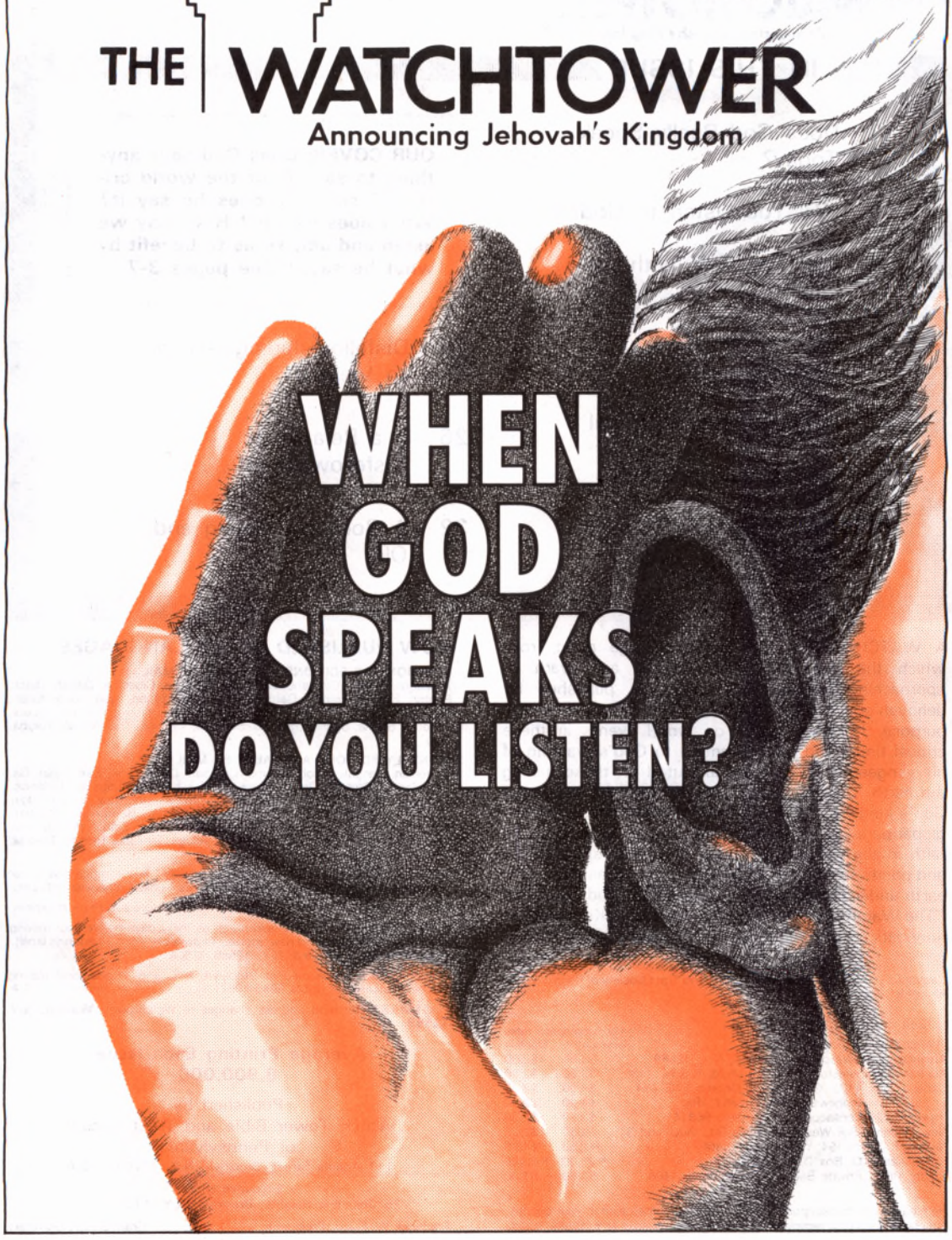
SEPTEMBER 15, 1981

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



WHEN GOD SPEAKS DO YOU LISTEN?

THE WATCHTOWER®
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

September 15, 1981
Vol. 102, No. 18

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OUR COVER: Does God have anything to say about the world crisis? If so, how does he say it? What does he say? How may we listen and act, so as to benefit by what he says? See pages 3-7

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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Fifteen cents (U.S.) a copy

Watch Tower Society offices	Yearly subscription rates Semimonthly	Monthly
America, U.S., Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589	$3.50	$2.00
Australia, 11 Beresford Rd., Strathfield, N.S.W. 2135	$3.50	$2.00
Canada, Box 4100, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4Y4	$4.00	$2.30
England, The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN	£4.00	£2.50
Hawaii, 1228 Pensacola St., Honolulu 96814	$3.50	$2.00
New Zealand, 6-A Western Springs Rd., Auckland 3	$4.50	$2.25
Nigeria, P.O. Box 194, Yaba, Lagos State	₦2.50	₦1.25
Philippines, P.O. Box 2044, Manila 2800	₱25.00	₱15.00
South Africa, Private Bag 2, Elandsfontein, 1406	R3,60	R1,80

Remittances for subscriptions should be sent to the office in your country. Otherwise send your remittance to Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589, U.S.A.

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The Bible translation used in "The Watchtower" is the modern-language "New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures," unless otherwise indicated.

Notice of expiration is sent at least two issues before subscription expires.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS should reach us thirty days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label). Write Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589, U.S.A.

Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) Printed in U.S.A.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Watchtower, **Wallkill, N.Y. 12589.**

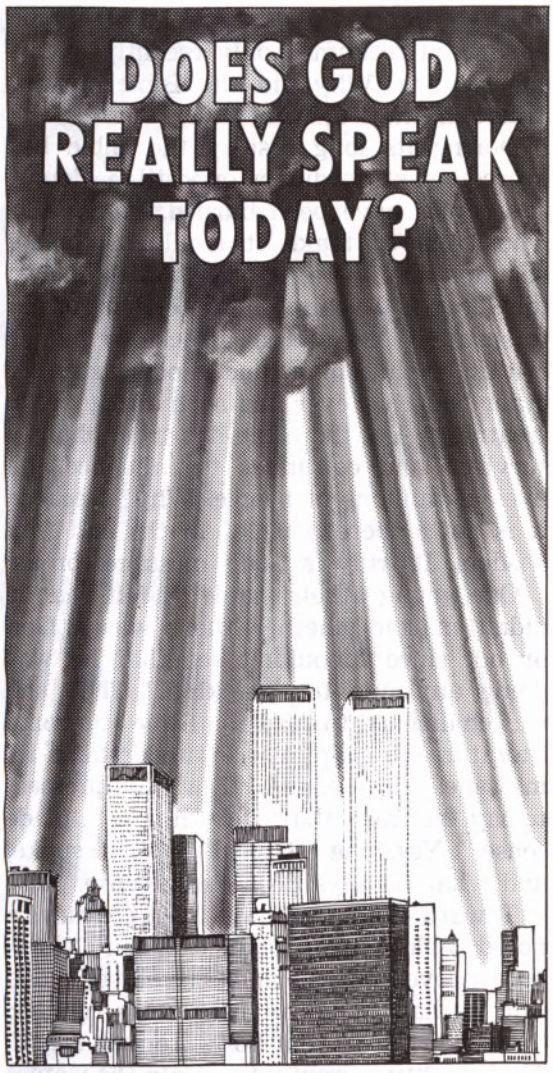
Average Printing Each Issue: 8,900,000

Published by
Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania
117 Adams Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201, U.S.A.

Executive Offices
25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201, U.S.A.

Frederick W. Franz, President Grant Suiter, Secretary

DOES GOD REALLY SPEAK TODAY?



A COLLEGE lecturer walked to the front of the class, prepared to start his lesson. Then he noticed that a student had written something on the blackboard: "QUESTION AUTHORITY!" Without saying a word, the lecturer wrote underneath: "If authority answers, will you listen?"

That is a good question. And it applies with regard to the highest authority of all, Jehovah God. Most would agree that, today, mankind needs help. So many things have gone wrong and are out of control—pollution, overpopulation, widespread starvation, inflation and the ominous threat of nuclear, gas or germ warfare. You may feel: 'Surely, if God has something to say to mankind, now is a good time for him to say it!'

This is true. But the question has to be asked: If God did speak, who would listen? While man obviously needs guidance, would he accept it if it was offered?

GOD DOES SPEAK

First, though, consider the question, Does God speak to us today? If he does not, our future is bleak. Fortunately, the evidence is that he does. How?

Well, if God really has an important message for mankind, what would be the best way to convey it? 'By a voice from heaven,' you might say. That would be an obvious method, true. But would it be the most practical?

A man with long experience in managerial work commented: "When I have important information to pass on, I *never* do it by word of mouth. I always write it down. In that way there is no confusion afterward."

This makes sense. If God spoke from the heavens, this would doubtless be very dramatic. But if 1,000,000 people heard him, there would soon be 1,000,000 versions of what he had said. On the other hand, if he were to have his instructions written down, there would be no doubt, later, about what his message was.

However, a written message from God would need to be a very special document. It would have to contain evident godly wisdom, and it would need to be widely available, so that everyone who wanted to could read it. Moreover, it would somehow have to surmount the world's many language barriers.

Does a document exist that claims to be from God and fulfills these conditions? Yes, there is one, and only one. It is the

most widely distributed book in all history, with a circulation of billions of copies. And it is now available, wholly or in part, in 1,710 languages, so that almost any literate person who wants to can read at least a part of it in his own language. What is this document? It is the Bible.

IS THIS REALLY GOD SPEAKING?

How do you react to that information? Do you feel: 'Oh, no, not the Bible! How could God be speaking today through a book that is so old-fashioned?'

Well, the Bible is, of course, old, because the human race is old, and God has been speaking to mankind for a long time. But is it really old-fashioned? Hardly!

Would you say a book is old-fashioned that foretold thousands of years ago the condition of mankind today, humanity's fear of the future, the danger of its ruining the whole earth, and even the threats by weapons deep in the sea and in outer space? Yet the Bible does this.—Luke 21:25-28; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Rev. 6:3-8; 11:18.

In days when divorce and marriage breakdown are epidemic, would you say a book is old-fashioned if it contains what has proved to be the most successful marriage counsel ever given? It may not be popular counsel with today's selfish "me" generation, but it works. And it is written in the Bible.—Eph. 5:21-33.

True, today it is intellectually respectable in some quarters to think of the Bible as merely a collection of myths and folk wisdom. But does this really account for the phenomenon that is the Bible? Thousands of years ago, when it was being compiled, there were books of myths and folk wisdom in existence. Yet they were mostly forgotten as time went by. Some have been reclaimed only recently by archaeologists. Why did the Bible survive although they did not?

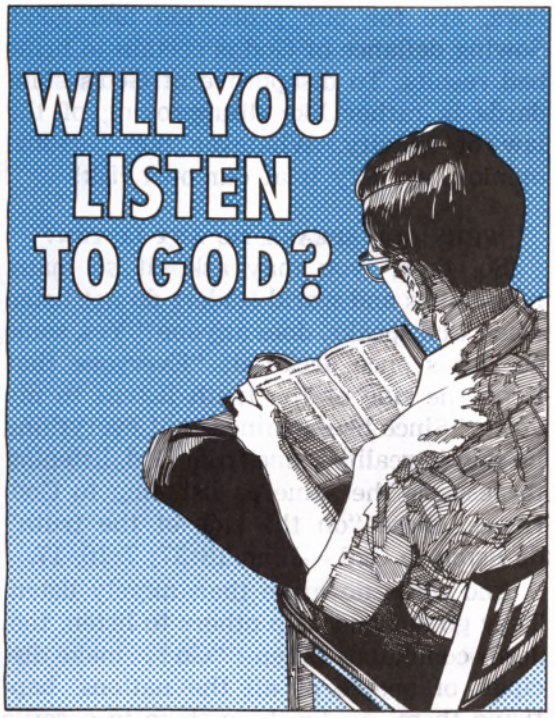
During its long history the Bible has overcome extraordinary opposition. Countless copies have been burned. Individuals who tried to make it available to the common man were tortured to death. And for about 200 years, it has been subjected to sustained intellectual attacks by higher critics, evolutionists and modernists. No other book has ever had such antagonistic treatment. Yet the Bible has triumphantly survived and continues to influence the lives of millions of people. Why? Because it is not a mere book of myths and folk wisdom. It truly is God's message for us.

One young atheist said: "I felt that it didn't matter whether there was a God or not since I couldn't see that he was doing anything for mankind." Then she was challenged to read the Bible and some literature to help her to understand its message. The result? "I was impressed, to say the least, that everything . . . made sense." Yes, she listened as God spoke, and what he says does make sense.

Toward the end of the 19th century, a noted Bible scholar wrote: "When Columbus discovered the Orinoco river, some one said he had found an island. He replied: 'No such river as that flows from an island. That mighty torrent must drain the waters of a continent.' So the depth and power and wisdom and scope of the Bible's testimony convince us that not man, but the Almighty God, is the author of its plans and revelations."

We invite you to study the Bible yourself. See if you do not agree that here, indeed, are the thoughts of God himself.

"I will hear what the true God Jehovah will speak, for he will speak peace to his people and to his loyal ones."
—Ps. 85:8.



'BUT surely the Bible has been around for a long time, and the world is in a worse state than ever!' This is quite true, and the reason is that people have not been listening while God has spoken. Why not?

In some cases, they are just not interested. A recent declaration by a group of Secular Humanists states: "[We] reject the idea that God has intervened miraculously in history or revealed himself to a chosen few, or that he can save or redeem sinners." Actually, God speaks today, not merely to a "chosen few," but to all who will listen. "God . . . is telling *mankind* that they should *all everywhere* repent." (Acts 17:30) Nevertheless, any who reject even the idea of God's speaking are evidently not going to listen to him. Their future must appear very dark.

True, many world leaders have claimed to believe in God. Yet they have not helped to improve things much. Why is this? Largely because, as the French philosopher Voltaire once said, "Most of the great men of this world live as if they were atheists." Their claims that they worship God have not held them back from the massacres, aggressive wars, oppressions, tortures and treachery that have been continuing features of history. Evidently, when God has spoken, they have not been listening either.

SOME HEAR BUT DO NOT LISTEN

'Is it not true, though, that many religions use the Bible in their services, and people hear its words every Sunday?' This is correct. But while they *hear,* do they really *listen,* that is, pay attention to what they hear?

For example, many churches use the "Our Father" prayer (or, the "Lord's Prayer") in their Sunday services. This prayer is a part of the Bible. In one Catholic version, the first words of the prayer are: "Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:9, 10, *Douay.*

What is God's will that has to be done on earth? Part of it is expressed in this promise: "The meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the *abundance of peace.*" (Ps. 37:11) Such peace, according to the "Our Father" prayer, is to be brought about by God's "kingdom," his government.

So it was interesting back in 1965, after Pope Paul VI visited the United Nations, to read in the newspapers that he had said: "The peoples of earth turn to the United Nations as the *last hope of concord and peace.*" (Italics ours) This statement doubtless helped United Nations members to feel that their work was important and worthwhile. But if they were the last hope for peace, what about God's kingdom?

In Coming Issues

- **Can You Tell Right from Wrong?**
- **Enduring After a Tragic Loss**
- **Parents, Reach Your Child's Heart**

Pope Paul VI evidently had not been truly *listening* to the words of the "Our Father" prayer.

There are many other examples showing that, even when people hear the Bible read, this to them is often just a ritual, and they fail to pay attention and get the sense of what it is saying.

LISTENING AND OBEYING

"To listen" also means "to consider seriously." Many today fully understand what God is saying about certain matters, but do not take his words seriously. They follow their own ideas. Hence, they do not listen when God speaks.

An example of this is the matter of morality. God gives a clear standard of morality. He says: "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men . . . will inherit God's kingdom." —1 Cor. 6:9, 10.

Modernists, including many religious leaders, reject this standard. They call it old-fashioned and encourage a more "liberal" way of life. The result? An epidemic of teenage pregnancies, abortions, venereal diseases, divorces and emotional turmoil.

This should not surprise us. "God is not one to be mocked. For whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap." (Gal. 6:7) God's moral laws, just like his physical laws, are for our protection and good. Sowing defiance of God is certain to bring bad results. To disapprove of God's standards is rather like disapproving of the law of gravity. Whatever our personal opinion, we defy it at our own risk!

WHEN GOD SPEAKS, DO ANY LISTEN?

'So, then,' you may ask, 'if so many religionists and world leaders do not listen when God speaks, does anyone?' Yes, some do. Jesus once declared: "Everyone that is on the side of the truth listens to my voice." Since he explained that everything he said in reality came from God, listening to Jesus is the same as listening to God. Hence, those "on the side of the truth" do listen to God.—John 18:37; 7:16, 17.

And these do more than merely listen. They go out and help others to listen, too. Jesus commanded them: "Go . . . make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19, 20) Is there anyone doing that today?

This question was on a young woman's mind some years ago. She was disillusioned by the confusion and contradictions of the religions she knew, and had become an agnostic. Without knowing it, she was seeking a quality that Jesus had said would identify those "on the side of the truth": "By their fruits you will recognize them." Since she did not know of any religious group producing what were recognizable as godly fruits, she felt that God was not speaking today.—Matt. 7:16.

One time, to please a friend, the young woman visited a religious group she had not associated with before. Since they were friendly, she asked one of them a question, just to see what would happen. She was surprised when he gave her a straightforward answer from the Bible. Then she went to another member of the group, and asked the same question. To her as-

tonishment, he opened the Bible and gave her the same answer. She repeated the experiment and found that, religiously, these people were united, not confused.

This impressed the woman. Unknowingly, she had stumbled across another characteristic of the people "on the side of the truth": they strive to be "fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought." (1 Cor. 1:10) They recognize that "all Scripture is inspired of God." Hence, they study, and teach, not men's opinions but what God says in the Bible. —2 Tim. 3:16.

The young woman gradually abandoned her agnosticism. She was happy to listen while God spoke. And she gladly associated with a people "on the side of the truth" who went out and read the Bible to others, thus helping as many as possible to listen to God speaking. Eventually, she became an active member of that congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

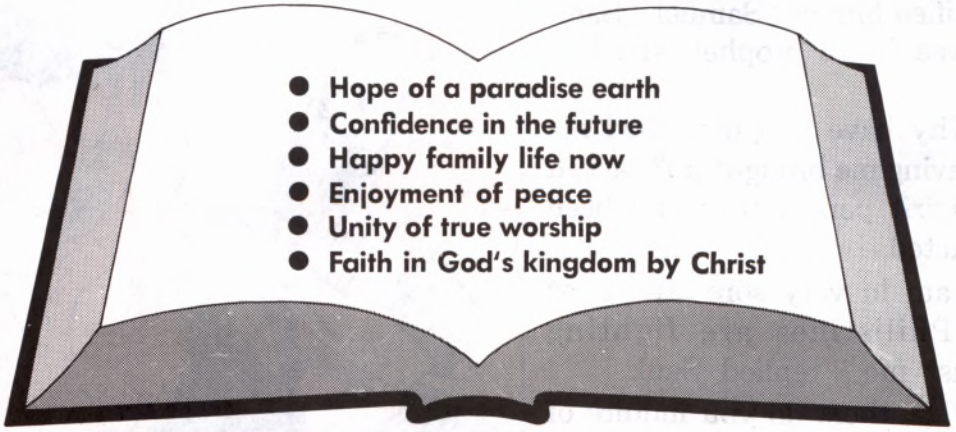
WHAT GOD SAYS

Are you "on the side of the truth"? Then you will want to listen—truly listen, in the sense of paying attention and taking to heart what God says. To do this will put you in the minority, since most people today do not listen to God. Sadly, like the ancient Israelites, "they have ignored the way of Jehovah."—Jer. 5:4.

Nevertheless, it is sensible to listen to God's wisdom. "The one listening to [true wisdom], he will reside in security and be undisturbed from dread of calamity." (Prov. 1:20-33) Today, those who listen to God are guided to avoid the pitfalls that come from living in this imperfect world. Thus they avoid unnecessary calamity. And soon, if they prove faithful, they will live in a world wherein 'calamities' no longer happen. At that time, God "will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."—Rev. 21:4.

This is the world God will prepare for those "on the side of the truth." Would you like to be a part of it? Then make it a point to listen when God speaks. Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to help you to do so.

Benefits from listening when God speaks



Can you talk with the dead?

Since so many persons say they have talked with the dead, it is evident that at least some of them have spoken with **someone** from the spirit world. Over 3,000 years ago Saul, the king of Israel, had such an experience. Let us see what we can learn from it.

A mighty force of Philistines had come up against Saul's Israelite army, and he was very much afraid. Saul knew God's law: "Do not turn yourselves to the spirit mediums, and do not consult professional foretellers of events." (Lev. 19:31) But Saul had turned away from Jehovah God. And now, in this time of trouble, he was so desperate for information that he went to a spirit medium in En-dor.

The spirit medium was able to bring forth the form of a person that she could see. According to her description of the form, Saul identified him as "Samuel." Samuel was God's prophet who had died.

"Why have you disturbed me by having me brought up?" asked the spirit person that had been contacted.

"I am in very sore straits, as the Philistines are fighting against me," replied Saul.

"Why, then, do you inquire of me, when Jehovah himself has

departed from you?" the spirit asked.

After this bad experience, Saul became very much afraid and fell dejected to the ground.—1 Sam. 28:3-20.

This person from the spirit world could not *really* have been Samuel. Samuel was dead, and the Bible says "as for the dead, *they are conscious of nothing at all.*" (Eccl. 9:5) Furthermore, while he was alive Samuel had refused to see unfaithful Saul. (1 Sam. 15:35) Surely now, even if he were alive after death, Samuel would not allow a spirit medium to arrange for him to meet Saul. So we can be sure that a spirit medium could not force Jehovah to give Saul a message through dead Samuel.

But suppose the living could actually talk with dead loved ones, as the people at this séance are trying to do. If they could, surely a God of love would not say in the Bible: "There should not be found in you . . . anyone who *inquires of the dead.* For everybody doing [so] is something *detestable* to Jehovah."—Deut. 18:10-12.

Who, then, was pretending to be Samuel? A wicked spirit person was. Wicked spirits, or demons, are the angels who joined Satan in rebellion against God. To promote the lie that death is only a change to another life, they pretend to be persons who have died. But the truth is, the dead are completely unconscious, awaiting the time when God may remember them in the resurrection. (Acts 24:15) So neither you, nor anybody else, can talk with the dead.

SHE FOUND THE SOURCE OF INCREASED JOY

A Heartwarming Report from Trinidad

"TEACHER resigns service to become missionary." In 1955, these words headlined an article in our local daily newspaper, *The Trinidad Guardian*. Who was this teacher? What moved her to make such a decision? Did she lose anything by taking this step? Is she still a missionary?

Sylvia was born in a quiet farming village called Flanagin Town in central Trinidad. The small community was of limited literacy, and the only school was run by Catholic teachers and managed by a priest who visited the area once a week. Sylvia was educated there and then became a pupil-teacher in the same school. In the 1940's she began to receive spiritual education from an elderly couple, both Jehovah's Witnesses. The man and his wife were despised by religiously prejudiced fellow villagers, but they courageously kept on proclaiming the Bible's message to all in the village. Another couple joined them, and this tiny group used portable phonographs to play recorded Bible sermons, after which they would offer literature explaining the message.

REJOICING BEGINS

Sylvia's grandmother would listen to the recorded sermons, obtain some literature, and put it away without ever reading it. But Sylvia read the publications. So, at the age of 17, she searched out the Witnesses and plied them with questions. Soon Sylvia began attending Bible study meetings with the four Witnesses in her village. The five of them would sit and discuss the Scriptures by the light of a kerosene lamp, as there was no electricity.

Sylvia's next step was to speak to her grandmother and certain teachers about the things she was learning. Quickly the news spread through the village that Sylvia had been secretly attending the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. How could an active Catholic do that? Was she not a choir member and a "Child of Mary"? Was she not a pupil-teacher in the Catholic school? What would "Father" say?

What would he do? The priest dismissed Sylvia, informing her by letter that her work as a teacher in the school had been terminated because of her persistence in attending the services of a false religion, as he viewed it.

This did not lessen her joy. In fact, some time after this she was baptized in symbol of her dedication to Jehovah God. In 1949, she entered the Government Training College for teachers and graduated in 1950. For the next five years she taught in government schools but, in 1955, left secular teaching to devote all her time to sharing the Bible's "good news" with others. (Matt. 24:14) Why did Sylvia give up her position? Why did she ignore the attractiveness of a regular salary to preach full time as a "pioneer" without a guaranteed income?

WHY PIONEER?

Ask Sylvia and she will give you several interesting reasons. For one thing, although opposed to the Witnesses, her mother had let the youthful Sylvia spend every vacation with a Witness aunt. She would then spend much of her time sharing the Bible's message with others. Sylvia enjoyed these vacations very much and returned home spiritually strengthened and increasingly convinced of the need to tell the glorious "good news" to as many as possible. Moreover, she came to appreciate that in a Christian's list of priorities the Kingdom should be first. (Matt. 6:33) In her circumstances, Sylvia saw that it was more important for her to declare Bible truth than to engage in full-time secular work.

Even today Sylvia can talk about the strong impression made by certain pioneers, Constance Mills and Maude De Freitas. She clearly recalls their rejoicing in Jehovah, their rich zeal for the full-time work and their striking ability to speak about the Kingdom and make it seem so real to her. Sylvia admired old Brother William Jordan too and vividly recalls her lunch-time discussions with him and how much they helped her to fix her mind on Jehovah's service. So she resigned from teaching to become a pioneer. What had she lost? "Becoming a pioneer meant leaving a comfortable home and my career. I had to give up my insurance policy and the idea of purchasing a car," she said. "But I realized that all I had was dedicated to Jehovah, and that settled the matter."

Sylvia would tell you that becoming a pioneer was one of several major decisions. Another involved the personal matter of marriage. She is single and does not feel that she is worse off for it. Though not waging a personal campaign sponsoring singleness, she made the decision to remain unmarried. "It is not that brothers have not been asking. I've had my share of 'applications,' " she says. "But I have made my decision, and my life is happy and full. I don't feel that I am missing anything. At any rate, I'm too busy to worry about that sort of thing."—Matt. 19:10-12.

BLESSINGS INCREASE REJOICING

Something that was a blessing in disguise was Sylvia's reassignment to Trinidad as a special pioneer after graduating from Gilead missionary school in 1959. She had looked forward eagerly to serving in a foreign land, and says frankly: "I was somewhat disappointed when I heard that I was being sent back to Trinidad to face the same familiar surroundings." But did this work out well for her?

Sylvia says about Jehovah's use of her: "He has used me to share in aiding clusters of six, four, three and sometimes one or two. I have had the privilege of helping four fleshly brothers and sisters and their marriage mates. It does the heart good to see and hear them express themselves for Jehovah and his kingdom." Hardly a bap-

tism session passes without one of Sylvia's students being among the candidates for water immersion.

It has not been smooth sailing all the way. Why, one year Sylvia's home was burned flat, and she and her partner lost everything! But fellow Witnesses housed and clothed them until they were able to get back on their own.—Mark 10:29, 30.

In 1968, Sylvia had to decide if she was going to remain in full-time service. Here is how she puts it: "I was faced with the blood issue, since I had to undergo a major abdominal operation. The operation was successful. No blood was used, but I was left in a greatly weakened and depressed state. I had to decide whether to continue in the full-time work or not. Some fellow Witnesses thought that I should leave full-time work because I was too weak. But Jehovah heard my prayers and raised me up again. He renewed my strength and, after three months, I was back in the field searching for his 'sheep.' (Isa. 40:28-31) Personally, I think I am now able to accomplish more than I did before the operation, thanks to Jehovah."

Sylvia has a winning personality. A person may walk down the street and see her before him—a slight girlish figure, sensibly and tastefully dressed, an engaging smile on a pleasant face. It is so natural for people to accept her offer of Bible literature. As she talks, listeners become infected by her joy of living. She points to Jehovah as the source of happiness: "To experience his loving, tender care over the years and to labor with him has been a most rewarding and thrilling experience. I humbly give thanks to Jehovah." Truly, 'the meek ones increase their rejoicing in Jehovah.'—Isa. 29:19.

A HAPPY DAY IN BRAZIL

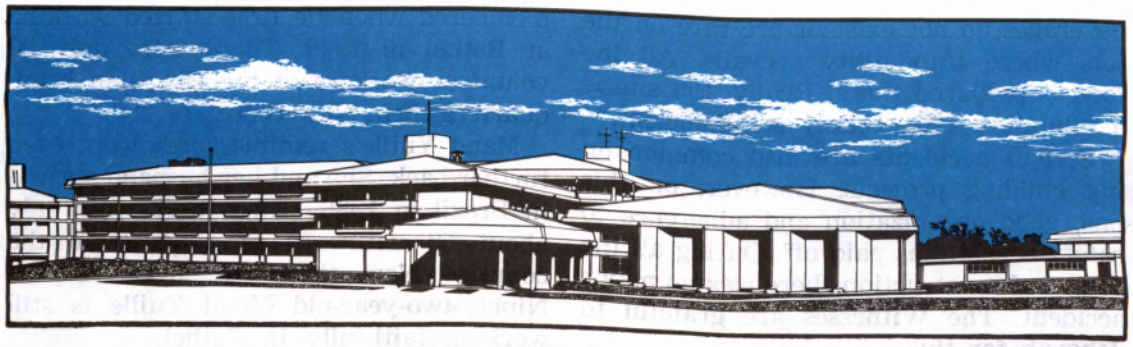
SATURDAY, March 21, 1981, was a happy day for Jehovah's Witnesses in Brazil. That day saw the dedication of their spacious new headquarters complex in Cesario Lange, 140 km (87 mi.) from São Paulo. It was a noteworthy day for the rest of Brazil, too. Why? Because sooner or later, the lives of most Brazilians will be touched by the activities of the volunteer workers in these new buildings.

Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced a rapid growth in Brazil. In the 1920's, eight sailors, who had obtained Bible literature in New York, returned home there and shared their newfound knowledge with others. From that small beginning, their number has mushroomed to more than 117,000.

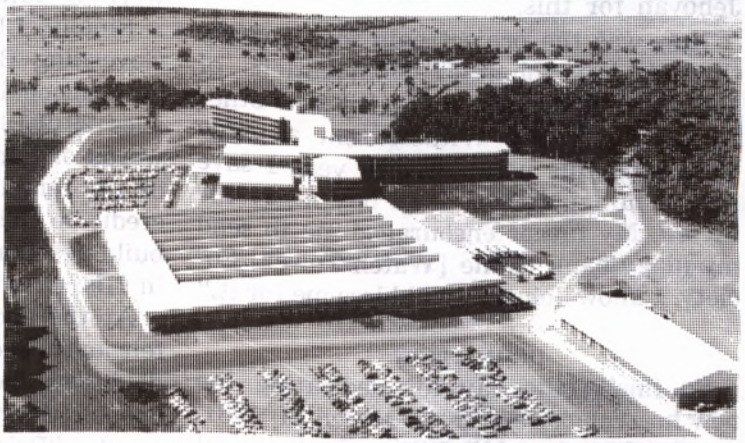
As Christians, witnesses of Jehovah are always busy speaking to their neighbors about the Bible, and they make extensive use of Bible literature. This explains the need for a headquarters from which their work can be organized and where their literature can be printed. They call their headquarters in each country "Bethel."

Due to the increasing number of Witnesses in Brazil, the former Bethel home and printery in São Paulo had been outgrown, extended and outgrown again. So it was decided to construct a brand-new building complex. In 1977, property was purchased in Cesario Lange.

The new property, comprising 115 hectares (280 acres), was uncultivated. So volunteers moved in, braving snakes and



painful beestings, to subdue the land. They cleared the area that would be needed for building and prepared some that would be used for gardening and cattle raising. They tried, however, to save as many trees as possible and were able to preserve 20 hectares (50 acres) of virgin forest. So now the Bethel family shares the site with armadillos, porcupines, deer, wildcats, skunks, squirrels and many colorful and unusual birds.



THE CONSTRUCTION

The new Bethel is truly beautiful in its rural setting. It is also large. Since it is almost six times as big as the previous one, it will be able to handle much future expansion. The eight buildings (including a printery) have a floor space of 46,000 square meters (495,139 sq. ft.). A total of 15,000 meters (16,404 yds.) of piles were driven into the ground for the supporting *pillars*—that is nearly twice the height of Mount Everest!

Who did the constructing? Well, as soon as the land was bought, many Jehovah's Witnesses from all around the country volunteered their skills and professions. Additionally, employees of a private contractor, who were not Witnesses, worked on the site. At one time there were 800.

That is a lot of people. Were they disorganized? No. The project was so well managed that a local newspaper reported: "There is no disorder, as is common among the workers on a big project; alcoholic

beverages do not exist or are rare on the job, where tranquillity prevails. All the food is prepared there. Really, the site is a miniature city, totally self-sufficient."

Serious accidents are also common on big building projects. However, on this one, good organization and adherence to safety regulations paid off. During all the period of construction there was no major accident. The Witnesses are grateful to Jehovah for this.

How was the project paid for? Largely through the voluntary contributions of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brazil and other lands. One young Witness sent a piggy bank with this note: "Every year I save money in a piggy bank to buy a toy for myself. My father encouraged me to send my piggy bank to the [Watch Tower] Society. I know Jehovah will bless me for it."

DEDICATION

So finally the day for dedicating the new headquarters arrived, March 21, 1981. On hand were 3,607 Witnesses from all parts of the country. Some had traveled 4,000 kilometers (2,485 mi.) to be there. Others, unable to attend, sent written greetings, including one message in Braille.

Among those present were some with many years of experience. Charles D. Leathco, a graduate of the very first class of the missionary school of Gilead, told the assembled crowd what it was like to visit the different congregations back in 1945. At that time, there were only 30 congregations in the whole country, compared with 2,100 today. Agenor da Paixão remembered when he first started working at Bethel in 1949. There were only 20 volunteer workers at the Brazilian headquarters then. Now there are 280.

Maud Yuille's reminiscences went even further back. She and her husband arrived in Brazil in 1936, when there were only about 60 witnesses of Jehovah in the country. Now there are over 117,000. Ninety-two-year-old Maud Yuille is still working faithfully in Bethel.

Finally, Lloyd Barry, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, gave the dedication talk, based on 1 Chronicles 29:9-13. He also used the beautiful words of King Solomon at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, and gave all credit to Jehovah God for the fine new buildings that were now ready to be used in His service.

At the end of the program, everybody felt joyful because of the day's events. And doubtless the words of Karl Rietz, who opened the program, were still in their minds: "Bricks cannot preach. Therefore, without the preachers of the 'good news' these buildings would never have been put up." How true! It was the zeal of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brazil, and the blessing of Jehovah on their hard work, that made the whole construction project necessary.

Now that it is completed, Jehovah's Witnesses will keep working hard to carry the "good news" to the farthest reaches of this vast country. Thus, this day of dedication proved to be a happy occasion not only for Jehovah's Witnesses but for all right-hearted people in Brazil.

"Yours, O Jehovah, are the greatness and the mightiness and the beauty and the excellency and the dignity; for everything in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Jehovah, the One also lifting yourself up as head over all. And now, O our God, we are thanking you and praising your beauteous name."
—1 Chron. 29:11, 13.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

● After watching a group of people dance on a bed of burning coals in Greece, a visiting American wanted to try it himself. He jumped onto the coals—but with disastrous results. He burned the skin off his soles. Not only was intense pain a problem, but he was almost lynched by the fire-dancing religionists who viewed him as desecrating their ceremony. Police had to rescue the screaming man from the mob.

Fire Dancing Just a "Gimmick"?

"I thought that they just skipped over as quickly as possible, that it was largely a gimmick," said the 29-year-old American from his hospital bed. He added: "The blind religious ecstasy the fire dancers are in when they do it is quite incredible. I would not advise anyone else to try it. All I managed to prove was that these people are genuine."

Fire walking and fire dancing, appearing in many cultures, need not necessarily be viewed as a "gimmick" or trick. It can be "genuine" in the sense that superhuman forces are involved. Because wicked spirit forces are behind the magical and occult practices mentioned at Deuteronomy 18:10-12, the true God viewed such as "detestable" in his eyes. These demon angels understand methods of insulating flesh from hot surfaces.

● "The kingdom of God is a political one." So said Anglican bishop Steven Mumba, as he encouraged Christians not to stand aloof from politics. Actually, the African bishop is merely reflecting the view of the Anglican leader Robert Runcie, archbishop of Canterbury, who said recently at St. Philip's Episcopal Church in New York city: "The church does not exist for itself, but to build the kingdom of God in the communities to which it is sent."

Christ's Position Ignored

When Christendom's clergy link God's kingdom with politics, they are not telling churchgoers what Christ's position is on the matter. For example, Jesus refused to have any political dealings, even though kingship on earth was offered to him more than once. (Matt. 4:8-11; John 6:15) Jesus said his followers are "no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world." And when questioned about his kingly authority, Jesus told the Roman governor Pontius Pilate: "My kingdom is no part of this world."—John 17:16; 18:36.

● Heart specialists now believe that about one third of heart patients have emotional problems after surgery. This often begins about the second day following the operation and may last about a week. Some patients become delirious; some suffer from weird dreams and hallucinations; others have severe bouts with anxiety and depression. To deal with the emotional problems that some patients have after surgery, heart surgeons and psychiatrists around the world recently formed an international consortium. The consortium would like doctors and nurses to pay as much careful attention to a patient's emotional state after heart surgery as they do to heartbeats.

"Heart Overrides Everything"

The specialists speak of the psychological significance of the heart. For example, psychiatrist Richard S. Blacher of Tufts–New England Medical Center in Boston says of the heart: "It's a very special organ. People commonly think of it as the seat of emotions. In our minds, the heart overrides everything." —"Newsweek," May 25, 1981, p. 63.

How true it is that the heart tends to overrule the head, the seat of intellect! In view of this, the heart, above all else, must be disciplined and trained to respond to Bible guidance. It must be taught to appreciate spiritual qualities. These qualities spring from God. "More than all else that is to be guarded," says God's Word, "safeguard your heart, for out of it are the sources of life." —Prov. 4:23; compare Matthew 15:19.

Godly conduct toward others

"I am writing you . . . that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in God's household, which is the congregation."—1 Tim. 3:14, 15.

AMONG the benefits that Christians have in studying the Bible is that they learn the godly way of dealing with other humans. Even persons unacquainted with Christianity or the Bible admit the wisdom and practicality of counsel such as: "Just as you want men to do to you, do the same way to them."—Luke 6:31.

[2] The Bible provides much more than broad generalities about our conduct toward others. It counsels on how we should conduct ourselves toward individuals who are in certain specific relationships to us, or in certain situations. For example, it gives advice as to a Christian wife's conduct toward her unbelieving husband, and counsel on our conduct toward lowly ones, the crippled and the opposite sex. (1 Pet. 3:1-6; Ps. 41:1; Lev. 19:14; 1 Tim. 5:1, 2) The Scriptures also offer much sound counsel on how we should 'conduct ourselves in God's household, which is the congregation.'—1 Tim. 3:15.

[3] Applying such divine counsel is vital, for God's Word indicates that, in part, he will judge us on the basis of how we conduct ourselves toward others. (Matt. 18:35; 25:40, 45; Rev. 2:23) Hence, rather than being guided either by what some human says that we should do, or by our emotions and what we "feel" is proper, we should have David's attitude: "Make me know *your* own ways, O Jehovah; teach me *your* own paths. Make me walk in *your* truth and teach me, for you are my God of salvation."—Ps. 25:4, 5; 139:17, 21.

1, 2. How can the Bible help us in our dealings with others?

3. Why are we in need of God's guidance as to our conduct?

DEALING WITH SINNERS

[4] As descendants of Adam, all humans "have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23; 5:12) Our situation is not hopeless, though, for "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Everyone who recognizes that and who exercises faith in Christ can gain forgiveness even though he has lived sinfully in the past.—1 Tim. 1:12-16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Acts 10:43; Rom. 6:12-14.

[5] But what if, after a person has repented, put faith in Christ and become a baptized Christian, he succumbs to weakness or stumbles into grave sin? He might still be forgiven, even as the apostle Peter was forgiven for denying Jesus. If you learned of a fellow Christian who had succumbed to grave sin, what would you do? Out of true love you certainly would want to see that that person got spiritual help. Often the devoted spiritual elders or overseers in the congregation are the means for providing that help. With what objective? That of restoring the erring Christian spiritually.—Gal. 6:1; 1 John 5:16; 2 Tim. 2:23-26; Jude 23.

[6] Sometimes, however, a person who has walked for some years in the way of true Christianity deviates from it, gives himself over to ungodly conduct and then is

4. Why is it necessary that we know about dealing with sinners?

5. What needs to be done if a Christian commits serious sin?

6. If a Christian guilty of grave sin is not repentant, what action must be taken?

not repentant despite the sincere efforts of the elders to help him. The Bible shows that this happened in the first century, and it happens today. (2 Pet. 2:10-20) What then must be done? In his perfect wisdom and justice, God directs that a firm step must be taken to protect the moral and spiritual cleanness of the congregation, which step might also shock the wrongdoer to his senses. God's Word commands: "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves." That means expelling him from the Christian congregation.—1 Cor. 5:13; 1 Tim. 1:20; compare Deuteronomy 17:7.

7 It is sad that a person's conduct and attitude would require such action, but once he has been expelled, how are the loyal members of the congregation to view and treat him? Should they conduct themselves toward him as they would toward any neighbor, workmate or person they happen to meet on the street? Should they say "Hello" or even chat briefly if they cross paths with the expelled person? What about working for him or hiring him? To what extent should Christian parents, or other relatives, communicate or keep company with the individual? Many such questions arise. How thankful we can be that Jehovah God provides us with guidance in dealing with an expelled wrongdoer!

JESUS' COUNSEL ABOUT WRONGDOERS

8 At a time when God was still dealing with the Jews as His people, Jesus offered some counsel about one who had sinned. Christ's disciples, themselves Jews, would understand this advice in the light of the existing situation in the Jewish community. We, too, can benefit, for the counsel Jesus gave would apply later when the Christian congregation was established by God. (Matt. 21:43) Christ began: *"If your brother commits a sin, go lay bare his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."*—Matt. 18:15.

9 Jesus evidently was not speaking of a "sin" in the sense of some small personal offense such as we read about in Philippians 4:2, 3. (Compare Proverbs 12:18.) Rather, it appears that he meant sins such as fraud or slander, sins serious enough that they might lead to a person's being expelled from the congregation.* If the one sinned against could resolve the matter through a private approach, he would have 'gained his brother'; when the sinner has evidenced heartfelt repentance and tried to rectify the wrong, there is no need to take the matter further.

10 What if that step failed? Jesus continued: *"But if [the sinner] does not listen, take along with you one or two more, in order that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter may be established."*—Matt. 18:16.

11 The ones brought along were to be "witnesses," not mere neutral parties attempting to mediate a reconciliation. It seems that they would be individuals who had 'witnessed' the wrongdoing, such as knowing of the financial agreement when it was made and thus being able to testify as to whether fraud had occurred. Or, if the evidence of wrongdoing was a contract or the like, spiritually qualified brothers with experience in such situations might be brought along. They could become witnesses to the facts and to what was said

7. What sort of questions arise concerning a person who has been expelled from the congregation?

8, 9. (a) What counsel did Jesus offer about one who had sinned? (b) To what type of sin was Jesus here referring?

* Under the law of Moses, some grave sins, such as adultery, homosexuality, manslaughter and apostasy, could not be settled merely on a personal basis, with a wronged individual accepting the wrongdoer's sorrow and efforts to rectify the wrong. Rather, these grave sins were handled through the older men, judges and priests.—Lev. 20:10, 13; Num. 5:11-31; 35:12, 19-25; Deut. 13:6-15; 17:2-9; 19:16-19; 22:22.

10, 11. If that first step failed, what would be the next thing to do?

by the accused during this meeting in case the last step had to be taken.

[12] Jesus gave as the final step in connection with the sinner: *"If he does not listen to them, speak to the congregation. If he does not listen even to the congregation, let him be to you just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector."* (Matt. 18:17) Yes, as a last effort to turn back the sinner from his way, the matter would be taken to spiritually older men of the congregation. These could hear the facts and obtain the witnesses' testimony. And they would be able to reprove the wrongdoer with God's Word. However, if he refused to repent, they would act in behalf of the congregation to discipline him, protecting the congregation from his dangerous influence by expelling him.

NOT INHUMANE TOWARD OTHERS

[13] As an aid in determining what our conduct should be toward such a person, we need to understand Jesus' words: "Let him be to you just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector." In later centuries, some Jewish rabbis did express extreme views, such as that a Jew should not even help a Gentile who was in peril of death. Such heartlessness was not shown only toward Gentiles. For instance, in Jesus' parable about being a true neighbor, both a Levite and a priest refused to help an injured fellow Jew, though a Samaritan later did so.—Luke 10:29-37.

[14] But in Matthew 18:17 Jesus could not have meant that his disciples were to refuse to do an act of human kindness, as in a case of accident or of desperate need. Jesus showed such kindness to some Gentiles. For example, he did so to a Syrophoenician woman. Though Jesus, his disciples and the woman acknowledged that her situation was unusual because she was a Gentile and Jesus was sent to the Jews, Christ nevertheless healed her daughter. (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30) Jesus showed similar human kindness when a Roman army officer implored him to heal a paralyzed and suffering slave. The officer admitted that he did not expect Jesus, a Jewish teacher, to enter his home. Yet "older men of the Jews" begged Jesus to show mercy to this worthy Gentile, and he did so. (Luke 7:1-10; Matt. 8:5-13) So by what he said about someone's being "as a man of the nations and as a tax collector," Jesus did not forbid expressions of merciful kindness. What, then, did he mean?

"AS A TAX COLLECTOR"

[15] First, how did the Jews look at and treat tax collectors?

> "The publicans [tax collectors] of the New Test[ament] were regarded as traitors and apostates, defiled by their frequent intercourse with the heathen, willing tools of the oppressor. They were classed with sinners . . . with harlots . . . with the heathen. . . . Left to themselves, men of decent lives holding aloof from them, their only friends or companions were found among those who, like themselves, were outcasts."—"Cyclopædia" by M'Clintock and Strong, Vol. VIII, p. 769.

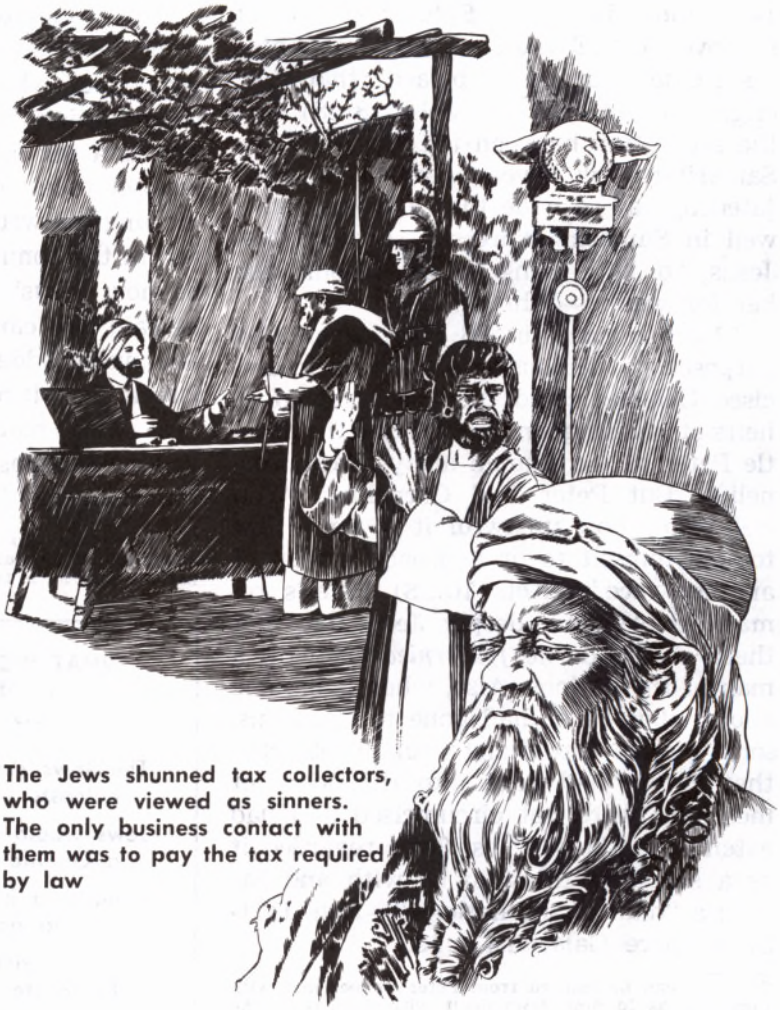
Yes, Jesus' hearers well knew that Jews in general shunned tax collectors. Only reluctantly would Jews have even minimal business contacts with them, to pay the tax required by law.

[16] 'But,' someone might ask, 'did not Jesus associate with tax collectors?' Well, let us examine the facts.

[17] As "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world," Jesus was a light to all people, though he concentrated on the Jews during his earthly ministry.

12. The final step would be what, as explained by Jesus?
13, 14. How can we be certain that Jesus did not endorse being inhumane toward others?
15. How did the Jews view and treat tax collectors?
16, 17. What was Jesus' conduct toward some tax collectors?

(John 1:29; 8:12; Isa. 42:1, 6, 7; Matt. 10:5, 6; 15:24) He was like a physician in aiding all those Jews who needed him most, including sinners such as harlots, drunkards and tax collectors, who often used dishonest means. Matthew Levi, a despised tax collector, was one who responded to the new message of salvation that Jesus brought. Matthew invited Jesus to his home for a feast, thus allowing Matthew and other interested tax collectors to hear more of the wonderful new truths. (Luke 5: 27-32; 19:1-10) These were men who had 'sinned in their ignorance,' but who were ready to take steps to have their sins "blotted out."—Acts 3:19; Heb. 9:7.



The Jews shunned tax collectors, who were viewed as sinners. The only business contact with them was to pay the tax required by law

[18] However, Jesus' effort to give a witness to tax collectors *who 'drew near to hear him' and 'followed him'* was not a pattern of how *unrepentant* sinners were to be treated. (Mark 2:15; Luke 15:1) How can we be sure? Though Christ ate with such tax collectors, the apostle Paul ordered that Christians must 'not even eat with' the sinner who was expelled from the congregation. (1 Cor. 5:11) Also, Jesus told his disciples to deal with an unrepentant wrongdoer as, logically, *they* viewed tax collectors of the time. The translation by R. F. Weymouth reads: "Regard him just as *you* regard a Gentile or a tax-gatherer." —Compare *New International Version; The New English Bible.*

HOW WERE GENTILES VIEWED AND TREATED?

[19] The apostles who heard Jesus' words that are recorded at Matthew 18:17 were Jews and knew that their countrymen did not socialize with Gentiles. The Law distinguished between Jews and Gentiles, serving to keep the Israelites separate from the surrounding nations. (Deut. 7:

18. Why were Jesus' dealings with some tax collectors not the pattern for what he said in Matthew 18:17?

19. What does the Bible show as to relations between Jews and non-Jews?

1-4; Num. 15:37-41; Eph. 2:11-14) At Passover 33 C.E. the Jews would not enter the Roman governor's palace "that they might not get defiled." (John 18:28) And the separation between the Jews and the Samaritans, who even accepted the Pentateuch, was so wide that a woman at a well in Samaria expressed surprise that Jesus, "despite being a Jew," would ask her for water.—John 4:9.

[20] Furthermore, in 36 C.E., when God purposed to demonstrate that uncircumcised Gentiles could then be accepted as heirs of the Kingdom, he directed the apostle Peter to the Roman army officer Cornelius. But Peter told Cornelius: "You well know how unlawful it is for a Jew to join himself to or approach a man of another race." (Acts 10:28) Peter's remark shows how deeply Jews felt that there should be *no fraternization* with a man of the nations. Also, when it became known that Peter had gone to Cornelius, some Jewish Christians strongly objected that Peter "had gone into the house of men that were not circumcised and had eaten with them." Yes, Jews regarded it as a shocking thing to be with and eat with a "man of the nations."—Acts 11:1-3; compare Galatians 2:12.

20. What can be learned from Peter's experience with Cornelius as to how Jews dealt with persons of the nations?

[21] The Scriptures thus help us to understand Jesus' advice to treat an unrepentant wrongdoer who refused to listen to the congregation "as a man of the nations and as a tax collector." Applying Christ's counsel today certainly would not mean viewing the wrongdoer as an average person in the community, for that would not be how Jesus' disciples understood what he said. We can better appreciate this by examining added counsel in the Christian Greek Scriptures, which will help us to deal with real-life situations today involving persons expelled from the Christian congregation.

21. How, then, do you understand what Jesus said about an unrepentant sinner being "as a man of the nations and as a tax collector"?

WHAT DID "AS A MAN OF THE NATIONS AND AS A TAX COLLECTOR" MEAN?

The Jews shunned tax collectors as outcasts

Jews would not enter the palace of a Gentile governor

Peter said it was "unlawful" for a Jew to approach a Gentile

Jewish Christians were shocked that Peter ate with Cornelius

Disfellowshiping—how to view it

"O Jehovah, . . . who will reside in your holy mountain? He who is walking faultlessly and practicing righteousness."—Ps. 15:1, 2.

JEHOVAH is righteous and holy. Though he is merciful and understanding with imperfect humans, he expects those worshiping him to reflect his holiness by trying to uphold his righteous standards.—Ps. 103:8-14; Num. 15:40.

1, 2. How do we know that God expects his worshipers to uphold his standards?

[2] An Israelite who deliberately violated God's commands, such as those against apostasy, adultery or murder, was to be cut off, put to death. (Num. 15:30,

31; 35:31; Deut. 13:1-5; Lev. 20:10) This firmness in upholding God's reasonable and just standards was good for all Israelites, for it helped to maintain the congregation's purity. And it served to deter anyone from spreading corruption among the people who had God's name on them.

[3] In the first century C.E. the Jews under Roman rule did not have the authority to administer the death penalty. (John 18:28-31) But a Jew guilty of violating the Law could be expelled from the synagogue. An effect of this severe punishment was that other Jews would shun or avoid the expelled person. It is said that others would not even have commercial transactions with him beyond selling him the necessities of life.*—John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2.

[4] After the Christian congregation was formed, it replaced the Jewish nation in having God's name upon it. (Matt. 21:43; Acts 15:14) Accordingly, Christians could rightly be expected to uphold Jehovah's righteousness. The apostle Peter wrote: "In accord with the Holy One who called you, do you also become holy yourselves in all your conduct, because it is written: 'You must be holy, because I am holy.'" (1 Pet. 1:14-16) Jehovah loves his people and wants to protect the purity of the Christian congregation. So he outlined a provision to reject or expel a person who persists in a course that dishonors God and endangers the congregation.

[5] The apostle Paul advised: "As for a man that promotes a sect, reject him after a first and a second admonition; knowing that such a man has been turned out of the way and is sinning, he being self-condemned." (Titus 3:10, 11) Yes, spiritual elders, such as Titus was, first try lovingly to help a wrongdoer. If he will not respond to their help and persists in a course of "sinning," they have authority to convoke a committee of elders to "judge the members of [the] fellowship." (1 Cor. 5:12, *Today's English Version*) Love for God and for the purity of his people requires that those in the "fellowship," the congregation, reject that man.

[6] In the first century some of such wrongdoers arose. Hymenaeus and Alexander were of that sort, men who had "experienced shipwreck concerning their faith." Paul said: "I have handed them over to Satan that they may be taught by discipline not to blaspheme." (1 Tim. 1:19, 20) Expelling those two men was a severe chastisement, or discipline, a punishment that might teach them not to blaspheme the holy and living God. (Compare Luke 23:16, where the basic Greek word often rendered "discipline" is used.) It was proper that these blasphemers be turned over to the authority of Satan, cast into the darkness of the world under Satan's influence.—2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:17-19; 1 John 5:19; compare Acts 26:18.

HOW TO TREAT EXPELLED ONES

[7] Some questions, however, may arise about how we should treat a former member who has been expelled. Thankfully, God has provided in his Word answers and directions that we can be sure are perfect, righteous and just.—Jer. 17:10; Deut. 32:4.

[8] At one point a man in the Corinthian congregation was practicing immorality and evidently was unrepentant. Paul wrote that this man 'should be taken away from

* "Henceforth he was like one dead. He was not allowed to study with others, no [social] intercourse was to be held with him, he was not even to be shown the road. He might, indeed, buy the necessaries of life, but it was forbidden to eat or drink with such an one."—*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, by A. Edersheim, Vol. II, p. 184.

3. What was the situation of a Jew expelled from the synagogue?

4, 5. How was the Christian congregation to deal with an unrepentant sinner?

6. Why was it right and proper to expel unrepentant sinners?

7, 8. How can we determine what our conduct should be toward an expelled one?

their midst,' for he was like a little leaven that could ferment, or corrupt, a whole mass. (1 Cor. 5:1, 2, 6) But, was he, when once expelled, to be treated as if he were just an average person of the world whom the Christians might meet in their neighborhood or daily life? Note what Paul said.

9 "I wrote you to quit mixing in company with fornicators, not meaning entirely with the fornicators of this world or the greedy persons and extortioners or idolaters. Otherwise, you would actually have to get out of the world." (1 Cor. 5:9, 10) In these words Paul realistically acknowledged that most persons whom we contact in our daily affairs have never known or followed God's way. They may be fornicators, extortioners or idolaters, so they are not persons whom Christians choose as regular, close associates. Still, we live on this planet among mankind and may have to be around such persons and speak to them on the job, at school, in the neighborhood.

10 In the next verse Paul contrasts this situation with how Christians should conduct themselves toward one who had been a Christian "brother" but who was expelled from the congregation because of wrongdoing: "But now I am writing you to *quit mixing in company* ["not associate," *TEV*] with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, *not even eating with such a man.*"—1 Cor. 5:11.

11 The expelled person is not a mere man of the world who has not known God nor pursued a godly way of life. Rather, he has known the way of truth and righteousness, but he has left that way and unrepentantly pursued sin to the point of having to be expelled. So he is to be treated differently.* Peter commented on how such former Christians differ from an average "man on the street." The apostle said: "If, after having escaped from the defilements of the world by an accurate knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they get involved again with these very things and are overcome, the final conditions have become worse for them than the first. . . . The saying of the true proverb has happened to them: 'The dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow that was bathed to rolling in the mire.'" —2 Pet. 2:20-22; 1 Cor. 6:11.

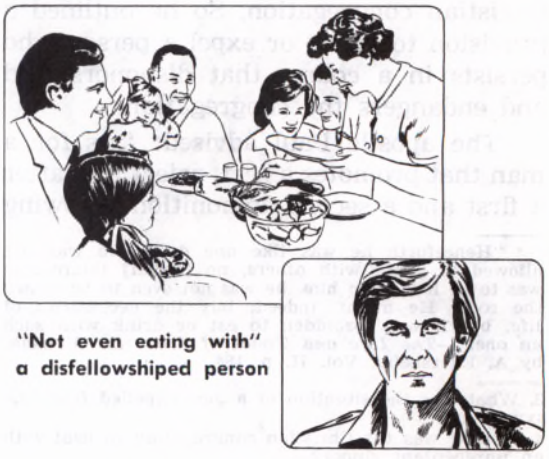
12 Yes, the Bible commands Christians not to keep company or fellowship with a person who has been expelled from the congregation. Thus "disfellowshiping" is what Jehovah's Witnesses appropriately call the expelling and subsequent shunning of such an unrepentant wrongdoer. Their refusal to fellowship with an expelled per-

9. What was Paul's counsel about dealing with unrighteous persons in general?

10, 11. Why are Christians to act differently toward a sinner who has been expelled?

* In line with this Bible teaching, Adam Clarke highlights the difference, stating: "Have no communion with [an expelled sinner] in things *sacred* or *civil*. You may transact your worldly concerns with a person that knows not God, and makes no profession of Christianity, whatever his moral character may be; but, ye must not even thus far acknowledge a man *professing Christianity*, who is scandalous in his conduct. Let *him* have this extra mark of your abhorrence of all sin."

12. (a) Why is "disfellowshiping" an appropriate term? (b) What does history show as to how those professing Christianity dealt with sinners in early times?



"Not even eating with" a disfellowshiped person

son on any spiritual or social level reflects loyalty to God's standards and obedience to his command at 1 Corinthians 5:11, 13. This is consistent with Jesus' advice that such a person be considered in the same way as "a man of the nations" was viewed by the Jews of that time. For some time after the apostles died, those professing Christianity evidently followed the Biblical procedure.* But how many churches today comply with God's clear directions in this regard?

THOSE WHO DISASSOCIATE THEMSELVES

[13] A Christian might grow spiritually weak, perhaps because of not studying God's Word regularly, having personal problems or experiencing persecution. (1 Cor. 11:30; Rom. 14:1) Such a one might cease to attend Christian meetings. What is to be done? Recall that the apostles abandoned Jesus on the night of his arrest. Yet Christ had urged Peter, "When once you have returned, strengthen your brothers [who also abandoned Jesus]." (Luke 22:32) Hence, out of love Christian elders and others might visit and help the one who has grown weak and inactive. (1 Thess. 5:14; Rom. 15:1; Heb. 12:12, 13) It is another matter, though, when a person repudiates his being a Christian and disassociates himself.

[14] One who has been a true Christian might renounce the way of the truth, stating that he no longer considers himself to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses or wants to be known as one. When this rare event occurs, the person is renouncing his standing as a Christian, deliberately disassociating himself from the congregation. The apostle John wrote: "They went out from us, but they were not of our sort; for if they had been of our sort, they would have remained with us."—1 John 2:19.

[15] Or, a person might renounce his place in the Christian congregation by his actions, such as by becoming part of an organization whose objective is contrary to the Bible, and, hence, is under judgment by Jehovah God. (Compare Revelation 19:17-21; Isaiah 2:4.) So if one who was a Christian chose to join those who are disapproved of God, it would be fitting for the congregation to acknowledge by a brief announcement that he had disassociated himself and is no longer one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

[16] Persons who make themselves "not of our sort" by deliberately rejecting the faith and beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses should appropriately be viewed and treated as are those who have been disfellowshiped for wrongdoing.

COOPERATING WITH THE CONGREGATION

[17] Though Christians enjoy spiritual fellowship when they discuss or study the Bible with their brothers or interested persons, they would not want to have such fellowship with an expelled sinner (or one who has renounced the faith and beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses, disassociating himself). The expelled person has been 'rejected,' being "self-condemned" because of "sinning," and those in the congregation both accept God's judgment and uphold it.

* Ecclesiastical historian Joseph Bingham writes concerning the early centuries: "The discipline of the church consisted in a power to deprive men of all the benefits and privileges of baptism, by turning them out of the society and communion of the church, . . . and every one shunned and avoided them in common conversation, partly to establish the church's censures and proceedings against them, and partly to make them ashamed, and partly to secure themselves from the danger of contagion." ". . . no one was to receive excommunicated persons into their houses, nor eat at the same table with them; they were not to converse with them familiarly, whilst living; nor perform the funeral obsequies for them, when dead, . . . These directions were drawn up upon the model of those rules of the apostles, which forbade Christians to give any countenance to notorious offenders."—*The Antiquities of the Christian Church*, pp. 880, 891.

13. What should be done in the case of a person who becomes weak and inactive?
14. How might a person disassociate himself?
15, 16. (a) How else might a person become disassociated? (b) How should Christians view and deal with disassociated persons?
17, 18. What is involved in our cooperating with the congregation as to disfellowshiping?

Disfellowshiping, however, implies more than ceasing to have spiritual fellowship. —Titus 3:10, 11.

18 Paul wrote: "Quit mixing in company . . . , not even eating with such a man." (1 Cor. 5:11) A meal is a time of relaxation and socializing. Hence, the Bible here rules out social fellowship, too, such as joining an expelled person in a picnic or party, ball game, trip to the beach or theater, or sitting down to a meal with him.* (The special problems involving a relative who has been disfellowshiped are considered in the following article.)

19 Sometimes a Christian might feel under considerable pressure to ignore this Bible advice. His own emotions may create the pressure, or it may be brought to bear on him by acquaintances. For instance, one brother was pressured to officiate at the marriage of two disfellowshiped persons. Could that service be rationalized as a mere kindness? One could feel that way. But why were his services wanted, rather than those of the town mayor or other state marrying agent? Was it not because of his standing as a minister of God and his ability to offer marriage counsel from God's Word? To give in to such pressure would involve him in fellowshiping with the couple, persons who had been expelled from the congregation for their ungodly way.—1 Cor. 5:13.

20 Other problems arise in connection with business or employment. What if you were employed by a man who now was expelled by the congregation, or you employed a person to whom that happened? What then? If you were contractually or financially obliged to continue the business relationship for the present, you certainly would now have a different attitude toward the disfellowshiped individual. Discussion of business matters with him or contact on the job might be necessary, but spiritual discussions and social fellowship would be things of the past. In that way you could demonstrate your obedience to God and have a protective barrier for yourself. Also, this might impress on him how much his sin has cost him in various ways. —2 Cor. 6:14, 17.

SPEAK WITH A DISFELLOWSHIPED OR DISASSOCIATED PERSON?

21 Would upholding God's righteousness and his disfellowshiping arrangement mean that a Christian should not speak at all with an expelled person, not even saying "Hello"? Some have wondered about that, in view of Jesus' advice to love our enemies and not 'greet our brothers only.'—Matt. 5:43-47.

22 Actually, in his wisdom God did not try to cover every possible situation. What we need is to get the sense of what Jehovah says about treatment of a disfellowshiped person, for then we can strive to uphold His view. Through the apostle John, God explains:

> "Everyone that pushes ahead and does not remain in the teaching of the Christ does not have God. . . . If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, never receive him into your homes or say a greeting to him. For he that says a greeting to him is a sharer in his wicked works."—2 John 9-11.

23 The apostle who gave that wise warning was close to Jesus and knew well what Christ had said about greeting others. He also knew that the common greeting of

* Our issue of September 1, 1981, discussed 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15, where the Bible says that it might be necessary to 'mark' a Christian who persists in disorderly conduct. He is still a brother and to be admonished as such, but other Christians are to "stop associating with him." If they should avoid his company on a social basis, much clearer separation should exist in the cases of disfellowshiped or disassociated wrongdoers.

19. Why may it sometimes seem difficult to uphold a disfellowshiping, but why is it important that we do?
20. What should be our reaction if a business associate is disfellowshiped?
21, 22. The Scriptures provide what advice about speaking with a disfellowshiped person?
23, 24. Why is it wise to avoid speaking to expelled individuals?

that time was "Peace." As distinct from some personal "enemy" or worldly man in authority who opposed Christians, a disfellowshiped or disassociated person who is trying to promote or justify his apostate thinking or is continuing in his ungodly conduct is certainly not one to whom to wish "Peace." (1 Tim. 2:1, 2) And we all know from our experience over the years that a simple "Hello" to someone can be the first step that develops into a conversation and maybe even a friendship. Would we want to take that first step with a disfellowshiped person?

[24] 'But what if he seems to be repentant and needs encouragement?' someone might wonder. There is a provision for handling such situations. The overseers in the congregation serve as spiritual shepherds and protectors of the flock. (Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2) If a disfellowshiped or disassociated person inquires, or gives evidence of wanting to come back into God's favor, the elders can speak to him. They will kindly explain what he needs to do and might give him some appropriate admonition. They can deal with him on the basis of facts about his past sin and his attitude. Others in the congregation lack such information. So if someone felt that the disfellowshiped or disassociated person 'is repentant,' might that be a judgment based on impression rather than accurate information? If the overseers were convinced that the person was repentant and was producing the fruits of repentance,* he *would* be reinstated into the congregation. After that occurs, the rest of the congregation can warmly welcome him at the meetings, display forgiveness, comfort him and confirm their love for him, as Paul urged the Corinthians to do with the man reinstated at Corinth.—2 Cor. 2:5-8.

* For a discussion of repentance, see *The Watchtower* of September 1, 1981.

NOT SHARING IN WICKED WORKS

[25] All faithful Christians need to take to heart the serious truth that God inspired John to write: "He that says a greeting to [an expelled sinner who is promoting an erroneous teaching or carrying on ungodly conduct] is a sharer in his wicked works."—2 John 11.

[26] Many of Christendom's commentators take exception to 2 John 11. They claim that it is 'unchristian counsel, contrary to the spirit of our Lord,' or that it encourages intolerance. Yet such sentiments emanate from religious organizations that do not apply God's command to "remove the wicked man from among yourselves," that seldom if ever expel even notorious wrongdoers from their churches. (1 Cor. 5:13) Their "tolerance" is unscriptural, unchristian.—Matt. 7:21-23; 25:24-30; John 8:44.

[27] But it is not wrong to be loyal to the righteous and just God of the Bible. He tells us that he will accept 'in his holy mountain' only those who walk faultlessly, practice righteousness and speak truth. (Ps. 15:1-5) If, though, a Christian were to throw in his lot with a wrongdoer who has been rejected by God and disfellowshiped, or has disassociated himself, that would be as much as saying 'I do not want a place in God's holy mountain either.' If the elders saw him heading in that direction by regularly keeping company with a disfellowshiped person, they would lovingly and patiently try to help him to regain God's view. (Matt. 18:18; Gal. 6:1) They would admonish him and, if necessary, 'reprove him with severity.' They want to help him remain 'in God's holy mountain.' But if he will not cease to fellowship with the expelled person, he thus has made himself 'a sharer (supporting or participating) in the wicked works' and must be

25, 26. What does God counsel about becoming a "sharer" with a disfellowshiped person?

27. How might a Christian become such a "sharer," and with what result?

removed from the congregation, expelled. —Titus 1:13; Jude 22, 23; compare Numbers 16:26.

LOYAL TO GOD'S VIEW

[28] Loyalty to Jehovah God and his provisions is a source of happiness, for all his ways are righteous, just and good. This is true, too, concerning his provision to disfellowship unrepentant wrongdoers. As we cooperate with that arrangement, we can trust in David's words: "Take knowledge that Jehovah will certainly distinguish his loyal one." (Ps. 4:3) Yes, God sets apart, honors and guides those who are loyal to him and his ways. Among the many blessings we receive from such loyalty is the joy of being among those whom God approves and accepts 'in his holy mountain.'—Ps. 84:10, 11.

28. How can we manifest our loyalty to Jehovah's view?

DO YOU RECALL THESE POINTS?

When Jews were expelled from the synagogue, how were they treated?

Paul showed what difference in treating (1) immoral persons in the world? (2) immoral persons disfellowshiped from the congregation?

How should Christians view a person who disassociates himself from the congregation?

"Disfellowshiping" implies the terminating of what kinds of fellowship?

Why do Christians not greet or speak with disfellowshiped persons?

With regard to disfellowshiping, what do we need to do to remain 'in God's holy mountain'?

If a relative is disfellowshiped ...

AFTER Adam had been alone for some time, God said: "It is not good for the man to continue by himself." Then He created Eve and instituted human marriage. (Gen. 2:18, 21, 22) Thereafter, earth's population was to grow. So each person would come to have many relatives. Even if some family members, such as children, did not live nearby they could be visited and pleasant times shared. —Gen. 1:28; Job 1:1-5.

[2] God had purposed that families should be united in true worship, so religious beliefs would not create any divisions. But incidents occurred in which religion became a family issue. One of these was when Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled. Jehovah confirmed that he was dealing through Moses and Aaron, not through these religious rebels. Then Moses told the people to get away from the rebels' tents. What would the children and households of Korah, Dathan and Abiram do? Would they put loyalty to family ahead of loyalty to Jehovah and his congregation? Most of those closely related to the rebels put family before God. Jehovah executed these relatives along with the rebels.—Num. 16:16-33.

[3] However, some of Korah's sons remained loyal to God and His people. They were not executed along with the rest of Korah's household and the families of Da-

1, 2. (a) What was God's purpose as to family religion? (b) Some families faced what decision in Korah's time?

3. Some of Korah's family made what wise choice?

than and Abiram. (Num. 26:9-11) In fact, descendants of these surviving Korahites were later blessed with special service at the temple and mentioned with honor in the Bible.—2 Chron. 20:14-19; Ps. 42, 44-49, 84, 85, 87.

[4] A similar decision between loyalty to family and loyalty to God was faced when an Israelite became an apostate. Would his family, moved by human emotion or blood ties, try to shield him from being cut off? Or would even his brother, son or daughter realize that loyalty to God and the congregation was the right and wise course? (See Deuteronomy 13:6-11.) In the Christian arrangement today a sinner is not cut off by execution, but Christians may face tests because of a relative's being disciplined.

RELATIVES MAY CAUSE PROBLEMS

[5] Family connections and affection can be very strong. This is natural and is in accord with God's arrangement. (John 16:21) But these strong ties can also bring a difficult test on Christians. Jesus explained that one effect of a person's becoming a Christian would be that relatives might oppose. Jesus said: *"I came to put, not peace, but a sword. For I came to cause division, with a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a young wife against her mother-in-law. Indeed, a man's enemies will be persons of his own household. He that has greater affection for father or mother than for me is not worthy of me."*—Matt. 10:34-38.

[6] Christians do not want such enmity to exist. And there is no reason why relatives should oppose or hate them for having become clean, moral, honest servants of God. Yet true Christians realize that they cannot put family before God. In the long run, what is in everyone's best interest is for Christians to continue faithful to God. In time they may be able to influence their relatives to walk on the way leading to salvation.—Rom. 9:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:12-16.

[7] Relatives may also cause problems for true Christians in another way. This may develop when a relative is disfellowshiped. As discussed in the preceding articles, if a person in the congregation unrepentantly practices gross sin, God requires that he be disfellowshiped. (1 Cor. 5:11-13) The conduct of the wrongdoer has changed his relationship with Jehovah and therefore with family members who are Jehovah's Witnesses. God is not to blame for these results, because his standards are righteous and just. (Job 34:10, 12) Nor does the fault rest with the faithful Christian relatives. It is the disfellowshiped person who has made problems for himself and for his relatives, as did Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

[8] We need to examine two distinct situations. The first is where a Christian lives in the same household with a disfellowshiped or disassociated family member. The second is where such a relative is not in the immediate family circle.

IN THE IMMEDIATE FAMILY CIRCLE

[9] A person might become a Christian without others in that one's family circle accepting the faith. For instance, a wife might be serving Jehovah, but her husband not. Despite that, she is still "one flesh" with her husband and is obliged to love and respect him. (Gen. 2:24; 1 Pet. 3:1-6) Or she might be married to a man who was a dedicated Christian but was later expelled from the congregation. Yet that would not end their marital ties; only

4. In what other way might family loyalty pose a test in Israel?

5, 6. (a) How might family division develop over religion? (b) Why must Christians not compromise in this situation? (Ps. 109:2-5)

7, 8. Who is at fault over family problems that disfellowshiping may cause? (Deut. 32:4)

9. What is the situation as to family obligations if a person's mate is not a Christian or is disfellowshiped?

death or a Scriptural divorce would do *that*.—1 Cor. 7:39; Matt. 19:9.

[10] Similarly, if a relative, such as a parent, son or daughter, is disfellowshiped or has disassociated himself, blood and family ties remain. Does that mean, then, that in the family circle everything remains the same when one member is disfellowshiped? Definitely not.

[11] A disfellowshiped person has been spiritually cut off from the congregation; the former spiritual ties have been completely severed. This is true even with respect to his relatives, including those within his immediate family circle. Thus, family members—while acknowledging family ties—will no longer have any spiritual fellowship with him.—1 Sam. 28:6; Prov. 15:8, 9.

[12] That will mean changes in the spiritual fellowship that may have existed in the home. For example, if the husband is disfellowshiped, his wife and children will not be comfortable with him conducting a family Bible study or leading in Bible reading and prayer. If he wants to say a prayer, such as at mealtime, he has a right to do so in his own home. But they can silently offer their own prayers to God. (Prov. 28:9; Ps. 119:145, 146) What if a disfellowshiped person in the home wants to be present when the family reads the Bible together or has a Bible study? The others might let him be present to listen if he will not try to teach them or share his religious ideas.

10, 11. How does disfellowshiping affect spiritual ties in the home?
12. With regard to spiritual communion, what changes might occur when a family member is disfellowshiped?

A disfellowshiped parent may need to be cared for in the home of Christian children

[13] If a minor child is disfellowshiped, the parents will still care for his physical needs and provide moral training and discipline. They would not conduct a Bible study directly with the child, with him participating. Yet this does not mean that he would not be required to sit in on the family study. And they might direct attention to parts of the Bible or Christian publications that contain counsel he needs. (Prov. 1:8-19; 6:20-22; 29:17; Eph. 6:4) They can have him accompany them to and sit with them at Christian meetings, hoping that he will take to heart Biblical counsel.

[14] But what if a close relative, such as a son or a parent who does not live in the home, is disfellowshiped and subsequently wants to move back there? The family could decide what to do depending on the situation.*

[15] For example, a disfellowshiped parent may be sick or no longer able to care for himself financially or physically. The Christian children have a Scriptural and moral obligation to assist. (1 Tim. 5:8) Perhaps it seems necessary to bring the parent into the home, temporarily or per-

* Comments on the situation of elders and ministerial servants are presented in "Questions from Readers" in *The Watchtower* of February 1, 1978.

13. How would parents deal with a disfellowshiped child in the home?
14, 15. What should be done about a disfellowshiped parent's moving back into the home?

manently. Or it may appear advisable to arrange for care where there is medical personnel but where the parent would have to be visited. What is done may depend on factors such as the parent's true needs, his attitude and the regard the head of the household has for the spiritual welfare of the household.

[16] This could be true also with regard to a child who had left home but is now disfellowshiped or disassociated. Sometimes Christian parents have accepted back into the home for a time a disfellowshiped child who has become physically or emotionally ill. But in each case the parents can weigh the individual circumstances. Has a disfellowshiped son lived on his own, and is he now unable to do so? Or does he want to move back primarily because it would be an easier life? What about his morals and attitude? Will he bring "leaven" into the home?—Gal. 5:9.

[17] In Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, the father ran to meet and then accepted his returning son. The father, seeing the lad's pitiful condition, responded with natural parental concern. We can note, though, that the son did not bring home harlots or come with a disposition to continue his sinful life in his father's home. No, he expressed heartfelt repentance and evidently was determined to return to living a clean life.—Luke 15:11-32.

The prodigal son did not return home to continue his sinful living, but was repentant. His father accepted him back

DISFELLOWSHIPED RELATIVES NOT LIVING AT HOME

[18] The second situation that we need to consider is that involving a disfellowshiped or disassociated relative who is *not* in the immediate family circle or living at one's home. Such a person is still related by blood or marriage, and so there may be some limited need to care for necessary family matters. Nonetheless, it is not as if he were living in the same home where contact and conversation could not be avoided. We should keep clearly in mind the Bible's inspired direction: "Quit mixing in company with *anyone* called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person . . . , not even eating with such a man."—1 Cor. 5:11.

[19] Consequently, Christians related to such a disfellowshiped person living outside the home should strive to avoid needless association, even keeping business dealings to a minimum. The reasonableness of this course becomes apparent from reports of what has occurred where relatives have taken the mistaken view, 'Though he is disfellowshiped, we are related and so can treat him the same as before.' From one area comes this:

16, 17. (a) How might parents react to the possibility of a disfellowshiped child's moving back home? (b) What can we learn on this from the parable of the prodigal son?

18, 19. (a) How should Christians view association with disfellowshiped relatives who are outside the immediate family? (b) Why is this position appropriate? (2 Tim. 2:19)

"One person who was disfellowshiped was related to about one third of the congregation. All of his relations continued to associate with him."

And a highly respected Christian elder writes:

"In our area some disfellowshiped ones with large families have been met, as they enter the lobby of the Kingdom Hall, with a fanfare of backslapping and handshaking (even though the disfellowshiped one was known by them to be still living immorally). I feel a deep concern that those who have been disfellowshiped need to see that their course is hated by Jehovah and by his people and that they should feel a real need to become genuinely repentant. What will help these disfellowshiped ones to change when they are continually greeted by all in their large families who know of their practices?"

[20] There must have been congregations in the first century where many were related. But when someone was disfellowshiped, were all the relatives to carry on as normal as long as they did not discuss Scriptural matters with the disfellowshiped person? No. Otherwise the congregation would not really be applying the command: "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves."—1 Cor. 5:13.

[21] Great care needs to be exercised that a person's situation as a disfellowshiped sinner is neither overlooked nor minimized. As the sons of Korah well demonstrated, our chief loyalty must be to Jehovah and his theocratic arrangement. We can be sure that when we uphold his standards and prefer association with his organized people, rather than with wrongdoers, we will have his protection and blessing.—Ps. 84:10-12.

SOCIAL GATHERINGS AND DISFELLOWSHIPED RELATIVES

[22] Normally, relatives are often together at meals, picnics, family reunions or other social gatherings. But when someone has unrepentantly pursued sin and has had to be disfellowshiped, he may cause difficulties for his Christian relatives in regard to such gatherings. While they realize that they are still related to him, they do not want to ignore Paul's advice that faithful Christians should "quit mixing in company" with an expelled sinner.

[23] There is no point in looking for some rule as to family members being at gatherings where a disfellowshiped relative might be present. This would be something for those concerned to resolve, in keeping with Paul's counsel. (1 Cor. 5:11) And yet it should be appreciated that if a disfellowshiped person is going to be at a gathering to which nonrelative Witnesses are invited, that may well affect what others do. For example, a Christian couple might be getting married at a Kingdom Hall. If a disfellowshiped relative comes to the Kingdom Hall for the wedding, obviously he could not be in the bridal party there or "give away" the bride. What, though, if there is a wedding feast or reception? This can be a happy social occasion, as it was in Cana when Jesus attended. (John 2:1, 2) But will the disfellowshiped relative be allowed to come or even be invited? If he was going to attend, many Christians, relatives or not, might conclude that they should not be there, to eat and associate with him, in view of Paul's directions at 1 Corinthians 5:11.

[24] Thus, sometimes Christians may not feel able to have a disfellowshiped or disassociated relative present for a gathering that normally would include family members. Still, the Christians can enjoy the association of the loyal members of the congregation, having in mind Jesus' words: "Whoever does the will of God, this one is my brother and sister and mother." —Mark 3:35.

20, 21. When it comes to disfellowshiped relatives, why do we need to be careful? (2 Tim. 2:22)

22. Why may family gatherings pose special problems as to disfellowshiped relatives?

23. What would be the situation with a disfellowshiped relative and a Christian wedding?

24. Loyal Christians can most enjoy what association? (Prov. 18:24)

[25] The fact is that when a Christian gives himself over to sin and has to be disfellowshiped, he forfeits much: his approved standing with God; membership in the happy congregation of Christians; sweet fellowship with the brothers, including much of the association he had with Christian relatives. (1 Pet. 2:17) The pain he has caused may even survive him.

[26] Should he die while disfellowshiped, arrangements for his funeral may be a problem. His Christian relatives may like to have had a talk at the Kingdom Hall, if that is the local custom. But that would not be fitting for a person expelled from the congregation. If he had been giving evidence of repentance and wanting God's forgiveness, such as by ceasing to practice sin and by attending Christian meetings, some brother's conscience might allow him to give a Bible talk at the funeral home or grave site. Such Biblical comments about the condition of the dead provide a witness to unbelievers or comfort to the relatives. However, if the disfellowshiped person had still been advocating false teachings or ungodly conduct, even such a talk would not be appropriate. —2 John 9-11.

LESSONS FOR ALL OF US

[27] All of us need to appreciate that it is Jehovah's judgment that counts. (Prov. 29:26) That is true as to hateful practices, for the Bible shows that these are things that God detests. (Prov. 6:16-19) But it is also true as to his judgment of individuals. Jehovah's Word plainly says that "unrighteous persons," those carrying on the "works of the flesh," will not inherit his kingdom. (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19-21) Such persons have no place in heaven, nor will they fit in the earthly realm of the Kingdom. Accordingly, anyone who wants to remain in the clean congregation of God today must meet His standards. God simply will not permit "leaven" to remain as a corrupting influence among his holy people.—1 Cor. 5:6-13.

[28] Naturally, if a close relative is disfellowshiped, human emotions can pose a major test for us. Sentiment and family ties are particularly strong between parents and their children, and they are also powerful when a marriage mate is disfellowshiped. Still, we must recognize that, in the final analysis, we will not benefit anyone or please God if we allow emotion to lead us into ignoring His wise counsel and guidance. We need to display our complete confidence in the perfect righteousness of God's ways, including his provision to disfellowship unrepentant wrongdoers. If we remain loyal to God and to the congregation, the wrongdoer may in time take a lesson from that, repent and be reinstated in the congregation. Yet, whether that occurs or not, we can draw comfort and strength from what David said late in life:

"All [God's] judicial decisions are in front of me; . . . And let Jehovah repay me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in front of his eyes. With someone loyal you will act in loyalty; with the faultless, mighty one you will deal faultlessly; with the one keeping clean you will show yourself clean . . . And the humble people you will save." —2 Sam. 22:23-28.

25, 26. If a disfellowshiped relative dies, what would be the situation as to a funeral?
27. How should we view God's judgments?
28. How may the matter of disfellowshiping put our loyalty to the test?

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

October 18: Godly Conduct Toward Others. Page 16. Songs to Be Used: 34, 31.
October 25: Disfellowshiping—How to View It. Page 20. Songs to Be Used: 52, 55.
November 1: If a Relative Is Disfellowshiped . . . Page 26. Songs to Be Used: 79, 82.