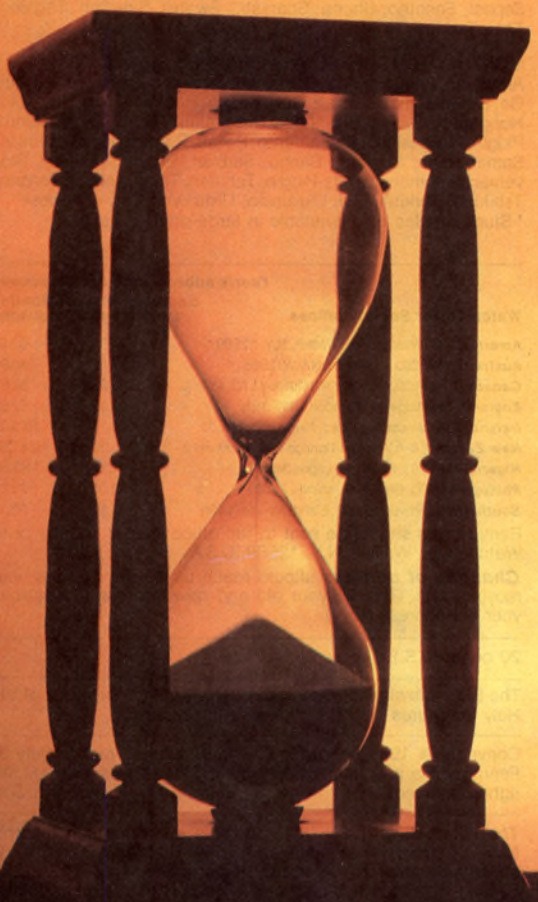
November 1, 1986

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



Are We Living in "the Time of the End"?

What Daniel's Prophecy Reveals

The Watchtower®

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

November 1, 1986
Vol. 107, No. 21

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THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER" is to exalt Jehovah God as the Sovereign of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as they fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in the now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. "The Watchtower," published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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November 30: Youths—Your Part in a Happy, United Family. Page 16. Songs to Be Used: 221, 183.

December 7: Parents—How Can You 'Build Up' Your Home? Page 21. Songs to Be Used: 164, 92.

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Are We Living in *"the Time of the End"?*

THE diner was confused. As he looked out the window of a mid-Manhattan restaurant overlooking Times Square, New York City, his eyes darted back and forth between three separate digital clocks, all flashing the time in oversized letters. One clock read 11:28. Another, as though doubtful of the lateness of the hour, lagged behind at 11:26, whereas the third was impatiently running ahead at 11:29.

'A minute or two does not really matter,' you may say. Try convincing a person of that, however, who has just missed his bus, train, or plane, not by minutes but only by seconds! Knowing the correct time is important. Knowing where we are in God's timetable is even more so.

The Possibility of Doomsday

Of course, as you may know, people have been talking about "the time of the end" —some say 'the end of the world' or 'doomsday'—for centuries. The prophet Daniel spoke about it 25 centuries ago. (Daniel 12:4) But nowadays, according to free-lance writer James David Besser, "it no longer takes religious or supernatural faith to accept the possibility of doomsday; it merely requires access to the television news." Do you not agree?

Without doubt, television makes world news more accessible by transplanting the action right into our living rooms. It makes problems seem more immediate and more personal. It reminds us that the city or town disintegrated in a possible nuclear holocaust, the son or daughter brutalized in a possible crime wave, the mother or father held hostage in a possible terrorist attack—potentially, all these problems could be ours. Still, these possibilities in themselves do not prove that doomsday will soon be upon us. But they do make it seem more likely, causing the question, Are we living in "the time of the end"? to take on greater urgency.

"As for you, O Daniel, make secret the words and seal up the book, until the time of the end."
—Daniel 12:4.

Jesus, Daniel, and the End of the World

Over 19 centuries ago, the disciples of Jesus asked him: "What will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things ["the end of the world," *King James Version*]?" (Matthew 24:3) In giving them a sign, Jesus spoke of numerous evidences, all of which in a composite way would indicate that we had reached "the conclusion of the system of things." Turn in your Bible to Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Mark chapter 13, and Luke chapter 21, and read about them for yourself.

You may be surprised to discover that what you read sounds almost like a summary of today's television news. You will read about wars, great earthquakes, pestilences, and food shortages—all occurring on a global scale. You will also read about "anguish of nations, not knowing the way out," and about people becoming "faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth."

DANIEL	JESUS
"In *the time of the end* . . . *Michael* [Jesus Christ] *will stand up* . . . and there will certainly occur a *time of distress* such as has not been made to occur since there came to be a nation. . . . And during that time *your people will escape.*"—Daniel 11:40; 12:1.	"What will be the sign of *your presence* and of *the conclusion of the system of things?* . . . "There will be *great tribulation* such as has not occurred since the world's beginning . . . *"Unless* those days were *cut short, no flesh* would be *saved;* but . . . those days will be cut short."—Matthew 24:3, 21, 22.

Could you find more appropriate words to describe the world situation, about which today's television programs tell us so much?—Luke 21:10, 11, 25, 26.

This strong circumstantial evidence that we are living in "the time of the end" is not all that we have. As we have noted above, we find corroborative evidence by going back another 500 years to the days of the Jewish prophet Daniel. Jesus referred to him by name, and pointed to the fulfillment of his prophecy. (Compare Matthew 24:3, 15, 21 with Daniel 11:31; 12:1, 4.) By doing this, Jesus showed that he did not consider Daniel's "Old Testament" words to be out of date or insignificant. Neither should we.

Notice the similarity in the words of Daniel and those of Jesus as set out above. Then ask yourself, 'Were they not speaking about the same thing?'

It is obvious that Daniel and Jesus both foretold the same thing, "the time of the end," during which time Christ would be present in kingly power. At the end of that time period, he would annihilate all his enemies here on earth in a great tribulation. But God's people would survive.

Do you want to be among those survivors? Then consider the evidence that Daniel presents about "the time of the end." It helps us to know exactly where we are in the divine timetable.

A Dream *Reveals How Late It Is*

"JEHOVAH is . . . the living God and the King to time indefinite." (Jeremiah 10:10) At no time has he relinquished control of his universe, a fact that King Nebuchadnezzar of ancient Babylon failed to recognize. To impress upon that pagan king that "the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind," God caused him to have a dream and enabled His servant Daniel to interpret its meaning. —Daniel 4:17, 18.

The dream involved an immense tree. Its "height finally reached the heavens, and it was visible to the extremity of the whole earth." At divine command, the tree was cut down, but its stump was bound with bands of iron and of copper. These were to remain in place until "seven

times" had passed over that stump, after which the tree could grow again.—Daniel 4:10-17.

"The tree that you beheld," Daniel explained, "is you, O king . . . and your rulership." Nebuchadnezzar was to be cut down. He was to lose his kingdom, yes even his sanity, doomed to roam the fields as a wild beast for "seven times." Only after the set time period had elapsed were the symbolic bands to be removed, permitting the king to regain both his sanity and his throne.—Daniel 4:20-27.

Just as foretold, "all this befell Nebuchadnezzar the king." (Daniel 4:28) The *Lexicon Linguae Aramaicae Veteris Testamenti* translation says that the "seven times" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream were seven literal years. Since Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years (624-581 B.C.E.), this is a reasonable conclusion.

Of What Meaning Is This to Us?

Jehovah has always exercised his universal sovereignty as he sees fit. For a time he did this on earth through the nation of Israel, whose earthly rulers were properly said to "sit upon Jehovah's throne." (1 Chronicles 29:23) When Israel turned apostate, however, Jehovah allowed its dynasty of kings in the descendants of King David to be overthrown.

How appropriate, then, that shortly thereafter God would give some indication to King Nebuchadnezzar—the very one permitted to destroy His typical kingdom—that this in no way meant that God's rightful sovereignty had come to an end. How important to impress upon him and upon all the Gentile nations that would afterward trample upon God's representative kingdom that this state of affairs was only temporary!

Thus, the *point of time* when the dream was given, the *person* to whom it was given, and the *theme* of divine sovereignty that it stressed, argue for a significance far beyond the meaning it had for Nebuchadnezzar. They suggest that like a cut-down tree with bands, divine rulership as had been expressed in Jerusalem, now destroyed, would not be restored until those bands of restraint were removed after "seven times." At that time, God's representative Ruler, "the lowliest one of mankind," a reference to the promised Messiah, would be set up in his Kingdom. As to when God would do this, Jesus' disciples requested a sign.—Daniel 4:17; Matthew 24:3.

There are also other indications showing this far-reaching application of Nebuchadnezzar's dream to be correct. The prophecy recorded at Daniel 9:24-27 pinpointed the exact year of Messiah's arrival over 500 years later.* Now if the time of Messiah's coming as a human was foretold with such precision, is it not reasonable to conclude that the time of his more significant invisible return in Kingdom power would be foretold with equal precision? Who could more appropriately do this than Daniel? Remember, too, that after recording his visions and dream prophecies, including Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the tree, Daniel was told: "Make secret the words and seal up the book, until the time of the end." Why until then? Because during that time "true knowledge will become abundant." If what Daniel wrote was to remain sealed, not understandable, until "the time of the end," would that not indicate that his writings would be of prophetic importance during that period?—Daniel 12:4.

The "Seven Times" —From When to When?

While giving his sign, Jesus spoke of

* For an explanation of this, see the book *"Let Your Kingdom Come,"* pages 56-63, published in 1981 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

the "seven times," calling them "the appointed times of the nations." He said: "Jerusalem will [continue to] be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled." (Luke 21:24) A footnote in the *Oxford NIV Scofield Study Bible* (1984) tells us that "the 'times of the Gentiles' [*King James Version* rendering of "appointed times of the nations"] began with the captivity of Judah under Nebuchadnezzar. . . . Since that time Jerusalem has been, as Christ said, 'trampled on by the Gentiles.'"

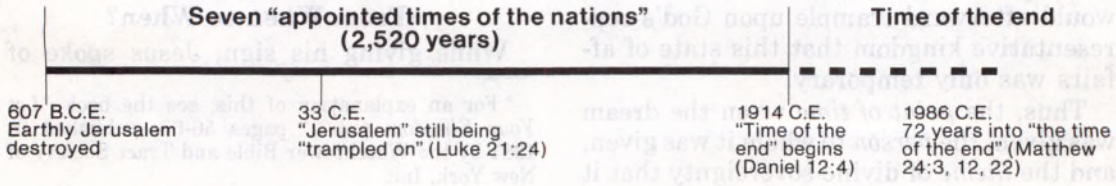
How long were the "seven times," or "appointed times of the nations," to last? Plainly, they would extend much longer than 7 literal years of 360 days each (as Biblical years were calculated), which would amount to 2,520 days. Scriptural precedent indicates that we should substitute one year for each day. (See Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6; compare Revelation 12: 6, 14.) Such a calculation would mean that the "seven times" lasted 2,520 years. If they began with Jerusalem's destruction in 607 B.C.E., they would end in the year 1914 C.E.

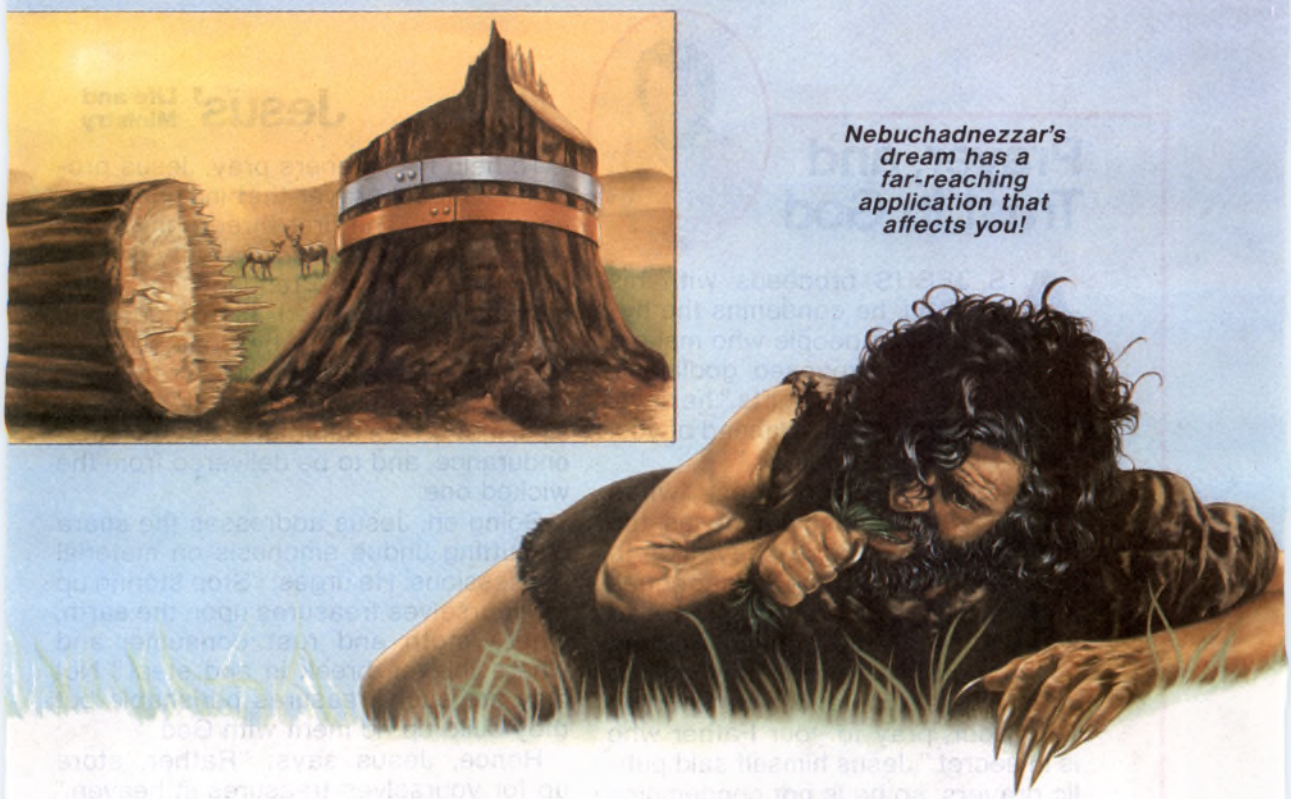
For over three decades before 1914, Jehovah's Witnesses called attention to the significance of this date. Interestingly, however, the book *International Crisis,* by Eugenia Nomikos and Robert C. North (1976), says that there was "little or no evidence of a steady rise or a 'snowballing' of conflicts and tensions leading directly to the outbreak of war." On the contrary, "by late 1913 and early 1914 . . . relations among the major powers appeared to be more settled than they had been for many years." Yet today, seven decades later, historians do indeed say that 1914 was a turning point in human history. The German reference work *Meyers Enzyklopädisches Lexikon,* for example, says that "the effects of World War I were literally revolutionary and struck deep in the lives of almost all peoples, economically as well as socially and politically."

The political ramifications of the events of 1914 are well known. The social changes it brought about are mentioned in Virginia Cowles' book *1913: An End and a Beginning.* "The year 1913 marked the close of an era," she writes. As regards economic consequences, Ashby Bladen, a senior vice president of The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, writes: "Before 1914 the monetary and the finan-

When Did the "Seven Times" Really End?

Some people argue that even if the "seven times" are prophetic and even if they last 2,520 years, Jehovah's Witnesses are still mistaken about the significance of 1914 because they use the wrong starting point. Jerusalem, they claim, was destroyed in 587/6 B.C.E., not in 607 B.C.E. If true, this would shift the start of "the time of the end" by some 20 years. However, in 1981 Jehovah's Witnesses published convincing evidence in support of the 607 B.C.E. date. (*"Let Your Kingdom Come,"* pages 127-40, 186-9) Besides, can those trying to rob 1914 of its Biblical significance prove that 1934—or any other year for that matter—has had a more profound, more dramatic, and more spectacular impact upon world history than 1914 did?





Nebuchadnezzar's dream has a far-reaching application that affects you!

cial systems were compatible. . . . If one takes August 1914 as marking the dividing line between them, the contrasts between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries are striking. In many aspects of human affairs there has been a complete reversal of trend. . . . One major reason was the severance of the linkage between the financial system and money with intrinsic value that began in 1914. . . . The breaking of the linkage was a momentous event. . . . 1914 marked a radical, and in the end catastrophic, transformation of that system."

How Late Is the Hour?

Evidence that Jesus' sign is now undergoing fulfillment is as easily available as is newspaper or television news. And it offers conclusive proof that the chronological evidence in support of 1914 as revealed in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is correct. So today, in 1986, this means that we are already 72 years into "the time of the end." Jesus promised that some members of the generation of people old enough to witness its beginning would still be alive when the great tribulation brought it to its completion.—Matthew 24:34.

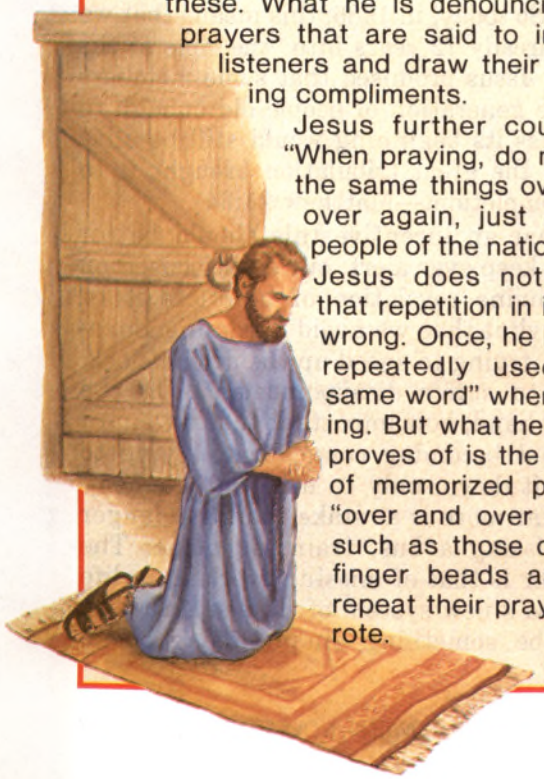
What an incentive this should be for us to keep ever alert, our eyes focused on the divine revelation of how late it is! How vital that we avoid becoming impatient, trying to speed up the divine clock, only to suffer disappointment! On the other hand, how important that we guard against becoming complacent, trying to slow it down, only to miss out! Remember, far more is at stake than the danger of missing a bus, train, or plane. The danger is that of missing everlasting life in God's new system of things. And that will be something simply too good to miss!

Prayer, and Trust in God

AS JESUS proceeds with his sermon, he condemns the hypocrisy of people who make a show of their supposed godliness. "When you go making gifts," he says, "do not blow a trumpet ahead of you, just as the hypocrites do."

"Also," Jesus continues, "when you pray, you must not be as the hypocrites; because they like to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the broad ways to be visible to men." Rather, he instructs: "When you pray, go into your private room and, after shutting your door, pray to your Father who is in secret." Jesus himself said public prayers, so he is not condemning these. What he is denouncing are prayers that are said to impress listeners and draw their admiring compliments.

Jesus further counsels: "When praying, do not say the same things over and over again, just as the people of the nations do." Jesus does not mean that repetition in itself is wrong. Once, he himself repeatedly used "the same word" when praying. But what he disapproves of is the saying of memorized phrases "over and over again," such as those do who finger beads as they repeat their prayers by rote.



To help his listeners pray, Jesus provides a model prayer that includes seven petitions. The first three rightly give recognition to God's sovereignty and his purposes. They are requests for God's name to be sanctified, his Kingdom to come, and his will to be done. The remaining four are personal requests, namely, for daily food, forgiveness of sins, not to be tempted beyond one's endurance, and to be delivered from the wicked one.

Going on, Jesus addresses the snare of putting undue emphasis on material possessions. He urges: "Stop storing up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal." Not only are such treasures perishable but they build up no merit with God.

Hence, Jesus says: "Rather, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven." This is done by putting God's service first in your life. Nobody can take away the merit thus accumulated with God or its grand reward. Then Jesus adds: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Further addressing the snare of materialism, Jesus gives the illustration: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If, then, your eye is simple, your whole body will be bright; but if your eye is wicked, your whole body will be dark." The eye that functions properly is to the body like a lighted lamp in a dark place. But to see correctly, the eye must be simple, that is, it must focus on one thing. An out-of-focus eye leads to a mistaken estimate of things, to putting material pursuits ahead of service to God, with the result that the "whole body" becomes dark.

Jesus climaxes this matter with the powerful illustration: "No one can slave for two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stick to the one and despise the other. You cannot slave for God and for Riches."

After giving this counsel, Jesus assures his listeners that they need not be anxious about their material needs if they put God's service first. "Observe intently the birds of heaven," he says, "because they do not sow seed or reap or gather into storehouses; still your heavenly Father feeds them." Then he asks: "Are you not worth more than they are?"

Next, Jesus points to the lilies of the field and notes that "not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. If, now," he continues, "God thus clothes the vegetation of the field, . . . will he not much rather clothe you, you with little faith?"

So Jesus concludes: "Never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' . . . For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you." **Matthew 6:1-34; 26:36-45.**

- What instructions on prayer did Jesus provide?
- Why are heavenly treasures superior, and how are they obtained?
- What illustrations were given to help one avoid materialism?
- Why did Jesus say that there is no need to be anxious?

Kingdom Proclaimers Report

Argentina's Outstanding Conventions

"JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES have learned to assemble without violence or promiscuity, without tobacco or alcohol, without excesses of any kind. A lesson, undoubtedly, for a society like ours, officially identified with Catholicism, yet having difficulties in taking care of big concentrations in football fields without episodes of intolerance, sometimes tragic," reported *Flash* magazine in Argentina. This comment was made with regard to one of the four "Integrity Keepers" Conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses held in Argentina in January 1986. Truly, the brothers were delighted to see 97,736 attend the four conventions. It was a joyful occasion for them to have almost 600 of their brothers from 19 other countries and 5 continents attending with them. They rejoiced, too, to know that of the 97,736 attending, about 40,000 were newly interested persons.—Psalm 122:1.

The newspapers highly commended the conventioners for their fine organization and conduct. *La Razon* newspaper highlighted the following with regard to the Buenos Aires convention in the River Plate Stadium where over 57,000 attended: "Order, cleanliness, and a notable silence, the characteristics . . . The attendance of the faithful displayed perfect organization . . . order rarely found when it comes to a multitude."

The newspaper *La Nacion* commented on the convention held in Rosario where 15,000 attended: "Despite the number of people invited by Jehovah's Witnesses, not even a single policeman could be seen around, and the order was perfect."

Delegates used every means of transportation to get to these conventions: planes, trains, buses, cars, and bicycles. More than 870 buses and one train were chartered to bring the delegates from the Rio Negro Valley in the south of the country to the River Plate convention. An interested person rode a bicycle for four days, 800 kilometers (500 mi), to attend the convention in Córdoba.

Showing the effect of the information presented, one man stated some time after the convention: "From that day [of attending the convention] on, my life has changed completely. I get along better with the members of my family. I work better. I am very happy to have become acquainted with you, to realize that there are still good people around, people who help their neighbor for the love of Jesus. Women dressed with modesty, nobody smoking or drinking. A true paradise, with so many people in unity and behaving as if they were one big family."

Such comments help us appreciate that it is by means of Jehovah's spirit that such order and love are possible.

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How I Conquered My Driving Ambition

As told by Waikato Gray

MY BIRTH on December 2, 1928, was not without its own significant feature. It was a breech delivery that nearly took my life as well as that of my mother. As a result, I was born with twisted feet. Fortunately, a great-aunt came to my assistance and eventually straightened them. For the life I would lead as a Maori in New Zealand, her help turned out to be vital.

My father, Clark Gray, was of the Ngati-Tuwharetoa Maori tribe and my mother, Hore Teree, came from the Ngati-Kahungunu tribe. According to ancient Maori genealogy, I had a good heritage, having descended from two very ambitious tribal chiefs. Ambition also became the driving force in my life.

Rising Above Poverty

I was the third of what in time came to be a family of eight children. It was the period of the Great Depression, and my parents were very poor. All ten of us lived in a two-room house in Bay View, near Napier, North Island, New Zealand. Gathering wood from the beach and carrying water in a four-gallon (15 L) kerosene tin from a neighbor's well were daily chores I clearly remember. We walked barefoot five miles (8 km) to school, summer and winter.

This poverty fed my ambition to carve out a better future—to get a decent education and be someone. School was the place to start. While I kept up with my academic studies, I also excelled in athletics and rugby football. I became the top sprinter at my secondary school and was soon made a member of the rugby team. At school level, my rugby fame as a top-notch wing-three-quarter spread around the North Island.

From school I went on to a teachers' training college at Wellington and also spent a year at Victoria University before taking up a teaching post at the Manutahi District High School. While there, I was selected as a trial player for the Maori All Blacks rugby team. To play for the New Zealand national rugby team is the dream of many Maoris. It was a real honor for me to take part in these trials.

My ambitions were being fulfilled. I was a Maori teacher and as such had achieved recognition both in the academic and in the sports field. Poverty had receded —what a far cry from the poor Maori boy of the 1930's!

Do You Know God's Name?

While I was in college, I had reason to take a hard look at religion. I was raised an Anglican. In fact, church services were at one time conducted in our home. A real test came when my father died. I kept asking myself why God had taken away my father when he was so badly needed by my mother and her eight children. It didn't seem fair.

About this time my mother started to attend Bible studies that Jehovah's Witnesses were conducting with some neighbors. I was indignant. We had our own faith, so why did she need to bother with those Witnesses?

Then one day Rudolph Rawiri, a local Witness, came to visit me. I decided I was going to put him in his place. But his smile and pleasant manner disarmed me.

He asked a simple question, "Do you know God's name?" I answered, "Jesus." He invited me to open my King James Bible to Psalm 83:18. What a surprise! There was God's name in my own Bible: "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the Most High over all the earth."

I was impressed. Why had my church not emphasized that holy name? Later, another Maori Witness, Charles Tareha, came to our home and conducted a regular Bible study with us. We recognized the ring of Bible truth and cut off all affiliations with the Church of England. I became a baptized Witness in 1955.

Why the Truth Appealed to Me

Since I was raised an Anglican, why did the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses appeal to me? As they explained God's Word, I was impressed by the simplicity and logic. Of course, for many people that simplicity is itself an obstacle. But I came to see that the Bible has basic principles, laws, and directives for any problem that might arise in life.—Compare Psalm 119.

This was especially true in married life. In the Bible, I found guidelines for a successful marriage. It helped me to see where I could improve as a husband and father by accepting my responsibilities. Of course, I was very fortunate to find such a good wife as Hinewaka, of the Ngati-Porou East Coast Tribe. We were married in 1954. She readily accepted the Bible truth, and we have cooperated with each other in applying the principles of God's Word.—See Proverbs 31:10-31.

I was also greatly impressed by the high moral standards that the Witnesses follow. In order to have a favorable standing with Jehovah, all immoral conduct has to cease—fornication, adultery, lying, stealing, violence, murder, hatred, and racism are all condemned by God's Word. I could see the benefits of good conduct to me and to others. There was no bad fruitage to regret.—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

Freed From Superstition

Maori superstitions go hand in hand with Maori heritage. We were very afraid of the souls of the dead, and the Anglican teachings about the immortal soul only served to heighten my Maori fears. Yet, when I started to study the Bible with the Witnesses, I learned that Jesus had said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32) Yes, accurate knowledge of God's Word freed me from bondage to Maori superstitions.

I remember a case in point. My grandfather died, and within 48 hours my grandmother also died—of a broken heart. She was laid out on the floor of the sitting room, next to my grandfather who was in a coffin. Many older Maoris were standing around the body, but when the undertaker asked for help to place her in the coffin, all

In traditional Maori dress

of them disappeared from the room! But for my knowledge of the truth, I would have fled also. Knowing that the dead are just sleeping in death, I didn't hesitate to help lift up my dear grandmother's body into her coffin.

Since then, as a minister of Jehovah's Witnesses, I have performed many funeral services and been able to comfort many with the Bible's simple teachings about the dead. I think the simplicity of the account at John 11:11-44 really clarifies the issue. Jesus compared death to sleep. There is no suffering, just a waiting for the resurrection, as though in sleep.

A Test of Loyalty

Deeper knowledge of the Bible and of Christ's example began to put me to the test. Ambition was still a driving force in my life. A teaching career and sports had been giving all that one could want. But now a choice must be made between living the humble, simple life of a Christian witness of Jehovah or trying to fit my ambitions in with my newfound faith.

In 1957 I faced a difficult decision, a real test of my loyalty to God. I was given an assignment to present a Bible talk at a district convention of Jehovah's Witnesses to be held in Lower Hutt. But as a teacher, I had to request special leave to attend the convention. The Hawke's Bay Education Board turned me down.

I was at a crossroads—would I stay on at the school and turn down the convention assignment? Or would I risk losing my job and attend the convention without permission? It was not easy to decide. I loved teaching, and the children and the parents depended on me. The headmaster pleaded with me to remain at the school. But I remembered Jesus' words: "Whoever does not accept his torture stake and follow after me is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:38) Was I willing to make a material sacrifice in order to obtain a spiritual blessing? Or would my overriding ambition get in the way?

I forfeited my life's ambition and a work I had grown to love, that of teaching children. I went to the Christian convention and lost my teaching post. Yet, looking back I know it was the right decision. I gave up teaching children, but eventually it led me to teaching adults over a much wider area. To support my family, I took up cleaning and gardening work. Eventually I did part-time office and shop work, which enabled me to spend more time in the ministry.

Severe Health Test

At one stage, I was really brought low. As an athlete, I had always cared for my body. Then, out of the blue, I was struck down with the white plague—tuberculosis. I was placed in the Waipukurau sanatorium in an effort to cure my sickness. My lung failed to respond to the treatment. The doctor's verdict was that I would have to have an operation to remove the top lobe of the left lung. The surgeon would not perform the operation without a blood transfusion. Bible principles would not allow me to accept someone else's blood into my system. (Acts 15:28, 29) I suggested to the doctor that he transfuse blood substitutes that I was willing to accept. He turned that down. I took the matter to Jehovah in prayer.

The doctors decided to cease all medical treatment. Instead, I was given physical therapy in the form of walking exercises for two weeks. After that I was X-rayed and called into the superintendent's office for the verdict. What suspense! "Your lung has cleared. You can go home," he said. My prayer was answered, and I returned home to my wife and my child.

Satisfaction in Service, not Ambition

As I progressed as a Witness, I came to be satisfied with the necessary things of life rather than being ambitious for the outward signs of worldly success. For 28 years I served as an elder in the Wairoa Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. Wairoa is a town of only 5,000 inhabitants, with a rural population of some 7,000 more. They are predominantly Maori, and like all Polynesian peoples, they are friendly, easygoing, and generous. This spirit was reflected in our congregation, which grew to over 90 active publishers of the good news.

A special part of my ministry was that of aiding unbelieving husbands. One such was John McAndrew, a heavy smoker and drinker, known as the roughest and toughest in the town. Yet Bible truth transformed him, and he now serves as the presiding overseer in the Wairoa Congregation.

Another unbelieving husband was John Salmon, a businessman, who moved to Wairoa to get his wife away from the Witnesses. When I met him, he was willing to talk only if I used the King James Bible. That really was no problem. After all, it was the principal translation that Jehovah's Witnesses used prior to 1950, before the *New World Translation* was first published. Thus, with his own Bible, he was helped to recognize and accept the truth.

Tutura Waihape was an outstanding character, a young married Maori with a bright rugby career ahead of him. When I began to study the Bible with him, he had the longest hair I had ever seen on a man. As he advanced in knowledge of Jehovah and Christ Jesus, his attitude changed. His love of the truth was more important than standing out because of his long hair, and he had it cut off. Today, he serves in the congregation as a ministerial servant.

Full-Time Teaching Career

For the past ten years, I have served as a regular pioneer minister, devoting an average of 90 hours per month to the ministry. My wife has been a pioneer for 15 years, and my three children also tasted pioneering when they left school.

As the climax of our service to Jehovah, my wife and I are now serving where the need is greater in Niue Island. This is away to the north of New Zealand, out in the Pacific. We have found that the small population of some 2,800 inhabitants are religiously inclined, and many love to discuss the Bible. While here, we have also helped a small congregation to be better organized.

My driving ambition for personal advancement and glory has vanished. I have come to realize that the glory that humans should attribute to Jehovah God is much more important. As King David expressed it: "Attribute to Jehovah, O families of peoples, attribute to Jehovah glory and strength. Attribute to Jehovah *the glory* of his name." Here on our little island of Niue, that is what we are trying to do. —1 Chronicles 16:28, 29.

In Our Next Issue

- **The Handwriting on the Wall —Do You See It?**
- **Maintaining Christian Unity in Business Relationships**
- **Are You Looking for a Partner in Life?**

An Appreciation —But Why a Retraction?

IN November of last year, during a convention of Italian bishops held in Bologna, Italy, the Catholic Church launched an attack against Jehovah's Witnesses. Under the theme "Christ Our God and Our Hope: Christians in the face of the Jehovah's Witnesses," priest Giovanni Marinelli charged that the Witnesses are "a peril for religion and society." Because of their rapid growth in Italy from among Catholics, he accused the Witnesses of being 'a virus that strikes especially those most exposed.'

Catholic dioceses and parishes throughout Italy were instructed to take an active stand against the Witnesses. How? By forming in every city groups that would "interest themselves" in the activity of the Witnesses in order to "open the eyes of our faithful."

How has such mobilization against Jehovah's Witnesses fared? In a letter published in the Piario Parish Magazine, one priest wrote: "Personally, I like Jehovah's Witnesses; I frankly admit it. You are all quite free to think differently and, perhaps, even to excommunicate me. . . . The ones I know are impeccably mannered, soft-spoken . . . [and] most persuasive. When will we understand that truth needs an acceptable presentation? That those announcing the truth needn't be halfhearted, foul-smelling, disheveled, sloppy?

"Also, Jehovah's Witnesses come and visit you at home. At home you are in your own environment and so have an advantage. . . . You can reach out and take down your Bible . . . from the shelf, and you can check to see if a verse cited is correct, get the right sense of it, etc.

"And may I also say that what really gets me is the fact that Jehovah's Witnesses feel personally 'called' . . . to the ministry of the word. That's a task that we have long since forgotten and that has caused incalculable damage to our evangelization. 'How will they hear unless someone announces it?' To me Jehovah's Witnesses seem to be 'complete': not just as far as home, work, and relaxation are concerned, but with regard to personal study of their creeds and how to help others understand them. But where I 'die' is at Jehovah's Witnesses' funerals. If I compare them to our Catholic funerals, where the only person who keeps quiet is the deceased, where no one has a Bible in his hands to follow the communal reading. . . . What light! What prayers! What faith! What serenity! Who knows whether I'll be able to resist the temptation to add to my will: 'I wish to have a Jehovah's Witness funeral.' Who knows!

"Their introductions are most appropriate. Perhaps it is because I also am discontented, unsatisfied, that I understand their open accusations. They say, 'The world in which we live is full of violence and immorality.' Do you feel like trying to prove them wrong? I don't. . . . 'The Catholic Church, being one of the more widely practiced and oldest of religions, has the prime responsibility for such degradation.' Will you raise a voice in dissent? I won't. Nice people, well-mannered, . . . dedicated. Jehovah's Witnesses have the courage that comes with logic. They conclude by saying, 'So, leave your churches and come with us.'

"I recognize that for me to leave the religion I've known since I sucked mother's milk, and embrace another, would be lacerating. But if such was reasonable why not take this step? Come to think of it, changing religions is not at all humiliating. . . . It would be humiliating to leave a religion only to find a void, to cut loose the anchor only to begin drifting aimlessly. But what if I thought my laundry was white only because I hadn't seen yours? It seems reasonable to me to choose a better detergent, one that washes whiter than white! The aim of missionaries is one, and one only: change people's religion. . . . Why shouldn't I change religion if my conscience tells me to? If the preacher convinces me to? If it is reasonable to do so? If the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses is more correct . . . , then . . . I'll go along with Jehovah's Witnesses. . . . I want to know if Jehovah's Witnesses are right."

Concluding his letter, the priest stressed that the Witnesses' use of Jehovah instead of Yahweh when pronouncing the divine name is "no reason for me to lose the strong liking I have for Jehovah's Witnesses." Why? "After all," he adds, "they're God's Witnesses and that's what counts!"

Postscript: The priest's letter apparently raised a storm in higher circles of the hierarchy. In a later issue of the parish magazine, he retracted his comments about Jehovah's Witnesses.

YOUTHS—Your Part in a Happy, United Family

"I proved to be a real son to my father, tender and the only one before my mother."—PROVERBS 4:3.

HOW refreshing it is to pour out your apprehensions to someone who cares about you, tries to understand your feelings, and offers empathetic counsel! And when that one is a parent, you are blessed indeed. But how close do you feel to your parents?

[2] Two teenagers with Christian parents wrote: "Our main problem is *communication.* We just can't seem to talk with our parents. We both love our parents very, very much, but we can't seem to communicate. I've prayed constantly about the matter but can't come up with an answer." Why is there at times a lack of meaningful communication even in Christian homes? Is there a way out of such a predicament?

Why a Communication Gap

[3] The youngsters previously quoted disagreed with their parents over choice of entertainment and friends. Disagreements, coupled with the feeling that your point of view is ignored, can shut down communication. But why do these differences occur? Proverbs 20:29 suggests one reason. It reads: "The beauty of young men is their power, and the splendor of old men is their gray-headedness." Because youthful "power" is untempered by the harsh realities of years of experience, you young people can overlook dangers, feeling that 'nothing wrong can happen.' Your parents, however, from wisdom gained as a result of age—or even from bitter personal experience—know differently. Though understanding your feelings, they may be aware of subtle hazards that you do not see.—Proverbs 29:15.

[4] At other times, there may be a lack of communication because you find it difficult to talk about certain painful emotions. Because of conflicts with others or because of your own shortcomings, your heart may be in pain. You may react as did Job, who felt that even his own brothers, his intimate acquaintances, yes, even

1, 2. What problem exists in some Christian homes?
3, 4. Cite some reasons for lack of communication between parents and children.

his own household, had turned aside from him. (Job 19:13-19) In some instances, a gap develops because a parent 'stops up an ear' when a youth tries to disclose delicate feelings. (Proverbs 21:13) One teenage girl complained: "I hurt a lot, I would cry a lot and dad would say, 'Crying isn't going to help,' so I put my feelings inside of me. I shed no tears around him, and there was no communication at all."

5 Yet, regardless of your parents' attitude, there is much that *you* can do to improve the communication! Start by honestly evaluating your relationship with your parents. For instance, the nation of Israel pretended to be close to their heavenly Father, saying: "My Father, you are the confidential friend of my youth!" But in reality, a strained relationship existed because of their rebellious actions. (Jeremiah 3:4, 5) Are your parents *really* 'confidential friends'? Could you be doing things, even inadvertently, that hinder communication? Can you say as did Solomon: "I proved to be a *real* son to my father [and my mother]"? (Proverbs 4:3) What can you do to draw closer to them?

"Loving-Kindness and Trueness"

6 Wise King Solomon considered what was needed for a youth to "find favor and good insight in the eyes of God and of earthling man [including one's parents]." His answer? "My son, . . . may loving-kindness and trueness themselves not leave you. Tie them about your throat. Write them upon the tablet of your heart." (Proverbs 3:1-4) Loving-kindness and trueness will draw you closer to your parents. But these qualities must become an intrinsic part of your personality, 'tied about your throat and written upon your heart.' Often, in Bible times, a signet ring was hung by a cord around the neck. (Genesis 38:18) This ring was priceless because without using it, no document could be made authentic. The wearer of the ring never forgot it and was constantly reminded of its high value. So loving-kindness and trueness should ever be kept in mind and their value never forgotten. But just how can you manifest these qualities?

7 "Loving-kindness," according to the sense of the original Hebrew word, means "loyal love" and implies personal commitment in a relationship. So are you loyal to your parents and committed to keeping emotionally close? At Zechariah 7:9, 10, loving-kindness is associated with mercy and compassion. Are you compassionate regarding the pressures your parents face? The loving-kindness of some people "is like the morning clouds and like the dew that early goes away." (Hosea 6:4) Does your loving-kindness disappear in the heat of an argument or when you do not get your way? When upset, do you keep 'the law of loving-kindness upon your tongue'? Loyalty and compassion are vital to communication.—Proverbs 31:26.

8 "Trueness" creates intimacy, since trust is essential to any close relationship. Do not be like the "men of untruth" who hid what kind of persons they were. (Psalm 26:4) You may be tempted to live, in effect, two lives—one when around your Christian parents and another when out of their sight. Such a course can lead to tragedy, especially when you face a serious problem and are ill-equipped to handle it by yourself. Think, too, of the breakdown in trust when a course of falsehood is uncovered. "My parents know

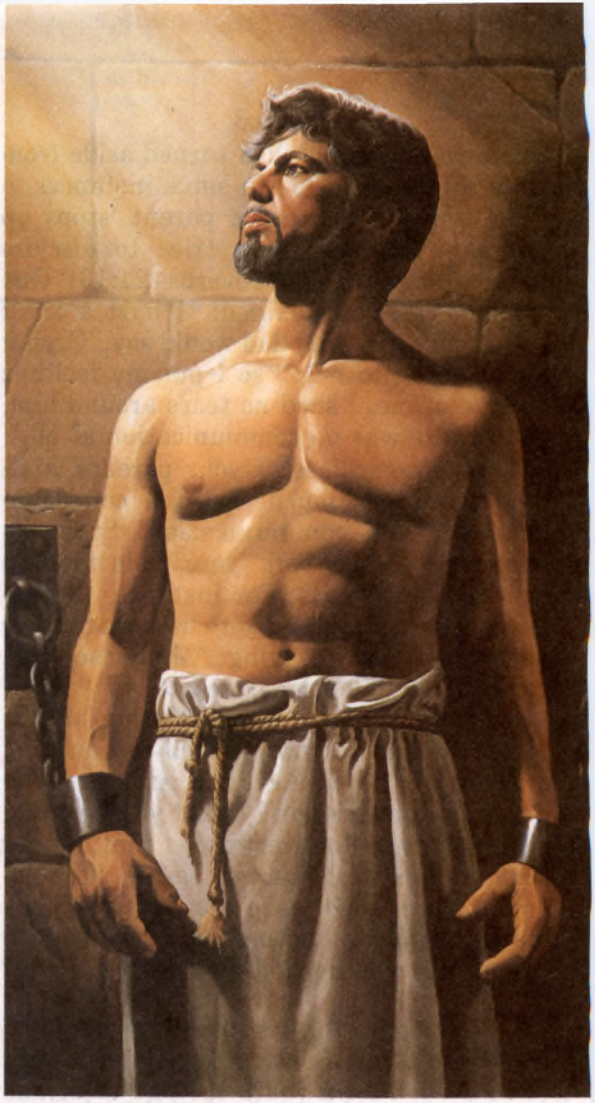
5. What is the first step toward improving meaningful communication?
6. (a) According to Proverbs 3:3, what qualities will help a youth 'find favor with God and men'? (b) How can one 'tie these about one's throat'?
7. How can loving-kindness be expressed in order to improve communication?
8. How can a youth display trueness?

much more than I think they know," said one young Christian. "If I try to hide something from them, I am only kidding myself and trying to fool Jehovah." Yes, be determined to develop an inward truthfulness. But is manifesting trueness limited only to avoiding 'crooked' speech and deeds?—Proverbs 4:20, 24; 10:9.

'Talk Straight From the Heart'

[9] Some youths are not honest about their feelings toward their parents. For instance, one of the youths mentioned in paragraph 2 admitted: "To keep peace, we began saying what we knew our parents wanted to hear, but we kept our real feelings inside us." These teenagers sought help. They were urged by an elder to approach their parents and to imitate the youth Elihu, who said: "I talk straight from my heart." (Job 33:3, *Beck*) After fervently praying, they finally bared their hearts to their parents, explaining their bitter feelings. (Compare Proverbs 12:18.) Though stunned to know that his children felt that way, the father admitted to them that he had overdone matters. He was glad they spoke up. The daughter concluded: "Our family situation is slowly but surely getting better. When we started to communicate more freely, then we could see the reasons for their rules. They stopped speaking down to us as if we were babies. We began to understand one another much better."

[10] Opening up to your parents builds heart communication. When you talk in a calm, respectful manner, your parents can sense what is in your heart. (Proverbs 29:11) You also see qualities in their hearts. This frank and sympathetic dialogue helps you to know your own heart better. Proverbs 27:19 states: "As in water face corresponds with face, so the heart of a man with that of a man."* Just



As the yoke of adversity refined Joseph's personality, so enduring hardships as a youth will refine your personality

9. What problem did two youths overcome, and what was the result?

10, 11. (a) According to Proverbs 27:19, what can add to warmth in a Christian family? (b) How can youths apply this verse?

* Commentator A. Cohen states concerning this verse: "In the heart of our friend we see our own character reflected. . . . It is in the frank and sympathetic intercourse of friendship that we really get to know ourselves, and to realize what is in us." (*Proverbs*, The Soncino Press) The Bible version by W. F. Beck states in part: "So you can see yourself reflected in the heart of another man."

as you see your facial reflection in a pool of still water, so by heart communication with your parents you may see that their emotions and motivations are not so different from your own. This interchange creates mutual understanding and caring, which are essential for a warm family.

[11] So be willing to talk with your parents about even painful matters. Express your fears and failures as well as your joys and successes. Talk about your goals in life and your prayers. Resist the urge to 'isolate yourself.' (Proverbs 18:1) Regularly try to spend some private time with a parent, so that you can share such intimacies. Some young people have found that they can do this between calls while working with a parent in the preaching work, while taking long walks together, or even while engaging in some forms of family recreation.

[12] Though your efforts to develop meaningful communication will usually have good effects, neither you nor your parents are perfect. Parents may at times act unjustly, lack sensitivity to the feelings of others, or fail to set the proper example. They may even be unbelievers and may not always deal with you according to Bible principles. Some of you may live in a one-parent home or in a stepfamily, both of which have unique pressures. Regardless of how close you are to your parents, at times you will feel emotionally alone. How can such adversity be faithfully endured?

Learn to 'Carry the Yoke During Youth'

[13] When commissioned by Jehovah, the prophet Jeremiah exclaimed: "I actually do not know how to speak, for I am but a boy"! But Jehovah reassured him and strengthened him. Because of his sufferings, fears, and discouragements he at times felt like quitting, and once he said: "Cursed be the day on which I was born!" (Jeremiah 1:6, 19; 20:7-9, 11, 14) Later, he wrote: "Good it is for an able-bodied man that he should carry the yoke during his youth." (Lamentations 3:27) But how could the carrying of a yoke of adversity be considered beneficial? The example of Joseph well illustrates this.

[14] At the age of 17, Joseph received in a dream a divine promise that he would hold a prominent position. But, alas, his jealous brothers sold him into slavery! He ended up in Egypt and was later bound with chains in a dungeon on a trumped-up charge of attempted rape. (Genesis 37:2, 4-11, 28; 39:20) This exemplary youth and heir of a glorious promise was confined within the dreary walls of a prison hole. As a stranger in a foreign land, he was without a friend to sympathize with or to intercede for him.

[15] "With fetters they afflicted his [Joseph's] feet, into irons his soul came; until the time that his word came, the saying of Jehovah itself refined him." (Psalm 105:17-19) For 13 years, Joseph suffered as a slave and a prisoner until Jehovah's promise came true. By this experience he was refined. Jehovah, though not causing the troubles, allowed them for a purpose. Would Joseph preserve his hope in "the saying of Jehovah" despite being in the crucible of adversity? Would he bring to maturity his fine qualities, and develop the needed patience, humility, spiritual strength, and determination

12. What realities must be faced by youths?
13. Why does Jeremiah's statement at Lamentations 3:27 seem unusual?

14, 15. (a) What was Joseph's experience as a youth? (b) How was he 'refined by the saying of Jehovah'?

to handle a difficult assignment? Well, Joseph came out as gold from the refiner's fire—purer and even more precious to God, who used him wonderfully thereafter.—Genesis 41:14, 38-41, 46; 42:6, 9.

[16] Both Joseph and Jeremiah suffered through no fault of their own. They had already cultivated godly qualities. However, they were refined even more as they coped with adversities. How much more is such refining needed by youths who have erred! Discipline, which may be hard to take, yields righteousness if you are trained by it. (Hebrews 12:5-7, 11) This training can develop an inner strength like heat-tempered steel. As "Jehovah continued with Joseph and kept extending loving-kindness," so he will give you strength beyond what is normal and richly reward your endurance.—Genesis 39: 21; 2 Corinthians 4:7.

[17] As an example, a young girl whose new stepfather seemed overbearingly firm and insensitive to her feelings about her beloved father's death considered running away. Realizing that this would only cause more problems, she stayed —and endured. Now, nearly 13 years later, she concludes: "The discipline of my stepfather made me a better person. When I was living alone with my mother, I was spoiled and rebellious. I always wanted to have things my own way. I learned to consider others. Jehovah also answered my many prayers for strength to get over my father's death and to get closer to my stepfather." Yes, learning to live with hardship will draw you closer to Jehovah. Thus he can become your Friend, 'your confidence from youth.' —Psalm 71:5.

16. How should a youth view adversity?
17. What effect did adversity have on one young girl? What do you learn from this?

[18] Never forget that your home environment alone does not determine your personal worth or how your life will turn out. Rather, "by his practices a boy [or, girl] makes himself recognized as to whether his activity is pure and upright." (Proverbs 20:11) Your own upright practices will endear you to God and give your life meaning and worth. No family is perfect, but look for the positive qualities in your home. Think of the sacrifices your parents have made to provide you with food, clothing, shelter, medical needs, and the like. Rather than repaying with ingratitude, "honor your father and your mother." Hold them as precious, of high value. —Ephesians 6:1-3; Proverbs 16:20; 17:13.

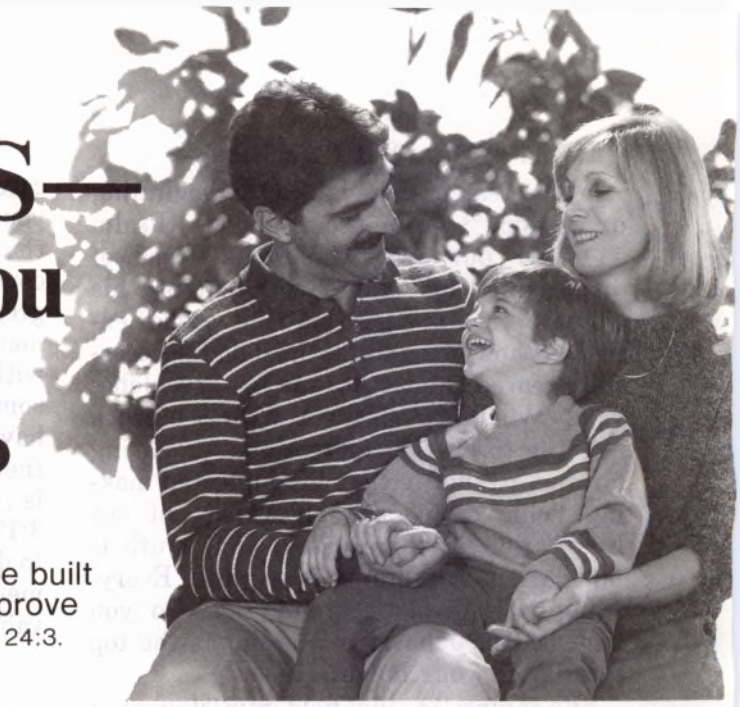
[19] Meaningful communication with your parents will deepen your love for them. Obedience then will come from the heart. "My son [or, daughter], my law do not forget, and my commandments may your heart observe," urges the wise father, who then points out the rewards, "because length of days and years of life and peace will be added to you."—Proverbs 3:1, 2.

18. (a) What will determine how a youth's life turns out? (b) Why should youths *hold their* parents as precious?
19. What rewards come from heartfelt obedience to one's parents?

Do You Remember?

- □ What can cause a communication gap?
- □ How can a youth express loving-kindness?
- □ In what ways will trueness improve family communication?
- □ What will bearing the yoke of adversity accomplish for a youth?

PARENTS—How Can You 'Build Up' Your Home?



"By wisdom a household will be built up, and by discernment it will prove firmly established."—PROVERBS 24:3.

A RECENT survey asked over 550 professionals who specialize in helping families which traits they most commonly found in strong families. At the top of the list: communicating and listening. The survey's author, Dolores Curran, explained why: "It's the energy that fuels the caring, giving, sharing, and affirming. Without genuine listening and sharing of ourselves, we can't know one another. We become a household of roommates who react rather than respond to one another's needs." Yes, open flow of communication is the life stream of a strong family.

[2] A lack of closeness, though, can have tragic consequences. For instance, one of the Watch Tower Society's branches in Africa was asked why some Christian youths abandoned Bible morality. "The main weakness relating to the whole problem," according to the reply, was "the failure of parents to be good listeners and their inability to reason with their children. So many parents do not have a really intimate relationship with their children." Of course, this is only one aspect of the problem—though an important one. Individual obedience and godly devotion on the part of youth, just as with everyone else, ranks first. (Romans 14:12; 1 Timothy 6:6) Consider, too, Proverbs 24:3, 4. It reads: "By wisdom a household will be built up, and by discernment it will prove firmly established. And by knowledge will the interior rooms be filled with all precious and pleasant things of value."

[3] But how can you apply wisdom, discernment, and knowledge to achieve the needed emotional intimacy, especially with adolescents? How do you avoid inadvertently creating communication blocks? (Compare Proverbs 14:1, 12.) Above all, how can you build a family that is steadfast in true worship? With so many demands on your time and attention, you may wonder where to start. The first quality, wisdom, can help you to establish priorities.

1. What is one essential for a strong family?
2, 3. (a) What problem is noted even in some Christian homes? (b) What does Proverbs 24:3, 4 reveal that can help build a strong family? (c) What questions need answering?

Wisely Set Priorities

[4] "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom," wrote the psalmist. (Psalm 111:10) Your own wholesome dread of displeasing God, along with putting his worship first, is essential. One mother explained how she and her husband successfully reared their two sons to serve Jehovah: "We filled our lives with the truth —going to all the conventions, preparing for and attending the meetings, and making field service a regular part of our lives." Her husband added: "The truth is not part of our life, it *is* our life. Everything else revolves around it." Do you likewise set Jehovah's worship as the top priority in your home?

[5] Engaging in the field ministry as a family will draw you closer, yet the unique needs of children require a commitment of your private time and emotional energy. Therefore, balance is needed to determine how much time you can use for the preaching work or congregation duties while you also care spiritually, emotionally, and materially for 'those who are your own.' You must "learn first to practice godly devotion in [your] own household." (1 Timothy 5:4, 8) To help fathers, especially, to get the balance needed between family obligations and ministerial duties, the September 15, 1959, issue of *The Watchtower* urged: "Let proper weight be given to the interests of your own family. Certainly Jehovah God would not expect a man to use all his time in congregational activity, in helping his brothers and neighbors gain salvation, and yet not look after the salvation of his own household. A man's wife and children are a primary responsibility."

4. What should be a Christian family's chief priority?
5. Why is balance needed by Christian parents?

[6] This responsibility is not necessarily cared for by spending many hours with your children but by making full use of that time. Sadly, some parents have become so wrapped up in caring for congregation matters, a challenging job, or material things that even when they are with their children, their minds are on something else. Only after family tragedy have they realized the need to reevaluate their priorities. "The wisdom from above is . . . reasonable, ready to obey." (James 3:17) Such heavenly wisdom will help you to divide your time and emotional involvement properly so as to obey all of Jehovah's commands.

Rod and Reproof Give Wisdom

[7] Firmness for right principles, displayed in kindness, tells your children that you care. Permissiveness breeds both juvenile insecurity and delinquency. "The rod and reproof are what give wisdom." (Proverbs 29:15; 22:15) To be effective "the rod and reproof" must be accompanied by love. Discipline applied unreasonably or in the heat of emotion can break a child's spirit. "You fathers, do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted." (Colossians 3:21) The "rod" of discipline includes appropriate punishment, but if you make unreasonable demands, are overly critical, and humiliate the child, it is a misuse of this "rod" and may shatter a child's confidence both in himself and in you. He may "become downhearted."

[8] But both "rod and reproof" are needed. Reproof requires more than chastisement; it involves the presentation of facts to

6. What danger must be avoided by parents, and how can this be done?
7. How can Proverbs 29:15 be effectively applied?
8. Explain why "reproof" means more than chastisement?

convince another person.* The Hebrew word for "reproof" is also rendered 'counterargument.' (Psalm 38:14) Therefore, to reprove truly means being willing and able to present facts so that the child can see the reasons for your action. The publications of the Watchtower Society contain material, some written primarily for youths, that can help you to present sound reasons to your child as to why a certain course is wrong. Are you making full use of such?

Discernment Creates Empathy

9 Discernment is also an essential communication skill. The original Hebrew word comes from a root word that means to "discern between," "to distinguish." This perceptive insight probes beneath the obvious, and therefore is akin to understanding, empathy, and compassion. —1 Peter 3:8.

10 A Bible example that shows the value of discernment is recorded at Joshua 22: 9-34. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh, who were given land inheritances east of the Jordan River, constructed a gigantic altar on their land. The other tribes, considering this to be apostasy, prepared to punish what appeared to be a deliberate breaking of God's law. (Leviticus 17:8, 9) Before acting, they sent a delegation to talk with the two and a half tribes. (Proverbs 13:10) The discussion revealed that the altar was not built for offering up sacrifices but "rather out of anxious care." Separated from the other tribes by the Jordan River, the two and a half tribes were deeply concerned about the possibility of their future generations being cut off from Jehovah's worship. The altar would serve as a constant reminder, "a witness," that they, too, were God's people. What a turnabout this explanation made! A different light was cast on what seemed to be a daring sin. Being "slow to anger," those other tribes were enabled to discern the true situation, and this created understanding.—Proverbs 14:29.

11 When a problem arises with your child, do you try to be discerning? For example, one of the sons of a Christian couple began coming home after school 'mad at the world.' "He refused to say why he was so angry," explained the father. "At first I thought he was just being rebellious, but then I noticed he got quiet when I asked about school. Well, we had a long talk, and I found out that because he was small for his age, the kids at school were picking on him. After reassuring him that I understood how difficult this treatment was, I gave him some practical suggestions to help him deal with it." The boy's disposition quickly improved.

12 Would you have shown the same patience with your child? Youths, especially teenagers, can be deeply influenced by such things as school, physical appearance, sexual desires, and popularity. "Of all the states of man's development, adolescence is the most difficult," stated the journal *Adolescence.* "The adolescents, self-critical and inexperienced, feel themselves lacking in a world that is competitive and insensitive. Instead of being able to accept humiliation and failure, they react with strong feelings of resentment and anxiety." Such

* According to *The Hebrew and English Lexicon,* by John Parkhurst, the word for "reproof" comes from a verb meaning 'to show plainly, point out by facts, to demonstrate, show by evident or convincing reasons or arguments.' *Old Testament Word Studies,* by William Wilson, says of the same verb: "to prove."

9. What is discernment, and why is it important?
10. How did probing beneath an apparent situation prevent hostilities in Bible times?
11. How did one parent show discernment?
12. Why are the teenage years difficult for most youths, and what is needed on the part of parents?

troublesome emotions can affect a child's behavior. (Compare Ecclesiastes 7:7a.) Only by developing close communication with your child will you understand the real problem and be able to discern the best way to help.

[13] Putting their apprehensions into words is difficult for many youths. Therefore, as your child starts to open up, avoid thoughtless comments that stab, such as: 'Is *that* all? I thought it was something important.' 'The trouble with you is . . .' 'How could you do this to me?' 'Well, what do you expect? You are just a child anyway.' (Proverbs 12:18) At times a youth will need some probing, especially if he has a sensitive problem. "The man [or, woman] of discernment" will persistently endeavor to 'draw up' such feelings. (Proverbs 20:5) One Christian couple found that their daughter was withdrawing from family activities. The parents probed but to no avail. They persisted. "Finally, one day I sat on the bed with her, put my arm around her, and again asked what was the problem," reported the mother. "With tears she told me that she felt that we and others just did not like her company, so she stayed away as much as she could. My first impulse was to say, 'That's absolutely ridiculous,' but I held it in and just listened as she poured out her heart." The parents assured her that they cared very much and made it a point thereafter to make her feel at home in the family circle. She overcame the problem and now serves as a happy full-time evangelizer.

[14] Building a close-knit family is important, and even some worldly families have accomplished that. But it is another matter to build a spiritually minded family that stays close to Jehovah and that is united around his Word. To accomplish this, more is required than just being emotionally close to your children.

13. (a) What are some communication barriers? (b) Why do parents have to apply Proverbs 20:5 persistently? Illustrate.

14. Why is having a family that is emotionally close not enough?

AN EFFECTIVE FAMILY STUDY

How should a study be conducted? Keep a relaxed, yet respectful, atmosphere. Avoid mechanical, overly formal procedure. Ask additional questions and use illustrations to stimulate thinking and to keep all involved. Simplify material when necessary. Better not to use study period to scold children. Perhaps any necessary reproving can be done in private.

What should be studied? Choose according to needs of family. Be flexible. May be preparation of weekly lesson in *The Watchtower*. Specific issues may need to be discussed, such as problems youths face in school, dating, extracurricular activities, sports, and immoral tendencies. Use articles or publications that deal with these. Could divide up study time to cover different subjects.

When should it be held and for how long? Family head can determine after discussing schedules of family members as well as considering their limitations. Need to appraise ages and attention span of children. May want to have abbreviated session several times during the week if children are young. Some have had such sessions at the dinner table immediately after the meal. Important factor is not length but quality of time spent together.

How can you be sure of reaching child's heart? Encourage child to put answers in own words. Tactfully use viewpoint questions to see how child really feels about matter. You could ask: "How do children in school feel about this matter? Do you feel they have a point?" Or, "How would you explain to a classmate why we do not commit fornication? Do you feel this is really for your good? Why?" Be careful not to overreact to answers given to viewpoint questions, so that child will feel free to express himself honestly. Take time to let each one speak, to be sure he or she understands important points correctly.

Reinforcing Knowledge

15 "By knowledge will the interior rooms be filled with all precious and pleasant things of value." (Proverbs 24:4) These precious things of value are not material treasures but include spiritual security, self-sacrificing love, godly fear, and faith based on the knowledge of God. These create a rich family life. (Proverbs 2:5; 15: 16, 17; 1 Peter 1:7) This knowledge will give children inner strength so that they can resist Satan's tactics, even subtle ones, for Proverbs 24:5 states: "One wise in strength is an able-bodied man, and a man of knowledge is reinforcing power." But you have to inculcate such knowledge into their hearts.—Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; 1 John 2:14.

16 One of the finest aids for inculcating the Word of God into your children is the conducting of a regular family study that encourages them to make the truth their own. "The family study sets the right mood, so that your child's mind is receptive to instruction," explains one successful parent of four. He added: "When you start to correct children, automatically you have a 'hostile audience.' But when you can discuss material at a time when there is no hostility, such as at the family study, there is more of a chance that the points you want to make will penetrate." But for the children really to benefit, you need to imitate the apostle Paul, who wrote: "I am longing to see you, that I may impart some spiritual gift to you in order for you to be made firm." (Romans 1:11) A gift is especially appreciated when it is something the receiver can use and that is of real value to him. So draw out from the material something that touches the child's life.

15. What kind of knowledge is vital, and why?
16. (a) What is essential in order to get knowledge of God into your child's heart? (b) For children really to benefit, what is necessary?

17 Parents should also make sure that all in the family know the time of the study, as well as what material will be considered. Some use visual aids, such as maps and charts, to enhance the material. Other parents include refreshments either before or after. Following the study they may discuss the day's or the week's problems. (See accompanying box for additional suggestions.) Above all, conduct this Bible study regularly! Many parents have to put forth much effort to provide food and shelter for their children; but it is of even greater importance to provide "the unadulterated milk belonging to the word, that through it [our children] may grow to salvation." —1 Peter 2:2; John 17:3.

18 Building a spiritually strong family takes skill and time. Be determined to develop the needed communication skills so as to keep emotionally close to your children. Do not allow anything to prevent you from taking the necessary time to strengthen your family through wisdom, discernment, and knowledge. Pray for, and with, your children, knowing that only Jehovah can crown your 'building' efforts with success.—Psalm 127:1.

17. (a) What can help make a family study both interesting and informative? (b) Do you have additional suggestions?
18. What will help 'build up' your home?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ How is a home strengthened by wisdom, and what can help children develop it?
- ☐ Why does discernment help create good family communication?
- ☐ Why is knowledge of God essential?
- ☐ How can a family study be made interesting and informative?

FAMILY Problems Solved by Bible Counsel

"WIVES [choose] to be divorced, children to be disinherited, . . . rather than be unfaithful to Christ," wrote Arnobius, a professed Christian of the fourth century.* Yes, even then, bitter religious opposition by unbelievers split up families. Jesus stated that those who had "greater affection" for family members than for him would not be worthy of him. Hence, there would be "a sword" causing division in some households, because of the believer's showing less love for his family, "yes, and even his own soul." (Matthew 10:34-37; Luke 14:26) Such divisions in families continue to our day.

2 Though the Christian may do all he can to keep the family intact, some unbelieving mates simply are not "agreeable to dwelling" with the Christian, and a separation or a divorce ensues. (1 Corinthians 7:12-16) Disrupted families also occur because during "the conclusion of the system of things" there has been a 'cooling off' of love for God and his laws, including those regarding marriage. (Matthew 19:6, 9; 24: 3, 12) In the United States the divorce rate increased 236 percent just between 1960 and 1980! Since about three out of five divorcing couples in the United States have children, those in broken homes face complex problems. Usually when people learn the truth of God's Word, their family life improves, but some persons were involved in divorces before becoming Jehovah's Witnesses. Sometimes even a Christian who failed to apply Bible counsel earnestly at home has ended up in a divorce. (John 13:17) What can Christian

* *Against the Heathen,* Book II, 5.

1, 2. (a) What are some causes of disrupted families? (b) Why should the problems of those in disrupted families be of concern to all? (1 Corinthians 12:26)

parents do under these circumstances to rear children to love Jehovah?

"Fellow Feeling" Vital

[3] In Malachi's day certain Israelite men were treacherously divorcing their wives. The "weeping and sighing" of these rejected women as they appealed for God's help were, in effect, "covering with tears the altar of Jehovah." (Malachi 2:13-16) The breaking up of a marriage today is likewise painful, even if there are solid Scriptural grounds for the breakup. Though the husband and the wife suffer, the children often suffer more.

[4] Even if the divorce brings relief from abuse, a child's whole world sometimes seems to fall apart. Hence, it is necessary for a believing parent to show out-of-the-ordinary love and understanding in handling the situation. "I was always in the middle. I felt divided," explained a youth whose Christian father obtained a Scriptural divorce when the boy was five. "I kept my true feelings to myself. This caused bouts of depression." Helping a child deal with such intense emotions requires that a parent have "fellow feeling" and be "tenderly compassionate." (1 Peter 3:8) The child may be silent out of guilt, feeling that he is in some way to blame for the divorce. A parent needs patiently to explain that he loves the child and that the divorce is not the child's fault.

[5] Bitterness between parents can become intense, especially so when religious issues are involved. Yet, rather than "paying back injury for injury or reviling for *reviling*," the believing parent should consider the welfare of the child. (1 Peter 3:9) In her book *Growing Up Divorced,* Linda Francke states: "Parents who are hostile to each other make these children's problems far more difficult and even destructive. Not wanting to risk alienating either parent, the child can withdraw from positive relationships with both parents." Yes, "bitter jealousy and contentiousness" are not only wrong but can even estrange the child from you. (James 3:14, 16) Thoughtless verbal attacks against an unbelieving parent can deeply hurt a child. (Proverbs 12:18) If an unbelieving ex-mate wishes to continue the conflict, "as far as it depends upon you [the believer], be peaceable with all men."—Romans 12:18-21.

Protect Your Child's Heart

[6] After custody is determined, there may still be difficulties to contend with. "One of the major problems," states a report from the Watch Tower Society's branch in Australia, "is that the parent who has gained custody of the child tends to relax . . . Even a parent in the truth can lose sight of the basic reason he or she wanted custody of the children. The primary reason should be to bring them up as true worshipers of Jehovah." To do so requires constant effort.—Ephesians 6:4.

[7] Of course, a law court often grants visitation rights to the parent who no longer has custody of the child. Can these be respected while still protecting the child's heart? Yes, and as appropriate, the child should show due respect to an unbelieving parent. If during the visit the unbeliever engages in unchristian conduct, rather than build hatred by condemning that parent, the believer can explain to the child that God has set standards of conduct in the Bible and that "each of us will

3. What suffering is caused by divorce?
4. (a) In what ways do children suffer when their parents divorce? (b) How can a parent help the child?
5. Why should a Christian parent endeavor to end hostilities with the ex-mate?
6. After custody is determined, what can be a problem with some parents?
7. (a) Why should a child be taught to respect the unbelieving parent? (b) How can you reason with a child if the unbeliever engages in unchristian conduct?

render an account for himself to God," the final Judge. (Romans 14:12) Yet, make clear that such conduct is not to be imitated. Discreetly show that though some people do not live by these standards, in time many change because of seeing a Christian example in the child and the ex-mate. In this way, it may be possible for the child to have a measure of respect for that parent. A divorced couple's differences about religion should not prevent a parent from affecting the child in a positive way. The Christian parent will "let [his or her] reasonableness become known to all men." (Philippians 4:5) What, though, if the unbeliever tries to undermine godly training?

[8] Preparation for the visits is the key! One Christian mother whose ex-husband became an apostate reported: "Before the visit, I would study with the children about how their conduct would be regarded by Jehovah. We would act out situations. I would say: 'If your father says this or that, how will you answer?'" Another Christian who was divorced because she became a Witness adds: "Before [my two teenagers] leave for their weekend visit with their father, we say a prayer asking Jehovah to be with them and to help them to witness to their dad, especially by their fine conduct."

[9] An unbelieving parent with visitation rights may try to woo the child with lavish gifts, expensive entertainment, and other recreational pleasures. Jochebed, the mother of Moses, (and Amram if he was still living) knew what would face Moses when he was turned over to Pharaoh's daughter. So she no doubt applied herself in shaping his sense of values while he was still with her. (Exodus 2:1-10) Despite facing the tempting "treasures of Egypt," Moses made his own choice to follow godly principles. He "esteemed" his spiritual privileges as real riches! (Hebrews 11: 23-26) Christian parents should similarly prepare their children to meet such temptations by discussing Scriptural material that focuses on spiritual treasures.* Children often see through the shallow motive of a parent who would attempt to buy their affection.—Proverbs 15:16, 17.

[10] In some extreme cases, such visits may pose a serious threat to the child. A parent would have to decide what to do under the circumstances, prayerfully evaluating the severity of the threat, the legal recourse available, and the possible consequences of refusing to honor visitation rights.# Avoid rash actions that could put into question your fitness as a parent. —Galatians 6:5; Romans 13:1; Acts 5:29; 1 Peter 2:19, 20.

Use "Practical Wisdom"

[11] What if it is the Christian parent who has only visitation rights? When the child is no longer in the Christian home, that parent has limited spiritual control over the child. (1 Corinthians 7:14) For instance, the faithful patriarch Abraham would likely have insisted that his son Ishmael, like Isaac, marry a fellow wor-

8. How did two parents prepare their children for visits to opposing ex-mates?
9. How can Christian parents imitate the example of Moses' mother?

* See "Youth's Greatest Opportunity" in our August 15, 1985, issue, as well as "How Do You View Material Possessions?" in the book *Your Youth —Getting the Best out of It,* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

The Uniform Marriage and Divorce Act in the United States says: "A parent not granted custody of the child is entitled to reasonable visitation rights unless the court finds, after a hearing, that visitation would endanger the child's physical health or significantly impair his emotional development."

10. In an extreme situation, what are some factors for a parent to consider?
11. When a Christian parent loses custody, what must he or she recognize?

Use visitation rights to inculcate the truth into your child's heart, but combine this with other wholesome activities

shiper. But after Ishmael, still a teenager, and his mother Hagar were dismissed from the household, Abraham was unable to prevent Hagar from arranging for Ishmael to marry an Egyptian who evidently was not a worshiper of Jehovah.—Genesis 21: 14, 21; 24:1-4.

[12] Despite what might be limited opportunities, a noncustodial Christian parent can do much to instill in the child a deep love for Jehovah. To do so, the parent must "safeguard practical wisdom and thinking ability." (Proverbs 3:21) Yes, more than intensity of effort is needed. "If an iron tool has become blunt and someone has not whetted its edge, then he will exert his own vital energies [with little results]. So the using of wisdom to success means advantage." (Ecclesiastes 10:10) For instance, on occasion the unbeliever may make excuses to prevent access to the child. Rather than make an immediate issue of this, a parent may get better results by applying Proverbs 25:15: "By patience a commander is induced, and a mild tongue itself can break a bone." Patience and mildness, though not easy to show when one is faced with unjust restrictions, can soften even one who is as hard in his opposition as a bone. (Compare 2 Timothy 2:23-25.) Arguments can often be avoided by your being punctual and following suggestions (not in conflict with the

12. (a) What positive effort may a noncustodial Christian parent make? (b) Illustrate how a Christian parent can 'use wisdom to success.'

Scriptures) that are given by the custodial parent regarding the child's care. If you are concerned that the unbeliever is making derogatory remarks about you to the child, remember 1 Peter 2:15: "By doing good you may muzzle the ignorant talk of the unreasonable men [and women]." If you set a good example, the child will see who is right.—Proverbs 20:7.

[13] During the visits, endeavor to put the Word of God into the child's heart by, whenever possible, personally studying spiritual material with him and by taking him to congregation meetings. Even if there are stringent legal restrictions, the parent can informally refer to God's creative works, and in other ways help the child to love God. (Romans 1:19, 20; Matthew 6:28-30) Jesus recognized the limitations of his listeners. He "would speak the word to them, as far as they were able to listen." (Mark 4:33, 34) So in addition to discussing serious spiritual matters, engage in other upbuilding activities, such as visiting with good friends, including some who are of the child's age. (Proverbs 13:20) Enjoy wholesome recreation together. Make the visit a precious occasion. Reasonable discipline shows love. (Proverbs 13:24) At times, however, the problems may seem overwhelming. Pressures come from many quarters. How can all of these be endured?

13. How can a believing parent make a visit truly beneficial?

Do You Remember?

- How can the custodial Christian parent protect the child's heart?
- How will "practical wisdom" help a believing parent who has only visitation rights?
- What assurance is given at Psalm 37:23, 24, and how does Jehovah fulfill this promise?

Rely on Jehovah

[14] Concerning a person in whose course of life Jehovah "takes delight," David wrote: "Although he may fall, he will not be hurled down, for Jehovah is supporting his hand." (Psalm 37:23, 24) Yes, a Christian struggling with the pressures of a disrupted family may at times "fall" in terms of frustrations, disappointments, and legal or financial reversals, but he will not be spiritually "hurled down" completely. As the *New Berkeley Version* renders the phrase: "When he falls, he shall not be down and out." Why? Because Jehovah offers his hand of uplift by means of his holy spirit and his loving worshipers. —James 1:27.

[15] One Christian woman, after her opposing ex-husband was granted custody of her two young children, stated: "When matters were taken completely out of my hands, I learned really to rely on Jehovah. I have learned to accept what he allows and not try to take things into my own hands. I am still learning. It's a hard lesson." However, she is making full use of her visitation rights and has drawn comfort not only from her new husband, a faithful Christian elder, but also from others in the congregation.

[16] Another Christian whose apostate ex-husband kept the children with him for several months against the court's ruling, said: "I was so depressed that I thought I was going to fall apart. The one thing that kept me from losing my mind during that period was being involved in the field ministry." Her daughter, who was seven at the time, took a firm stand for Jehovah, even

14. What assurance do we have at Psalm 37:23, 24?

15, 16. How have some in disrupted families been sustained?

enduring several beatings by her father because she refused to read his apostate literature. When she returned to her mother, she was determined to stick even closer to Jehovah. These and other faithful servants have seen fulfilled Psalm 54:2-7: "O God, hear my prayer; . . . look! God is my helper; Jehovah is among those supporting my soul. . . . For out of every distress he delivered me." Yes, we can count on Jehovah's support!—1 Corinthians 10:13.

[17] So if you are a parent in a disrupted family, be sensitive to your child's feelings. Fortify that one's heart with God's Word. If you only have visitation rights, then exercise "practical wisdom" as you use these to the full. Have confidence in the power of God's Word planted in a receptive heart. (1 Thessalonians 2:13) Seeing a child come to love Jehovah is well worth all the effort.

17. How can parents in disrupted families help their children, with what possible reward?

Questions From Readers

■ I have been of the understanding that since man's fall into sin God has dealt with humans only through his Son. So how could Jehovah deal directly with Satan, as the book of Job shows?

God has dealt with humans through his Son both before and after Adam sinned and produced an imperfect race.—Romans 5:12.

Colossians 1:16, 17, says concerning God's firstborn Son: "By means of him all other things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible . . . All other things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all other things and by means of him all other things were made to exist." John 1:1-3 makes a similar point, but we also learn that this Son was the Word, or Logos. Even when all humans *were* perfect, before Adam and Eve had sinned, God dealt with them and communicated with them through His spokesman, the Word. So we should not think that God's dealing with mankind through his Son is a consequence of man's fall into sin and imperfection.

The Bible does not provide us with great detail about how Jehovah God communicates with spirit creatures. Job chapters 1 and 2 relate that Satan once appeared "before Jehovah" at an assemblage of angels in heaven. "Then Jehovah said to Satan: 'Where do you come from?'" (Job 1:6, 7) In this case, the book of Job does not depict Satan as communicating with Jehovah through an intermediary. Again, the prophet Micaiah had a vision of Jehovah seated upon His throne. The prophet saw an angel communicating with Jehovah, and no intermediary is mentioned. (1 Kings 22:19-23) The Logos is left out of the picture in these two cases. Whether he was involved is not specifically stated.

While Jehovah God's method of communicating with Adam did not need to change when the first man sinned, Adam's situation certainly was different. Before he sinned Adam was a human "son of God." (Luke 3:38) Afterward he was not. The descendants of Adam have also been imperfect, soiled with sin. Thus, Jehovah was not in position to view even loyal and faithful men and women as his "sons," or human children. However, he purposed a change. Jesus came and provided a ransom sacrifice, laying a basis for Jehovah to forgive the sins of those putting faith in that sacrifice. The apostle Paul explained to Christians: "When we were enemies, we became reconciled to God through the death of his Son."—Romans 5:10; Ephesians 1:7.

Yes, without himself becoming unrighteous or unclean, Jehovah thereafter could forgive the sin of men of faith and view them as clean, sinless human sons, in line to be adopted as spiritual sons. (Romans 3:25, 26; 8:15-17) Even in this, however, God used his Son, as shown by the account of Jesus' pouring out holy spirit at Pentecost.—Acts 2:33.

So God's dealing with humans through the Word was not first because of human sin, nor need it be viewed as at variance with what we read in the book of Job.

Comfort in Trying Times

That is what so many of us need. A woman from Ohio explains where she found such comfort:

"I just have to write to express my appreciation for the recordings of the Scriptures I am enjoying today for the first time.

"I have never had anyone sit down and quietly read the Bible to me, like a loving mother. No wonder children love to be read to! How comforting, calming, and reassuring it is when we need it so much in the times we're living in.

"Please be certain of my heartfelt thanks for providing such a welcome aid."