comforts the mourners. And now they have laughed at me, those younger in days than I am, whose fathers I would have refused to place with the dogs of my flock. And now I have become even the theme of their song [of derision], and I am to them for a byword. They have detested me, they have kept themselves far from me; and from my face they did not hold back their spit."—Job 29:25-30:1, 9, 10.

Job's sufferings became so severe that he clamored for death as a release from suffering. "O that in Sheol [the grave] you would conceal me," he cried out, "that you would keep me secret until your anger turns back, that you would set a time limit for me and remember me!"—Job 14:13.

Even Job's wife went to the point of saying: "Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9) But even in extreme pain and anguish Job

refused to take what might have seemed 'the easy way out.' Instead, he replied to his wife: "As one of the senseless women speaks, you speak also. Shall we accept merely what is good from the true God and not accept also what is bad?"—Job 2:10.

According to the Scriptural record, all these calamities were brought upon Job by Satan the Devil, with God's permission. Satan claimed that Job's reverence for God was motivated only by love of material prosperity. The Devil asserted that if God would 'thrust out his hand' against Job, making things unpleasant for him, he would 'curse God to his very face.' (Job 1:11; 2:4, 5) But in this the Devil was proved a liar.

ENDURING "TROUBLESOME COMFORTERS"

The test of Job's endurance was to become even greater. He was visited by three companions, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite. Supposedly they came to "sympathize with [Job] and comfort him." (Job 2:11) But the visit proved to be anything but comforting. The companions insisted that Job's sickness was a punishment from God for serious sins. (Job 4:7-9; 8:11-19; 20:4-29; 22:7-11) In the opinion of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, a person's circumstances, whether of prosperity or misfortune, were an indication of that one's moral worth. They were convinced that Job's disease was evidence of his being of reprobate conduct and they kept insisting that he repent.

Job found no solace in their false charges. "I have heard many things like these," he exclaimed. "All of you are troublesome comforters! . . . If only your souls existed where my soul is, would I be brilliant in words against you, and would I wag my head against you? I would strengthen you with the words of my mouth."—Job 16:2, 4, 5.

The faithful patriarch outspokenly rejected the viewpoint that righteous persons always live in prosperity and ease while the wicked consistently suffer privations and disease. He asked: "Why is it that the wicked themselves keep living, have grown old, also have become superior in wealth? Their offspring are firmly established with them in their sight, and their descendants before their eyes. Their houses are peace itself, free from dread, and the rod of God is not upon them. His [the wicked one's] own bull actually impregnates, and it does not waste semen; his cows bring forth and suffer no abortion."—Job 21:7-10; see also verses 29-31 and Psalm 73:1-14.

Since the Devil's assertion that Job would curse God at the onset of calamity was not known to the patriarch, he became bewildered at the sudden change of circumstances. Thus, at times Job displayed too much concern with vindicating his own integrity. For instance, in the heat of emotion Job cried out:

"My soul certainly feels a loathing toward my life. I will give vent to my concern about myself. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul! I shall say to God, 'Do not pronounce me wicked. Cause me to know why it is that you are contending with me. Is it good for you that you should do wrong, that you should reject the product of the hard work of your hands, and that upon the counsel of wicked ones you should actually beam?' " (Job 10:1-3) "Know, then, that God himself has misled me, and his hunting net he has closed in upon me. Look! I keep crying out, 'Violence!' but I get no answer; I keep crying for help, but there is no justice. My very path he has blocked with a stone wall, and I cannot pass over; and upon my roadways he puts darkness itself."—Job 19:6-8.

Expressions such as these, however, should not make one think that Job lost his confidence in the righteousness of God's dealings with mankind. On the contrary, he firmly believed that, though for a time

the wicked often thrived while the righteous suffered, ultimately God would rectify that situation. As to "the share of the wicked man from God," Job declared: "If his sons become many, it is for a sword; and his descendants themselves will not have enough food. His own survivors will be buried during a deadly plague, and their own widows will not weep. If he should pile up silver like dust itself, and he should prepare attire just as if clay, he would prepare, but the righteous would be the one to clothe himself, and in the silver the innocent would be the one to have a share."—Job 27:13-17.

Job never assented to the reasoning of his companions that suffering is a sure evidence of God's disapproval. Nor did he agree with an assertion of Eliphaz that God has no faith in his servants, either angelic or human. (Job 4:18, 19) On the contrary, Job insisted that God was aware of him as a man of integrity and would act in his behalf by redeeming him from the dire circumstances into which he had fallen.—Job 16:18, 19; 19:23-27.

ACCEPTS CORRECTION

It was a fact, though, that Job had become overly concerned with establishing his own righteousness. The Scriptural record relates that "the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite of the family of Ram came to be hot. Against Job his anger blazed over his declaring his own soul righteous rather than God." (Job 32:2) Elihu reproved Job, setting forth his own viewpoint that "God himself does not act wickedly, and the Almighty himself does not pervert judgment." (Job 34:12) Following Elihu, Jehovah himself "proceeded to answer Job out of the windstorm." (Job

38:1) Both Elihu and, above all, Jehovah pointed out that the evidence of God's handiwork and control in all creation far exceeds human comprehension.

Overwhelmed by this, Job drew the conclusion that he had spoken without understanding fully God's dealings with him. "Look! I have become of little account," Job declared. "What shall I reply to you? My hand I have put over my mouth. Once have I spoken, and I will not answer; and twice, and I will add nothing." (Job 40:4, 5) After Jehovah had questioned Job further about His own immeasurable wisdom displayed in the animal creation, Job exclaimed: "I have come to know that you are able to do all things, and there is no idea that is unattainable for you. In hearsay I have heard about you, but now my own eye does see you. That is why I make a retraction, and I do repent in dust and ashes."—Job 42:2, 5, 6.

As a reward for Job's endurance, Jehovah restored his health, blessed him with double the amount of possessions that he formerly had and extended his life for an additional 140 years. "And gradually Job died, old and satisfied with days."—Job 42:10, 16, 17.

Job is a fine example for worshipers of God today. He underwent a grueling ordeal for reasons unknown to himself at the time, yet refused to become embittered against God. Though confused about why he had to suffer, he came to recognize that whatever God allows must have some useful purpose.

Do you not agree that the book of Job offers much of value for worshipers of God today? Why not take time to read it through carefully at your earliest convenience?

"Look! . . . You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome Jehovah gave, that Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful."—Jas. 5:11.



God Delivers the Considerate One

HAVE you noticed that people frequently flock around wealthy persons and those who have prominent positions in social structures? On the other hand, they often avoid the impoverished, the sickly and those otherwise lacking power.

An experience of this type is related in Psalm 41. This psalm may be divided into three parts. First comes mention of the blessings that God extends to individuals who treat 'lowly ones' with consideration. (Vss. 1-3) Next are described a severe illness and treachery from friends suffered by the psalmist himself. (Vss. 4-9) Finally, there is a prayer for divine help and an expression of firm confidence that the prayer would receive a favorable hearing. (Vss. 10-12) The final verse (13) is understood to be a conclusion to the first of the five smaller "books" into which the book of Psalms is divided.

The superscription to Psalm 41 states that it is "a melody of David." The circumstances described in this psalm fit well the turbulent years of David's life that followed his sin with Bath-sheba. (2 Sam. chaps. 11-18) However, it relates experiences like those that devoted servants of God have undergone at all periods of history.

The psalm begins: *"Happy is anyone acting with consideration toward the lowly one."*

(Ps. 41:1a) The Hebrew word for "lowly one" literally means "thin," "lean," "slender." It indicates one who is weak due to poverty, disease or depressing circumstances, and who is in need of help. The individual "acting with consideration" discerns

the need of such a lowly one. Rather than disinterestedly passing by, he cares for and attends to the needy one, displaying tender fellow feeling. Such a considerate one is truly "happy," both from enjoying the special state of well-being that comes to one who is generous and from having the favor of Almighty God, whose generosity he imitates.—Acts 20:35; Jas. 1:17.

The psalmist goes on to say of the considerate one: *"In the day of calamity Jehovah will provide escape for him. Jehovah himself will guard him and preserve him alive. He will be pronounced happy in the earth; and you cannot possibly give him over to the soul of his enemies."*—Ps. 41:1b, 2.

"The day of calamity" can refer to any calamitous occasion or even to an extended period of hardship. Verse 3 indicates that the psalmist had in mind particularly illness that had reduced the one giving consideration to the lowly one to a severely weakened state. Such one expressed confidence that Jehovah would guard him during the infirmity and see him through it alive. When others would observe the evidence of God's deliverance from such an apparently hopeless situation, they would 'pronounce him happy in the earth'

by spreading abroad the news of God's merciful dealings with that one.

The psalmist goes on to say: "*Jehovah himself will sustain [the considerate one] upon a divan of illness; all his bed you will certainly change during his sickness. As for me, I said: 'O Jehovah, show me favor. Do heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.'*"—Ps. 41:3, 4.

The psalmist's experience "upon a divan of illness" may have occurred while his son Absalom was scheming to seize the throne. The Bible indicates that affairs of state were in disorder during that period of David's rule. This may have been because the king's sickness prevented him from handling matters properly. (2 Sam. 15:1-6) Absalom's rebellion and other calamitous developments in David's household fulfilled God's judgment against the king for his adultery with Bath-sheba and his maneuvering of matters to get her husband killed. (2 Sam. 11:1-12:12) David knew that God had forgiven him for this shameful conduct. (2 Sam. 12:13) But, in a weakened physical state, he would naturally call to mind that he had sinned so seriously.

However, the psalmist felt that if he had been one pursuing a general course of considerateness toward lowly ones, God would "sustain" him, giving him support and strength while lying helpless on a sickbed. (Compare Psalm 18:24-26.) Though dangerously ill, the Bible writer had confidence that God would 'change his bed,' not by removing the sickness miraculously, but by strengthening the sufferer with comforting thoughts that engender hope of recovery. It would be as if God were transforming his bed from one of sickness into one of recuperation. His acknowledging that he had "sinned against" God put David in a position to receive his favor once again. Hence, he could ask God to 'heal his soul,' or help in his recovery from illness.—Compare Psalm 32:1-5.

The psalmist goes on to tell of treachery that he experienced from associates while in a weakened condition: "*As for my enemies, they say what is bad concerning me: 'When will he die and his name actually perish?' And if one does come to see me, untruth is what his heart will speak; he will gather up for himself something hurtful; he will go out; on the outside he will speak of it.*"—Ps. 41:5, 6.

David's enemies had nothing good to say about him. Maliciously they spoke of him as a wicked man. Impatiently they yearned for him to die and be remembered no more. Even when one would "come to see" him on the sickbed, that one's words of sympathy would be "untruth," prompted by a heart that really desired the ailing one to die. Rather than trying to dispense comfort, the hypocritical sympathizer would be 'gathering up for himself something hurtful,' looking for something in the words, bearing or physical condition of the sufferer that could be used in a hurtful way against him. As soon as the visitor would get "outside" of the infirm king's residence, he would "speak of it," that is, spread abroad whatever news detrimental to the king that he had gathered during the visit.

Indicating how quickly such malicious gossip would spread, the psalmist goes on to say: "*Unitedly against me all those hating me whisper to one another; against me they keep scheming something bad for me: 'A good-for-nothing thing is poured out upon him; now that he has lain down, he will not get up again.'*"—Ps. 41:7, 8.

Conspirators against David would get together and "whisper," or discuss in hushed tones, their common stock of rumors, to the king's detriment. They kept "scheming" something bad for the psalmist by spreading vicious talk to the effect that "a good-for-nothing thing," namely, the disease, had such a hold on the king that it was as if "poured out upon him."

This illness seemed like something from which he could never escape or "get up again." This would add considerable fuel to the fire of rebellion against David's kingship.

But David suffered even worse treachery. He writes: "*Also the man at peace with me, in whom I trusted, who was eating my bread, has magnified his heel against me.*"—Ps. 41:9.

Even a confidential friend, one who 'was eating bread' as a frequent recipient of David's hospitality, turned against him. The traitor "magnified his heel" against the king just as a horse might turn and kick the one feeding him. This is understood to be a reference to David's personal adviser Ahithophel, whose counsel was esteemed as if it were the direct word of Jehovah. (2 Sam. 15:12; 16:23) Ahithophel turned traitor and joined Absalom in a coup against the king. (2 Sam. 15:31; 16:15)* So not one of such men scheming against David proved himself to be the "happy" one "acting with consideration toward the lowly one," as mentioned in verse one of this psalm.

The psalmist continues: "*As for you, O Jehovah, show me favor and cause me to get up, that I may pay them back.*"—Ps. 41:10.

The weakened king now addresses God. Since David's companions had claimed that "he will not get up again" (vs. 8), the psalmist asked that God would 'cause him to get up,' that is, assist him back to health and vigor. The desire to 'pay back'

his enemies was not in the spirit of personal vengeance. Rather, the king, as the nation's highest magistrate, knew that such treacherous conspirators should be punished by due process of law for the good of all.—See Deuteronomy 19:15-21.

Next, David expresses confidence that God would hear his prayer, saying: "*By this I do know that you have found delight in me, because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me. As for me, because of my integrity you have upheld me, and you will set me before your face to time indefinite.*"—Ps. 41:11, 12.

That God had taken delight in the psalmist was evident "by this," namely, by the fact that God gave him internal assurance that his enemies would not "shout in triumph" over him as victorious fighters in war. During David's sickness, God directed his thoughts to the firm conviction that he would be upheld 'because of his integrity.' The psalmist does not thereby deny his own sinfulness and unrighteous acts but lays claim to a general life course of wholehearted devotion to God. Instead of succumbing to an untimely death, the psalmist anticipated continuing for a long time ("to time indefinite") 'before God's face,' that is, in friendly relations with the Creator and as the recipient of his protection.

The final verse of this psalm states: "*Blessed be Jehovah the God of Israel from time indefinite even to time indefinite. Amen and Amen.*" (Ps. 41:13) With this, the first of the five books of the Psalms ends, the 13th verse being a doxology or form of words ascribing praise to Jehovah God and corresponding to the doxology with which each of the other four books ends, namely, Psalms 72, 89, 106 and 150.

* While conversing with his 12 apostles during the Last Supper, Jesus drew on these words of David. In pointing to the fact that one of the 12 would betray him, Jesus said: "I know the ones I have chosen. But it is in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, 'He that used to feed on my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'" (John 13:18) God knew that Jesus would undergo ill treatment from a close associate in a way that resembled what happened to David.



Quest for Truth Rewarded

In Ireland some people have been seeking Jehovah's Witnesses to inquire about Bible truth. For example, in one case a Witness placed a booklet with a woman who read it and passed it on to her husband. Some two weeks later, this man came to the home of the Witness and told his wife: "Your husband gave my wife a booklet. I've read it, and it's the truth. I would like to talk to your husband. I've been looking for him for the past two weeks."

The man explained that he was very interested in the Bible. In fact, from reading a Catholic Bible he said that he knew God's kingdom was coming. "What I would like to know is this," said the man, "is there a place for me in this kingdom?"

Arrangements were made for the Witness couple to visit the inquirer and his wife. During the visit, a long Bible discussion took place. On the following Sunday, the interested couple and their family attended a public talk at the Kingdom Hall, and this led to a regular home Bible study. Within a short time, the truth-seeking family had removed objects of false religious devotion from their home and were making fine spiritual progress.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

July 8: You No Longer Walk Just as the Nations Walk. Page 5. Songs to Be Used: 66, 71.

July 15: Go On Walking as Children of Light. Page 10. Songs to Be Used: 32, 2.