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THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



FAITH HEALING

What Is It? Does It Really Work?

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Faith Healing—How Does It Work?
- 5 Faith Healing—Does It Do Any Harm?
- 8 Missionary Zeal—A Mark of True Christians
- 12 A Day in the Life of a Missionary
- 17 Happy Are Those Whom God Corrects
- 22 Repentance Leading Back to God

OUR COVER: Jesus Christ performed many miraculous cures. But what about our day? What power lies behind "faith healing"? Or is there something better? For the Bible's answers, please read pages 3-7

- 28 Insight on the News
- 29 Oppression Will End
- 31 Questions from Readers
- 32 Thinking of Marriage?

A WATCHTOWER provides a vantage point from which the watchman can observe and warn of approaching danger. This magazine, published by Jehovah's Witnesses since 1879, serves a similar purpose. It keeps watch on world events in these critical times and calls attention to God's warning of his vengeance soon to be executed on those ruining the earth. It comforts all peoples with the hope that God's kingdom by Jesus Christ is about to bring in a global paradise of peace. It encourages all to exercise faith in the ransoming power of Jesus' shed blood, and points to the joyous prospect of everlasting life on earth under the sovereignty of the true God, Jehovah. "The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom" is nonpolitical, and adheres to the Bible as authority.

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FAITH HEALING

—How Does It Work?

“THAT girl with that neck brace. Just take it off. You’ve been healed. Come up here and praise Jesus.” The girl walks from her seat to the altar. She says she has had 12 operations and has been disabled with rheumatoid arthritis since 1973. Standing in front of the priest, she moves her neck back and forth. The priest blesses her, the crowd applauds and the priest says: “She’s been healed!”

Imagine the joy of a person cured of rheumatoid arthritis! Do such things really happen?

Reports such as this one in the *Worcester Sunday Telegram* suggest that they may. No wonder modern-day faith healing is attracting a lot of attention. Sick people

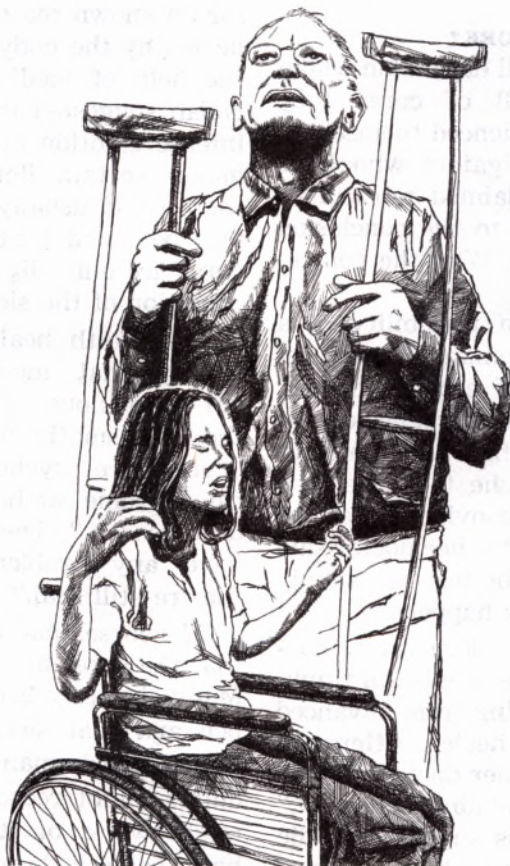
flock to faith healers, hoping for cures. Are their hopes fulfilled? Is faith healing really effective in treating sickness? How does it work?

WHAT IS IT?

Actually, faith healing comes in different forms.

In the West, it is often performed in services held by evangelists or by ministers of principal religions—perhaps those associated with the charismatic movement. These faith healers claim to imitate Jesus Christ and his apostles, and they feel that God himself is the source of their power.

Another group are the “healers” of non-Christian religions—the voodoo priests, witch doctors, medicine men, and so forth. These believe that sickness is caused by evil spirits, and they



perform ceremonies to drive the spirits away.

Then there are the "psychic surgeons" who perform what they call "psychic operations." In the Philippines, for example, they claim to reach with bare hands into the body of sick people and withdraw diseased tissues and blood clots. Reportedly, their "patients" are fully conscious and no scars are visible afterward.

Finally, there are those who say that their "healing" has nothing to do with religion or faith. They speak of it as a natural process, a way of tapping a mysterious healing force that exists around us, or in the body itself. Some of these prefer to be called "psychic healers" rather than "faith healers."

DOES IT WORK?

The answer to this will depend on whom you ask. Believers tell of cures they have witnessed or experienced themselves. Doubters tell of investigators who have followed up cases of claimed miraculous healing and have come to the conclusion that it does not happen. Why the contradiction?

Sometimes there is a possibility of a genuine mistake. One woman sincerely believed she was cured of cervical cancer. She had a clinical test that suggested the presence of cancer; so she went to a faith healer. The next time she took the test, it was negative. She is convinced that the faith healer cured her. But her doctor said that the first result of the test was simply erroneous, as sometimes happens.

At other times, people desperately hoping for a miracle indulge in wishful thinking. A young girl suffering from advanced cancer went to a faith healer. Afterward she was reexamined by her doctor. "When the doctor saw me he couldn't believe it," she said happily. "I was supposed to die in two months. But nothing had happened . . . I'm not supposed to be alive but I

don't know why God has saved me." Sadly, less than a year later she was dead.

One time, a doctor was quoted as saying that the recovery of his patient was a miracle. When a newspaper reporter followed up the story, however, the doctor said that the word "miracle" was a "figure of speech." He felt sure the cure was a "natural event." "I don't think we can prove God intervened personally," he said. "I've seen the same thing happen when faith healing was not involved."

There are factors that make it difficult to judge what really brought about certain "cures." The effect of the mind on the body's health is still only imperfectly understood. The progress of many diseases is unpredictable. Some go into remission for no known reason. Many sicknesses are healed by the body itself, sometimes with the help of medication. Dr. William A. Nolan suggested that it may be that the intense emotion of some healing services makes certain illnesses respond quicker than would usually be the case. It should also be noted that many of the claimed cures are only slight improvements in the condition of the sick person.

Some faith healers recognize the possibility that many of the cures are not miraculous. A priest connected with the charismatic movement said: "Some [cures] are psychosomatic, some hysterical and some can be explained through natural reason." Then he added: "I don't have any problem with that because they're still real."

Of course, not all accept the thought that the cures have a natural explanation. Many sincerely believe that miracles happen and that sick people are healed by some superhuman force. Hence, an inquirer might reason: "Well, faith healing might work, or it might not. But what harm could it do to try it?" This is an important question.

FAITH HEALING

—Does It Do Any Harm?

FAITH healers explain that their power to heal does not work in every case. As can be imagined, this has led to problems. When sick people have relied completely on a faith healer, and the hoped-for miracle has not happened, at times the results have been serious. In some instances, people have died of diseases that could have perhaps been treated successfully in another way.

Possibly with this in mind, many faith healers now recommend that their "patients" keep in touch with their doctor while still coming to them for faith healing. They say they consider the doctor to be a partner, not a rival, in the work of healing. Some doctors give a wary approval to *this* kind of faith healing, in view of possible psychosomatic benefits to their patients.

Dr. William A. Nolan, after a long investigation of faith healing, men-

tioned another problem. Following up several of the claimed healings, he found a lot of bitterness. People had been told, or had led themselves to believe, that they were healed. But afterward the sickness was still there. Some sicknesses were worse than before. Many persons felt deceived.

Suppose, though, a person followed the advice to keep in contact with his personal doctor; and suppose that the individual was prepared for the fact that the hoped-for healing might not happen. Would it not still be worth going to a faith healer—just in case? To answer this, we need to look at the religious aspect.

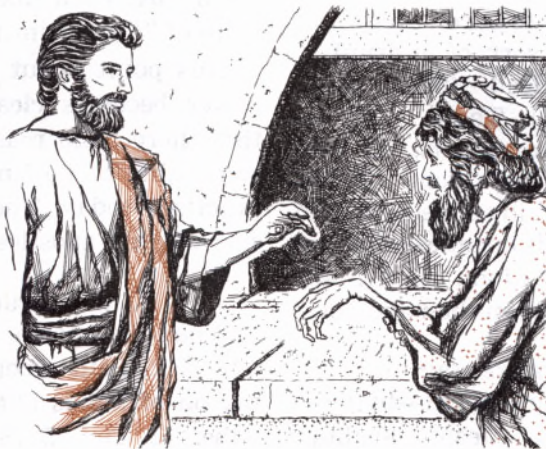
THE RELIGIOUS CONNECTION

Faith healing has strong religious connections. Evangelists and charismatics feel that their activities 'bring people back to Christ.' Do they?

It is noteworthy that during their services people

may "speak in tongues" or be "slain in the spirit," as they say—that is, they fall into a kind of trance in which they cannot move but seem to be aware of what is happening around them. Interestingly, such things are not unlike the fits and trances that involve those other religious healers, the voodoo priests and witch doctors.

There are differences between the healings Jesus performed and today's faith healings



True, some "psychic healers" feel their healing is separate from religion. Yet their procedures and experiences are often similar to those of religious healers. And at least some have a background of spiritism or perhaps Oriental religious philosophy.

Are these details important in this liberal 20th century? Yes, those details are very important, if we use as a basis for evaluation the healings performed by Jesus Christ and his apostles in the early days of Christianity. What do we observe when we consider these healings?

THE HEALINGS JESUS PERFORMED

In connection with the healings performed by Jesus, there was no "psychic surgery" or "being slain in the spirit." Neither did he give emotional sermons before his healings. What he did was often quite informal. He might touch the sick one, or that one might touch him, or sometimes he merely spoke to the ailing. And they were healed.—Matt. 8:14, 15; Luke 8:43-48; 17:12-19.

The healing performed by Jesus was not psychosomatic. A withered hand cannot be healed by that means, yet he cured such afflictions. He was able to cure "every sort of disease and every sort of infirmity." He even raised the dead. (Matt. 4:23; Luke 6:6-11; 8:49-56) There were no merely marginal improvements, no failures. Words like "disappointment" or "deception" were not heard in connection with Jesus' healings. Even his enemies admitted that these happened. (John 11:47, 48) Why the difference between then and now?

WHY THE DIFFERENCE?

Since there is wide agreement—by most faith healers too—that Jesus' healings

were from God, could it be that today's healers are in contact with a different source of power? This is very likely, especially when we consider the connections of some faith healers with spiritism and occultism. And it is very significant that,

Jesus' healings were—

- obviously from God
- completely effective in every case
- often quite informal
- acknowledged as being successful even by his enemies
- intended to prove the truthfulness of the message of salvation

concerning these practices, the Bible warns us: "There should not be found in you anyone... who employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone who

looks for omens or a sorcerer, or one who binds others with a spell or anyone who consults a spirit medium or a professional foreteller of events or anyone who inquires of the dead."—Deut. 18:10, 11.

This is not religious bigotry. Rather, it protects us from contamination by sinister spirit forces—demons—that have always been against mankind's better interests. Modern faith healing, with its occult connections, is inevitably different from the healings performed by Jesus Christ, since he always shunned such influences. Anything performed under the influence of these forces will inevitably lead to many cases of "disappointment" and "deception."

This point about a different source of power becomes clearer when we realize that there is no reason to expect that the same kind of healing Jesus did would be practiced today. The healing work of Jesus and his apostles fulfilled its purpose.

WHY JESUS HEALED

When the apostle Paul's friend Timothy was sick, Paul recommended not the laying on of hands but the medicinal use of wine. (1 Tim. 5:23) Why? Because the

early Christians did not view the gift of healing as a kind of therapy. Neither was it their commission to care for the physical health of mankind back there.

Like Jesus, they were preachers. To Pontius Pilate, Jesus explained his main purpose in life when he said: "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth."—John 18:37.

Why, then, the healing? It, along with the other miracles, was a sign. It proved that the Christian message really was from God, was "the truth." The apostle Paul showed this when he wrote: "How shall we escape if we have neglected a salvation of such greatness in that it began to be spoken through our Lord and was verified for us by those who heard him, while God joined in bearing witness with *signs* as well as *portents* and various *powerful works*." (Heb. 2:3, 4) Hence, the important thing was the message of salvation, not the miracles. The miracles merely proved the truth of the message. Once that and the fact that God was using the Christian congregation had been established, miraculous gifts of the spirit, including healing, were no longer needed.—1 Cor. 12:27-13:8.

But what about claimed miracles performed today in Jesus' name? Jesus himself said that many would say to him: "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?" And Jesus' reply? "Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness." Jesus did not deny that powerful works

would be performed. But these would not be done by his authority, 'in his name.' They would be done by some other power; hence, they were lawless.—Matt. 7:21-23.

On the other hand, Jesus said of the activity of his true followers: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." He also said: "Go . . . make disciples of people . . . teaching them." Yes, the witness today was to be *preaching* and *teaching*, not miracles such as healing.—Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20.

A BETTER ANSWER

Hence, while the possible benefits of going to a faith healer are dubious, the dangers are real. There is the danger of getting involved with the demons, and your being viewed by Jesus as being among the "workers of lawlessness." Additionally, there is a danger of missing out on a much better answer to the problem of human sicknesses than faith healing.

There is a better answer—God's own answer, which is explained to us in the Bible. This inspired book does not promise instant relief from sickness. But it *does* give help on health matters. Following the Bible's counsel on physical and moral cleanness will help us to avoid many diseases, including the modern scourges of venereal disease and cancer as a result of smoking. Listening to its advice will help us to escape many of the stress-related illnesses that can be brought on by envy, jealousy and bitter anger.

—Prov. 14:29, 30; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:19-23.

Furthermore, the apostle Paul shows us how to rely fully on God in times of crisis, such as sickness. This removes much anx-

Jesus' healings were—

- NOT related to spiritism or occultism
 - NOT accompanied by emotional sermons
 - NOT psychosomatic or a form of therapy
 - NOT the most important part of his ministry
 - NOT foretold to be imitated in our day
-

iety and brings the "peace of God that excels all thought." Such peace of mind brings undoubted psychosomatic benefits in times of sickness, without a person's having to rely on faith healing.—Phil. 4:6, 7.

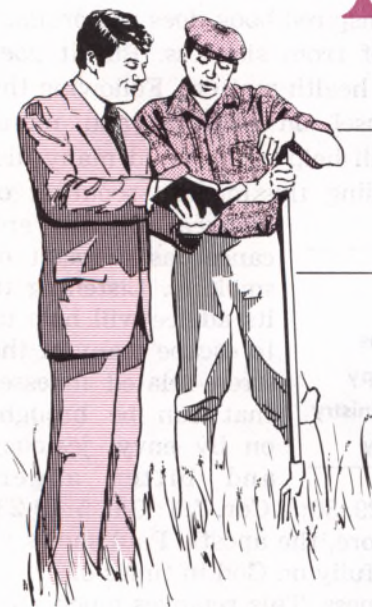
More than this, the Bible thrills us by describing conditions that will exist earth-wide after the Kingdom, the heavenly government that Jesus preached about, has completely removed the present selfish and violent system of things. These descriptions are more exciting when we understand that the time for their realization is very close.

The apostle Peter said that Jesus' miracles were "signs" and "portents." (Acts 2:22) They were "signs" of the truth of Jesus' message, and they were "portents" of what Jehovah God will empower him

to do for mankind when God's kingdom causes His will to be done in all the earth. Imagine the healing and restoration work that will occur then!

Describing the result of this future healing activity, the book of Revelation says: God "will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be any more. The former things have passed away." This is a reliable promise. There will be no disappointed hopes or deception, since God himself says: "Write, because these words are faithful and true."—Rev. 21:4, 5.

Are you concerned about the problem of sickness and death? Most of us are. Then, why not investigate these promises of God? You will find them much more reliable and satisfying than faith healing.



MISSIONARY ZEAL

—A Mark
of True Christians

“THEY had no leisure time even to eat a meal.” These words epitomize the pace and zeal of Jesus Christ as he carried out the missionary assignment from his heavenly Father. (Mark 6:31) He was whole-souled, to the point that he could say: “My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work.” (John 4:34) Up and down the land Jesus went preaching the “good news.” (Luke

8:1) What a display of missionary zeal!

To speed up this work, Jesus prayerfully selected 12 disciples and sent them forth in the year 31 C.E. He instructed them: "Do not go off into the road of the nations, . . . but, instead, go continually to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" (Matt. 10:5-7) At that time not only were complete instructions given about how to do the work but also these words specifically limited their preaching territory. In these territories they and their Master toiled zealously down to the year 33 C.E.

Having these territory restrictions in mind, some of Jesus' disciples may have been puzzled about what he said just prior to his death. Jesus gave them a "sign" marking the end of "the system of things" and foretold that the "good news" would then be preached in all the inhabited earth for a "witness to *all* the nations" before the end came. Later, the resurrected Jesus stressed to his disciples that they were to "make disciples of people of *all* the nations." Finally, just prior to his ascension, he told his disciples: "You will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth." —Matt. 24:3, 14; 28:19; Acts 1:8.

With Pentecost 33 C.E. came the promised outpouring of the holy spirit, and Peter was empowered to use the first 'key of the kingdom.' As a result, about 3,000 Jews and proselytes became Christians. (Matt. 16:18, 19; Acts 2:1-4, 14-41) In the succeeding three and a half years, Peter used two more "keys," so that the missionary work was truly reaching people of *all* nations. (Acts 8:14-17; 10:23-48) How true it was that holy spirit had imparted "power" so that the same missionary spirit Jesus had displayed was again

very evident! The account of the missionary work of these early Christians, as found in the Bible book of Acts, provides clear evidence of tremendous zeal. It must have pleased the apostle Paul to be able to say, about 61 C.E., that the "good news" had been "preached in all creation that is under heaven"!—Col. 1:23.

MISSIONARY ZEAL REVIVED IN MODERN TIMES

However, with the foretold apostasy and its attendant loss of God's spirit, that missionary zeal all but disappeared for over 1,700 years. In place of it, Christendom resorted to the sword of war, colonialism and other unscriptural methods to make her "converts." Was the missionary zeal of Christ and his true disciples gone forever? Never could that be, for Jesus himself had foretold that the Kingdom good news would be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all nations during his presence, which began in 1914.

In the 1870's it became evident that God's holy spirit was with Charles T. Russell and sincere Bible students associated with him. Accordingly, true missionary zeal once again became evident. Soon *ecclesias* (congregations) of Bible Students sprang up throughout the North American continent. The first branch office of the Watch Tower Society outside the United States was established at London, England, in 1900. Russell made preaching journeys to Europe, and on the second of these, in 1903, a branch office of the Society was set up in Germany. The following year another branch was established, this time in Australia, where the missionary work had begun during the previous year. In 1911 and 1912, Russell and others made a world tour, preaching in such places as Singapore, the Philippines, China and Japan. Truly, the missionary zeal exemplified by Jesus was again

very apparent. However, as in the case of Jesus, their zeal for witnessing stirred up the overt opposition of Satan. So the missionary work was not without its problems and trials.

In 1915 Brother Russell expressed the opinion that there was yet much missionary work to be done. But in 1916 he completed his earthly course. Would this small group of persecuted Christians continue to display missionary zeal? That they did. J. F. Rutherford, the Society's second president, vigorously encouraged all these Christians (today known as Jehovah's Witnesses) to share zealously in the missionary activity. Those who were able to move to foreign lands were invited to do so, and thus small groups went into Africa, India, Burma, Thailand, China and many islands of the seas. By the time World War II broke out, at least a limited amount of missionary work was being done in more than 60 lands. Some who then went to these faraway places still serve there, after 40 or 50 years!

NEW PROVISION PROMOTES FOREIGN MISSIONARY WORK

World War II greatly restricted the missionary work being done in many of these lands. Would that war lead right into Armageddon? (Rev. 16:14, 16, *Authorized Version*) Was the missionary work begun by Jesus coming to its completion? These questions were resolved by the clearer understanding of Revelation 17:8, presented in the public talk "Peace—Can It Last?" at the 1942 convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. From this talk the Witnesses learned that there would be a postwar period of peace. With this in mind, N. H. Knorr, the third president of the Watch Tower Society, along with the rest of the board of directors of the Watch Tower Society, laid plans to take advantage of the period of peace they now expected.

A school especially designed to train Christians for foreign missionary service was planned, in addition to greater congregational training for local missionary work. On February 1, 1943, the first class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead began its course of study. What faith this represented! There were practically no countries to which these missionaries could yet be sent. Nevertheless, with confidence that there was to be a period of peace that could be utilized, they were being trained.

Eventually, most of the missionaries from the first classes of Gilead School were able to enter Central and South American countries and islands of the Caribbean, there to use their training to help others. In those days, there were many problems to overcome. Finding a place to live, the language, customs, food, clergy opposition and superstitious beliefs all added to the difficulties with which these new missionaries had to cope. In most of these lands, only one or two persons were interested or active in the Christian witnessing work when the missionaries arrived. In spite of all obstacles, however, many of those first missionaries still serve in these lands. How joyful they are that now there are over 380,000 Witnesses serving along with them in Central and South America and the Caribbean!

How did Gilead School prepare these missionaries? One missionary, who has served for 24 years in the Orient, comments: "Since our main instrument in the missionary field would be the Bible, the book-by-book and often verse-by-verse study of the Bible, along with related courses in history, geography and the way life was in Bible times, was to my mind the most important part of my training. Additionally, we had practice sessions to sharpen our ability to converse with and teach people. We were helped to see what adjustments might be needed to enjoy liv-

ing in a new environment. Another thing that helped me greatly was five months of living at Gilead with a large 'family' from all sorts of backgrounds. This helped me to adjust to living with a missionary 'family' that includes members from different environments." As the years have gone by, the Gilead curriculum has been updated to make it even more practical and effective in helping new missionaries to prepare for their foreign assignments.

Who, then, may qualify to receive such specialized training? Generally speaking, the requirements are that those making application be between 21 and 40 years of age, without dependents or other obligations that would prevent them from serving anywhere in the world. They can be single, or married at least two years, and must be in good health. They must have been baptized at least three years ago, currently having served at least two years without interruption as full-time Kingdom proclaimers. Applicants must also have the true missionary spirit—not being motivated by a spirit of adventure but, rather, by the desire to do the work assigned. This requires that they be motivated by deep love for Jehovah God and their fellow humans in their prospective assignment. With this type of love motivating them, they can be truly content in their assignment, even if things may not be as convenient and comfortable as they have been accustomed to formerly.—Luke 10:27.

DO YOU HAVE GENUINE MISSIONARY ZEAL?

Obviously, only a comparatively small number of Jehovah's Witnesses can serve as foreign missionaries. However, all dedicated servants of Jehovah God should have that same missionary zeal. It must be admitted, though, that it does take diligence to maintain that zeal, for there are many distractions.

Sometimes young Witnesses in high

school express the desire to make their goal full-time missionary work, either at home or abroad. But by the time they could qualify for such special service, that original zeal has disappeared. What has happened? Have they allowed the spirit of the world to sidetrack them? The world's spirit is one of self-indulgence, a pursuit of pleasure and a disdain for hard work and responsibility. This spirit has affected some to the point that they do not find satisfaction merely in a job well done. For many in the world, a career must be "fun," "exciting," or "glamorous." Otherwise, it holds no appeal for them. Therefore, young Christian men and women especially need to ask themselves: Has a measure of this love for the soft life rubbed off on me? Has the spirit of the world—or anything else—diluted my zeal for the missionary work?

Whatever your age, and even though you may not be one who can share full time in the missionary work either at home or abroad, it would be beneficial to examine yourself to determine whether you have true missionary zeal or not. If you feel that somehow your missionary zeal is deficient, what can you do about it?

Perhaps an examination of Acts chapter four will help you to pinpoint areas in need of additional attention so that you may more fully imitate the missionary zeal of first-century Christians. Note that, according to verse 13, the opposers recognized that the apostles "used to be with Jesus." Perhaps the various pursuits of this life have restricted your 'being with Jesus' through Bible study to the extent that you have lost some of your original zeal.

Verse 23 shows that, even after facing a trial, as soon as possible the apostles again met with their fellow believers for spiritual encouragement and to build up one another's zeal. By contrast, when a

person allows relaxation and other activities that are not wrong in themselves to prevent him from meeting regularly with fellow Christians, he will gradually lose true missionary zeal. The fine prayer recorded in verses 24 to 30 gives additional guidance to those who seek increased zeal. Note how Jesus' disciples prayed for boldness in speaking. Do you seek the power of God's spirit to help you to increase your zeal as earnestly as did those believers in that prayer? If so, then you may expect results similar to those recorded in verse 31. Jehovah answered their prayer, they were filled with the holy spirit and they "were speaking the word of God with boldness."

Jesus said the "good news" *would* be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness. In doing that privileged work, some Christians manifest missionary zeal in their home territory, others in foreign fields. Enthusiastically, they 'speak God's word with boldness.'

By Jehovah's undeserved kindness, the Kingdom message is now being heard in more than 200 lands, to compare with 54 when Gilead School was established. What is the life of a missionary like? How are their material needs met? Where do they live? How do they handle language problems? If you are considering foreign missionary service, the following account will be especially reassuring.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MISSIONARY

“WAS that the 6:30 bell?”

“Perhaps it was the 6:55 bell and we have only five minutes to get to the breakfast table. No, relax, it’s only 6:30. Plenty of time yet.”

This is a typical early morning exchange between my roommate and me. We still find 6:30 an early hour to rise, even though we have been doing it for years. As Jehovah’s Witnesses living in a missionary home here in Taipei, Taiwan, we gather with

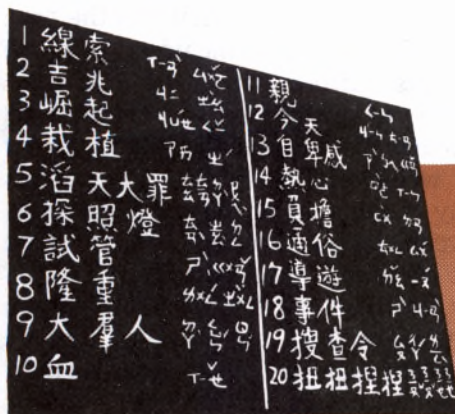
fellow missionaries for a prebreakfast spiritual discussion at seven o’clock.

Different members of our “family” take turns caring for cooking, marketing, housecleaning and other duties. That includes ringing those bells that help us to get ready for meals and other activities.

OUR PURPOSE AS MISSIONARIES

On hearing the word “missionary,” you may envision a nurse dressed in white, or a teacher instructing a class of children in some remote village. But that is not the commission Jesus gave his followers. He instructed them to make disciples. (Matt. 28:19, 20) Thus, as with Jehovah’s Witnesses everywhere, our principal work is that of teaching people Bible truths in this, our foreign missionary assignment.

Early-morning language study is applied later in Kingdom service



As missionaries, we spend a minimum of 140 hours each month in the preaching and teaching activity. To find those who would like to learn

more of God's Word, we spend about half that time making house-to-house calls, having Bible discussions with the people at their doors. We then spend the remaining time revisiting those who previously showed some interest in the Kingdom message, conducting free home Bible studies with individuals and families desiring to learn more. By following the systematic method of study used by Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the world, we find it possible to help Buddhists and others, who formerly may have known nothing about the Bible, to learn its basic teachings. This may take from six months to a year, but upon acquiring this understanding, persons are in a better position to decide whether they would like to become Christian witnesses of Jehovah or not.

OUR DAILY ROUTINE

Our lives are centered around spiritual matters. That accounts for our early-morning Scriptural discussion in Mandarin

Chinese, the official language of Taiwan. These discussions get our day off to an uplifting and faith-strengthening start. Sometimes they also add a touch of humor, as when one newer missionary was flustered by the laughter of others when she was commenting on a particular Bible text. She could not see anything funny about her statement that Jesus is our High Priest. At least, that is what she thought she had said. Unfortunately, a slight error had turned her comment into a remark that Jesus is our great chicken!

After breakfast, 15 minutes are spent practicing the use of some new Chinese words or expressions. We try to master 20 each week. These are written on a blackboard and, each morning, a Chinese sister living in our home tries valiantly to correct our speech. We appreciate her help in improving our sentence structure and pronunciation (which includes tones in Chinese), for her efforts help us to become more effective in teaching God's Word.

We are then dismissed with prayer and prepare for our day's activity. Most of us spend two to three hours in the morning making house-to-house calls on people in our assigned territory. Yes, each pair of missionaries has a section of the city in which to concentrate its efforts. We try to locate interested people and gradually build up a group of Jehovah's praisers that may eventually become the nucleus of a new congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The witness work is carried on here much as it is anywhere else in the world. However, there are some differences. One difference is how we get to the territory. I well recall that one of my first impressions of the Orient was that it teems with people, people and more people. My partner and I ride the buses to and from the territory. They are plentiful but are invariably crowded. During rush hours, this has to be seen to be believed! We are now quite adept at scrambling quickly on or off the bus. However, until we became accustomed to this it was not uncommon for us to find that our bookbags were still in the bus behind closed doors with us on the road tenaciously clinging to the handles! Quite a few missionaries prefer to use small motorbikes or scooters, as these provide more convenient and economical means of transport.

As with much of the world these days, people here are becoming more suspicious of others. But the traditional friendliness of the Chinese is often displayed as we call at their doors. We still find it common to be invited inside and given a seat, as well as tea or water that is so hot we have to prolong our discussion until it is cool enough to drink! In Taiwan it is not unusual for people with even minimal interest in the Bible to take our literature. Hence, we are able to leave many publications in the homes, and this literature may be read by persons even more interested than those who originally listened to us.

When we make return visits on the people, we find that many, including those of the Buddhist faith or some who follow the philosophy of Confucius, are willing to have further discussions and even agree to regular weekly Bible studies. Thus I can normally conduct 10 or more Bible studies each week, being limited only by the amount of time I have available for this activity. Many of these persons attend our meetings right from the start, so that 20 to 50 percent more people are present than there are Witnesses in the area.

AMPLE PROVISION

As missionaries, we are cared for very well. The Watch Tower Society realizes that missionaries living in a foreign land are not able to care for themselves as easily as they might in their home countries. In fact, in many lands, governments stipulate that missionaries cannot undertake secular work. Therefore, provisions are made for our material needs. We do not receive salaries, but the Society either rents or buys a home suitable for the group of missionaries that will be working in a city. In most cases in Taiwan, this means between four and eight persons will occupy a missionary home. However, as my partner and I live at the missionary home that also houses the Society's branch office, we have up to 18 persons living here.

A fund is provided to enable the missionaries to purchase foodstuffs and pay for the rent, utilities, and so forth. Additionally, we receive a small personal allowance that enables us to buy things needed in our daily lives. In Taiwan this amounts to a little less than the equivalent of \$10 (U.S.) per month. We also get an allowance to help cover our transportation costs, and the Society provides for a modest personal expense account to help us to buy needed clothing, pay our way to assemblies and the like. So we are very

grateful that we do not have to worry about material things but can devote our time and full attention to fulfilling our goal as missionaries.

Knowing that all these provisions are made possible through the loving donations of our fellow believers who are unable to share directly in foreign missionary service, we endeavor to show our appreciation in two basic ways. First, we try to make our missionary service as effective as possible. Second, we view the money as belonging to the Lord and thus try to use it wisely. Cook day affords an opportunity to do just that.

COOK DAY

We have individual assignments to prepare meals on a certain day—cook day, as we call it.

Once breakfast is over and the dishes are washed, we go to the market. During the morning, the two markets close to our home have a bewildering supply of fresh vegetables, meat, fish and fruit. Chinese vendors love to bargain, and this can be enjoyable, while also making it possible to save money. We have become experts at knowing what we should pay and in buying things in season, so that we can use wisely that portion of the home funds entrusted to our care on our individual cook day.

In Coming Issues

- **Can You Talk with the Dead?**
- **Godly Conduct Toward Others**
- **Unified Action for Worldwide Building**

We have found many vegetables and fruits that we had never before seen. Understandably, we were a little wary of purchasing these because of not knowing how to prepare them. But, never fear. Upon inquiry the vendor is pleased to tell us how he or she prepares the item. Thus we have come to enjoy such new vegetables as sweet potato leaves and a small green three-cornered stem with a little bud on top and with a smell somewhat like that of mild garlic. By learning to use local foods, we eat well while not wasting any of the Lord's provisions.

With live chickens, live fish, freshly slaughtered pork and beef and all the fresh vegetables on open tables, the atmosphere and aroma of the market differ from what we had been used to in other lands. For example, it took much self-control on my part to stifle the scream that rose in my throat the first time I saw a vendor take a knife and slit the throat of a chicken painstakingly selected by a customer!

In addition to the market in general, it is not uncommon to see the streets and alleys almost blocked by displays of clothing, material and knickknacks for sale. If we do not allow our curiosity to get the better of us, we can get our shopping done quickly and get back home to start preparing the noon meal, which in our home is the main one of the day. We have a cafeteria-style evening meal, as this allows more flexibility in the schedule of all who are conducting Bible studies in the afternoons and evenings. This also affords time on our cook days to do housework and personal laundry and otherwise to prepare for our activity during the next seven days.

TRUE FAMILY ATMOSPHERE

Even though our family is larger than most of the missionary families in Taiwan, we have quite a family atmosphere. For

example, we have our own family study on Monday nights. We first spend an hour studying the Bible with the help of *The Watchtower*. Then we study a section of one of the Society's latest bound books, so that even though we do not have some of these publications in Chinese, we are still able to keep up with all the latest information. At our breakfast table we read experiences and reports from the *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* and material from *Our Kingdom Service* (Chinese) that we will be considering at a congregational meeting that week. Occasionally, we have informal get-togethers or go on a picnic as a group. All of this makes us more like a family.

IS IT WORTH IT?

Some readers may feel that the struggle of learning a new language would make missionary life more of a burden than it is worth. But I do not feel that way, even though learning Chinese was not easy for me. For example, knowing that there is a great need to proclaim the "good news" in our territory is always a stimulus to me. Why, even though the number of Witnesses in Taipei has trebled in the time I have been here, we are not able to cover our territory even once a year! Time and again, those hungering for righteousness recognize the ring of truth, even when spoken by a missionary with limited language ability. Consider this experience, enjoyed by one of my fellow missionaries a few years ago.

She had been in Taiwan only three months and was still learning Chinese when she met a young university student from a Buddhist family. This girl's life had been filled with many sad experiences, including the death of two family members. She had been to some churches of Christendom in an effort to find comfort, but without success, and doubted that this new missionary could help her.

From the beginning, the young woman was impressed by how the missionary, in spite of her limited language ability, was able to use the Bible to answer her questions. She soon began attending meetings and made rapid progress. After nine months of Bible study, she was happy to become a dedicated, baptized witness of Jehovah. For several years this woman served every month as an auxiliary pioneer, devoting 60 hours per month to the Kingdom-preaching work, even though employed as a full-time schoolteacher. She has now quit that job and become a member of the Taipei Bethel family. Many similar experiences could be related to show that it truly is worth while being a missionary in a foreign field.

Every honest-hearted person enjoys sharing good things with others, and that is what prompts Jehovah's Witnesses to be so zealous in their preaching and teaching work, no matter where they find themselves. But I deeply treasure the privilege of serving in a land where millions have not yet seen the Bible. What joy there is in helping some to come to a knowledge of the wonderful hope set out in God's Word! While we missionaries do not receive a salary, we have superior rewards. These include a close relationship with many Orientals who have, due to the diligent work of missionaries from other lands, turned away from vain worship of idols to the living God Jehovah. Personally we have experienced the great blessings that result from complete reliance on Jehovah and his visible organization when making oneself available for foreign missionary service.

So, really, even though my roommate and I are not by preference early risers, we are glad that someone rings that bell at 6:30 every morning. That gives us an early start to a day that we know will be filled with interesting and worthwhile missionary activity.

HAPPY ARE THOSE WHOM GOD CORRECTS

"Happy is the able-bodied man whom you correct, O Jah, and whom you teach out of your own law."—Ps. 94:12.

WHEN was the last time you, in word or in deed, fell short of God's righteous ways and standards? Likely you do not have to think back very far, perhaps just a few hours or days, for all of us sin, failing to reflect properly God's glory.—1 Ki. 8:46; 1 John 1:8-10.

² We can be happy that in his love Jehovah desires and is able to correct us. "The One correcting the nations, can he not reprove, even the One teaching men knowledge? Happy is the able-bodied man whom you correct, O Jah." If we 'let ourselves be corrected' by Jehovah, we will be happy, for we will be in harmony with him.—Ps. 94:10, 12.

³ Christians can trust the Bible's assurance, "Whom Jehovah loves he disciplines." (Heb. 12:6) We are pleased, therefore, to present a Bible-based consideration of matters related to reproof, repentance and disfellowshipping. Two articles in this series are in this issue of *The Watchtower*, and the remaining three will be published in the following issue. These five articles should help all to obtain a clear understanding of the Scriptural principles involved, and "to be readjusted, to be comforted, to think in agreement, to live peaceably."—2 Cor. 13:11.

⁴ God often corrects us in such a gentle and mild way that we may not even recognize it as correction. Perhaps we read something in his Word that leads us away from an undesirable course or corrects our thinking. At other times correction from God may be more pointed and even

somewhat painful. Yet he knows the degree and the method of correction that are best for us. (Jer. 30:11) How fine it is when we willingly accept his correction, for God provides discipline out of love as a father does for a dear son! It is also much wiser for us to accept any limited or restrained correction that Jehovah God gives us than for us to be punished to the point of extermination.—Jer. 10:24; Heb. 12:5.

⁵ Sometimes God offers correction through humans. He sent prophets and judges to the nation of Israel. But he can provide wise correction even on an individual basis. One of Job's false "comforters" had to acknowledge that Job had "corrected many." (Job 4:3; 16:2) What a blessing it must have been to receive wise correction from Job, a man outstanding in godly devotion! We can ask ourselves, though, 'Am I open to helpful correction of this sort, correction from a human but which is based on God's perfect wisdom?'

CORRECTING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE

⁶ Jesus laid the basis for our expecting to receive, and to give, loving correction. In words that cover cases of serious personal offense, but that in principle can be applied in many situations, Jesus said: "If your brother does wrong, correct him; if he repents, forgive him." (Luke 17:3, *The New American Bible*) Also, the apostle Paul wrote that a "servant of the Lord" should be "patiently and gently correcting" others.—2 Tim. 2:24, 25, *NAB*.

1, 2. How should we feel about godly correction?

3. What subjects rightly come under consideration?

4, 5. How does Jehovah God provide correction for us?

6. On what basis might we receive correction from a brother?



If you saw a Christian associate heading into danger, would you offer kindly counsel?

⁷ The shepherds, or appointed overseers, in the congregation are interested in each Christian individually, and also in protecting the flock as a whole. (Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3) Hence, when someone falls into gross sin, the matter should come to their attention. The sinner himself ought to “call the older men of the congregation to him.” Or, any other Christian who learns of the grave sin should, out of concern for the wrongdoer and for the cleanliness of the congregation, alert the elders. (Lev. 5:1) These elders, then, may be able to aid the person who has fallen into error, turning him back and thus ‘saving his soul from death.’—Jas. 5:14, 16, 19, 20.

⁸ There are failings or errors of a less grave nature concerning which mature Christians might be in a position to offer Bible-based correction and help. Of course, we should guard against being overcritical of another’s minor faults, for God urges us to be long-suffering and to put up with one another. (Col. 3:12, 13) We should have ‘lowliness of mind, considering that the others are superior to us, keeping an eye, not in personal interest upon just our own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others.’ (Phil. 2:3, 4)

7. What should occur in the case of gross sin?

8. How should we view our brothers’ minor errors?

God assures us that “it is beauty on [our] part to pass over transgression.”—Prov. 19:11.

⁹ Still, there may be some occasion when we see that a Christian associate is taking a false step or is heading into danger because of a bad pattern. For instance, in our close association with a brother we may note that he is inclined to heavy drinking. He does not appear to be a drunkard, but clearly is ‘given to a lot of wine.’ (1 Tim. 3:8) So some helpful correction could be offered. But by whom?

¹⁰ Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians: “Even though a man takes some false step before he is aware of it, you who have spiritual qualifications try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness.” (Gal. 6:1) A Christian with spiritual qualifications might kindly and tactfully provide correction in various ways. For example, he could say something in general conversation so that it would not even give the appearance of deliberate counsel. (Prov. 15:23) Or, he might privately offer words of admonition. Yet—and this is vital—his effort should not be motivated by a critical spirit, but should spring from loving concern.—1 Cor. 13:4, 5.

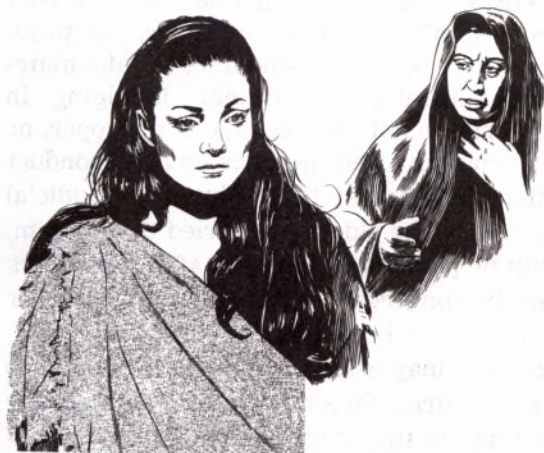
¹¹ There are other situations, too, in which Christian brothers and sisters can help. Paul wrote this about a problem in Philippi:

“Euodia I exhort and Syntyche I exhort to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, I request you too, genuine yokefellow, keep assisting these women who have striven side by side with me in the good news.” (Phil. 4:2, 3)

There apparently was a problem or significant difference between these two

9, 10. What could be done if a brother seemed to be taking a false step?

11. How could brothers and sisters in Philippi have helped with a problem some had there?



"Keep assisting" those who need corrective encouragement, counseled Paul

anointed Christian women. Surely the apostle was not urging the Philippians to take sides over the difference. That would polarize the congregation, producing faction, jealousy and strife. (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:2-9) That is a serious danger that *must* be avoided. Yet, without busybodying as to the women's grievances or views, the brothers and sisters, like the "genuine yokefellow" in Philippi, could offer corrective encouragement toward Christian unity, being forgiving and working together in love. (Matt. 5:23-25; Eph. 4:1-6, 31, 32; Titus 2:3-5) If you are given such well-motivated correction by a fellow worshiper, you should look upon it as an expression of kindness.—Ps. 141:5.

ACTING WITH FIRMNESS

¹² On occasion there may be a Christian who pursues a course that is out of harmony with God's directions and does not change despite help even from the elders. This is not a case of someone who merely has a personality difference with another. Nor is it just that an individual has yet to grow up to Christian maturity and so reflects in various ways his need for con-

tinued growth. Paul acknowledged that there would be immature Christians who should be helped with patience, love and a desire to see them progress. (Rom. 14:1; 15:1; 1 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 3:15, 16) But, aside from such, there may be someone who chooses to pursue a course that, while it does not yet amount to grave sin, is clearly in conflict with God's counsel.

¹³ It should not be shocking that there occasionally might be some Christians of this sort. The Bible says: "Now in a large house there are vessels not only of gold and silver but also of wood and earthenware, and some for an honorable purpose but others for a purpose lacking honor." (2 Tim. 2:20, 21) The congregation was compared to a house in which there might be *some* individuals who were like dishonorable vessels, whose ways or influence were unwholesome. Timothy and other faithful Christians were warned to 'keep clear' of such dishonorable vessels.—Compare Romans 16:17.

¹⁴ In line with such an understanding and application of Paul's words, we note that there was a case of this sort in ancient Thessalonica. The congregation as a whole was counseled that some, who evidently were healthy and able, would not work. These few wanted to live off others, contrary to God's counsel about laziness. So Paul wrote: "Now we are giving you orders, brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to withdraw from every brother walking disorderly and not according to the tradition you received from us."—2 Thess. 3:6; Prov. 20:4; 24:30; Eccl. 5:12, 18; 10:18.

¹⁵ Yes, there may be someone who has "not let himself be corrected by mere words," including Scriptural counsel from the elders to the congregation, and he persists in going contrary to God's prin-

^{12, 13.} What sort of more serious error might exist in a congregation?

^{14, 15.} What problem arose in the congregation at Thessalonica, and how might Christians react to such a problem?

ciples. Christians, then, may feel obliged to "withdraw" from him, as Paul advised. —Prov. 10:17; 29:19.

"KEEP THIS ONE MARKED"

¹⁶ Continuing in the counsel to the Thessalonians about the lazy, disorderly ones, Paul wrote: "If anyone is not obedient to our word through this letter, 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) Hence, Christians can 'mark' someone who persists in disregarding God's principles.

¹⁷ We need, however, to exercise great care in applying this divine counsel. In our imperfection, we might tend to make personal judgments based on individual likes or dislikes, such as about styles of dress or grooming. But if a sister's clothing, for example, is not immodest, indecent, or shocking to the brothers in general, we should recognize that she simply has a different taste or preference. (Gen. 37:3, 4; John 19:23; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10) We have not been made judges of our brothers and sisters on inconsequential matters of opinion, taste or variations of conscience. (Rom. 14:4, 10-12) Or, even if someone is incorrect on what is really a minor point, we must recall Jesus' advice:

"Stop judging that you may not be judged; for with what judgment you are judging, you will be judged; . . . Why, then, do you look at the straw in your brother's eye, but do not consider the rafter in your own eye?"—Matt. 7:1-3.

¹⁸ However, what if there is someone who is significantly deviating from God's principles, perhaps being grossly lazy or critical, a 'profitless talker' who is a

constant 'meddler with what does not concern him'? (2 Thess. 3:11) Or, the problem may be one of scheming to take material advantage of others, indulging in entertainment that clearly is improper, or getting involved in questionable conduct that does not at this point merit judicial action.* The elders have tried to help him, but he persists and may be affecting others in the congregation or presenting a danger to others. The elders can discuss the matter and may assign one of their number to give a firm, direct Scriptural talk on the matter to the congregation. Without mentioning the "disorderly" one by name, the elders may thus be able 'to shut the mouth of' such an unruly one.—Titus 1:10-13.

¹⁹ Should such a situation exist in a congregation, individual Christians might feel obliged to 'mark' the person.† Paul explains what this, in part, involves, saying: "Stop associating with him, that he may become ashamed." (2 Thess. 3:14) That would mean your curtailing social involvement with the "marked" person. You should not announce or publicize your private decision, nor try to influence others. But you personally would avoid the company of the "marked" person, in keeping with the healthful counsel given by the congregation's elders. You would not, though, reject him altogether, for he is still your brother, a fellow Christian for whom Christ died. Rather than allowing any seeds of "hate" to develop, you should "reprove" him. How? Well, in addition to being a good example yourself, your kindly but firmly obeying the direction "Stop as-

* An example involving dating when an individual is not Scripturally free to remarry was discussed in "Questions from Readers" in *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1980.

† To 'mark' a person means to take special note of him. Contrast the favorable noting mentioned in Psalm 37:37; Philippians 3:17 and Hebrews 13:7.

19. How might others in the congregation react if the problem persists?

16. Paul offered what counsel to the Thessalonians?
17. (a) Why is care needed in applying that counsel?
(b) What did Jesus say in this regard?
18. What should be done when someone is clearly violating God's counsel?

sociating with him" is one form of correction. But you can do more to help.—Lev. 19:17; Titus 2:7, 8.

²⁰ You will still be around the "marked" Christian at congregational meetings and in the field service. Thus, you may have occasion to carry out your other obligation involved in 'marking' him: "Do not be considering him as an enemy, but *continue admonishing him as a brother.*" (2 Thess. 3:14, 15) If you did not fulfill your responsibility as to this aspect of God's counsel, but treated the "marked" person as an enemy, your course might be as unloving as his.

²¹ It is to be hoped that the "marked" individual will become ashamed. He may realize that it is by Scriptural direction that you are avoiding his social company. This discipline may help him to "straighten up the hands that hang down and the enfeebled knees, . . . that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather that it may be healed." In view of the vast numbers of loyal brothers associating with God's congregation today, likely it will be seldom that Christians are obliged to 'mark' a disorderly brother. But when this does occur, perhaps correction, combined with continued admon-

ishing, will 'yield peaceable fruit, namely, righteousness.'—Heb. 12:11-13.

MEETING WITH A COMMITTEE OF ELDERS

²² As we have noted (in paragraph 7), an individual who 'has committed serious sins' needs the attention of "the older men of the congregation." (Jas. 5:14, 15) These men are in a good position to offer godly correction to a person who has been overreached and has fallen into grievous sin. They can provide the spiritual help that he needs.—Prov. 6:23.

²³ Usually a committee of three elders is designated to handle a case of grave wrongdoing. They do not act as mere judges or 'spiritual policemen.' They are shepherds of the flock, and prove to be such when dealing with an individual wrongdoer. A shepherd of literal sheep does not display a spirit of vengeance, harshness or faultfinding. Nor should the elders. They are there to help, not to condemn. (Jude 23) Their goal is to turn the sinner back from his way, if that is possible.—Jas. 5:19, 20.

²⁴ Yet, in dealing with grievous sin, elders must 'hold firmly to the faithful word,' being "able both to exhort by the teaching that is healthful and to reprove those who contradict." (Titus 1:9) So they should not hold back from straightforwardly

20. If you have "marked" someone who is disorderly, what responsibility do you have?

21. What is the objective of this Biblical arrangement? (Num. 35:12; Deut. 19:11, 12)

22, 23. How are cases of gross sin to be handled?

24. What do the elders attempt to do for the sinner?

HOW ARE WE INVOLVED IN GODLY CORRECTION?

Sometimes God corrects us through the Bible or Bible study aids.

Or a Christian, especially an elder, might lovingly call a fault to our attention.

If some refuse to abandon a disorderly course, the elders might have to alert and warn the congregation about the course or trait.

We ought then to feel that we **individually** should 'mark' (2 Thess. 3:14, 15) any who are thus disorderly.

If we do so, we would avoid social association with such ones, BUT we also should fulfill our obligation to help and admonish such disorderly ones, for they are still our Christian brothers.

showing the erring one from the Scriptures the wrongness of his course and why he needs to correct his way. They want him to repent and come to be at peace with God again.—1 Pet. 3:10-12.

²⁵ How, though, should the elders reprove
25. What matters yet need to be studied?

REPENTANCE LEADING BACK TO GOD

"The kindly quality of God is trying to lead you to repentance."—Rom. 2:4.

EACH of us can be encouraged by the psalmist David's words:

"Jehovah is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness.

He has not done to us even according to our sins;

Nor according to our errors has he brought upon us what we deserve.

As a father shows mercy to his sons,
Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him.

For he himself well knows the formation of us,
Remembering that we are dust."—Ps. 103: 8, 10, 13, 14.

² Even though God recognizes that we are all sinners, he wants to help us and is willing to forgive. (Ps. 32:1, 2) Our concept of God, though, would not be accurate if we did not accept his whole view of sin. Whereas Psalm 103 assures us that Jehovah "is forgiving all [our] error," it also indicates our obligations, saying: "The loving-kindness of Jehovah is from time indefinite even to time indefinite toward those *fearing him*, . . . toward those *remembering his orders* so as to carry them out."—Ps. 103:3, 17, 18.

1, 2. We should appreciate what as to sin and God's viewpoint?

wrongdoers? What is godly repentance? How is it manifested? How should the elders deal with cases of gross sin where repentance is shown? Must the wrongdoer be reprovved before the entire congregation? These matters are considered in the following article.

³ If a person commits grave sin, does not repent and seek God's fatherly mercy, but continues to pursue sin, what then? Exodus 34:6, 7 gives us a description of Jehovah. After stressing his mercy, his slowness to anger and willingness to pardon error, it adds: "But by no means will he give exemption from punishment." (Compare Numbers 25:1-5; Ezekiel 33:12, 13.) Hence, we must not presume upon his mercy or take it for granted. What, then, should a true worshiper do if he falls into sin?

TAKING STEPS BACK TO GOD

⁴ A Christian who has sinned against God's law needs forgiveness. Who can extend that? In actuality, only God. The apostle John wrote: "If we confess our sins [to God], he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—1 John 1:9; 2:1.

⁵ In the case of grave sin, God wisely advises that a Christian 'confessing his

3. Why is repentance vital?

4. How can we obtain forgiveness? (2 Chron. 7:13, 14)

5, 6. What does James 5:14-16 advise, and why is it reasonable for a wrongdoer to follow this counsel?

sins' ought to take an additional step. In a context that evidently refers to spiritual sickness involving "sins," the disciple James wrote: "Is there anyone sick among you? Let him call the older men [or, elders] of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, . . . And the prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well, and Jehovah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him."—Jas. 5:14-16.

⁶ This step is reasonable, for a Christian who has given in to grave sin displays a measure of spiritual weakness and a need for help. He could benefit from the prayers of faith of the "older men of the congregation." They are in position, also, to offer him Biblical counsel and help so that he can regain spiritual strength. Further, some transgressions amount to sins against the Christian congregation, for they bring reproach and sorrow upon God's people. This makes it even more appropriate that such a sinner seek the elders' help.—2 Cor. 2:10.

⁷ It displays wisdom and humility on the part of the Christian guilty of grievous sin to approach the elders on his own. "He that is covering over ["who hides," *Lamsa*] his transgressions will not succeed, but he that is confessing and leaving them will be shown mercy." (Prov. 28:13) Sometimes, because of embarrassment, a feeling of guilt or a lack of heartfelt sorrow a sinner does not approach the elders, as James advises. Any Christian aware of the sin should encourage the wrongdoer to turn away from his error and seek the spiritual help that he needs. If the wrongdoer still will not go to the elders, the other Christian should alert them so that they can provide the needed help. All Christians should want to 'turn a sinner back from the error of his way' and thus "save his soul from death."—Jas. 5:19, 20.

7. How are the elders alerted to wrongdoing so that they can help? (Prov. 28:23; 29:24)

REPROVING WITH THE WORD OF GOD

⁸ When a judicial committee meets concerning wrongdoing, they prayerfully seek Jehovah's guidance. In a manner appropriate for loving shepherds, the elders patiently discuss with the individual what appears to be the problem or wrongdoing. (Eph. 5:1, 2; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3) Even where there are witnesses who establish that wrongdoing has occurred, the judicial committee encourages the person to discuss frankly not only the wrong but what led up to it and how he feels about it. (Deut. 19:15; John 8:17) Why is this necessary?

⁹ Though the elders hearing the case establish guilt or convince someone of wrongdoing, their primary interest is in helping their Christian brother who has gone astray. They want to move him to repent so that "refreshing may come from the person of Jehovah." (Acts 3:19) If the individual does not admit the wrong, recognize its grievous nature or see the need to repent, they may have to present 'convincing evidence concerning his sin and concerning righteousness.' (Compare John 16:8.) But in giving such godly reproof they should not be vindictive or harsh. The Bible urges: "Reprove, reprimand, exhort, *with all long-suffering and art of teaching.*" (2 Tim. 4:1, 2) By firmly, kindly and patiently giving reproof, they may be able to reach the sinner's heart, helping him to hate the wrong and to turn back to God.—Jer. 3:12, 13.

¹⁰ We can learn from Ezra's example. He clearly showed the Jews their error. This was not primarily to shame them, but to get them to stop, to touch their heart, to move them to hate the wrong and to repent. They needed to make confession to Jehovah and to act in accord therewith by doing what they could to undo their wrong. (Ezra 10:7-14) Similar-

8. How do elders proceed in handling a committee meeting?

9, 10. At a committee hearing concerning wrongdoing, what are the elders striving to do? (Ps. 51:13)

ly, the committee handling a case of gross sin wants to help the wrongdoer to see the gravity of the wrong and to sense in his heart the need to repent.—Isa. 1:18.

"REPROVE BEFORE ALL ONLOOKERS"

¹¹ In connection with judicial meetings with wrongdoers, the elders apply the apostle Paul's words to Timothy: "Reprove before all onlookers [literally, "in sight of all"] persons who practice sin, that the rest also may have fear." (1 Tim. 5:20) These wrongdoers are persons who 'have persisted in sin' (*Revised Standard Version*) or "who continue in sin" (*New American Standard Bible*) up until the time that the reproof is actually given.

¹² In the first century, Timothy, as an authorized delegate of the apostle Paul, could carry out that written instruction personally 'in the sight of all' those concerned, with the wrongdoer present. Today such reproof is usually provided by a designated committee of elders instead of by an individual. It may not necessarily involve the entire congregation. Toward the conclusion of the judicial committee meeting, after guilt has been established, the elders offer Scriptural reproof concerning the wrongdoing. They have present the witnesses who testified concerning the sin, and such informed persons are invited to hear the Biblical reproof. It is thus offered "before all onlookers" or 'in the sight of all.' These, who are "the rest" mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:20, may thus be helped to have a healthy fear concerning sin, to see the need to avoid sin and the circumstances that can lead to it.

IS HE REPENTANT?

¹³ One of the greatest challenges for elders handling cases of wrongdoing is de-

ciding whether the sinner shows true repentance. They must not judge merely on surface appearances. Hence, not being able to read hearts, they need to exercise great discernment, balance and wisdom in evaluating the wrong, its relation to God's law and what the sinner says and does.

¹⁴ The elders ought not to be hasty in concluding that repentance exists. Why? Well, if they mistakenly judge that a sinner is repentant, that may have a damaging effect on all the flock. But please note a contrasting Biblical example involving a wrongdoer in the Corinthian congregation. After having been expelled for a time, he was reinstated because of being truly repentant. How would the brothers then deal with him? The Corinthians, trusting the judgment that he was repentant, were encouraged kindly to "forgive and comfort him," 'confirming their love for him.' (2 Cor. 2:6-8) It is the same today when a committee concludes that a wrongdoer is repentant. But if they had misjudged the matter and turned back to the congregation a wrongdoer who was not truly repentant, they would be endangering the moral and spiritual purity of all in the flock.—1 Cor. 5:6.

¹⁵ What can the committee look for in determining whether the wrongdoer is truly repentant? A person who is repentant does not try to minimize or justify his bad course. He recognizes in his mind the wrongness of what he did and feels in his heart deep regret over having sinned against God. (Jer. 3:25; Acts 3:19) Thus the elders handling a case must make sure that such regret or sadness exists.

¹⁶ The elders may have to differentiate between the "sadness of the world" and "sadness in a godly way [that] makes for repentance to salvation." (2 Cor. 7:10) A

11. Who are in need of Scriptural reproof?

12. How does a judicial committee apply the counsel at 1 Timothy 5:20?

13. What challenge faces the elders in dealing with grave sin?

14, 15. Why should the elders be careful in deciding whether someone is repentant?

16, 17. (a) What is the difference between the "sadness of the world" and 'godly sadness'? (Heb. 12:16, 17)

(b) How will tears or evidences of emotion bear on the elders' judgment?

person guilty of wrongdoing might feel a sadness of personal failure, shame at being exposed or feel gloomy over the possibility of facing discipline. But such "sadness of the world" does not mean that he is sad over having sinned against God or having brought reproach on God and His people, which are indications of 'godly sadness.' Though Esau shed tears over the loss of his birthright, Jehovah knew that Esau was not truly repentant at heart. So, if a person guilty of grave sin gives way to tears, the elders must try to determine whether this is out of 'godly sadness.' It may be. In Ezra's day the people "wept profusely" after hearing his earnest prayer regarding their sin, and Peter cried bitterly over having denied Jesus.—Gen. 25: 29-34; 27:34; Ezra 10:1; Luke 22:59-62.

¹⁷ These Scriptural examples emphasize why the elders cannot judge merely on a display of emotion. Persons differ in their emotional makeup and control. So whether there are tears or not, the important thing is that the wrongdoer is touched at heart, having a spirit of agony or sense of deep regret over having offended Jehovah and damaged his relationship with God. (Ps. 51:1-4) Accordingly, the elders will likely inquire as to whether the wrongdoer has prayerfully confessed to Jehovah, seeking God's forgiveness, as David did.—Ps. 32: 3-5; 41:4; Jer. 31:19.

¹⁸ If the wrongdoer voluntarily confessed to the "older men of the congregation," that may be a helpful indication as to his heart condition. (Jas. 5:14, 16) What, though, if he did not voluntarily confess and the matter had to be established by his being confronted with evidence or the testimony of witnesses? He might still (there at the meeting) be reached, acknowledging his sin. (Note the example of David's repentance over his sin with Bathsheba, at 2 Samuel 12:1-13.) But, especial-

18. How does confession come into the picture?

ly when extensive reproof had to be given before the wrongdoer began to make any initial expressions of repentance, should the committee exercise caution. They would have to be *convinced* of the wrongdoer's changed heart condition and that he has a zeal to right the wrong and is absolutely determined to avoid it in the future.—2 Cor. 7:10, 11; Rev. 3:19.

¹⁹ A wrongdoer should have sorrow for the dishonor brought on God's congregation. When David sinned by taking a census and realized what he had done, he acknowledged his foolish action. Then when he saw the drastic results upon the entire nation, he was moved to say: "Here it is I that have sinned and it is I that have done wrong; but these sheep—what have they done?" (2 Sam. 24:10, 17) So, then, does the wrongdoer show *genuine* remorse over the reproach, problems and sorrow that he may have brought on the congregation?

"WORKS THAT BEFIT REPENTANCE"

²⁰ The apostle Paul exhorted persons to "repent and turn to God by doing works that befit repentance." (Acts 26:20) When the Jews in the days of Nehemiah repented over having foreign wives, they took definite action that reflected repentance. (Neh. 9:1, 2; compare Jonah 3: 5-10.) Consequently, in dealing with a case of gross sin, the elders will be interested in whether the wrongdoer has 'produced fruit that befits repentance.' —Matt. 3:8.

²¹ If he sinned against an individual, has he confessed his sin to that person and asked for forgiveness? For example, in a case of adultery, has he made confession to his innocent mate and asked forgiveness? Or if the wrongdoer is guilty of

19. How should a repentant wrongdoer feel concerning the congregation?

20-22. (a) What "works," or "fruit," will the elders examine? (b) Illustrate how a repentant one might produce such "fruit."

fraud, has he taken any steps to compensate for the loss? In some circumstances he might be unable to undo all the damage he has caused, but does he give evidence that reasonable steps will be taken to make up for any loss? (Luke 19:8) The point is, to what extent has the guilty person produced the 'fruit befitting repentance'?

²² Maybe the sin sprang from ignoring Scriptural counsel. For instance, he might have regularly shared in recreation with worldly workmates, and this unwholesome association led to immorality. So has the erring person ceased that association? (Prov. 13:20; 1 Pet. 4:3, 4) Also, has he put forth effort to meet regularly with God's people, and has he displayed a heartfelt desire to praise God as a pure worshiper? No one of these 'fruits' is the sole criterion for determining that the sinner is repentant. The elders would be concerned that he have wholesome association, attend Christian meetings and be zealous in the field service, for they accept God's view that there should be "works that befit repentance."

²³ The judicial committee should be very concerned about keeping the congregation clean and should exercise particular care if the wrongdoer has secretly carried on gross sin over a long period. The same would be true if they were dealing with a person who had established a pattern of sinning and then seemingly had repented. A number of times he may have done wrong but because he appeared repentant he was reproofed each time and was allowed to remain in the congregation. Now he has sinned again. In such cases the elders, having in mind also the welfare of the whole flock, must consider whether *his life* gives true evidence that he is producing "fruit that befits repentance." Has he not by his way of life shown that it is

very questionable that he belongs in God's congregation?—Ps. 119:104; Rom. 12:9.

²⁴ Sometimes a sinner is hardened or belligerent, manifesting no true repentance despite the sincere and patient efforts of the elders. (Eccl. 8:11) They are not obliged to meet repeatedly with such a wrongdoer as if pleading with him or trying to beg him to repent. But in some cases they may feel the need to meet again with the sinner, if the evidence concerning his feelings, motives and repentance is not so clear. After he has had time to pray and to reflect on the previous Scriptural discussion, the question of his repentance may be clarified.

²⁵ The elders' responsibility in determining true repentance is a weighty one. They ought to show mercy and help erring ones who are truly repentant. Yet they also need to guard against misplaced sympathy that could lead to dangerous "leaven" remaining in the congregation.—Gal. 5:9.

ADING THE CONGREGATION

²⁶ In some cases grievous sin has not, and likely will not, become commonly known. Perhaps only a few individuals, such as the immediate family or the few witnesses, are aware of the sin. (These, although "onlookers," should be made to realize that it would be unloving to gossip about it.) Hence, once the judicial committee is sure that the wrongdoer is repentant, there is no need for the matter to be made more public, for the "onlookers" have all heard Scriptural reproof on the matter, and the sinner is repentant.

²⁷ In other cases a sin may be known to many in the congregation and/or the community. Or the sin may be such that it

24. What determines whether additional meetings might be held with a wrongdoer? (Hos. 5:4; Matt. 21:30)

25. Why do the elders have a heavy responsibility as to wrongdoing?

26. How might some cases be handled if few know of the wrongdoing?

27, 28. When may it be advisable for the congregation to be informed that someone has been reproofed?

23. The committee needs to consider what in the case of repeated sin?

will no doubt become generally known in time. Such a case needs to be handled differently. The entire congregation needs to be put at rest as to whether the matter has been properly handled. Also, they can benefit from Scriptural counsel that may aid them in having a healthy fear of sin.

²⁸ Or there may be an instance where the elders feel that a degree of caution must be exercised. For example, though genuinely repentant now, the wrongdoer may have in the past shown some weaknesses as to his determination to avoid the way leading to sin. So out of concern that the congregation not be endangered by someone in their midst becoming a corrupting influence, the committee of elders might resolve that an informative Scriptural talk needs to be given.

²⁹ In either of these situations, the congregation elders can arrange to deal with the matter at the weekly service meeting, *not* at other meetings. At the service meeting it could be announced that the former wrongdoer has been reproved by a judicial committee and has demonstrated repentance. Also, the judicial committee may feel it necessary to impose certain restrictions. These might include not sharing in

29, 30. (a) How will the elders inform the congregation? (b) What may be the benefit of handling some cases in this way?

meeting parts, not representing the congregation in prayer or, perhaps, not reading scriptures or commenting at meetings. If the committee has instituted some restrictions, they may advise the elders whether they feel that this should be announced to the congregation. Such restrictions can gradually be lifted in the future.

³⁰ The same evening, but somewhat later in the service meeting program, an assigned elder could deliver a firm Scriptural talk. He should not mention the wrongdoer by name nor reveal any specific details of the confidential information that came to light in the judicial committee meeting. But he could discuss what God's Word says about the type of error or sin involved in this instance, its danger and how to avoid it. All the congregation can benefit from such Scriptural admonition. —2 Tim. 4:1, 2.

³¹ All of us should deeply appreciate Jehovah's willingness to accept genuine repentance. We certainly should not "accept the undeserved kindness of God and miss its purpose." (2 Cor. 6:1) Should someone do that, giving in to sin and not being repentant, God directs the congregation to take stronger steps. These will be dealt with in our next issue.

31. How should we feel concerning God's view of repentance?

WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT REPENTANCE?

If we commit grave sin, we need to confess to God and also should apply the advice in his Word to seek the help of the "older men."

At a judicial committee meeting, elders seek to establish guilt and strive to help the wrongdoer to repent.

At this meeting, 'reproving before all on-lookers' involves those present as witnesses or who know of the sin.

A person who is truly repentant has been touched at heart over having sinned against and reproached God and His people.

The elders will look for evidence of "works that befit repentance."

While interested in helping the wrongdoer, the committee also is concerned with protecting the congregation from corruption.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

● Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is an often-fatal disease in which the body's immune defenses seem to attack its own organs. A recent article in the "Journal of the American Medical Association" clinically describes the unusual case of a 28-year-old Philippine-

Witchcraft Baffles Doctors

American woman with SLE.

When the woman did not respond to initial treatment, stronger drugs were recommended. But "the patient instead elected to return to the remote Philippine village of her birth," reports the "Journal." And "much to the surprise of distraught family members and skeptical physicians, the patient returned three weeks later"—apparently cured. The woman claimed to have been cured by "the village witch doctor, who had removed the curse."

In bafflement, the "Journal" article asked: "By what mechanism did the machinations of an Asian medicine man cure active lupus nephritis . . . and allow precipitous withdrawal from corticosteroid treatment without symptoms of adrenal insufficiency?" Is it possible that the answer does not lie within human scope? The Bible indicates that Satan the Devil has been known to use 'powerful works and lying signs' in misleading mankind.—2 Cor. 11:14; compare 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.

● "Where do we go for help in our search for a closer, more aware relationship with our Maker?" wrote a Texas woman for the "In My Opinion" column of the "National Catholic Reporter."

Trying to Find God in Church

"Logically," she said, "we started with our parish priest. Would he teach a Bible class? No, he did not have time." But "after some urging he said if we could get 50 people interested, he'd see about it. We did get 27," she said, but since that still was not enough for priestly assistance, "[we] are still wondering about Jesus and the one lost sheep [Matt. 18:12-14]." The column continues:

"Our next problem centered on the literature he recommended. For all his good points, he is far above us intellectually; he could not seem to realize how basic our needs were.

The majority of us are lacking in basic knowledge of the Bible. This, I'm sure, stems from our lack of encouragement from our church in reading the Bible. . . . what [reading matter] we were able to find for Catholics seemed to be written for highly educated priests, not your average lay person. . . . We dropped our diocesan paper several years ago because of lack of spiritual news."

Through the prophet Isaiah, God warned of such an impoverished spiritual condition when religious leaders would fail to feed their flocks properly from the Word of God. But contrasting His "servants" with others, God said: "Behold, my servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, and you shall be thirsty." Surely, persons with such 'hunger' and 'thirst' would do well to seek out those whom God calls "my servants" to find satisfaction.—Isa. 65:13; Amos 8:11, Catholic "Douay Version."

● "Christian Century" magazine reports that "Grace Lutheran Church and Akiba Temple [Jewish] in Culver City, California, are offering licenseless marriage ceremonies for couples who are unhappy with the way the tax system treats two-income families."

Clerics Cut Taxes

Married couples in America often have to pay somewhat higher taxes on joint income than do single persons filing separately. So the clergymen are helping couples to skirt the law. Says the Lutheran pastor: "We have simply removed any reference to civil authority" in the wedding ceremony. Instead of a validated state license, a certificate declaring the couple "united in marriage according to the ordinances of God" is issued.

Apparently, though, the "ordinances" of God are far from the minds of these yielding clergymen. When Christ commanded that his disciples "pay back, therefore, Caesar's things to Caesar," he did not add, 'except when Caesar asks much.' And, because of the prophet Daniel's strict adherence to Persian law, his opposers could find no pretext against him at all except "in the law of his God." Tax evasion certainly does not harmonize with 'the law of God.'—Matt. 22:17-21; Dan. 6:4, 5; Rom. 13:1-7.



OPPRESSION WILL END

THE record of oppression that humankind has made for itself is indeed shocking. Countless millions have suffered. Especially have wars of conquest been the source of misery. Besides the direct loss of life resulting from such conflicts, the famines and pestilences accompanying war have taken a heavy toll in lives. Do you not yearn for the day when oppression and its attendant suffering will be no more?

There is One higher than men who has decreed an end to all oppression in his due time. Yes, the Almighty God Jehovah is fully aware of the shameful record that men and nations have made. His past dealings with individuals and peoples guarantee that he will hold an accounting. In fact, the kind of God that he is makes it necessary for him to act. His Word tells us: "Jehovah is a God exacting exclu-

sive devotion and taking vengeance; Jehovah is taking vengeance and is disposed to rage. Jehovah is taking vengeance against his adversaries, and he is resentful toward his enemies. Jehovah is slow to anger and great in power, and by no means will Jehovah hold back from punishing."—Nah. 1:2, 3.

These words form part of Nahum's prophetic pronouncement against Nineveh, the capital of ancient Assyria. Since Jehovah God is unchanging in his standards, the historical record regarding the destruction of Nineveh assures us that oppression will not last indefinitely. (Mal. 3:6) Additionally, for lovers of righteousness, there is nothing to fear from a day of reckoning. Nahum's prophecy provides this encouragement: "Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of distress. And he is cognizant of those seeking refuge in him." (Nah. 1:7) Therefore, our examining Nahum's prophecy can be most faith-strengthening.

NINEVEH 'ENSNARES NATIONS'

The prophet referred to Nineveh as a "city of bloodshed." (Nah. 3:1) Its warriors were like lions tearing apart prey, that is, the weaker peoples and nations. (Nah. 2:11-13) In the seventh century B.C.E., when Nahum prophesied, the Assyrians were the terror of the Middle East. To inspire fear, they were especially cruel toward those refusing to meet their demands. Captives of war might be burned or skinned alive. Many were blinded or led with cords attached to hooks piercing the nose or lips.

Even the kingdom of Judah did not escape suffering at the hands of the Assyrians. Ahaz unwisely appealed to King Tiglath-pileser (Tilgath-pilneser) for aid against a coalition of the kingdoms of Israel and Syria. Although the Assyrians smashed the power of this coalition, Judah did not really benefit. Ahaz came to be at the mercy of his powerful and demanding ally. The Bible reports: "Tilgath-pilneser the king of Assyria came against him and caused him distress, and did

not strengthen him. For Ahaz stripped the house of Jehovah and the house of the king and of the princes and thus made a gift to the king of Assyria; but it was of no assistance to him.”—2 Ki. 16:5-9; 2 Chron. 28:20, 21.

In the hope of maintaining a measure of independence, other nations were similarly drawn into alliances with Assyria. But such alliances only resulted in their being faced with Assyrian oppression and loss of freedom. Because the alliances promised much in the way of help and protection but eventually led to painful experiences, Nineveh is spoken of as a prostitute “ensnaring nations.” (Nah. 3:4) Her offers of friendship were appealing. But woe to the nation that accepted them!

When Hezekiah, the son and royal successor of Ahaz, tried to cast off the Assyrian yoke, King Sennacherib invaded the kingdom of Judah, seizing one fortified city after another. Only divine intervention saved Jerusalem from destruction. Jehovah’s angel struck down 185,000 of the Assyrian host, forcing Sennacherib to give up plans for laying siege to the city.—2 Ki. 18:13; 19:32-36.

NINEVEH’S END FORETOLD

The Assyrian invasions of Judah interfered with agricultural operations and travel to the yearly festivals held at the temple in Jerusalem. What relief, therefore, the fall of Nineveh would bring! Anticipating this, the prophet Nahum was inspired to state: “Look! Upon the mountains the feet of one bringing good news, one publishing peace. O Judah, celebrate your festivals. Pay your vows; because no more will any good-for-nothing person pass again through you. In his entirety he will certainly be cut off.”—Nah. 1:15.

What could Nineveh expect on the day of her calamity? The prophet Nahum describes the city under siege. In vain does Assyria’s king look to his “majestic ones,”

his powerful military men, for protection. (Nah. 2:5) Defenders of the city would be like weak women. The prophecy challenges Nineveh: “Water for a siege draw out for yourself. Strengthen your fortified places. Get into the mire, and trample down in the clay; grab hold of the brick mold.” Nevertheless, all efforts to strengthen the city’s defenses would prove to be useless. The prophecy continues: “Even there fire will devour you. A sword will cut you off.”—Nah. 3:13-15.

Nineveh had been “like a pool of waters” into which peoples and the riches of the

ANNUAL MEETING OCTOBER 1, 1981

The annual meeting of the members of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania on October 1, 1981, will be held at Jehovah’s Witnesses Assembly Hall, 44-17 Greenpoint Avenue in the Borough of Queens, New York city. The meeting will be at ten o’clock in the forenoon of Thursday, October 1, 1981.

It will be appreciated if the members of the corporation will now see to it that the Secretary’s office has their present mailing addresses so that the regular letters of notice and proxies can reach them shortly after September 1.

The proxies, which will be sent to the members along with the notice of the annual meeting, are to be returned so as to reach the office of the Secretary of the Society not later than September 15. As each member knows, he should complete and return his proxy promptly, stating whether he is going to be at the meeting personally or not. The information given on each proxy should be definite on this point, as it will be relied upon in determining in advance those who will actually be personally present.

It is expected that the entire session, including the formal business meeting and any remarks by members or officers, will be concluded at 12 noon or shortly thereafter. There will be no afternoon session. No arrangements will be made for tying in the annual meeting by telephone line to any other locations.

nations flowed. "But," says Nahum, "they are fleeing. 'Stand still, you men! Stand still!' But there is no one turning back." (Nah. 2:8) Thus, the peoples who had profited from Nineveh would escape in all directions. Cries for them to remain to help the city would fall on deaf ears. Enormous stores of silver and gold would come into the hands of the plundering conquerors.—Nah. 2:9.

That the "city of bloodshed" would suffer such a fate may have seemed unbelievable to many. However, the foretold event was not without historical precedent. Nahum called attention to this with the words: "Are you better than No-amon, that was sitting by the Nile canals? Waters were all around her, whose wealth was the sea, whose wall was from the sea. Ethiopia was her full might, also Egypt; and that without limit. Put and the Libyans themselves proved to be of assistance to you. She, too, was meant for exile; she went into captivity. Her own children also came to be dashed to pieces at the head of all the streets; and over her glorified men they cast lots, and her great ones have all been bound with fetters."—Nah. 3:8-10.

The Assyrians knew well what had befallen No-amon, or Thebes. Their armies, under the command of King Ashurbanipal, had razed Thebes to the ground. The city's "wall"—her defenses, including the Nile and its canals—had failed. Even the military support of the Ethiopians, Libyans and the men of Put had not been able to save Thebes.

Nothing could save Nineveh either. She had made such a bad record for herself through her wars and alliances that her fall would be greeted with jubilation. "All those hearing the report about you," wrote Nahum, "will certainly clap their hands at you; because upon whom was it that

your badness did not pass over constantly?"—Nah. 3:19.

In fulfillment of Nahum's prophecy, Nineveh fell to the combined forces of Babylonian King Nabopolassar and Cyaxares the Mede in 632 B.C.E. The Babylonian Chronicles state: "The great spoil of the city and temple they carried off and [turned] the city into a ruin-mound."

Today the site of ancient Nineveh is still a desolate ruin, vindicating the God of true prophecy, Jehovah. Just as oppressive Nineveh came to nothing, so will all oppressors in the fast-approaching "war of the great day of God the Almighty." (Rev. 16:14) What grand relief this will bring! May we then be found among those who are seeking refuge in the Supreme Sovereign.

QUESTIONS from READERS

● In the illustration of the 10 virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), who made the cry: "Here is the bridegroom! Be on your way out to meet him"?

Jesus did not say. In a Hebrew wedding, such as Jesus was using to make an illustration, the bridegroom probably would have been accompanied by male attendants or friends. (John 3:29) These could alert any people awaiting the bridegroom's party. However, there was no need for Jesus to mention such attendants. Nor would there be any application of them in a figurative way. The point is that there was a cry that alerted the virgins, moving them to activity.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

October 4: Happy Are Those Whom God Corrects. Page 17. Songs to Be Used: 18, 88.
October 11: Repentance Leading Back to God. Page 22. Songs to Be Used: 37, 94.

