

The **Watchtower**
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

February 15, 1987

*Do You Worry
About Your Children?*

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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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Do You Worry About Your Children?

OF COURSE you do! Disease, drug abuse, and delinquency are just three of the problems that you know endanger your children. It is normal for parents to be concerned about their children—even to worry about them.

That is how most parents have felt down through history, as the Bible shows. Remember that Jacob sent Joseph to check up on his brothers because Jacob was concerned about them. (Genesis 37:13, 14) Job, too, worried, even though his sons were grown-ups with families of their own. He thought: "Maybe my sons have sinned and have cursed God in their heart."—Job 1:4, 5.

Why, even Joseph and Mary were concerned about their perfect son Jesus! In fact, on one occasion when Jesus was 12 years old, they became particularly worried about him, for they found that he was missing. Nevertheless, their child Jesus was a credit to them, and they had no reason to reproach themselves. Let us see exactly what happened on that memorable occasion and consider what lessons modern parents can draw from it.

A Lost Son

If you are a parent, you can probably sympathize with Mary's feelings when she



scoldingly said to Jesus: "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you." Joseph and Mary had been separated from Jesus for three days. You can appreciate why they were anxious as to the whereabouts of the 12-year-old boy. —Luke 2:48, *Today's English Version*.

Why did Joseph and Mary lose Jesus? A well-known commentator criticized them for this, writing: "Knowing what a treasure they possessed, how could they be so long without looking into it? Where were the bowels and tender solicitude of the mother?" But really, as we will see, close analysis of the account clears Joseph and Mary of serious blame.

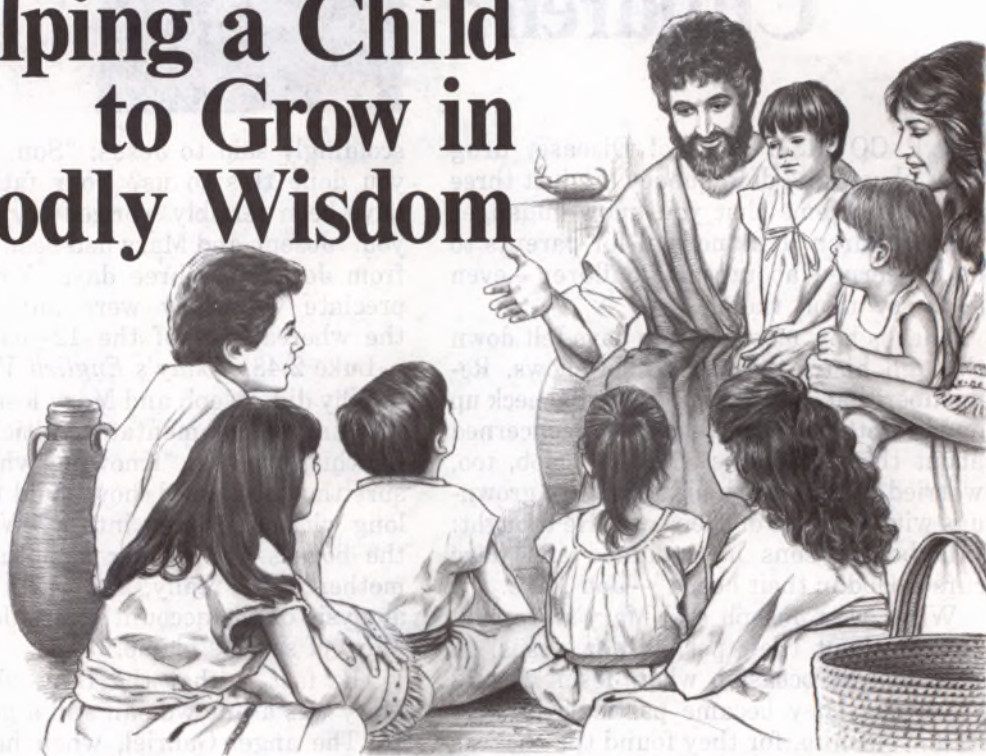
The fact is that the Bible shows that Mary was a fine woman and a good mother. The angel Gabriel, when he came to foretell Jesus' birth, said that she had "found favor with God." (Luke 1:28, 30) She willingly accepted the assignment of giving birth to this special man-child, along with the weighty responsibility of raising and training him. She was a woman of humility and strong faith in God. After Jesus' birth, she did everything required by Jehovah's Law, "just as it is written."—Luke 1:38, 45-48; 2:21-23, 39.

Joseph, the man who married Mary and became the adoptive father of Jesus, was also a fine, righteous man who had had communication with Jehovah's angel on four occasions. (Matthew 1:19, 20; 2:13, 19, 22) Remember, Jehovah selected Joseph and Mary to rear His precious, only-begotten Son. Would God have done less than choose a couple who would do well

in helping this son to grow in divine wisdom?

Of course, parents today likely worry about their children because of the dangerous and delinquent environment they have. And they know that their children are not perfect as was Jesus. Still, we can profit from the example of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.

Helping a Child to Grow in Godly Wisdom



THINKING people of many nations and backgrounds acknowledge that Jesus was a marvelous teacher and moralist. But did certain things in his youthful training contribute to this? What lessons can today's parents learn from his family life and upbringing?

The Bible tells us very little about Jesus' childhood. Basically, his first 12 years

are covered in two verses: "So when [Joseph and Mary] had carried out all the things according to the law of Jehovah, they went back into Galilee to their own city Nazareth. And the young child continued growing and getting strong, being filled with wisdom, and God's favor continued upon him." (Luke 2:39, 40) But there are lessons here for parents to learn.

The young child "continued growing and getting strong." Hence, his parents were caring for him physically. Also, he was continually "being filled with wisdom."* Whose responsibility was it to teach him the knowledge and understanding that would be the basis for such wisdom?

Under the Mosaic Law, his parents had that duty. The Law said to Israelite parents: "These words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart; and you must inculcate them in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up." (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) The fact that Jesus continued "being filled with wisdom," and also that "God's favor continued upon him," indicates that Joseph and Mary were obeying this command.

Some may feel that since Jesus was a perfect child, his upbringing does not really provide a realistic pattern for the rearing of other children. However, Joseph and Mary were not perfect. Yet they evidently continued to supply his physical and spiritual needs, and they did so despite the pressures of an enlarging family. (Matthew 13:55, 56) Also, Jesus, even though perfect, still had to grow from babyhood through childhood and adolescence to adulthood. There was a lot of formative work for his parents to do, and they evidently did it well.

Jesus at Age 12

"Now his parents were accustomed to go from year to year to Jerusalem for the festival of the passover." (Luke 2:41) According to God's Law, every male was to appear in Jerusalem for the festivals. (Deuteronomy 16:16) But the record says

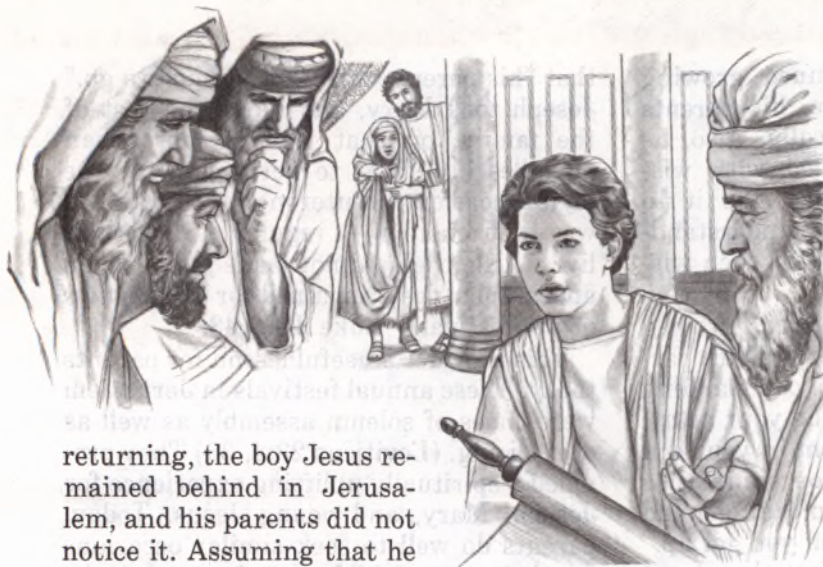
* The original Greek here carries the thought that Jesus' "being filled with wisdom" was a continuous, progressive process.

that "his parents were accustomed to go." Joseph took Mary, and likely the rest of the family, on that trek of more than 60 miles (100 km) to Jerusalem for the joyful occasion. (Deuteronomy 16:6, 11) It was their custom—a regular part of their lives. Also, they did not make just a token appearance; they remained for *all the days* of the festival.—Luke 2:42, 43.

This provides a useful lesson for parents today. These annual festivals in Jerusalem were times of solemn assembly as well as of rejoicing. (Leviticus 23:4, 36) They provided a spiritually uplifting experience for Joseph, Mary, and young Jesus. Today, parents do well to seek similar occasions for their young children to have an exciting change as well as to enjoy spiritual upbuilding. Parents who are Jehovah's Witnesses do this by taking their children to the assemblies and large conventions held at regular intervals during the year. Thus, children may have the exciting experience of traveling and being able to mix with hundreds or thousands of fellow believers for a few days. A father who successfully raised ten children attributes much of his success to the fact that since his baptism as a Christian 45 years ago, he has not missed one session of any assembly. And he has encouraged his family not to miss any.

An Oversight

When Jesus was younger, he doubtless stayed close to his parents during these annual trips to the big city of Jerusalem. However, as he got older he may have been given more latitude. When he was 12, he was about the age that the Jews view as an important milestone in the path toward manhood. Perhaps because of this normal and natural change, an oversight occurred when the time came for Joseph's family to leave Jerusalem and return home. The account reads: "But when they were



returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, and his parents did not notice it. Assuming that he was in the company traveling together, they covered a day's distance and then began to hunt him up among the relatives and acquaintances."—Luke 2:43, 44.

There are features of this incident that both parents and youngsters will recognize. However, there is one difference: Jesus was perfect. Since he was obediently subject to Joseph and Mary, we cannot imagine that he failed to obey some arrangement that they made with him. (Luke 2:52) It is far more likely that there was a breakdown in communication. The parents *assumed* that Jesus was in the company of relatives and acquaintances. (Luke 2:44) It is easy to imagine that, in the bustle of leaving Jerusalem, they would give their first attention to their younger children and assume that their eldest son, Jesus, was coming along too.

However, Jesus evidently thought that his parents would know where he was. This is suggested by his later reply: "Why did you have to go looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in the house of my Father?" He was not being disrespectful. His words merely reveal his surprise at the fact that his parents did not know

where to find him. It was a typical case of misunderstanding that many parents of growing children can appreciate. —Luke 2:49.

Think of Joseph and Mary's concern at the end of that first day, when they found that Jesus was missing. And imagine their growing worry during the two days that they searched Jerusalem for him. However, it turned out that their training of Jesus

paid off in this crisis. Jesus had not got into bad company. He was not bringing shame on his parents. When they found Jesus, he was "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers and listening to them and questioning them. But all those listening to him were in constant amazement at his understanding and his answers."—Luke 2:46, 47.

The fact that he was spending his time in such a way, and his evident fine grasp of Scriptural principles, also speak well of Joseph and Mary's training of him up to that point. Nevertheless, Mary's reaction seems typical for a worried mother: first, relief at finding that her son was safe; then expressing her feelings of worry and frustration: "Child, why did you treat us this way? Here your father and I in mental distress have been looking for you." (Luke 2:48) It is not unexpected that Mary spoke before Joseph in expressing the concern of both parents. Many teenagers reading the account will likely say: "That is just like my mother!"

Lessons Learned

What lessons can we learn from this experience? Teenagers are prone to as-

sume that their parents know what they are thinking. They are often heard to say: "But I thought you would know." Parents, if your teenager has ever said this when there was a misunderstanding, you are not the first to have the problem.

As children approach adolescence, they become less dependent on their parents. This change is natural, and parents need to make adjustments to allow for it. Yet even with the best of training, misunderstandings will arise and parents will have their share of worries. However, if they follow the fine example of Joseph and Mary, when crises do arise, the training given will stand their children in good stead.

Apparently Jesus' parents kept working

with him through his teenage years. After the event just considered, he submissively "went down with them" to his hometown and "continued subject to them." With what result? "Jesus went on progressing in wisdom and in physical growth and in favor with God and men." So this episode had a happy ending. (Luke 2:51, 52) Parents who follow the example of Joseph and Mary, who help their children to grow in divine wisdom, who give them a good home atmosphere and expose them to the fine influences of godly association, increase the likelihood that something similar will happen to their offspring. Such children are more likely to enjoy a happy life as they grow to responsible, Christian adulthood.



Jesus—A Center of Controversy

SHORTLY after he is entertained at the home of Simon, Jesus begins a second preaching tour of Galilee. On his previous tour of the territory, he was accompanied by his first disciples, Peter, Andrew, James, and John. But now the 12 apostles accompany him, as well as certain women. These include Mary Magdalene, Susanna, and Joanna, whose husband is an officer of King Herod.

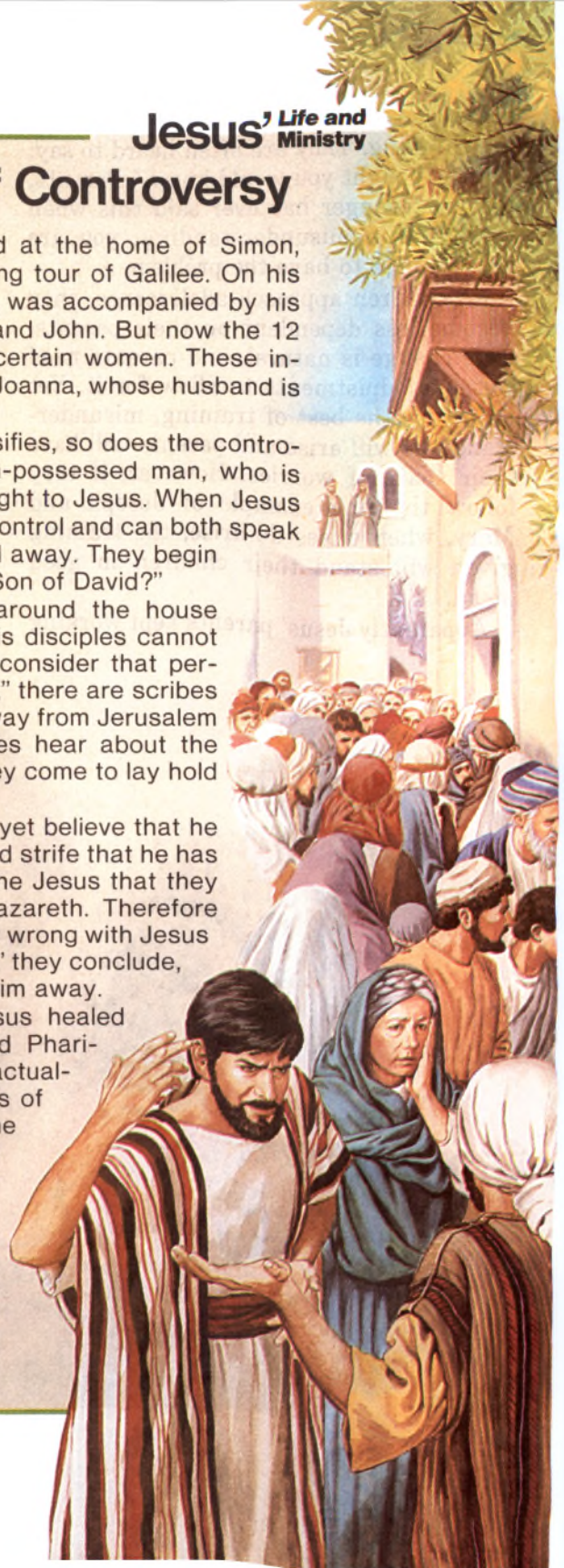
As the pace of Jesus' ministry intensifies, so does the controversy regarding his activity. A demon-possessed man, who is also blind and unable to speak, is brought to Jesus. When Jesus cures him, so that he is free of demon control and can both speak and see, the crowds are simply carried away. They begin to say: "May this not perhaps be the Son of David?"

Crowds gather in such numbers around the house where Jesus is staying that he and his disciples cannot even eat a meal. Besides those who consider that perhaps he is the promised "Son of David," there are scribes and Pharisees who have come all the way from Jerusalem to discredit him. When Jesus' relatives hear about the commotion revolving around Jesus, they come to lay hold of him. For what reason?

Well, Jesus' own brothers do not as yet believe that he is God's Son. Also, the public uproar and strife that he has created is totally uncharacteristic of the Jesus that they knew while he was growing up in Nazareth. Therefore they believe that something is seriously wrong with Jesus mentally. "He has gone out of his mind," they conclude, and they want to seize him and take him away.

Yet the evidence is clear that Jesus healed the demonized man. The scribes and Pharisees know that they cannot deny the actuality of this, as well as of other miracles of Jesus. So to discredit Jesus they tell the people: "This fellow does not expel the demons except by means of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

Knowing their thinking, Jesus calls the scribes and Pharisees to him and says: "Every kingdom divided against itself comes to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. In the same way, if Satan





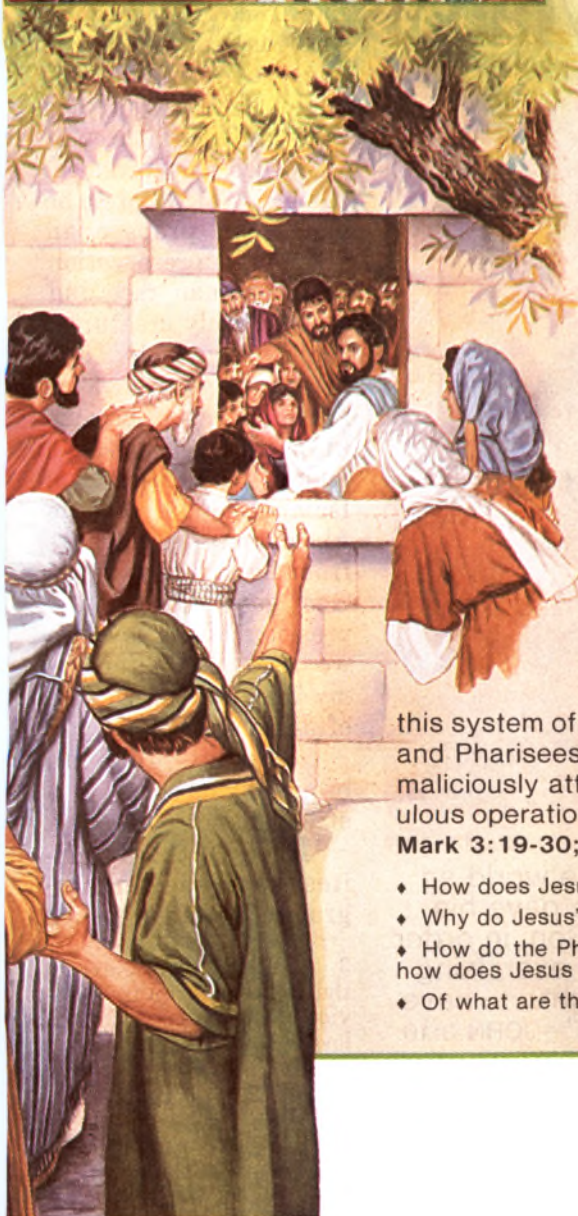
expels Satan, he has become divided against himself; how, then, will his kingdom stand?"

What devastating logic! Since the Pharisees claim that persons from their own ranks have cast out demons, Jesus also asks: "If I expel the demons by means of Beelzebub, by means of whom do your sons expel them?" In other words, their charge against Jesus should just as well be applied to them as to him. Jesus then warns: "But if it is by means of God's spirit that I expel the demons, the kingdom of God has really overtaken you."

To illustrate that his casting out of demons is evidence of his power over Satan, Jesus says: "How can anyone invade the house of a strong man and seize his movable goods, unless first he binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He that is not on my side is against me, and he that does not gather with me scatters." The Pharisees clearly are against Jesus, demonstrating themselves to be Satan's agents. They are scattering Israelites away from him.

Consequently, Jesus warns these satanic opposers that "the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven." He explains: "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the holy spirit, it will not be forgiven him, no, not in this system of things nor in that to come." Those scribes and Pharisees have committed that unforgivable sin by maliciously attributing to Satan what is plainly a miraculous operation of God's holy spirit. **Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:19-30; John 7:5.**

- ◆ How does Jesus' second tour of Galilee differ from the first?
- ◆ Why do Jesus' relatives attempt to lay hold of him?
- ◆ How do the Pharisees attempt to discredit Jesus' miracles, and how does Jesus refute them?
- ◆ Of what are those Pharisees guilty, and why?

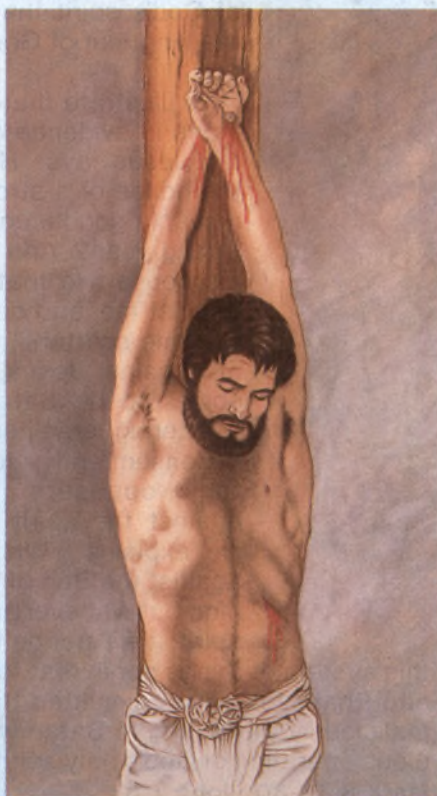


“GOD is love.” The apostle John made that statement twice. (1 John 4:8, 16) Yes, Jehovah God is loving not simply in the way that he is wise, just, and mighty; he IS love. He is the embodiment, the personification, of love. You might ask yourself: ‘Do I know why that is the truth? Could I provide someone with a clear explanation, backed by evidence or examples proving that He is love? And what bearing does it have on my life and activities?’

² How much love Jehovah God has bestowed upon his human creatures on earth! Reflect on the complete beauty and function of our eyes, the marvel of our strong bones, the power of our muscles, and the sensitivity of our touch. We have reason to echo the sentiments of the psalmist: “I shall laud you because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made.” Consider, too, the majestic mountains, the calm brooks of clear water, the fields of spring flowers, and the glorious

1. What is meant by the statement “God is love”?
2. God has given what visible expressions of his love?

The Two Greatest Expressions of Love Ever Made



“God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might . . . have everlasting life.”—JOHN 3:16.

sunsets. “How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made. The earth is full of your productions.”—Psalm 139:14; 104:24.

³ The expressions of God’s love did not cease when his first human creatures rebelled. For example, Jehovah showed love by permitting that couple to produce offspring who might benefit by Jehovah’s provision through his “seed” of promise. (Genesis 3:15) Later, he had Noah prepare an ark for the preservation of the human race and other earthly creatures. (Genesis 6:13-21) Then he showed great love for Abraham, who became known as Jehovah’s friend. (Genesis 18:19; Isaiah 41:8) In rescuing Abraham’s descendants from Egyptian bondage, God gave further expression of his love, as we read at Deuteronomy 7:8: “It was because of Jehovah’s loving you . . . that Jehovah brought you out with a strong hand.”

⁴ Though the Israelites kept showing ingratitude and rebelled

- 3, 4. What examples do the Hebrew Scriptures provide of God’s expressions of love?

repeatedly, God did not cast them off at once. Rather, he lovingly pleaded with them: "Turn back from your bad ways, for why is it that you should die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11) However, even though Jehovah is the personification of love, he is also just and wise. The time thus came when his rebellious people reached the limit of his long-suffering! They went to the point that "there was no healing," so he let them go into Babylonian captivity. (2 Chronicles 36:15, 16) Even then God's love did not stop forever. He saw to it that after 70 years a remnant of them were allowed to return to their native land. Please read Psalm 126 and see from it how the returnees felt about it.

Preparing for His Greatest Expression of Love

⁵ Further down in history the time came for Jehovah to give the greatest expression of his love. It was a truly sacrificial love. Preparing for this, God had the life of his only-begotten Son transferred from spirit existence in heaven to the womb of the Jewish virgin Mary. (Matthew 1: 20-23; Luke 1:26-35) Imagine the special closeness that had existed between Jehovah and his Son. We read about Jesus' prehuman existence under the symbol of wisdom personified: "I came to be beside [God] as a master worker, and I came to be the one he was specially fond of day by day, I being glad before him all the time." (Proverbs 8:30, 31) So can you not agree that just having His only-begotten Son leave His presence was a sacrifice for Jehovah?

⁶ Without doubt, Jehovah watched with keen and great interest the development of his son from human conception onward.

5. Why can it be said that sending his Son to earth was an expression of God's love?

6. What paternal interest must Jehovah have had in Jesus' early life?

God's holy spirit overshadowed Mary so that nothing could damage the growing embryo. Jehovah saw to it that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem for the census so that Jesus would be born there in fulfillment of Micah 5:2. Through an angel, God warned Joseph about King Herod's murderous scheme, causing Joseph and his family to flee to Egypt until Herod's death. (Matthew 2:13-15) God must have continued his interest in Jesus' progress. What a pleasure it was for God to watch 12-year-old Jesus amaze the teachers and others in the temple with questions and answers!—Luke 2:42-47.

⁷ Eighteen years later Jehovah was watching when Jesus came to John the Baptizer to be immersed. Then he joyfully sent his holy spirit upon Jesus and said: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved." (Matthew 3:17) Any Christian father can imagine how pleasant it would be for God to follow Jesus' ministry and to see the way he directed all praise to his heavenly Father. On one occasion Jesus took some apostles up on a lofty mountain. There Jehovah caused Christ to shine with a supernatural splendor, and the Father said: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved; listen to him." (Matthew 17:5) Jehovah had his voice heard a third time in answer to Jesus' petition for God to glorify his own name. Jehovah said: "I both glorified it and will glorify it again." Apparently this was said primarily for Jesus' benefit, for some with him thought an angel had spoken, whereas others thought it had thundered.—John 12: 28, 29.

⁸ What have you concluded from this brief review of God's actions toward his Son and his interest in him? It should be plain that Jehovah dearly loves his

7. What three expressions evidenced God's interest in Jesus' ministry?

8. How do you feel about God's love?

only-begotten Son. With that in mind, and appreciating how almost any human parent would feel toward an only child, consider what next occurred—Jesus' sacrificial death.

The Greatest Expression of Love

⁹ The Bible shows that our heavenly Father has empathy. We read at Isaiah 63:9 regarding his people Israel: "During all their distress it was distressing to him. And his own personal messenger saved them. In his love and in his compassion he himself repurchased them, and he proceeded to lift them up and carry them all the days of long ago." How much more distressing it must have been for Jehovah to hear and see Jesus' "strong outcries and tears." (Hebrews 5:7) Jesus prayed in that way in the garden of Gethsemane. He was made a prisoner, faced a mock trial, was beaten and scourged, and had a crown of thorns pressed down upon his head. Remember, his loving Father was observing all of it. He also saw Jesus stumble under the weight of the execution stake and watched as his Son was finally impaled on that stake. Let us not forget that God could have prevented this suffering on the part of his beloved Son. Yet Jehovah allowed Jesus to suffer so much. Since God has feelings, for him to witness these events without a doubt caused the most pain he ever had or ever will have.

¹⁰ In view of all the foregoing, we can see how much meaning there is in Jesus' words to Nicodemus: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Of similar import are the words of John, Jesus' dear apostle: "By this the love of God was

made manifest in our case, because God sent forth his only-begotten Son into the world . . . as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins."—1 John 4:9, 10.

¹¹ You can, then, understand why the apostle Paul, at Romans 5:6-8, stressed Jehovah God's great love in the words: "Christ, while we were yet weak, died for ungodly men at the appointed time. For hardly will anyone die for a righteous man; indeed, for the good man, perhaps, someone even dares to die. But God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Certainly, in having his only-begotten Son come to earth, suffer, and die a most ignominious death, Jehovah God made the greatest expression of love.

The Second Greatest Expression

¹² 'What,' you may ask, 'was the next greatest expression of love?' Jesus Christ said: "No one has love greater than this, that someone should surrender his soul in behalf of his friends." (John 15:13) True, throughout mankind's history, there have been some who sacrificed their lives for others. But theirs was only a limited life; sooner or later they would have died anyway. Jesus Christ, however, was a perfect human with the right to life. He was not facing inherited death as were and are all the rest of mankind; nor could anyone have forcibly taken Jesus' life without his allowing it. (John 10:18; Hebrews 7:26) Recall his words: "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father to supply me at this moment more than twelve legions of angels?"—Matthew 26:53; John 10:17, 18.

¹³ We can further appreciate the love

11. How does the apostle Paul highlight God's greatest expression of love?

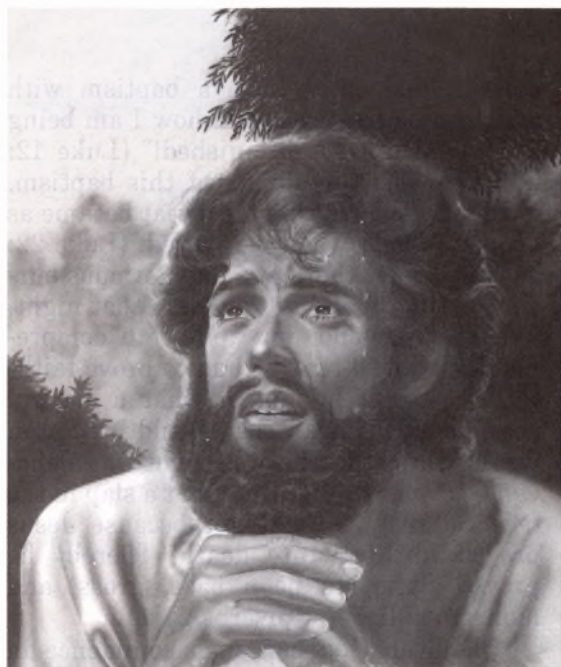
12, 13. (a) In what way was Jesus' expression of love unique? (b) How does Paul call attention to Jesus' great love?

9, 10. What was God's greatest expression of love toward mankind, underscoring what Scriptural testimony?

involved in what Jesus did by looking at the following aspect: He had left a glorious existence as a spirit creature in the heavens where he had lived as the close companion and fellow worker of the universal Sovereign and King of eternity. Still, out of unselfish love, Jesus did as the apostle Paul tells us: "Although he was existing in God's form, [he] gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God. No, but he emptied himself and took a slave's form and came to be in the likeness of men. More than that, when he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake."—Philippians 2:6-8.

¹⁴ Was that not an expression of love? It most certainly was—second only to that of Jehovah God, his heavenly Father. The prophetic words of Isaiah chapter 53 testify to all that Jesus endured: "He was despised and was avoided by men, a man meant for pains and for having acquaintance with sickness. . . . Truly our sicknesses were what he himself carried; and as for our pains, he bore them. But we ourselves accounted him as plagued, stricken by God and afflicted. But he was being pierced for our transgression; he was being crushed for our errors. . . . Because of his wounds there has been a healing for us. . . . He poured out his soul to the very death."—Isaiah 53:3-5, 12.

¹⁵ Because of all that was bound up with his death, Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me. Yet, not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39) What was Jesus asking for when he uttered those words? Was he wanting to beg off from being "the Lamb of God that



takes away the sin of the world"? (John 1:29) It simply could not mean that, for all along Jesus had told his disciples that he would suffer and die, even indicating the kind of death he would die. (Matthew 16:21; John 3:14) So Jesus must have had something else in mind when praying thus.

¹⁶ Without a doubt Jesus was concerned about the charge of blasphemy that he saw would be hurled against him, the worst crime a Jew could possibly be guilty of. Why be concerned about a false charge? Because his death under that circumstance would bring reproach upon his heavenly Father. Yes, the spotless Son of God, who so loved righteousness and hated lawlessness and who had come to earth to glorify his Father's name, was now to be put to death by God's own people as a blasphemer of Jehovah God.—Hebrews 1:9; John 17:4.

¹⁷ Earlier in his ministry Jesus had

17. Why did the kind of death Jesus was facing prove to be such an ordeal to him?

14. How did the prophet Isaiah testify to the great expression of Jesus' love?

15, 16. That it was a sacrifice for Jesus can be seen from what words of his?

stated: "Indeed, I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and how I am being distressed until it is finished!" (Luke 12:50) Now was the climax of this baptism. Evidently that is why his sweat became as drops of blood when he prayed. (Luke 22:44) Moreover, there was an enormous burden resting upon his shoulders that night, a burden beyond our ability to comprehend. He knew that he had to prove faithful because if he failed, what a slap in the face of Jehovah that would be! Satan would claim that he was right and Jehovah God was wrong. But what a slap in the face Satan the Devil got because Jesus proved faithful unto death! Thereby he proved Satan to be a base, gross, and monstrous liar.—Proverbs 27:11.

¹⁸ Jehovah God had such confidence in his Son's loyalty that he foretold that Jesus would prove faithful. (Isaiah 53:9-12) Yet Jesus also knew that the burden of maintaining integrity rested upon him. He could have failed. He could have sinned. (Luke 12:50) His own eternal life and that of the entire human race hung in the balance that night. What a terrible

18. Why was Jesus under a terrible strain that night?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ What expressions of God's love can all mankind see?
- ☐ How can we know that Jehovah suffered when he saw his Son suffering?
- ☐ How was Jesus' death in behalf of humans different from that of others who may have sacrificed their lives?
- ☐ How should we be affected by the love shown us by Jehovah and Jesus?

strain that must have been! If Jesus had weakened and sinned, he could not have called for mercy on the basis of another's sacrifice, as we imperfect creatures can do.

¹⁹ Certainly, Jesus' endurance on Nisan 14, 33 C.E., was the greatest expression of unselfish love ever made by any human, second only to that of Jehovah God. And what grand things he accomplished for us by his death! By his death he became "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) He opened up the way for 144,000 of his footstep followers to be kings and priests and to reign with him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4, 6) In addition, the "great crowd" of "other sheep" today are benefiting from Christ's sacrifice and can hope to survive the end of this old system of things. These will be the first to enjoy the blessings of an earthly paradise. There will also doubtless be billions of human-kind who will be resurrected as a result of what Jesus did. They, too, will have the opportunity to enjoy endless life in the earthly Paradise. (Revelation 7:9-14; John 10:16; 5:28, 29) Truly, "no matter how many the promises of God are, they have become Yes by means of him," that is, by means of Jesus Christ.—2 Corinthians 1:20.

²⁰ It is surely most fitting that we show appreciation for all that Jehovah God and Jesus Christ have done in our behalf by giving us these greatest of all expressions of love. We owe them such appreciation, and for us truly to benefit to the full, we must express such appreciation. The following article will show some of the very best ways that we can do this.

19. What did Jesus accomplish by his unselfish course?

20. How should we respond to the two greatest expressions of love on the part of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ?

Showing Appreciation for the Two Greatest Expressions of Love

"As for us, we love, because he first loved us."—1 JOHN 4:19.

HOW can we best show our appreciation for the great love that Jehovah God and Jesus Christ have expressed toward us? A primary way is by imitating Jesus, who tirelessly witnessed to his Father's name and Kingdom. (1 Peter 2:21) He did so in homes, in synagogues, in the temple, on mountainsides, and at the seashore. Let us consider nine distinct ways that may be open to us.

The House-to-House Activity

² The first, and perhaps most distinctive, way in which we can show our love and appreciation is by going from house to house with the good news of God's Kingdom. Doing so requires real freeness of speech because it continually involves direct confrontation with others, many of whom will view us as a bother. It takes genuine love for God and for neighbor to keep going from door to door, though we

1. What example did Jesus set for us?
2. How can you persevere in the house-to-house work?

may meet up with indifference, annoyance, contempt, or direct opposition.—Compare Ezekiel 3:7-9.

³ The Gospel record of Jesus' instructions to his 12 apostles, and later to the 70 evangelists, clearly indicates that they were to go from house to house preaching the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 10:5-14; Luke 10:1-7) At Acts 20:20 Paul tells of his going from house to house. Those words have been applied to his making shepherding calls, but verse 21 leaves no doubt as to the activity meant, for Paul adds: "I thoroughly bore witness both to Jews and to Greeks"—not to Christian brothers and sisters—"about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus." When making shepherding calls, an elder usually does not urge 'repentance toward God and faith in Jesus.' Rather, he encourages fellow Christians to have increased appreciation of meetings or the ministry, or he helps them with personal problems.

⁴ Not only is there sound Scriptural basis for our going from house to house but the fruits of that activity show that Jehovah's blessing is upon it. Yes, "wisdom is proved righteous by its works." (Matthew 11:19) Frequently, those going from house to house have seen evidence of angelic direction that leads them to those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. The householder has said that he or she had been praying for help and that the Witness' visit answered that prayer.

⁵ What great help for the field service we have in the book *Reasoning From the Scriptures!* It contains many appealing

3. What Scriptural basis do you have for the house-to-house activity?
4. What encourages us to share in preaching from house to house?
5. What fine aid do we have for our house-to-house ministry, and in what various ways can it help us?



introductions for Bible discussions as well as useful information on numerous Scriptural or religious subjects. So not only carry it but keep referring to it. The pioneers in particular have expressed great appreciation for this valuable field-service aid. Could you manifest your appreciation for God's love by using this book more fully and more effectively?

⁶ We should not overlook the fact that we personally stand to benefit greatly by sharing in the house-to-house ministry. As we Christians act on our faith, it becomes more firm; as we speak with conviction, it is strengthened. We cannot tell others about our hope without our own hope becoming brighter. There is nothing like participating regularly in the house-to-house ministry for cultivating the fruits of the spirit mentioned at Galatians 5:22, 23. It simply has to be that way, for the Bible assures us: "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."—Proverbs 11:25, *New International Version*.

Making Return Visits

⁷ A second way for us to respond to the love that God and Christ have shown us is

6. We stand to gain what personal benefit by going from house to house with the Kingdom message?

7, 8. For what logical and practical reasons should we make return visits?

by making return visits on persons who previously evinced an interest in the Kingdom message. Paul and Barnabas were concerned about those to whom they had preached. (Acts 15:36) In fact, consistency requires that we make return visits. While witnessing from door to door, informally, or on the streets, we are looking for those "conscious of their spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) Obviously, giving them, as it were, one glass of spiritual water or one piece of spiritual bread is by no means enough. For them to get on the road to life, they need more help.

⁸ Our first efforts might be likened to planting seeds of truth. But as the apostle Paul indicated at 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7, more is needed. It was not enough that he planted. The seeds also required water, such as Apollos supplied. Then it could be expected that God would make it grow. This feature of the work is neglected by some, and yet many consider it to be really the easiest feature of the Christian ministry. Why? Because the people we call on have already shown some interest.

Conducting Home Bible Studies

⁹ When return visits are made regularly on persons who have shown an interest in the Kingdom message, the result often is

9. Why should conducting a home Bible study be your goal?



a home Bible study—a third way in which we can show our appreciation. It really can be the most enjoyable and most rewarding feature of our ministry. Why? Well, what a joy it is to see people grow in knowledge and appreciation of Bible truths, to see them make changes in their lives, and to assist them until they dedicate themselves to do God's will and get baptized! Such ones can truly be viewed as our spiritual children and we as their spiritual parents.—Compare 1 Corinthians 4: 14, 15; 1 Peter 5:13.

¹⁰ Consider a typical example. A missionary going from house to house in a Caribbean island met a hippie couple whose home was anything but neat and orderly. Yet they expressed interest. A Bible study aid was placed, and a home Bible study was started with the couple, who were not married although they had several children. As the study progressed, the home began to look more presentable and so did the couple and their children. Before long the couple asked the missionary to marry them, opening the way to their getting baptized. Then one day the new brother happily displayed his auto driver's license, the first he had ever obtained. Yes, before he became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, he had not seen the need

to get either a marriage license or a driver's license, but now he was obeying both God's laws and those of caesar.

Street Witnessing

¹¹ A fourth way in which we can show our appreciation for what God and Christ have done for us is by street witnessing. When we take part, we are helping to fulfill Proverbs 1:20, 21 in a somewhat literal way: "True wisdom itself keeps crying aloud in the very street. In the public squares it keeps giving forth its voice. At the upper end of the noisy streets it calls out."

¹² There are ever so many good reasons for us to share regularly in this feature of Kingdom preaching. In many areas, it is more and more difficult to find people at home. They are either sharing in some form of recreation, shopping, or working. Also, many people live in exclusive apartment buildings or condominiums, not to mention those living in hotels. But usually there are people to be seen on the streets.

¹³ An elder in the United States currently conducts four home Bible studies with individuals whom he first contacted

11, 12. (a) We have what Scriptural encouragement to share in street witnessing? (b) What reasons are there for our doing so?

13. Street witnessing can have what results? Illustrate.

10. What typical example shows the value of conducting home Bible studies?



in the street witnessing activity. Of course, he does not simply stand mute (although in some lands that is all that the law permits). Rather, with a friendly smile and cheerful voice, he approaches people who are standing, waiting for a bus, or walking along leisurely. His 'utterances are with graciousness, seasoned with salt,' and he uses discernment as to how to approach each one. (Colossians 4: 5, 6; 1 Peter 3:15) Not only has he obtained home Bible studies by such street witnessing but he is also very successful in placing literature with many. Yes, by being neatly groomed and having a friendly smile together with freeness of speech, you can be very effective in street witnessing. In fact, five Witnesses recently placed more than 30 copies of the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* in public shopping areas. Many of the books were obtained by people sitting in their cars.

Informal Witnessing

¹⁴ A fifth way for us to show appreciation for the great love that God and Christ have expressed to us is by informal witnessing. How effective this has often been, both in finding persons hungering and thirsting for righteousness and in placing

literature! It certainly is one way by which we can heed the advice found at Ephesians 5:15, 16, 'to buy out the opportune time for ourselves.' A missionary struck up a conversation with a fellow passenger in a taxicab. The man showed interest. Return visits were made and a Bible study was started. Today that man is a Christian elder. Elsewhere an elder started a conversation with a woman who, it turned out, was changing her religion to marry a Jew. She wanted to know who came first, Moses, Noah, David, and so forth. He told her that what she needed was the *Bible Stories* book, which presents Bible events in chronological order. Although he was a perfect stranger to her, she readily gave him her name and address and the necessary contribution so that he could mail the book to her.

¹⁵ Sometimes, for fear we may get rebuffed, we may hesitate to start a conversation with someone traveling next to us. How often, though, we are richly rewarded if we summon up the courage to do so! Appreciation of God's goodness and people's need will help us to have the necessary courage. Yes, remember that "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."—2 Timothy 1:7, NIV.

14. How is the value of informal witnessing evident?

15. What will help us to be alert to opportunities for informal witnessing?



Welcoming Strangers

¹⁶ A sixth way in which we can show our gratitude to God and Christ is by welcoming strangers that show up at our Kingdom Hall. Love for neighbor should make us alert to notice any stranger that visits our place of worship. Let us strive to make him feel at ease, to feel that he is among friends who are sincerely interested in his spiritual well-being. Most likely, more than idle curiosity brought him there. He may truly be hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Our genuine concern for him may result in our starting a home Bible study, helping him on the road to life. (Matthew 5:3, 6; 7:13, 14) In fact, this very thing has happened often. A missionary from the first class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead noted that his two most promising Bible students were those whom he first met at the Kingdom Hall.

Witnessing by Writing Letters

¹⁷ A seventh way for us to witness, in response to the love God and Christ have shown us, is by writing letters. Often, those who use this form of witnessing get some very appreciative letters in reply. This is a method employed by some full-time ministers who may temporarily be

unable to go from house to house because of physical infirmity. For example: There was a family with 12 children. One day the father came home to find five of them shot in cold blood by one of his daughter's suitors. In vain he looked for comfort from Christendom's clergy. Then one day he received a letter from a stranger, a Witness who had read in the press about his tragedy and who wanted to comfort him, enclosing a *Truth* book. This was just what the man was looking for. Today he, too, is a zealous Witness.*

Making Phone Calls

¹⁸ To mention an eighth avenue of witnessing, there is the opportunity to use the telephone in preaching the Kingdom good news. This increasingly is proving to be a pleasant and an effective form of witnessing. More and more Witnesses are becoming skilled in this feature of the ministry, which has much to recommend it. By it we reach some people whom we are unable to meet in the house-to-house activity. When phone witnessing is done discreetly, with kindness, tact, and skill, some have found even better response than from calling on such persons at their homes.

* For details, see *Awake!*, October 22, 1986, pages 12-16.

18, 19. What other avenue for preaching the good news have some found effective, and why?

16. Why should we be alert to notice strangers visiting our Kingdom Hall?

17. Witnessing by writing letters can have what results?

¹⁹ A Japanese congregation in an English-speaking country uses the telephone book as part of its territory. Publishers phone up Japanese names and arrange to make a personal call where they find interest. They have started literally dozens of studies by this means.

Witnessing by Good Conduct

²⁰ A ninth way in which we can bring praise to God is by our good conduct. A Russian journalist once stated that our fine conduct was our best sermon. In fact, repeatedly the press has commented on Jehovah's Witnesses' high morality. One reported: "Jehovah's Witnesses are recognizably the most honest people in the Federal Republic of Germany." At the beginning of her school term, a Witness girl brought the *School* brochure to her teacher. He bluntly rejected it, saying he wanted nothing to do with the Witnesses. However, in time her fine conduct won her his highest praise and caused an entire change of attitude on his part toward the Witnesses. Of similar import is the letter that Witness parents received from their children's schoolteacher: "The undeniable measure of the success of your beliefs is your children."

²¹ Those in the world cannot say good about Jehovah's Witnesses without bringing honor to God and Christ. That is the way it simply has to be. Did not Jesus say that we should let our light shine so that men might see our good works and give glory to our heavenly Father? (Matthew 5:16) Truly, by our fine conduct, we can adorn the truth. (Titus 2:10) Surely, the fact that our fine conduct brings praise to God and Christ and helps others get on the way to life is powerful reason for our being deeply concerned that our conduct at all times is above reproach.

20, 21. Our conduct can have what good effects? Illustrate.



²² As we have seen, there are many ways by which we can show our appreciation for all that Jehovah and Jesus Christ have done for us, particularly in their great expressions of love. In the process, we can prove our neighbor love.—Mark 12:30, 31.

²³ Finally, let us note that we can show our appreciation for the two greatest expressions of love by celebrating the Lord's Evening Meal. On his last night on earth as a human, Jesus instituted an annual commemorative meal consisting of bread and wine, representing his flesh and his blood. He commanded that this celebration be held in memory of him. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) This year the Lord's Evening Meal falls on Sunday, April 12, after sundown. Throughout the earth, Jehovah's Witnesses will be coming together in obedience to Jesus' command. Do not miss it!

22. In which of the ways of showing appreciation will you be striving, and why?

23. In what final way can you show appreciation to God and Jesus?

Questions for Review

- ☐ How and where did Jesus witness?
- ☐ In what ways may we imitate Jesus in showing appreciation for God's great love?

Insight on the News

An "Offensive" Name?

Not speaking the divine name, transcribing it at most as JHWH, and pronouncing it as "Lord," is a recommendation that should be accepted, says the Catholic periodical *Com-nuovi tempi*. This was the reaction to a petition raised by the "Association for Jewish-Christian Friendship" of Rome and signed jointly by eminent Catholic and Jewish theologians and scholars. The petition requested that "publishing firms and the editorial staffs of newspapers and magazines" stop using the name "Jahweh" because it is "offensive to Jews, who consider the name of God to be unpronounceable." Their appeal, the Association says, is based on a "long-standing Jewish tradition" that "has been maintained without interruption" until today.

But should Christians be guided by Jewish traditions? Would it be right for them to put God's name aside and avoid pronouncing it? The Bible shows that God wants all to know that he, "whose name is Jehovah," is the Most High. (Psalm 83:18; Ezekiel 38:23; Malachi 3:16) Jesus set the example in this. Rather than following Jewish traditions that "made the word of God invalid," he taught his followers to pray: "Let your name be sanctified." (Matthew 6:9; 15:6) And only a few hours before his sacrificial death, he said in prayer: "I have made your name known to [the disciples] and will make it known."—John 17:26.

Engagement: A Contract?

The young Brazilian woman and her fiancé had just finished furnishing their new home. The invitations had been sent out, and everything seemed in order for their wedding, just three days away. Anticipating her new life, the bride had quit her job. Then, without any notice, the groom broke the engagement. Stunned and disappointed, the rejected bride sought legal recourse. Her lawyer argued that the 'marriage engagement is a preliminary contract, and if broken unjustifiably, the innocent party should be compensated for any damages suffered.' The court agreed and ordered the man to give to his ex-fiancée 'a dowry equal to a legally preset salary and to pay court costs and lawyers' fees.' Commenting on the decision, lawyer Nereu Mello, wrote in the São Paulo newspaper *Jornal da Lapa*: "The marriage engagement is a very serious contract and breaking it is not viewed with indifference before the Law."

This concept of the seriousness of the marriage engagement is not new. Under the Mosaic Law an engaged woman who committed fornication received the same punishment as did an adulterous married woman. She was thus treated differently from the single woman who fornicated. (Deuteronomy 22:23, 24, 28, 29) Back then the engagement was viewed as binding—as if the couple were already married. (Matthew 1:19) Christians today also recognize engagement as a serious step. They do not view it lightly. —Compare Matthew 5:37.

Adapted to Modern Technology

After Martin Luther railed against the sale of indulgences (exemption from certain forms of punishment for sin), the Roman Catholic Church outlawed the practice in 1562. But Vatican official Pedro Albellan stressed recently that the teaching on granting indulgences remains "unrenounceable and immutable." A revised Roman Catholic manual on indulgences shows that the Vatican has harnessed this ancient belief to modern technology. According to *The Times* of London, bishops can now "grant a full indulgence to their faithful by radio or television three times a year when they impart a blessing in the name of the Pope." However, there is a restriction. "It's got to be a live transmission," says Luigi De Magistris of the Vatican's Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary, the office that deals with indulgences. "Watching a replay is not sufficient."

But whether sold or given in person or by TV, are indulgences Scriptural? While Jesus, at times, freely forgave sins, he said nothing about the need of indulgences. Neither did the apostles. "The blood of Jesus [God's] Son cleanses us from all sin," the apostle John wrote. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:7, 9) If all sins are thus forgiven, what is left to be paid for by punishment or covered by indulgences?—John 3:36; Romans 5:10.

Is There Any Benefit in Suffering?

WHEN faced with intense suffering, many people get bitter. Others going through the same or even worse experiences become more compassionate and tender in their feelings for fellow humans. Similarly, there are those who deny God's very existence when subjected to prolonged hardships, while others pass through severe trials with unwavering faith in the Almighty. Why is this?

Often people become bitter and lose faith because they consider themselves too important and fail to recognize that they are sinful humans living in a world that ignores God's law. They wrongly attribute to the Almighty the bad things for which men are to blame. Hence, they learn nothing beneficial from difficulties and, after experiencing relief, may show even more undesirable personality traits than they did formerly.

So that this does not happen to us, we should make it a point to profit from whatever may befall us. This requires having a right view toward human suffering. The Bible book of Lamentations is most helpful in putting this matter in the right perspective.

Maintain Hope

The book itself consists of five poems lamenting or mourning the terrible destruction that came upon Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. In the third of these poems, the prophet Jeremiah, impelled by God's spirit, pours out his intense feelings, transferring them to the whole nation under the figure of an able-bodied man. (Lamentations 3:1) Though

Jeremiah had suffered along with the entire nation, the experience did not embitter him. He looked hopefully to the time when God's favor would again be with His people and accepted what came upon the nation as a rightful execution of divine judgment.

The hope of future deliverance sustained Jeremiah. We read: "Without fail your soul [Jehovah himself] will remember and bow low over me. This is what I shall bring back to my heart. That is why I shall show a waiting attitude." (Lamentations 3:20, 21) There was no doubt in Jeremiah's mind that Jehovah would eventually look with favor upon His repentant people. True, they had been brought very low in utter defeat. But Jehovah would, as it were, stoop down from his heaven-high position, lifting them up from their debased state. With this thought, Jeremiah could comfort his heart and patiently wait until Jehovah would act in behalf of His repentant people.

So, when undergoing a distressing experience, we should not give up hope. We should call to mind the fact that trials have a beginning and also an end. Never will the Most High allow his faithful servants to suffer indefinitely along with those who are not his devoted people. That is why we should patiently wait until Jehovah brings certain relief.

The very fact that a person is still alive should give him reason for hope. Back in the time of Jeremiah, the city of Jerusalem and the land of Judah were desolated, and many Israelites perished. Still, there

**Jeremiah, who composed
Lamentations, could write from
experience about suffering**



were survivors. This gave assurance of God's continued mercy toward his people. We read: "It is the acts of loving-kindness of Jehovah that we have not come to our finish, because his mercies will certainly not come to an end. They are new each morning. Your faithfulness is abundant. 'Jehovah is my share,' my soul has said, 'that is why I shall show a waiting attitude for him.'"—Lamentations 3:22-24.

If it had not been for God's loving-kindness, his compassionate concern for his people, there would have been no survivors among the Israelites. But Jehovah God did show mercy. So his expressions of mercy would continue to flow toward his people, being renewed each morning. The fact that Jehovah's faithfulness is abundant made certain that his mercies could be depended upon. They would be con-

stant, never weak or ineffectual. Since the Most High remained the share, or inheritance, of his people, there was good reason for them to continue waiting for a reversal of the trying circumstances into which he had permitted them to come because of their unfaithfulness.

How to Wait Patiently

What should characterize such waiting? The book of Lamentations answers: "Good is Jehovah to the one hoping in him, to the soul that keeps seeking for him. Good it is that one should wait, even silently, for the salvation of Jehovah. Good it is for an able-bodied man that he should carry the yoke during his youth. Let him sit solitary and keep silent, because he has laid something upon him. Let him put his mouth in the very dust. Perhaps there exists a hope.

Let him give his cheek to the very one striking him. Let him have his sufficiency of reproach.”—Lamentations 3:25-30.

Note that during such a time of affliction, one should continue looking hopefully to God for relief and draw closer to him. A person should want to be patient, waiting silently or without complaining until the Almighty has brought deliverance, or salvation. For a person to learn thus to bear a yoke of suffering in youth is most beneficial. Why? Because it makes it much easier for him to undergo such an experience later in life without losing hope. Knowing that he has passed through great hardships before, he has a basis for hope that he will be able to do so again.

Now, when a person has a yoke of affliction put upon him, he should not be running about voicing his complaints. No, he should sit solitary, as does a person in mourning, and remain silent. He should lie prostrate, with his mouth touching the very dust. This means that he should humbly submit to the trials that God is permitting him to bear, and he should look hopefully to the coming deliverance. He should not rise up in revolt against his persecutors but patiently put up with physical and verbal abuse. This reminds us of the way Jesus Christ conducted himself. The Bible record reports: “When he was being reviled, he did not go reviling

in return. When he was suffering, he did not go threatening, but kept on committing himself to the one who judges righteously.”—1 Peter 2:23.

Another vital point to remember when experiencing suffering is that God is not giving his approval to the hateful things that men may do. The Most High does, however, permit certain things to happen with a good purpose in view. This is nicely expressed in the following words from the book of Lamentations: “For not to time indefinite will Jehovah keep on casting off. For although he has caused grief, he will also certainly show mercy according to the abundance of his loving-kindness. For not out of his own heart has he afflicted or does he grieve the sons of men. For crushing beneath one’s feet all the prisoners of the earth, for turning aside the judgment of an able-bodied man before the face of the Most High, for making a man crooked in his legal case, Jehovah himself has had no countenance.”—Lamentations 3:31-36.

In the case of the unfaithful Israelites, Jehovah God permitted them to undergo a terrible experience at the hands of the Babylonians. He cast them off to the extent of allowing them to be taken into exile. Yet, this was with a good purpose in view, namely, to produce a repentant remnant among the survivors and their offspring. It was toward this remnant that Jehovah would show mercy. The Almighty had no pleasure in punishing the Israelites. It was not his heart’s desire to cause them grief and affliction by giving them into the hands of their enemies. Jehovah did not countenance the terrible treatment these gave to his people. He did not look approvingly upon men who oppressed prisoners of war, those who denied a man his God-given rights, and those who refused to render justice in a legal case.

Accordingly, when we suffer at the hands of men, we should not blame God

In Our Next Issue

■ **Fortune-Telling—Still in Fashion**

■ **‘Upon the Watchtower I Am Standing’**

■ **Making All Things New**

for the wrongs that men commit. The Most High does not approve of their oppression and violence. Eventually they will have to answer to him for their wrong deeds.

Then, again, people may bring suffering upon themselves. The faithless Israelites turned their backs on Jehovah God, rejecting his protective care. Rightly, then, he abandoned them to their enemies. So they had no basis for complaint regarding what had befallen them. This is stressed in the question: "How can a living man indulge in complaints, an able-bodied man on account of his sin?" (Lamentations 3:39) Instead of complaining, the Israelites should have repentantly returned to Jehovah, imploring him for mercy. We read: "Do let us search out our ways and explore them, and do let us return clear to Jehovah. Let us raise our heart along with our palms to God in the heavens: 'We ourselves have transgressed, and we have behaved rebelliously.'"—Lamentations 3:40-42.

Yes, it was no time for grumbling and complaining. It was a time to look carefully at their ways, their course of life or conduct, and to consider what had been

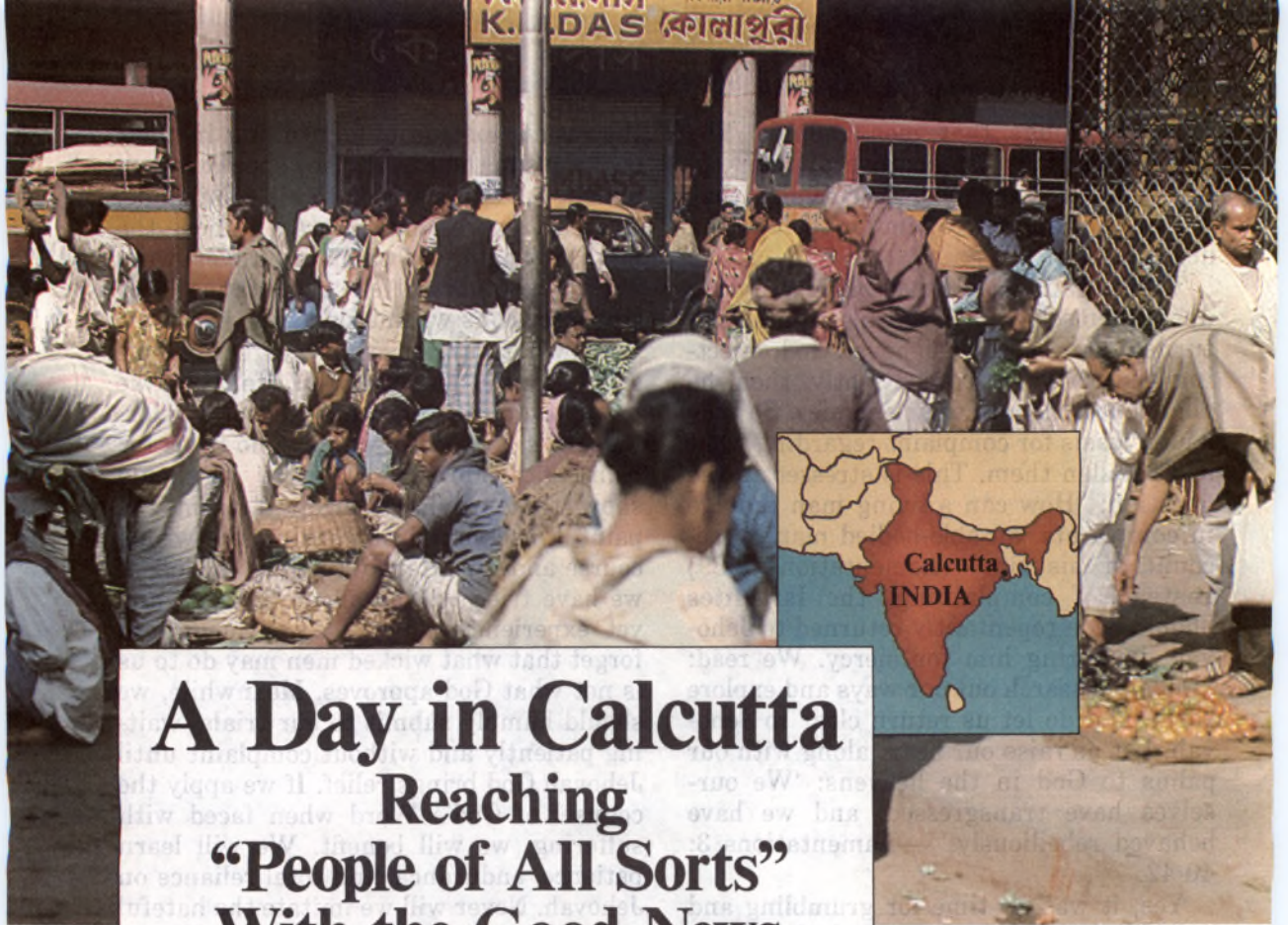
the result. Instead of continuing in their own ways to their hurt, they should return to Jehovah and conform to his commands. Outward expressions of repentance, the mere raising of the palms in prayer, were not enough. Heartfelt repentance over transgressions was needed.

So when undergoing suffering, we should look at our course of life. Have we brought troubles upon ourselves by ignoring God's law? If so, we have no basis for blaming the Most High. Rather, we should show that we have profited from the painful discipline by forsaking the wrong course and repentantly turning to God. If we have tried to lead an upright life and yet experience affliction, we should not forget that what wicked men may do to us is not what God approves. Meanwhile, we should humbly submit to our trials, waiting patiently and without complaint until Jehovah God brings relief. If we apply the counsel of God's Word when faced with suffering, we will benefit. We will learn patience, endurance, and total reliance on Jehovah. Never will we imitate the hateful ways of oppressive men, but we will continue to be kind and compassionate toward fellow humans.

"Honest With His Religion"

While government departments have been very helpful to the Watchtower Society's building project in Nigeria, some newspapers and religious leaders have tried to make trouble for Jehovah's Witnesses over the neutrality issue. Other newspaper reporters, however, have given commendation. One writer, a lawyer, asked whether Jehovah's Witnesses "portray themselves as really unpatriotic." Giving his own answer, he said:

"Witnesses are tax-paying and law-abiding citizens. Any . . . Witness who can be honest with his religion to the extent of obeying it at the risk of losing certain privileges will be equally honest in most other things . . . The reason he refuses to steal government money while his other colleagues . . . sing the national anthem and yet embezzle funds is because his Bible which asks him not to sing the national anthem also said he should not steal."



A Day in Calcutta Reaching “People of All Sorts” With the Good News

CALCUTTA, India, is a city teeming with “people of all sorts.” Among its more than ten million inhabitants, Jehovah’s Witnesses are busy preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom. It takes a great deal of ingenuity and endurance to reach all these people with their highly diversified racial, social, cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds. But like the Christian apostle Paul, whose missionary journeys took him to the far corners of the world of that time, Jehovah’s Witnesses in Calcutta also “have become all things to people of all sorts” so that they might “by all means save some.” —1 Corinthians 9:22; Colossians 1:23.

How do the Witnesses there go about their preaching work, and what kind of people and conditions do they meet in their ministry? Recently, as a visitor, I spent a day in Calcutta with a pioneer, or full-time preacher. Would you like a peek into that unique experience?

A Vast and Varied Field

Late in that busy and fascinating day of house-to-house preaching, my companion and I were ready to go home. As we were waiting for the bus, we began talking about the challenges that he and other pioneers face in this enormous city.

“Well,” he commented, “ask anyone in

the full-time preaching work here if he would like to move to an easier assignment. I don't think he would be keen about it."

He was right. The pioneers in Calcutta view their work as one of the most interesting careers in the world. They have a vast and varied field in this city of great contrasts.

Though the Hindu religion dominates the city, churches and Muslim mosques are plentiful, and one finds a few Buddhist temples here and there. In some quarters, stately mansions house some of the world's richest people. Not so far away are the lean-to shacks of the migrant workers who can expect to earn as little as 150 rupees (about \$12, U.S.) per month. Their customs, languages, and appearances are as varied as their religions and their living conditions.

In the midst of all of this flourishes one congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses with about a hundred active Kingdom proclaimers. Though the challenge is formidable, the Witnesses find special joy and satisfaction in being able to adapt themselves in order to respond to the needs of the people.

Just then, Bus No. 45 juddered to a halt in front of us. It was so packed that my immediate reaction was: "I can't possibly get on!" A friendly push came from behind, and soon both of us were swept along onto the bus by a wave of arms and bodies. At least ten more people got on after we did. They were riding on the footboard, hanging on like bees around the entrance. Inside the vehicle, designed to seat 46, I counted over a hundred heads before giving up the count to resume my conversation with my friend.

"Are the buses always like this?"

"They often are a little crowded," he explained, "but they are inexpensive, which means we can easily afford to ride

even 6 to 9 miles (10 to 15 km) each day to some of the more distant parts of the city to preach."

"Wouldn't it be better to work in communities closer to home more often?"

"Yes, but some of us full-time workers have decided to make the effort to reach the people in other areas. Our records show that many neighborhoods of Calcutta have not been visited with the good news in the last 50 years!"

Yet reaching everyone in a given area is a real challenge due to the sheer quantity of people. A survey once put the density of the population in Calcutta at three times that of New York City at the time, and the number has increased in recent years.

At least one third of Calcutta's people live in overcrowded slums known locally as bustees. Typical bustees are rows upon rows of small huts, usually within arm's reach of one another. Each hut consists of a dirt floor and walls made of mud and cow dung smeared on wooden frames, all under the cover of a clay-tile roof. Each hut, with little or no ventilation, is the sleeping quarters of as many as seven or eight people. There is usually one water standpipe for about every 150 people, and in long-established bustees, the government provides a few community latrines.

As one starts to make calls in a bustee, it is not uncommon to be escorted by crowds of as many as a hundred curious onlookers, mostly children. One Witness, somewhat annoyed by a persistent youth who heralded his visit at each home, asked the young man if he would like to do the rest of the talking too. At this seeming invitation, the good-natured youth took the tract from the Witness and gave the presentation word for word, even offering the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines.



Tackling the Varied Religious Backgrounds

About half of the city's bustees are inhabited by followers of Islam. The tolerant attitude prevailing in the city, however, makes it possible to preach from house to house in such areas, a privilege not always enjoyed in other countries with large Muslim communities. I asked if the pioneers in Calcutta have a special approach with people of this background.

"Some use local problems to highlight man's inability to solve his woes," my friend replied, "while others try to overcome religious prejudice by discussing points held in common, such as belief in one God (not a trinity) or our common belief that the original Bible was inspired of God."

"And the results?" I wondered.

"Very few are interested enough to want a Bible study. Making a living and bettering their station in life seem to be the only things on their mind. That, coupled with minimal, if any, education,

makes it very difficult for them to accept the good news."

Hindu views are most commonly encountered in the city. The Bengali people in particular are fond of quoting a saying of Ramakrishna, who lived and preached in the mid-19th century. "*Jotto moth, totto poth,*" means, when loosely translated, that all religions are but different roads leading to the same goal.

"Is this viewpoint difficult to overcome?" I asked.

"Not if the person is open to reason. We can tactfully explain some obvious differences, such as our Bible-based hope of living forever in human perfection on earth. Or we can point out that it is not possible for opposite views to be true at the same time. For example, either there is an immortal soul or there is not one."

"That's sound reasoning."

"Yes, but too often people refuse to take what we say seriously. They are sure that they know what we believe and that they believe the same thing. This attitude tends to foil any constructive discussion. So we try to leave some literature and move on to the next person."

"Have there been any from the Hindu community who seek a deeper knowledge of God and his purposes?"

"Yes, the pioneers contacted a young man who had been disillusioned by his association with the followers of Ramakrishna," my friend related. "He accepted the magazines and had read them by the

time he was visited again two days later. After several discussions, he began to study the booklet *The Path of Divine Truth Leading to Liberation*. He would write out his answers and comments on the study questions in a notebook. Within five months, this man was baptized and serving as an auxiliary pioneer so that he could share his knowledge with many others."

"That's quite an experience! But what was the reaction of his family?"

"He was living with his widowed mother and grandmother, both devout Hindus. They, too, began to show interest and started to study the Bible. Soon the neighbors noticed the changes in the women, and three others became interested as a result. The mother has now been baptized, and granny, a little slower due to her 70 years, is hoping to be baptized soon."

From my friend's excitement in relating this story, I could see that such experiences are a real stimulus for the pioneers. Sometimes there may appear to be little progress, but then someone takes an exceptional interest. Thus the pioneers are encouraged to press on in their search for yet others who may be interested.

Hurdling the Language Barriers

The crowd on the bus had begun to thin a little, and I recognized some English. "Ticket, *apnar* ticket," cried a short, non-uniformed man, who had a colorful fan of bank notes in his right hand and a leather pouch of change on his side to show that he was the conductor. I offered to pay, but my friend's Indian hospitality would not hear of it. He thrust his briefcase into my



hands and dived into his shirt pocket for change.

"Whatever have you got in here?" I exclaimed. "This must weigh a ton!"

"Well, the Indian language editions of the Bible are rather large. To be fully equipped in Calcutta, we really need to carry Bibles in three languages—Bengali, Hindi, and English—plus Bible literature, of course."

"Surely you could just take an English Bible and translate the verses."

"I suppose we could. However, many people who read only Bengali or Hindi have never seen a complete Bible in their own language. We feel especially good when we can show them a copy and read to them from it. It's well worth the extra effort and weight."



Adjusting to the needs of the different language groups here keeps the pioneers busy. Most of them teach themselves to witness effectively in the three main languages. Some with exceptional skill have learned to speak five or six languages. The local people appreciate the efforts of the visitors in trying to speak in the tongue of the community, and their attentive response can be reward enough for the long hours of language study.

Finding Joy in a Challenging Territory

Just then our bus again grated to a halt on brake linings that had long since worn out, and I was jostled outside.

"Why here?" I asked. "This is not where you live."

"No, it's a Punjabi area. These people make the best tea, you know. I thought you might like to try a cup."

The tea was excellent.

"How did you know about this place?" I queried.

"Working around each area, we pioneers get to know what the local specialties are and where the best and cheapest

shops are. If your stomach is strong enough, we can go and sample some interesting foods to-night."

Remembering the advice of some of my more cautious friends, I declined the invitation. But I did enjoy the tea. I could see that the pioneers are balanced and have learned to make the best of their circumstances. Even things

that at first seem to be obstacles can be overcome and enjoyed.

"Is there anything you don't enjoy about your work?" I finally asked.

My friend contemplated this question for a while. "I think the summer and monsoon weather is something we will never really get used to. Yet that is a problem you have whether you are pioneering or not. Heat and humidity get so high that perspiration often drips from the tip of your nose onto your Bible as you read from it. Still, we learn to put up with it. Why, in May, perhaps the hottest month of the year, we see the highest number of auxiliary pioneers joining us in the preaching work."

Looking back on the day and my conversation with my pioneer friend, I am impressed with the ability of Calcutta's pioneers to adapt to so many varied situations and peoples so that they can reach them with the good news. Of course, I realize that pioneers all over the world are doing just the same. They are truly happy 'to be all things to people of all sorts.'

—Contributed.

Questions From Readers

■ Once someone has signed a Declaration Pledging Faithfulness, can that arrangement be terminated?

The question has to do with a provision that does not apply in most lands. So let us first see what that solemn interim arrangement is.

The Watchtower of March 15, 1977, discussed a problem existing in some lands. Though God permits divorce on Scriptural grounds, some governments have no divorce provision. (Matthew 19:9) Or the law may make it very hard to get a divorce, perhaps requiring many years. Hence, that magazine issue explained that Jehovah's Witnesses have a concession *applying only in such lands*; it involves a Declaration Pledging Faithfulness. Consider an example of the arrangement:

A woman comes to a knowledge of Christian truth while living with (and perhaps having children by) a man who has long been separated from his legal wife. The newly interested woman is faithful to him and wants to marry him, but that is impossible because the law does not permit him to divorce his legal wife. Hence, if the congregation elders are convinced that her relationship with this man would otherwise be accepted by God, they will allow her to sign a Declaration Pledging Faithfulness. She therein states that she has done all she can to legalize this relationship; that she acknowledges before God the binding nature of the Declaration; and that she promises to get legally married as soon as that is possible, thus terminating the Declaration that had enabled her to become part of the Christian congregation.

However, the question arises: Once she (or anyone in that situation) comes into the congregation under such a Declaration, is there

any other way that it ends or could be ended?

The Declaration itself states that its signer 'recognizes his or her relationship as a binding tie before Jehovah God and before all persons, to be held to and honored in full accord with the principles of God's Word.' It thus is, from the congregation's standpoint, as morally binding as a legal marriage. However, death of a mate ends either a marriage or a union under such a Declaration. (Romans 7:2) The Bible also says that if one's marriage mate is guilty of *por-nei'a* (sexual immorality outside the union), the innocent partner can get a divorce. (Matthew 5:32; 19:9) Parallelwise, under a Declaration Pledging Faithfulness, immorality by a mate can be a basis for ending the union, if the innocent one so chooses. The innocent Christian would have to establish with the elders proof of the unfaithfulness. This would terminate the Declaration; thereafter the innocent one would be Scripturally free.

Recognizing that the congregation considers a Declaration Pledging Faithfulness as being as morally binding as a legal marriage raises a related issue. This comes about when the previous impediment to marriage is removed. For instance, in the example above, the man's legal wife might die or the government might legalize divorce, and he is willing to marry the Christian woman legally. In that case the sister cannot continue under the Declaration Pledging Faithfulness, even for reasons such as its being embarrassing to get legally married now or because she might lose some material advantage. In accord with her Declaration, she must now take steps to

have their union legalized. Otherwise, the congregation would invalidate the Declaration, and she would have to separate from the man or be disfellowshipped.

What, though, if the unbeliever refuses to marry her? When she signed the Declaration, the congregation viewed the union as binding and moral. The fact that she is unable to force her unbelieving partner to legalize their union does not now make the union immoral. So she could continue to be a faithful mate, not needing to separate from the unbeliever, although she should persist in her efforts toward having the union legalized. (This adjusts the comment in "Questions From Readers" of November 1, 1985.)—Compare Judges 11:35; Luke 18:1-5.

Of course, the situation is different if *both* parties signed the Declaration and became baptized Christians. In this case, both solemnly committed themselves to enter into a legal marriage when the governmental impediment was removed, at which point the Declaration would be terminated. They are obliged to do this within a reasonable time, or else separate in order to remain in the congregation. (Compare "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of September 1, 1982.) If they do separate, the morally binding Declaration still applies, so neither is free to enter into a union with someone else.—Compare 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11.

Though the arrangement for a Declaration Pledging Faithfulness does not apply in most places, the above discussion centers on the Bible standard that applies everywhere: "Let marriage be honorable among all, and the marriage bed be without defilement, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers."—Hebrews 13:4.

It Points to a Bright Future



Gloom and doom are so often the forecasts as the world faces one crisis after another. What a contrasting message in the new book *Worldwide Security Under the "Prince of Peace"*! "Upon opening it, a look of sheer delight sprang to my eyes," writes one reader. "The illustrations are so beautifully thought-provoking, and how delightfully the final illustration depicts the entire universe at peace."

She continues: "My heart is so full of gladness over this book. I just could not help but excitedly read out loud portions of it to my husband, and now I cannot put the little book—with the big message—down, but keep drinking from it as often as possible during the day. It is more refreshing than the coolest mountain stream."