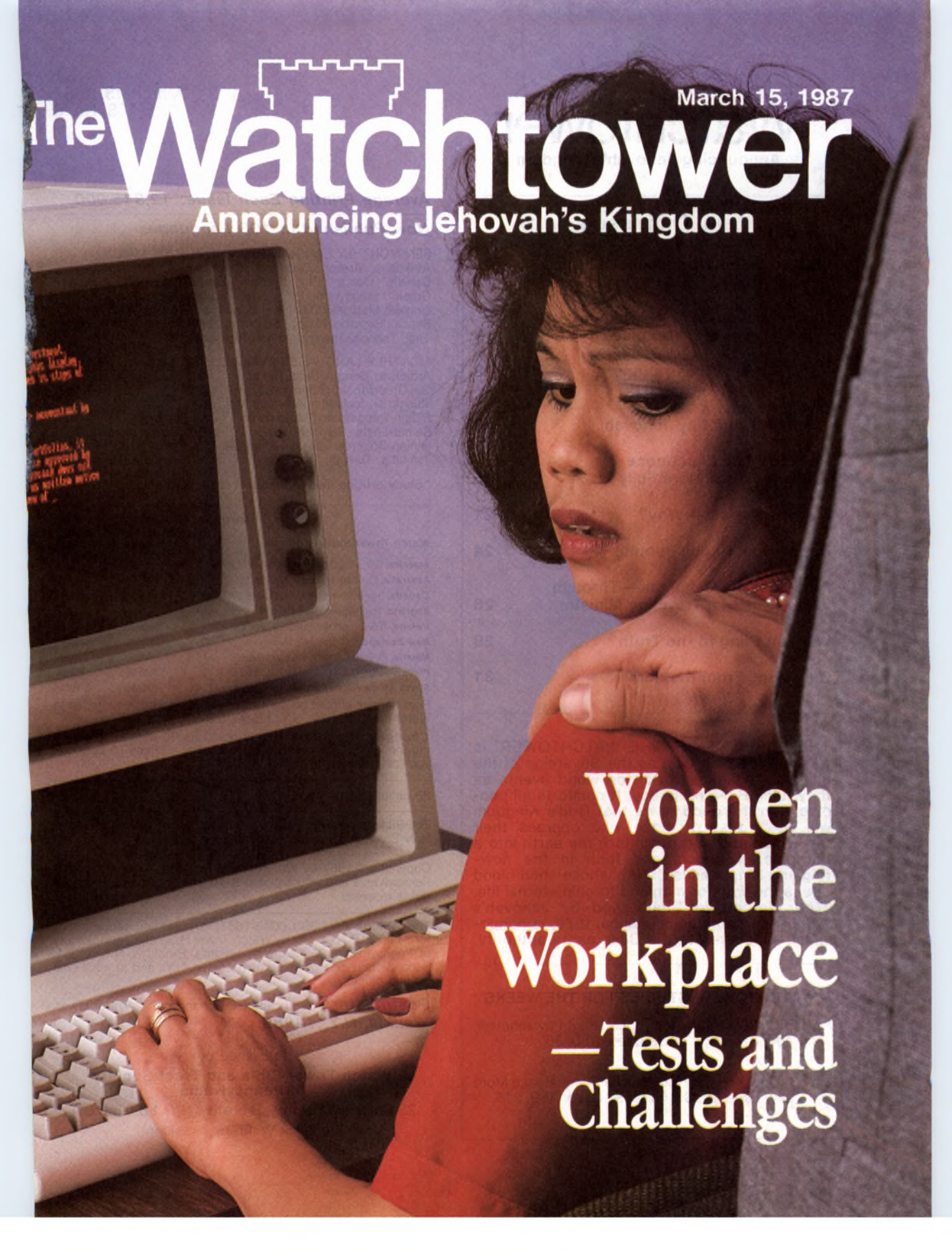




The Watchtower

March 15, 1987

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

**Women
in the
Workplace
—Tests and
Challenges**

In This Issue

Women in the Workplace —Tests and Challenges	3
Christian Women—Maintaining Integrity in the Workplace	4
Teaching With Illustrations	8
Divine Peace for Those Taught by Jehovah	10
How You Can Experience Divine Peace More Fully	15
A Joyful People—Why?	21
Happy God, Happy People!	24
A Look at the Bahamas—Through the Eyes of a Traveling Minister	26
Will You Cling to the Truth?	29
Questions From Readers	31

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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Women in the Workplace

—Tests and Challenges



“WOMEN have entered the formal labor force in unprecedented numbers during the past three decades.” So reports the research organization Worldwatch Institute. “In both rich countries and poor,” the report continued, “inflation encourages women to work for pay.” Or as one Nigerian woman put it: “The economic pressure is such that I just have to go out and work.”

Like the “capable wife” of Bible times, many women are happy to make a necessary economic contribution to the welfare of their families. (Proverbs 31:10, 16, 24) And some find having a job to be challenging and satisfying. But while secular work has its benefits, it may also have its drawbacks.

For example, one woman who is a store manager says: “I love my job. My boss is great, my office is beautiful. But I hate it when that job takes more of my time than I can give it, because afterward I’ve got another job waiting for me at home—as wife and mother.” Still, many women care for job, home, and family quite ably, and for that they are to be warmly commended.*

Secular jobs, though, also expose women to a number of problems unique to the workplace. For many, the challenge is keeping a balanced attitude when forced to work in an atmosphere charged with fierce competition or thick with indifference. A desire to advance, to get ahead, has driven some women to make their jobs the main focus of their lives.

Sometimes the workplace is also a source of *moral* pressures. Exposure to daily doses of degrading talk is one common complaint of working women. Worse yet, some find themselves the victims of unrelenting sexual harassment. “When I first started working,” recalls one Christian woman, “I was the only girl in the office. The men would make suggestive remarks, and it was really hard for me.”

Such problems are a real concern to women who must daily face them, especially those who desire to maintain Christian standards. Happily, there is a source of real help for them.

* See the discussion “Working Couples—Facing the Challenges,” in the February 8, 1985, issue of our companion magazine *Awake!*



Christian Women

—*Maintaining Integrity in the Workplace*

“SOMETIMES the tension at [work] is so thick you could cut it with a knife.” So said one working woman.* Pressure to produce, backstabbing competition, demanding supervisors, monotony—these are just a few of the things that make many jobs a drudgery. Few jobs deliver the glamour and excitement promised by media propaganda. But if you are a working woman, you should strive to make a success of your job.

By this, however, we do not refer to monetary gain. The workplace is an arena in which your *Christian integrity* is put to the test! The way you perform at your job, fend off the spirit of cutthroat competition, and resist moral encroachments reveals the extent to which you are devoted to godly principles. To gain Jehovah God’s favor, the working woman must be able to

* Here denoting a woman secularly employed. Of course, housewives, mothers, and other women also work.

say as did the psalmist: “I myself have walked in my own integrity.”—Psalm 26:1.

The Bible helps you to do just that. For example, when urged to stoop to dog-eat-dog tactics or when tempted to let a job overshadow family responsibilities, Bible study, Christian meetings, and the ministry, you may well recall the words of King Solomon: “I myself have seen all the hard work and all the proficiency in work, that it means the rivalry of one toward another; this also is vanity and a striving after the wind.” (Ecclesiastes 4:4) Viewing secular work this way prevents or cools burning ambition. It helps you to have the right perspective on a job, viewing it as secondary to spiritual matters.—Matthew 6:33.

But does this mean being indifferent toward secular work? Hardly, because the Bible condemns laziness. (Proverbs 19:15) It speaks of ‘seeing good because of your

hard work.' (Ecclesiastes 2:24) Further, providing for one's family is a God-given responsibility. (1 Timothy 5:8) So if meeting that obligation means doing secular work that is unpleasant, reflect upon the Bible's words at Colossians 3:23: "Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men." Viewing oneself as working "as to Jehovah" is a powerful motivation to be productive, far more so than a pay raise or the lure of a promotion.

"Hard to Please" Employers

A woman named Sally says: "I feel as if [my supervisor is] looking over my shoulder all the time. He never has a good word to say to anyone." Working under a boss who is "hard to please" or short-tempered can be equally frustrating, especially when one is new to the workplace.—1 Peter 2:18.

Quitting, though, may be economically out of the question. It may thus be best to follow the Bible's advice that workers—male and female—"be in subjection." (1 Peter 2:18) Rather than escalating a conflict with sarcasm or disrespect, try to "please [employers] well, not talking back." (Titus 2:9) Such self-control may even prevent you from losing your job. Said Solomon: "If the spirit of a ruler [someone in authority] should mount up against you, do not leave your own place, for calmness itself allays great sins."—Ecclesiastes 10:4.

A harsh taskmaster may even be shamed when his impatience is countered with mildness, his unreasonable demands with graciousness. (Proverbs 15:1; Colossians 4:6) And as you prove your competence and dependability, his attitude toward you may gradually improve. If not, you may have little choice but to "exercise patience," knowing that God is pleased with your Christian conduct.—James 5:7, 8.

Staying Morally Chaste

Integrity also involves Christian morals. An article in *Ladies' Home Journal* warned: "The office—where everyone is expected to dress up, behave well, spend time together and pursue common goals—has an atmosphere that can easily become sexually charged." Office affairs are commonplace. So it is wise to be cautious. Keep relationships with men on the job on a professional basis. Avoid conversations that could arouse romantic feelings. "For this is what God wills, . . . that you abstain from fornication."—1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4.

At times, though, women are victims of an age-old problem: sexual harassment. The Bible tells us that a man named Boaz ordered the young men in his employ "not to touch" Ruth, a woman working in his field. Bible scholar John P. Lange speaks of "the coarse jests with which such peasant laborers were perhaps in the habit of assailing women." (Ruth 2:9) And though certain present-day employers are trying to protect their female employees, some estimate that 40 to 85 percent of working women (in the United States) have been exposed to some form of sexual harassment.

A young woman named Valerie, for example, worked as a secretary. From time to time, her boss—more than three times her age—would make suggestive remarks about her clothing. Once he tried to trick her into looking at pornographic pictures. Finally, he called her into his office and told her, "To keep your job, you will have to perform sexual favors for me." Of course, she refused to do so.

Such humiliating treatment takes many forms. Says the British magazine *New Statesman*: "It ranges from leering, pinching, unnecessary physical contact and verbal abuse." Often the pressure to engage in sexual immorality is as subtle as being

called pet names (Honey, Sweetheart) or as overt as an open proposition. Some women tolerate the harassment out of fear of losing their jobs. And surveys show that a minority of women even seem flattered by the attention!

But while attention from the opposite sex may be flattering, overfamiliarity is often the opening move in the game of seduction. It is thus an assault on your integrity and an affront to your Christian dignity.—1 Corinthians 6:18.

Preventive Measures

"When wisdom enters into your heart . . . , thinking ability itself will keep guard over you, discernment itself will safeguard you." (Proverbs 2:10, 11) So how can you use practical wisdom and discernment to protect yourself? A working woman named Diane says: "I let it be known on the job that I am one of Jehovah's Witnesses." (Compare Matthew 5:16.) When men know you have high moral standards, often they are less prone to make advances.

A discerning woman named Betty takes yet another precaution. She says: "I'm very careful about associating with my coworkers because their morals are not the same as mine." (1 Corinthians 15:33) This does not mean being aloof or hostile to fellow workers. But when they insist on discussing matters offensive to a Christian, do not hesitate to excuse yourself. (Ephesians 5:3, 4) Your listening to such immoral talk could give men at work the impression that you would be receptive to their advances.

Maintaining a *professional bearing* can also discourage unwanted attention. Too, the Bible advises women "to adorn themselves in well-arranged dress, with modesty and soundness of mind." (1 Timothy 2:9; contrast Proverbs 7:10.) Says the book *Sexual Harassment on the Job*: "Pro-

vocative attire—that is, plunging necklines; sundresses; short, short skirts; and masses of glittery makeup—*do not* belong in the workplace. . . . Your chances of creating a professional image are vastly improved if you do choose to dress unspectacularly."

Finally, a discerning woman avoids *compromising situations*. An invitation to have an alcoholic drink or to remain at work after hours for no apparent reason may well be a trap. (Compare 2 Samuel 13: 1-14.) "Shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself," says a wise proverb.—Proverbs 22:3.

Halting Harassment

Of course, it is not realistic to imagine that you can rearrange the thinking of all the men on the job or change long-ingrained behavior patterns. (Compare Jeremiah 13:23.) And it is not fair to conclude that all men who appear rather overfriendly have "eyes full of adultery." (2 Peter 2:14) So at times it is appropriate to extend the benefit of the doubt.

But when *obvious overfamiliarity* is involved, take a firm stand. When Solomon made unwanted overtures to a young maiden, she was not coy. She responded to his flattery with expressions of unswerving love for a modest shepherd boy. Since she had refused to yield to Solomon's advances, she could say, "I am a wall."—Song of Solomon 8:10.

Show the same firmness. Often advances can be nipped in the bud by saying: "No touching, please"; "Call me by my name"; or, "I don't appreciate that type of humor." One Christian woman has more than once simply said, "Cut it out!" At any rate, make it clear that your no means *no*! (Compare Matthew 5:37.) A weak or vague response may simply encourage a harasser to try harder.

If you are married, it would be good to



*Be careful about socializing
with coworkers*



*Let it be known that you have
high moral standards*

For Maintaining Integrity in the Workplace:

*Adorn yourself with
modest dress*



share your feelings with your husband. He may have some practical ideas about how to handle the situation. If it seems best simply to change employment, remember God's promise: "I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you."—Hebrews 13:5.

Your Job and Your Integrity

So while a secular job is often necessary, it can in some cases present threats to your Christian integrity. Thus Jesus' words at Matthew 10:16 are quite apropos: "Prove yourselves cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves."

Keeping Christian integrity in the workplace is not easy, but it can be done. Thousands of women among Jehovah's Witnesses are doing so by following the counsel of the Bible. They keep themselves spiritually strong by means of Bible study, prayer, Christian meetings, the Kingdom-preaching work, and other godly activities. As a result, they enjoy something no paycheck can give. It is the knowledge that they have the favor of Jehovah, the One whose Word promises: "He that is walking in integrity will walk in security."—Proverbs 10:9.

Teaching With Illustrations

JESUS is apparently in Capernaum when he rebukes the Pharisees. Later that day he leaves the house and walks to the nearby Sea of Galilee, where crowds of people gather. There he boards a boat, pulls away, and begins teaching the people on the shore about the Kingdom of the heavens. He does so by means of a series of parables, or illustrations, each with a setting familiar to the people.

First, Jesus tells of a sower who sows seed. Some seed falls on the roadside and is



eaten by birds. Other seed falls on soil with an underlying rock-mass. Since the roots lack depth, the new plants wither under the scorching sun. Still other seed falls among thorns, which choke the plants when they come up. Finally, some seed falls on good soil and produces a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold.

In another illustration, Jesus says the Kingdom of God is as when a man sows seed. As the days go by, while the man sleeps and when he is awake, the seed grows. The man does not know how. It grows all by

itself and produces grain. When the grain ripens, the man harvests it.

Jesus tells a third illustration about a man who sows the right kind of seed, but while he is sleeping, an enemy comes and sows weeds in among the wheat. The man's servants ask if they should pull out the weeds. But he replies: 'No, you will uproot some of the wheat if you do. Let them both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the reapers to sort out the weeds and burn them and put the wheat in the barn.'

Continuing his speech to the crowds on the shore, Jesus provides two more illustrations. He explains that "the kingdom of the heavens" is like a mustard grain that a man plants. Though it is the tiniest of all seeds, he says, it grows into the largest of all vegetables. It becomes a tree to which birds come, finding shelter among its branches.

Some today object that there are tinier seeds than mustard seeds. But Jesus is not giving a lesson in botany. Of the seeds that Galileans of his day are familiar with, the mustard seed really is the tiniest. So they appreciate the matter of phenomenal growth that Jesus is illustrating.

Finally, Jesus compares "the kingdom of the heavens" to leaven that a woman takes and mixes into three large measures of flour. In time, he says, it permeates every part of the dough.

After giving these five illustrations, Jesus dismisses the crowds and returns to the house where he is staying. Soon his 12 apostles and others come to him there. **Matthew 13:1-9, 24-36; Mark 4:1-9, 26-32; Luke 8:1-8.**

- ◆ When and where did Jesus speak with illustrations to the crowds?
- ◆ What five illustrations did Jesus tell the crowds?
- ◆ Why did Jesus say the mustard seed is the tiniest of all seeds?



Divine Peace for Those Taught by Jehovah



If that most important relationship is shattered, it is impossible to have true peace with God, with one's fellowman, or within oneself.—Isaiah 57:21.

“All your sons will be persons taught by Jehovah, and the peace of your sons will be abundant.”—ISAIAH 54:13.

PEACE! How desirable it is! Yet the record of humankind has been anything but peaceful. Why is this so?

² The enjoyment of peace is closely connected with respect for authority. And who is the highest authority in the universe? The Creator, Jehovah God. An approved relationship with him is therefore essential to peace. (Psalm 29:11; 119:165)

1, 2. On what does the enjoyment of peace depend?

Why the World Does Not Have Peace

³ As we well know, it was shortly after the dawn of human history that a spirit son of God rebelled against Jehovah. Rebellion is a state of war. That peace wreck-er, who came to be known as Satan the Devil, urged Eve not to let God's law stand in the way of her doing something if she felt it would be to her advantage. The Devil twisted the facts to make her think she was being deprived of something good by paying attention to God. The appeal was to selfishness, to a me-first attitude.

3. How was humankind's relationship with God spoiled?

Soon her husband joined her in lawless conduct, and as a result, all their offspring have been infected by that spirit.—Genesis 3:1-6, 23, 24; Romans 5:12.

⁴ It is not just a small segment of mankind that shoves aside divine law. The Scriptures tell us that Satan is “misleading the entire inhabited earth.” (Revelation 12:9) Some people are grossly lawless, showing complete disregard for God and for their fellowman; others are less so. But so successful has Satan been in influencing the thinking of mankind that the apostle John could say: “The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) Whether people profess to believe that the Devil exists or not, they do what he wants. They obey him, so he is their ruler. As a result, mankind is alienated from God, is at enmity with him. In such an environment, is it any wonder that human efforts to achieve peace have been frustrated?—Colossians 1:21.

⁵ Nevertheless, a growing number of people out of all nations are experiencing divine peace, peace that has its origin with God. How has this come about?

The Satisfying Peace That God Gives

⁶ At Romans 15:33 Jehovah is appropriately described as “the God who gives peace.” From the very beginning, it has been God’s purpose for all his creatures to enjoy peace. Over 300 times his inspired Word, the Bible, refers to peace. It makes clear that Jesus Christ is the “Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6, 7) He is the one commissioned by God to break up the works of that foremost peace wrecker, Satan the

Devil. (1 John 3:8) And by means of the “Prince of Peace” it is possible for each one of us to enjoy the satisfying peace that God gives.

⁷ What a marvelous peace this is! It is more than the absence of war. The Hebrew word *sha-lohm*’, which is usually translated “peace,” implies health, prosperity, and welfare. The peace of God that is the possession of true Christians is unique in that it does not depend upon their environment. This does not mean that unpleasant surroundings do not affect them. But they come to have an inner strength that enables them to avoid contributing to the turmoil by retaliating when it touches them. (Romans 12:17, 18) Though a person may be physically ill or have little materially, he can still be healthy and prosperous from a spiritual standpoint and thus enjoy the peace that God gives. Obviously, the peace that such ones experience will be enhanced when this selfish world is gone, and it will deepen when all mankind has attained perfection. But the divine peace that is possible right now is a calm condition of mind and heart, an inner state of quiet regardless of what may be taking place on the outside. (Psalm 4:8) It springs from an approved relationship with God. What a priceless possession!

Sons Taught by Jehovah

⁸ Who have such peace because of being taught by Jehovah and paying attention to his commandments? In reply, the Bible directs our attention first to those who make up spiritual Israel. They are spoken of at Galatians 6:16, where we read: “All

4, 5. (a) To what extent has Satan succeeded in influencing the thinking of mankind? (b) What effect has this had on man’s efforts to achieve peace?

6. (a) What emphasis does the Bible place on peace? (b) By means of whom is it possible for us to enjoy the peace that God gives?

7. (a) What does God-given peace include? (b) Why is it not something that we must wait for until the old system is gone and we have finally attained perfection?

8. Who were the first to enjoy this peace with God through Jesus Christ?

those who will walk orderly by this rule of conduct, upon them be peace and mercy, even upon the Israel of God." These are the 144,000 who have been chosen by God to share heavenly life with Jesus Christ.—Revelation 14:1.

⁹ Back in the first century, those of spiritual Israel were learning a basic truth, a "rule of conduct," that was directly connected with their enjoyment of peace. It was vital that they grasp this rule of conduct. For over 15 centuries, Jehovah had used the Mosaic Law to set out shadows of good things to come. But after the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, the requirements of the Mosaic Law were no longer binding. (Hebrews 10:1; Romans 6:14) This was manifested by the decision of the Christian governing body in Jerusalem on the issue of circumcision. (Acts 15:5, 28, 29) It was emphasized again in the inspired letter to the Galatians. The good things that the Mosaic Law foreshadowed had gone into effect. Patiently Jehovah was impressing on the minds and hearts of Christ's anointed followers the significance of His undeserved kindness expressed through Christ. By exercising faith in this provision, by conducting themselves in harmony with it, they could enjoy peace of a sort that had never before been possible for sinful humans.—Galatians 3:24, 25; 6:16, 18.

¹⁰ Those of spiritual Israel were experiencing fulfillment of the grand promise recorded at Isaiah 54:13. There God himself said to his wifelike organization of loyal spirit creatures: "All your sons will be persons taught by Jehovah, and the *peace of your sons will be abundant.*" Of

9. What was the "rule of conduct" associated with spiritual Israel's enjoyment of peace?

10. (a) Spiritual Israel was experiencing fulfillment of what promise recorded at Isaiah 54:13? (b) How has Jehovah's disciplining of them been a factor in their experiencing peace?

course, her principal Son is Jesus Christ himself, brought forth as the Messiah when he was anointed with holy spirit in 29 C.E. But Jehovah's heavenly "woman" has more sons—144,000 others who become the secondary part of the seed foretold at Genesis 3:15. Jehovah promised that he would be the Grand Instructor of all these sons. He has taught them the truth about himself and his purposes. He has told them how to serve him. At times, he has had to discipline them. This has been necessary when they have failed to heed his Word. Discipline can be hard to take. But they have humbly acknowledged their need of it and made the required changes, and that discipline has yielded good results—"peaceable fruit, namely, righteousness."—Hebrews 12:7, 11; Psalm 85:8.

"A Great Crowd" Instructed in God's Ways

¹¹ In our day, spiritual Israel is not the only group that Jehovah is teaching. During the past half century, attention has also been directed to others. Isaiah was inspired to write about them in chapter 2,

11. (a) Who else is being taught by Jehovah in our day? (b) How do they demonstrate that they fit the description found at Isaiah 2:2, 3, and with what effect on others?

In Our Next Issue

- **God—Is He a Real Person?**
- **Worldwide Security Under the "Prince of Peace"**
- **Do You Always Get the Point?**

verses 2 and 3: "It must occur in the final part of the days that the mountain of the house of Jehovah will become firmly established above the top of the mountains, and it will certainly be lifted up above the hills; and to it all the nations must stream." Yes, those who embrace the worship of the only true God give it the most highly exalted place in their lives. Thus it stands out as elevated above every other sort of worship in which they formerly engaged and in which the world around them continues to engage. People of all nations have observed this. They have seen that, regardless of demands made by worldly authorities or the prevalence of unchristian practices in the world, those who worship Jehovah put their relationship with him above everything else. Observers have also seen the fruitage that this produces in the lives of such worshipers, and many want to share in true worship. So upwards of three million people are now saying to others: "Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths."—See also Zechariah 8:23.

¹² Just think what that means—having God as their Instructor! Those who receive such instruction and truly appreciate its source are not plagued by constant mental conflicts. They do not find themselves torn between two opinions or on the horns of a dilemma as to what is right. The truth from God's Word is crystal clear. And what does Isaiah 2:4 indicate would be an outstanding part of the instruction they receive? It involves how to enjoy peace in a strife-torn world. Thus, regardless of what others choose to do, those taught by

12. How are those mentioned at Isaiah 2:2, 3 benefited by having God as their Instructor, and what is an outstanding part of the instruction he gives them?

Jehovah take the initiative to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. They learn war no more.

¹³ It is this same group that is depicted at Revelation 7:9, 10, 14 as survivors into God's peaceful new earth that follows the coming "great tribulation." The surviving "great crowd" come out of all ethnic groups, tribes, peoples, and tongues. Many of them formerly belonged to factions that were at war with one another. Others simply pursued a course of life that was basically selfish; yet, that too interfered with enjoyment of peace. But now these who have come out of all nations are a peace-loving, peace-promoting people. And what has made them that way? They have been taught by Jehovah.—Isaiah 11:9.

A Unique Kind of Peace

¹⁴ The peace with which Jehovah favors his people is truly unique. It is not the sort of thing that results when a shaky agreement is made between two parties that do not trust each other. It involves no compromises. It is based on righteousness. (Isaiah 32:17) But how can that be true of peace that involves imperfect humans? As sinners, what righteousness do any of us have? Well, by faith we can enjoy a righteousness that is made possible through the sin-atoning value of Jesus' sacrifice.

¹⁵ This helps us to appreciate what Jesus said as recorded at John 6:45-47. There he was speaking to Jews who were not drawn to him as the Messiah and so were murmuring against him. But it was with

13. From what backgrounds did the "great crowd" come, but what has made them the sort of people they are?

14. On what is the peace of Jehovah's people based, and how is this so?

15. During Jesus' earthly ministry, what was Jehovah teaching his prospective sons that was vital to peace?

reference to his disciples that he said: "It is written in the Prophets [specifically, at Isaiah 54:13], 'And they will all be taught by Jehovah.' *Everyone that has heard from the Father and has learned comes to me.* Not that any man has seen the Father, except he who is from God; this one has seen the Father. Most truly I say to you, He that believes has everlasting life." Those disciples accepted the instruction that Jehovah was giving them. They were drawn to Jesus. When others rejected the things he taught and forsook Jesus, his apostles stayed. As Peter said: "We have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:69) Because of their faith in Jesus Christ, it would be possible for them to come into a peaceful relationship with Jehovah God, a relationship that carries with it the assurance of everlasting life.

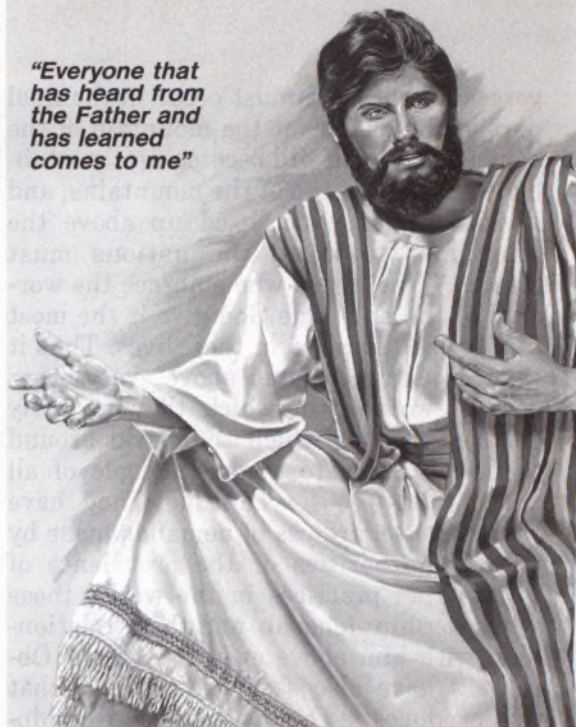
¹⁶ Starting at Pentecost 33 C.E., the benefits of Christ's sacrifice began to be applied to those faithful followers of Jesus. What Paul later wrote at Romans 5:1 came to be true of them: "Now that we have been declared righteous as a result of faith, let us enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." By birth all of these were descendants of Adam. As sin-

16. (a) Starting at Pentecost 33 C.E., how did Jesus' followers benefit from the provision made through Christ? (b) Thereafter, what was required of them?

Review Questions

- ☐ Why does the world not have peace?
- ☐ What is the peace that God gives now?
- ☐ Who can enjoy such peace?
- ☐ How is righteousness a vital factor in this peace?

"Everyone that has heard from the Father and has learned comes to me"



ners, they were alienated from God. No good works that they might personally have done could have canceled out their inheritance of sin. But by His undeserved kindness, Jehovah accepted the sacrifice of Jesus' perfect human life in behalf of Adam's offspring. For those who exercised faith in this provision, it now became possible to have righteousness credited to them and for them to be adopted by God as sons with heavenly life in view. (Ephesians 1:5-7) But was more required on their part? Yes, they had to walk in Jehovah's ways. No longer were they to make a practice of sin. But they realize that whatever righteousness they have is a result of God's undeserved kindness expressed through Christ. As the scripture says, they 'enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ.'

¹⁷ What about those to whom Jesus re-

17, 18. (a) Do the "other sheep" enjoy such peace with God? (b) What further questions deserve consideration?

ferred as his “other sheep”? (John 10:16) Do they enjoy such peace with God? Not as sons of God, but Colossians 1:19, 20 does include them as recipients of divine peace. It says that God saw good through Christ “to reconcile again to himself all other things by making peace through the blood he [Jesus] shed on the torture stake, no matter whether they are the things upon the earth [that is, those who will be favored with eternal life on a paradise earth] or the things in the heavens.”

These with earthly prospects are declared righteous and enjoy peace with God even now, not as sons, but as ‘friends of God,’ as was Abraham. What a favored position that is!—James 2:23.

¹⁸ Do you personally enjoy that peace? Are you experiencing it as fully as is possible for humans who are living during this most significant time in history? In the following article, we will consider some of the things that can help to make that possible.

How You Can Experience Divine Peace More Fully

“O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”

—ISAIAH 48:18.

THOSE who share regularly in congregational study of the Bible with the help of this magazine recognize the value of the peace that God gives, and they want that peace. The majority undoubtedly do enjoy it. But not all experience it as fully as they might. Why is this? Regarding those who would have divine peace, Jehovah says: “I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk. *O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just*

like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”—Isaiah 48:17, 18.

² Obviously, anyone can benefit from attending meetings where we discuss the Bible. But only those who *pay attention* to Jehovah’s commandments, making personal application of them and conforming to them, truly enjoy divine peace. Are there areas in which you need to do this more fully? (2 Peter 1:2) It is not enough for us to heed a few of God’s requirements but then sidestep those that we find inconvenient or more difficult. When the Devil tried to entice Jesus Christ over to his

1. What is needed if we are to experience peace as fully as we might?

2. (a) What is implied in the expression “pay attention”? (b) To how many of God’s commandments must we pay attention? (1 John 5:3)

selfish way of thinking, Jesus firmly responded: "It is written, 'Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth.'" —Matthew 4:4.

³ God's commandments touch every aspect of our lives. First of all, they involve our relationship with Jehovah. Then they affect our viewpoint toward his visible organization and the Christian ministry, the way we treat family members, and our dealings with people of the world. Those who earnestly pay attention to Jehovah's commandments in all these matters are the ones blessed with abundant peace. Let us consider a few things that can help us to experience that personally.

Do Any of These Matters Need Your Attention?

⁴ Have you recently begun studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses? Or have you perhaps been associating with the local congregation for a number of months or even years? If so, you have undoubtedly found joy in having a knowledge of God's purposes open up before you. But the fact that a person enjoys a home Bible study or finds pleasure in going to the Kingdom Hall does not prove that he is at peace with God. We were all born in sin, and peace with God is possible for us only through Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 53:5; Acts 10:36) A mere passive belief in Jesus does not bring that peace. It is necessary to appreciate personally our need of the ransom, to exercise faith in the value of Jesus' sacrifice, and then to give evidence of that faith by obeying his commandments.

3. What aspects of our lives must be brought into harmony with Jehovah's ways if we truly are to have abundant peace?

4. (a) Why does having a home Bible study or going to the Kingdom Hall not guarantee that we are at peace with God? (b) What is included in exercising faith in Jesus Christ? (John 3:36)



(James 2:26) One of the commands that Jesus gave while on earth was that those who would become his disciples should be baptized in water. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Have you been immersed in symbol of your dedication to Jehovah through Jesus Christ?

⁵ Is there anything in your life that disqualifies you for baptism? If you know that there is, or if during the course of your study you learn that this is the case, do not delay to set matters straight. Realize that any attitude or conduct that would disqualify a person for baptism is also an obstacle to his being at peace with God. Act with urgency while there is still the opportunity. As indicated at 1 Peter 3:21, those who are granted a good conscience by Jehovah God first dedicate themselves to him on the basis of faith in the sacrifice of Christ, get baptized in symbol of that dedication, and do God's will. Then the peace that goes with a good conscience because of having an approved standing before God becomes theirs; it is

5. Why are dedication and baptism important to our being at peace with God?

Regular meeting attendance



possible in no other way. Of course, it is only a beginning.

⁶ Next, consider your regularity in attending congregation meetings and your participation in them as you are able. Do these meetings have a place in your life that you do not allow to be infringed on by the world or by other personal activities? Do you prepare for the meetings and count it a privilege to participate? These things, too, have a definite bearing on one's enjoyment of peace. Why? Because God's spirit is with his congregated people, and peace is a fruit of that spirit. (Galatians 5:22) It is at these meetings that we are helped to understand Jehovah's requirements, and we need this in order to do what is pleasing in his eyes. Here, too, we learn how to promote peace in our relations with fellow humans—in the congregation, at home, at school, and at our secular work. Our meetings are one of the principal ways in which we are taught by Jehovah, and as the Scriptures point out, it is those who are taught by Jehovah that enjoy abundant peace.—Isaiah 54:13.

6. Why does our attitude toward congregation meetings have a bearing on our enjoyment of peace?

⁷ A closely related point that deserves attention is the progressive application in our personal lives of what we learn. We do not want to be like those Israelites who Jehovah said would 'hear again and again but not understand.' (Isaiah 6:9) Moreover, do we want to be like those whom Jehovah described to Ezekiel—people who would listen to Jehovah's prophet but not do what he said because they chose to fulfill their unclean or materialistic desires? (Ezekiel 33:31, 32) In contrast, those who would gather at Jehovah's house in our day and would gain his approval are described as saying: "Let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will instruct us about his ways, and *we will walk in his paths.*" (Micah 4:2) If we truly take to heart the instruction that we receive at our meetings, if at each meeting we isolate at least one point that we personally need and then work on it, we are

7. What follow-through on the things discussed at our meetings is needed?



Applying
what we
learn



**Sharing fully in
the field ministry**

going to reap peaceable fruitage. As Jesus said at Luke 11:28: "Happy are those hearing the word of God *and keeping it!*"

⁸ One of the things emphasized at our meetings is the importance of sharing fully in the proclaiming of God's Kingdom and in helping others to become disciples. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19) How prominent are these activities in your life? If we have truly paid attention to what Jehovah is saying to us through his Word and by means of his organization, we know that this is the most important work being done on earth today. (Revelation 14:6, 7) And it is a well-known fact that those who are in full-time service—as well as those who, though they cannot be pioneers, are truly zealous in the ministry—are the ones among us who are outstandingly happy. The peace they enjoy is not like a mere drop of water, but as Jehovah said, it becomes "just like a river." (Isaiah 48:18) Is that what you are experiencing? All of us can.

8. How can sharing in the field ministry to the fullest extent that our circumstances permit benefit us personally?

⁹ Our heeding all this counsel, however, does not make us immune to the pressures of life in the present system of things. But regardless of how difficult situations may be, God assures us of his loving help if we will turn to him. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) Have we learned to seek Jehovah's help and direction in everything we do, freely turning to him in prayer and, after we have done what we can about difficult situations, throwing our burdens on Jehovah, confidently leaving them with him? (Proverbs 3:5, 6; Psalm 55:22) Warmly we are encouraged at Philippians 4:6, 7: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." What a marvelous provision that is! Have you learned to benefit

9. What can help us to maintain our God-given peace even when we experience very severe difficulties?



**Throwing our burdens
on Jehovah**

fully from the peace of God that is thus made possible?

Continually Pursue Peace

¹⁰ Once we have such peace, we cannot afford to be careless about it. Diligent effort is required in order to maintain it. Thus 1 Peter 3:10, 11 says: "He that would love life and see good days, . . . let him seek peace and pursue it." Having sought a goal and attained it, a person would be foolish to treat that goal lightly. After seeking and attaining peace, we need to be on guard against things that could disrupt it. More than that, we should actively pursue those things that contribute to peace.

¹¹ If we have attained to peace with God through the means that he has provided, we need to be careful not to disrupt that relationship by returning to a practice of sin. Of course, since all of us are imperfect, all of us sin. But there is danger when a person justifies in himself attitudes and actions that God condemns. We cannot afford simply to shrug our shoulders and say, "That's just the way I am." (Romans 6:16, 17) We need to repent of wrongdoing instead of justifying it, and then we ought to beg God to forgive us on the basis of our faith in Jesus' sacrifice. We also need to learn to turn to God for help *before* we do wrong, instead of trying to fight the battle alone, finally giving in, and then begging for forgiveness. With God's help, we can succeed in putting on "the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." —Ephesians 4:20-24.

10. After seeking peace, what is needed on our part?

11. (a) What attitude might endanger our relationship with Jehovah? (b) When should we really be asking for God's help with regard to temptations? (Matthew 6:13)

¹² Enjoyment of peace, of course, also involves relationships with other people. True Christians serve God as part of an organization; they are an "association of brothers." (1 Peter 2:17) As Jesus said would be true of his followers, they are outstanding in their love for one another. (John 13:35) But none of them are perfect. Because of our own imperfections and those of others, we may need to pray earnestly about certain situations and work hard to resolve problems. Hebrews 12:14 urges us: "Pursue peace with all people." And in our relations with our Christian brothers and sisters, there is a special obligation to persevere in pursuing peace. Pointedly, 1 Thessalonians 5:13 says: "Be peaceable with one another." That means not merely to refrain from retaliating but to be active peace promoters, taking the first step to restore peace and being willing to yield in the interest of peace.—Ephesians 4:1-3.

¹³ Outside the congregation, however, not everyone is willing to be peaceable. So, realistically, Romans 12:18 counsels: "*If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men.*" But our efforts to promote peace do not include compromising with regard to Jehovah's righteous requirements. We may adjust the times for doing certain things, but we know that it would be unwise to quit attending congregation meetings or to refrain from sharing in the field ministry in order to maintain peace with marriage mates or relatives. And we know that Jehovah would not approve our joining in ungodly practices with workmates or schoolmates

12. (a) To enjoy peace, what other relationships need attention? (b) What is required of us in this regard?

13. (a) In promoting peace with unbelievers, what might we do, but how do we demonstrate that peace with God comes first? (b) How is it possible for us to have peace when there is turmoil around us?

in order to have their approval. We recognize that real peace belongs only to those who first of all enjoy peace with God, to those who love Jehovah's law and walk in his ways. It is that peace that we prize above all else. (Psalm 119:165) True, around us there may be turmoil. Unbelievers may argue and fight with one another; they may even heap abuse upon us because of our faith. But we know how God's Word has taught us to conduct ourselves. By continuing to pursue a course that is in harmony with Jehovah's righteous ways, we are not deprived of the peace that counts most.—Compare Psalm 46:1, 2.

¹⁴ On the final night before his death, Jesus told his faithful apostles: "I have said these things to you that by means of me you may have peace. In the world you are having tribulation, but take courage! I have conquered the world." (John 16:33) Yes, we do experience tribulation. As Christians, we undergo persecution of various sorts. We may experience injustice, and many suffer severe illness. But divine peace sustains us through all of this. Because we have been taught by Jehovah, we know why Christians are persecuted. We are in no doubt as to why there is injustice and why we suffer illness. We also know what the future holds. We know that as a result of Jesus' faithful life course and his sacrificial death, deliverance is a certainty. Furthermore, we know that regardless of the problems that confront us now, we can turn to God in prayer with the confidence that he lovingly cares for us and will sustain us by means of his spirit.—Romans 8:38, 39.

¹⁵ Appropriately, Jesus said at John 14:27: "I leave you peace, I give you my peace.

14. Even though we personally experience tribulation, what makes it possible for us to continue to maintain inner calm and a bright outlook?

15. How is it true that the peace Christ makes possible is not like what the world offers?

I do not give it to you the way that the world gives it. Do not let your hearts be troubled nor let them shrink for fear." It certainly is true—the world has nothing like the peace that God gives through Jesus Christ. It enables us to be strong in the face of situations that would make others give up all hope.

¹⁶ What a marvelous future lies ahead for all who now embrace the peace that comes from God and who give it the prominence that it deserves in their lives! Soon the world that is at enmity with God will be gone. All creation will in time be fully united in peace by the righteous requirements of the Universal Sovereign. May our gratitude for this grand prospect move us to work in full harmony with it now. May all of us listen carefully to Jehovah's instruction and get his commandments firmly implanted in our heart so that we truly love his ways and do what he requires. As Proverbs 3:1, 2 states: "My son, my law do not forget, and my commandments may your heart observe, because length of days and years of life and peace will be added to you."

16. (a) What prospect lies ahead for those who now truly treasure the peace that God gives? (b) How can we demonstrate that we do prize that peace?

Review Questions

- ☐ According to Isaiah 48:18, what is needed if we are to have abundant peace?
- ☐ By doing what things may we experience divine peace more fully?
- ☐ What is expected of us as to maintaining peace with our brothers and sisters?
- ☐ How can we maintain peace even when surrounded by unbelievers?

A Joyful People —Why?

TRUE Christians today are a joyful people. After all, we serve “the happy God,” Jehovah. (1 Timothy 1:11) He supplies us with his spirit, and a fruit of that spirit is joy.—Galatians 5:22.

Such deep-seated joy is resilient and stands up to pressure. For example, Jesus Christ was subjected to the pain of impalement and the disgrace of being executed as a blasphemer. Yet, “for the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake.” (Hebrews 12:2) Jesus knew that ahead of him lay grand opportunities and privileges in connection with his service to Jehovah. Focusing on these future privileges helped him to maintain his joy in the midst of suffering.

Jesus wants his disciples to be joyful also. He said: “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you and your joy may be made full.” (John 15:11) This has proved true of Jehovah’s Witnesses today. Many are the reasons that we are a joyful people. We know the truth, which has freed us from the grip of superstition and false religious beliefs. (John 8:32) Then, too, we know where we are in the stream of time and rejoice in the soon-to-be-realized hope of salvation. (Luke 21:28) We are also protected from many of the problems—among them sexually transmitted diseases—faced by those who do not practice Bible-based morality. We enjoy the very finest of association with people interested in doing Jehovah’s will. And, yes, we have the grand privilege of sharing in preaching the good news of the Kingdom and making disciples

of sheeplike ones.—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20.

But while this is true of Jehovah’s Witnesses as a whole, what about you as an individual? Why can it be said that you have reason to rejoice along with the rest of Jehovah’s people?

Finding Joy in the Evangelizing Work

Some find it difficult to engage in the house-to-house preaching work. Perhaps they are uneasy about approaching strangers and striking up conversations. Or they may simply feel inadequate when it comes to teaching others. Do you feel that way at times? If so, how can you find joy in the evangelizing work?

First of all, keep a positive attitude. Many people would be thrilled to be employed by some celebrity or well-known politician. But what greater joy we should find in being used by “the King of eternity,” Jehovah God himself!—1 Timothy 1:17.

Remember, too, that this is a never-to-be-repeated work. Just think! The angels themselves are guiding and directing Christians here on earth in their endeavors to locate sheeplike ones. (Revelation 14:6) Does this not bring joy to your heart?

Finding Joy in Kingdom Increase

Another reason to have a positive view of the preaching work is the fine effect it is having. The Bible foretold: “The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time.” (Isaiah 60:22) This promise of

Jehovah has come true in recent times. For example, during the 1986 service year, 225,868 were baptized in symbol of their whole-souled dedication to Jehovah God. There was an increase of 6.9 percent in the average number sharing in spreading the Bible's truths to others.

No doubt this increase is evident in your own congregation or circuit. New ones are coming to meetings and making necessary changes in their lives so as to be able to serve God. Does this not point to the fact that the preaching work has Jehovah's blessing? Having a share in this increase can thus be a source of great joy to you. True, you may not have personally studied with an individual to the point of his getting baptized. But we cannot take credit for bringing someone into the truth anyway. 'God makes it grow,' said Paul. (1 Corinthians 3:6-9) All members of the congregation have a share in helping new ones. How? By being present at meetings, commenting, hospitably greeting new ones, and conducting themselves in a way that makes the truth appealing.

However, greater joy can be obtained if you have a more direct share in the house-to-house preaching activity and the home Bible study work. Last year, on the average, 2,726,252 weekly Bible studies were conducted. Why not make more of an effort to share in this joyous work? Offer a Bible study to someone you know, perhaps a neighbor or an individual with whom you have placed literature. Ask Jehovah for help in locating such a sheeplike person.

Overcoming Obstacles to Joy

Of course, if a person feels inadequate about teaching others, this can be a real obstacle to his finding joy in the field ministry. Remember, though, that "our being adequately qualified issues from

God." (2 Corinthians 3:5) And through his organization Jehovah has provided many fine aids to help us qualify as effective ministers.

First of all, there are many among us who have been serving God for a long time and have much experience in the field ministry. We can join these experienced ministers in their activity and learn from them. Moreover, every month fine suggestions appear in *Our Kingdom Ministry*. Then there is the publication *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, which contains a wealth of information to sharpen our preaching skills. Utilize these tools and prepare more thoroughly for the field ministry. Think of new and interesting ways to introduce yourself at the door. Or consider different ways to draw householders into conversations. As you become more effective in the field, your enthusiasm and joy in preaching will doubtless increase.

The ministry is more enjoyable when we are able to talk to people. In some territories this admittedly is a problem. Can you arrange to share in the field service at a time when more people are at home, such as in the early evening? Many find doing so quite effective. You can also take the initiative and talk to people wherever they are to be found—on the streets, sitting on park benches, washing their cars. Remember that people need the truth and that lives are involved. This can help motivate you to overcome tendencies toward shyness. While it is true that the vast majority of people will not respond favorably, those who do so bring us much joy.

However, one of the greatest aids to our maintaining joy is prayer. Ask Jehovah for his spirit to strengthen and encourage you. Paul said: "For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me." (Philippians 4:13) We can feel that way, too, as we learn to rely more fully on Jehovah.

Enduring as a Joyful People

Many individuals do not appreciate our work. Jesus was aware that this would be the case. So when he sent his followers out to preach, he counseled them: "Wherever anyone does not take you in or listen to your words, on going out of that house or that city shake the dust off your feet. . . . Look! I am sending you forth as sheep amidst wolves; therefore prove yourselves cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves." Jesus also said: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore have no fear."—Matthew 10:11-16, 30, 31.

These words help us to endure joyfully. They help us to realize that when we meet people who do not appreciate our efforts on their behalf, we are still making Jehovah's name known; we are still praising him. (Psalm 100:4, 5) Interestingly, at times householders who refuse to open the door can be heard to say to others: "It was Jehovah's Witnesses." Yes, without our saying a word, Jehovah's name has been magnified, and people have received the opportunity to accept or reject the truth. (Matthew 25:31, 32) So even unresponsive territories can be endured joyfully.

Besides, we never know when such individuals may have a change of attitude. One day, a woman who had turned a Christian sister away from her door on a number of occasions asked the sister if she had any new literature. The sister was surprised and remarked that the woman had never accepted Bible literature before. The woman explained that her husband worked with a man who was studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. He had given her and her husband one of the Watch Tower Society's publications. Out



of curiosity, the woman had read it and had recognized the message as the truth. So she decided then and there that the next time a Witness called she would let him in. A home Bible study was started, and the woman later became a dedicated witness of Jehovah!

We thus have a grand privilege—a joyful privilege—of declaring the only message of hope in the world. And the preaching work is the assignment God has given us during these last days. It must be done before the end comes. (Matthew 24:14) How long will it be before the end of Satan's wicked system? We know the end will not come late. (Compare Habakkuk 2:3.) In the meantime, there is still time for others to learn the truth. Let us take advantage of this remaining time and zealously be at our preaching work. And let us have a positive attitude, working hard so as to 'save both ourselves and those who listen to us.' (1 Timothy 4:16) In doing so, we will remain a joyful people sharing in Kingdom increase.

Bible Highlights

Psalms 107 to 150

Happiness is a goal most people never attain. For a small group of others, though, happiness is a way of life. Their key to it? True worship! The Psalms convince us that Jehovah is a happy God, and therefore we can be happy by worshiping him. For evidence of this, let us look at Book Five of the Psalms, that is, Psalms 107 to 150.

Jehovah the Deliverer

Please read Psalms 107 to 119. The prayer of the Jews for deliverance from Babylonian captivity is answered, and "the reclaimed ones of Jehovah" celebrate the return in song. (Psalm 107) Upon being delivered earlier, David 'made melody' to God and declared His goodness and love. (Psalms 108, 109) With strength from Jehovah, David's Lord, who is Jesus Christ, was to subdue God's enemies. (Psalm 110) In addition to rescuing His people, Jehovah blesses the upright man fearing Him. (Psalms 111, 112) Following their deliverance from Babylon, the Jews sang the Hallel Psalms, or songs of praise, at the great annual feasts. (Psalms 113-118) The 119th Psalm is the longest, and all but 2 of its 176 verses refer to the word or law of God.

♦ 107:27—How did 'their wisdom prove confused'?

Like sailors caught in a destructive storm, the Jews' wisdom proved futile during their captive state in Babylon; all human means of delivering them had failed. But by turning to Jehovah in the midst of this stormy situation, deliverance had come. He caused the symbolic storm to abate and delivered them to a safe "haven"—the land of Judah.—Psalm 107:30.

Happy God, Happy People!

♦ 110:3—What is the significance of having "young men just like dewdrops"?

Dew is associated with blessing, productivity, and abundance. (Genesis 27:28) Dewdrops are also gentle, refreshing, life-sustaining, and numerous. In the day of the Messianic King's military force, his subjects quickly, cheerfully offer themselves in numbers so great that they can be compared to dewdrops. Just like refreshing dewdrops, throughout Jehovah's organization today numerous young men and women render service to God and their fellow worshippers.

♦ 116:3—What are "the ropes of death"?

It seemed as if death had so tightly bound the psalmist with unbreakable ropes that escape was impossible. Ropes tied tightly about limbs produce sharp pains, or pangs, and the Greek *Septuagint* version renders the Hebrew word for "ropes" as "pangs." Hence, when Jesus Christ died, he was in the paralyzing grip, or pangs, of death. When Jehovah resurrected Jesus, therefore, He was "loosing the pangs of death."—Acts 2:24.

♦ 119:83—How was the psalmist "like a skin bottle"?

While waiting for Jehovah to comfort him, the psalmist had become like a skin bottle that would be hung up when not in use. Because of the smoke in a tent or a house lacking a chimney, this type of bottle would gradually darken, dry up, and shrivel. In effect, this is what happened to the psalmist at the hands of persecutors. (Verse 84) His distressed state was probably evident in his dismal countenance and lined face, and his entire body may have been so affected as to have lost some of its moisture. (Compare Psalm 32:4.) Thus he may have felt as worthless as a withered skin bottle that others cast aside as unsuitable to hold liquids. Yet he had not forgotten God's regulations.

♦ 119:119—How does God make the wicked cease "as scummy dross"?

The scum that forms on molten metal or in the smelting furnace is a worthless waste product, something impure to be discarded. Thus a refiner separates such metal as gold or silver from the "scummy dross." Similarly, Jehovah considers the wicked ones fit only for the slag heap and makes them cease, separating them from those of value who have his favor.—Compare Ezekiel 22:17-22.

Lesson for Us: Like the Jews of old, Jehovah's Witnesses today await deliverance—this time through the storm of Armageddon. (Revelation 16:14, 16) At God's appointed time, this system of things will be swept away by this great war. Those who do not look to Jehovah for salvation will be utterly helpless as they are tossed about by the waves of this great destruction. The survivors, however, will "give thanks to Jehovah for his loving-kindness." Therefore, in these last days, both Jesus' anointed followers and the "great crowd" can put their full trust in Jehovah.—Psalm 107:31; Revelation 7:9.

'Songs of the Ascents'

Read Psalms 120 to 134. These 15 psalms are called songs "of the ascents." Scholars disagree as to the precise meaning of "ascents," but perhaps these psalms were sung by Israelites when they went up, or ascended, to the lofty city of Jerusalem for their three annual festivals.—Psalm 122:1.

♦ 120:4—What were these "sharpened arrows" and "burning coals"?

A slanderous tongue can be as destructive as a weapon or a fire. (Proverbs 12:18; James 3:6) In retribution, Jehovah sees to it that the

slandrous tongue is silenced as by a warrior's arrows. Interestingly, charcoal made from the shrublike broom tree burns very intensely, pointing to the severity of the divine judgment upon "the tricky tongue." —Psalm 120:2, 3.

♦ 131:2—How does the soul become like a "weanling"?

Before being weaned, an infant longs for its mother to satisfy its desire to be fed. And a weanling in its mother's arms finds satisfaction, security, and solace. Content to pursue a humble course (verse 1), the psalmist felt "soothed and quieted," like a weanling in his mother's arms. Humbly waiting on Jehovah and doing his will bring security and rich blessings.

Lesson for Us: Although Jehovah can rescue his people from calamity, he does not shield them from all adversity. Indeed, adversities moved the composers to utter these psalms. However, God "will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear" but "will also make the way out." (1 Corinthians 10:13) Jehovah does protect us from spiritual ruin. He can either maneuver events so as to eliminate the calamity itself or strengthen us so that we can withstand the pressure. To that end, very soothing and beneficial is the unity we enjoy at our Christian meetings. —Psalm 133:1-3.

The Praiseworthy God

Read Psalms 135 to 145. In contrast with idols whose makers become just like them, Jehovah is the praiseworthy God and Deliverer. (Psalms 135, 136) Even when his people were in *Babylon*, they did not forget "the songs of Zion." (Psalm 137) David says 'kings will laud Jehovah' and exults in how wonderfully he is made. (Psalms 138, 139) He prays for God's protection and extols His goodness, knowing that only a good relationship with Jehovah brings true happiness. —Psalms 140-145.

♦ 138:2—How did God magnify his saying above his name?

When Jehovah declares something on the basis of his name, we expect much in the way of fulfillment. However, he always exceeds our expectations, causing the realization to surpass by far our anticipation. God magnifies his "saying" by making its fulfillment grander than what we expect.

♦ 139:9—What is meant by "the wings of the dawn"?

This expression depicts the light of dawn, as if having wings, swiftly spreading over the sky from east to west. Were David to "take the wings of the dawn" and reach the remotest part of the west, there he would still be under Jehovah's care and control.—Psalm 139:10; compare Amos 9:2, 3.

♦ 141:3—Why did David want 'a watch over the door of his lips'?

David knew the damage the tongue can do and how imperfect men are tempted to speak rashly, especially when provoked. Moses was the meekest man on earth, yet he sinned with his tongue in connection with the waters of Meribah. (Numbers 12:3; 20:9-13) Control of the lips is necessary, then, to avoid injurious speech and preserve a good heart.—James 3:5-12.

♦ 142:7—Why did David think his soul was in a "dungeon"?

He felt all alone with his problems, as in a dark, dangerous dungeon, misunderstood and separated from all humans. When we have similar feelings and think that our "right hand" is open to attack, we can confidently call out to Jehovah for help.—Psalm 142:3-7.

Lesson for Us: In Psalm 139, David expressed delight in God's ability to 'search through' him and "know" him and his ways. Rather than seeking escape, David wanted to yield more fully to Jehovah's guidance and control. He knew that God always observed him. Such knowledge not only restrains one from wrongdoing but also provides one with the ut-

most comfort. The fact that Jehovah sees our deeds, understands our problems, and is always ready to help us produces a deep sense of security and peace, which is essential to our happiness.

Praise Jah!

Read Psalms 146 to 150. These psalms strike up the theme of the entire Book of Psalms—"Praise Jah, you people!" Each of them begins and ends with those glorious words. All of this rises to a grand crescendo in the 150th Psalm, which calls on all creation to "praise Jah!"

♦ Psalm 146:3—Why not put confidence in human leaders?

Human leaders are mortal. They can save neither themselves nor those trusting in them. Thus, confidence in human leadership is undermined by the eventuality of death. But "happy is the one . . . whose hope is in Jehovah his God." (Psalm 146:5, 6) The psalmist saw the need for guidance superior to what humans themselves can give.

♦ 148:4—What are the 'waters above the heavens'?

The psalmist apparently meant the water-carrying clouds above the earth that empty themselves from time to time in the form of rain, which eventually flows back into the oceans. This cycle is essential to life, and its very existence gives praise to the Creator. Since the atmospheric expanse between the earth and the clouds can be spoken of as *heavens*, the psalmist referred to the clouds as the 'waters above the heavens.'

The Psalms make this truth self-evident: To be truly happy, we need a good relationship with Jehovah. Thus, the whole aim of God's people and the purpose of our existence can be summed up in the psalmist's concluding call: "Every breathing thing—let it praise Jah. Praise Jah, you people!"—Psalm 150:6.

A Look at the Bahamas

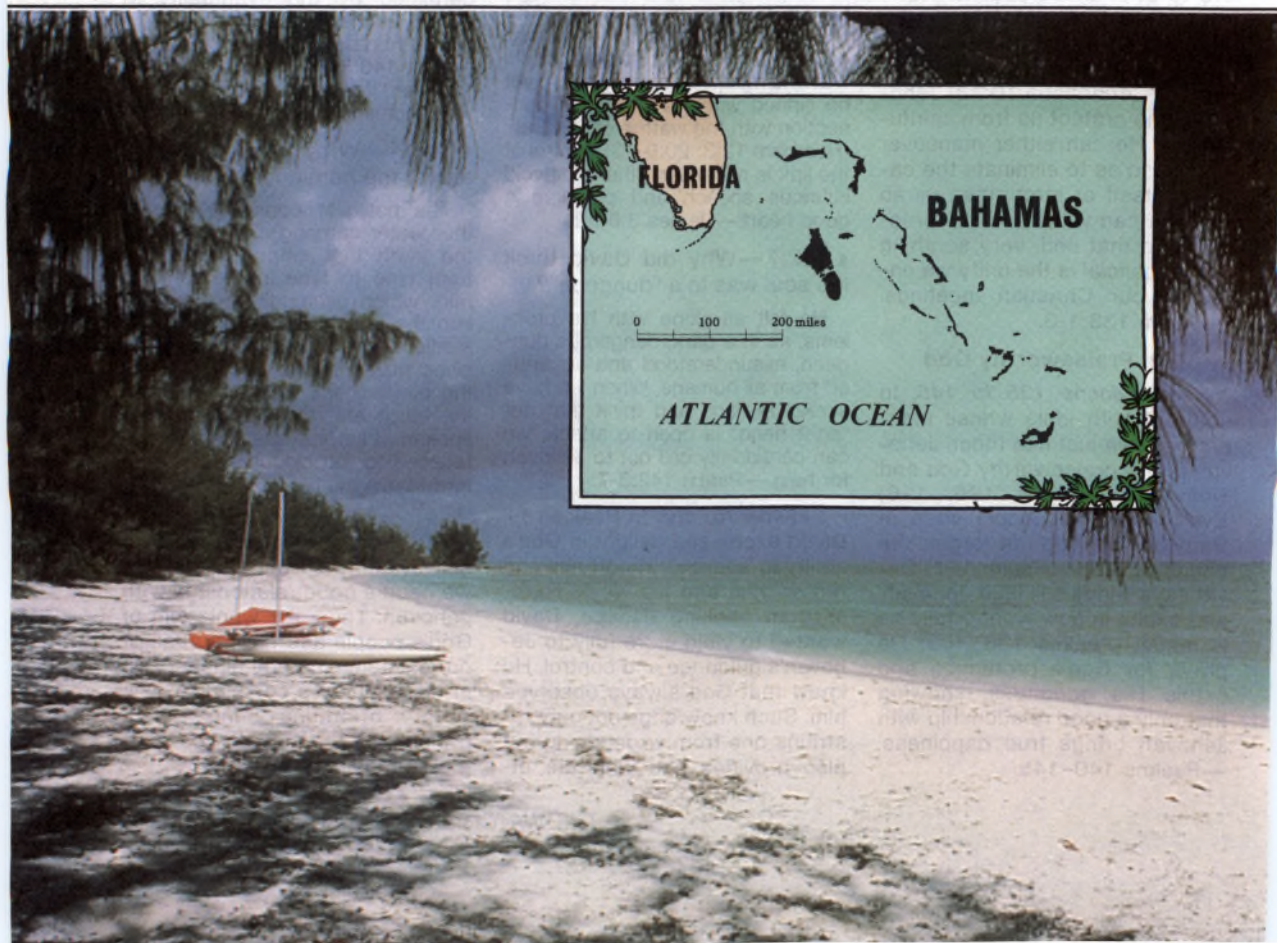
—Through the Eyes of a Traveling Minister

THE Bahamas. There was a time when those words conjured up in me dreams of lying on beautiful sandy beaches beneath gently swaying coconut palms or swimming in crystal-clear turquoise waters. Indeed, to the thousands of vacationers who visit the Bahamas each month, such visions become a reality. And no wonder, for the climate on these tropical islands is enjoyable, with an average temperature of 70 degrees Fahrenheit (21° C.) in winter and 85 degrees Fahrenheit (29° C.) in summer!

Now, though, the Bahamas mean much more to me than just soaking up the warmth of the tropical sun as a vacationer. They have become my assignment as a traveling minister of Jehovah's Witnesses. Come with me and see the Bahamas through my eyes.

The Out Islands

Only about 20 of the 700 islands and cays are populated, and the majority of the Bahamians live in the capital city of Nassau on the island of New Providence. Nas-



sau is known as a port of call for ocean cruise ships and has a number of large hotels for vacationers. Maybe you have stayed at one of them. But have you toured the other islands?

A large number of Bahamians live on the Out Islands, which are also called Family Islands. These islands surround Nassau, the farthest one being over 300 miles (480 km) away. On a few of these Out Islands, you can enjoy all the modern conveniences of Nassau, but others are not as developed. For example, some do not have electricity or running water. On others, you can still see people cooking on wood fires in their thatched-roof kitchens or grinding corn in hand mills.

How I Travel

All the Out Islands can be reached from Nassau by boat or airplane, but their remote location may present a challenge to persons with a profession such as mine. In a procedure similar to that followed by first-century Christians, a traveling minister, or circuit overseer, will visit congregations and small groups of Jehovah's Witnesses to strengthen and encourage them spiritually.—Acts 15:36; 16:4, 5.

I remember a group of only three Witnesses that I was to visit on one of the Out Islands. This group had not been visited by a circuit overseer for over three years. I wrote to them from Nassau, notifying them of the dates for my visit. But when I arrived by boat, no Witness met me at the dock. So I asked if anybody could help me find one of the Witnesses. I was directed to a certain woman, and as I introduced myself as the circuit overseer, she got so excited that she ran off to tell the other Witnesses about my arrival. She left me standing there with my luggage. Those Witnesses had never received my letter, and they were surprised and delighted by my visit.

I became very nervous when I saw smoke fill the cockpit of the plane as it lifted off the ground

The return trip to Nassau was by means of a small freight-and-mail boat. The voyage took more than 30 hours through rough seas, but the time passed quickly, at least for me. I seized the opportunity to preach to some of the passengers. Sometime later, one of the crew members began studying the Bible and is now attending meetings at one of the congregations in Nassau.

Another way to visit the Out Islands is by airplane. However, only small planes can land on some of the island airstrips. These are usually quite safe, but sometimes there are frightening experiences. On one occasion, I became very nervous when I saw smoke fill the cockpit of the plane as it lifted off the ground. The plane quickly returned to the airstrip. The cause of the smoke? A rodent's nest built in the heating and ventilation air duct next to the engine!

What About the People?

While traveling in the Out Islands, I have found many persons who desire Bible literature. But for some of them, even the low cost of the literature is beyond their means. For example, on one extremely hot day, five of us were preaching on a remote island when I met a woman who showed keen interest in the publication *My Book of Bible Stories*. She did not have any money to contribute toward its cost, but what she did have in her refrigerator was just what we needed—five cans of a cool beverage. We traded the book for her cool drinks, which made everyone happy.

The Bahamians have a real love for the Bible. This makes it a joy to bring them

The Bahamians have a real love for the Bible. This makes it a joy to bring them the "good news" of Jehovah's Kingdom

the "good news" of Jehovah's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) Often when calling at a home, you will find the householder reading the Bible. At one home I visited, the mother proudly had her three-year-old daughter recite to me the names of all 66 books of the Bible in their proper order.

During the past few years, the Out Islanders have enjoyed seeing slide presentations on Bible subjects prepared by the Watch Tower Society. On one island, no hall was available, so we made arrangements to show the slides outside on a newly painted white wall next to a small food store. About 60 people gathered around—some standing, others sitting.

On another occasion, 120 people assembled. They relished the slide program so much that when the lights were turned on, no one left. I remembered that I had brought along another set of slides on a different Bible subject. So off went the lights again, and the second set was shown—to the delight of the crowd.

Sometimes problems can spring up. On one island a group of people gathered in the local schoolhouse to see our slide program. As I turned the projector on, the bulb burned out. I did not have an extra projector bulb, and one was not available on this Out Island. Needless to say, the crowd was disappointed. However, by quickly taking the projector apart and making a few adjustments, I was able to use an ordinary household bulb as a fair, but somewhat dimmer, substitute. The audience did not care. They enjoyed the program anyway.

**Tarantulas, Mosquitoes,
and "Fried Cats"**

Making regular visits to the Out Islands calls for some adaptations to the tropical conditions. I remember the first time I saw a tarantula. The spider was crawling across the floor and seemed as big as my hand! I stood frozen—terrified. I am thankful that the householder came to my rescue. With one swift blow from his machete, the "enemy" was dispatched. The householder was an 82-year-old man. Formerly, he had bitterly opposed his wife's efforts to serve Jehovah. But in time he began attending the meetings at the Kingdom Hall and studying the Bible with her.

Because of the warm climate, mosquitoes may pose a problem. At times they are so numerous that, as you speak, one may fly right into your mouth. Of course, many other living things are a joy to behold, like the beautiful pink flamingos living in the midst of their natural habitat of lush tropical plants and fruit trees.

Learning about local foods can be quite a revelation. On one island, I spotted what looked like an orange tree full of that juicy fruit. I asked the lady of the house if I might pick one or two of her oranges. She cautioned me. They were not oranges but sours. Nevertheless, I could help myself, she said. Well, I figured that I knew an orange when I saw one. So I picked a nice fat one and took a bite. What a surprise! My mouth puckered. The fruit was extremely sour, like a lemon. The woman laughed, but I learned that although the fruit of the sour "orange" tree looks like an orange, it surely does not taste like one!

I remember the first time I saw a tarantula. It was crawling across the floor and seemed as big as my hand!

I thought I was adjusting to island life quite well until a trip to one of the islands not long ago. I was staying with an elderly widower as I served the congregation. Upon arising the first morning, he invited me to join him for breakfast. My mouth watered in anticipation—until he mentioned the menu. “Fried cats”! As I entered the kitchen and was about to decline the offer, I saw him flipping pancakes. “Where are the ‘fried cats’?” I asked. He pointed to the pancakes. I heaved a big sigh of relief, and we both broke out laughing. He thought that I knew that pancakes were called fried cats on that island.

Rewards of Traveling

Because of the remote location of some of the islands, there is a great need for more ministers to help in spreading the good news of God’s Kingdom. This need is not only to reach the English-speaking people of the Bahamas but also to contact the Haitian immigrants who speak French.

I asked him, “Where are the ‘fried cats’?”

Being a traveling minister in the Bahamas is an exciting challenge that calls for some adjustments to the island way of living. But there are also great rewards. One is the inestimable joy of seeing people respond to the Bible’s message. Another is the fine privilege of spiritually stimulating the scattered congregations and isolated groups.

We in the Bahamas delight in the beauty of beaches sparkling with pink sand and white sand and the enchanting coral reefs gorgeously arrayed with fish. But we are especially delighted with what is now taking place here and around the globe. As Jehovah’s Witnesses, we see Psalm 97:1 being fulfilled. It says: “Jehovah himself has become king! Let the earth be joyful. Let the many *islands* rejoice.”—*As told by Anthony Reed.*

Will You Cling to the Truth?

IF YOU have begun to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses, the principal question you must answer to your own satisfaction is, Is this the truth? If you find that it is, will you cling to it? Similar questions confronted people in the days of Jesus Christ and his apostles.

When the apostles preached about Jesus, how did people react? Well, news regarding Christ’s Kingdom, his miracles, his ransom sacrifice, his resurrection, and everlasting life sounded good, and many accepted what they heard as the truth. But the majority did not. In fact, the Christian organization of that time was

“spoken against” everywhere. (Acts 28:22) So accepting the truths Jesus’ disciples preached meant going against popular opinion and encountering opposition. Interested people therefore had to prove to their own satisfaction that Christian teachings were the truth. Only then could they take a firm stand.

When Paul and Barnabas visited Antioch in Asia Minor, many people listened to their message with keen interest. The Bible record says: “Now when they were going out, the people began entreating for these matters to be spoken to them on the following sabbath. The next sabbath

nearly all the city gathered together to hear the word of Jehovah." (Acts 13: 42, 44) But this initial interest waned in a great number of the people when they heard emotional opposers speaking against the apostles.

Verse 45 of Acts chapter 13 says: "When the Jews got sight of the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began blasphemously contradicting the things being spoken by Paul." Then verse 50 goes on to say: "But the Jews stirred up the reputable women who worshiped God and the principal men of the city, and they raised up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and threw them outside their boundaries." Interested people had to decide whether to continue listening to Jesus' followers despite the opposition. They had either to accept what they heard as the truth or to close their ears to it.

Opposition Today

Even as Christians were opposed in the first century C.E., so there are present-day opposers who try to close the ears of interested people to the Scriptural truths Jehovah's Witnesses are teaching. Friends, relatives, and religious leaders often try desperately to discourage interested ones from studying the Bible with the Witnesses. Without Scriptural proof, the opposers contradict what is taught and make false accusations.

What should interested people do? Should they permit the words of opposers to close their minds and ears as some did in Antioch? Or should they prove to themselves from the Bible whether what they are studying is the truth or not?

The receptive people in the city of Berea were commended because they examined the Scriptures to see if what Paul told them was the truth. Upon finding that he spoke the truth, they took a firm stand for it. We are told: "The [Bereans]

were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things were so."—Acts 17: 10, 11.

The people of Berea did not permit the statements of opposers to close their minds to the good news. Rather, they examined the Scriptures daily to confirm that the things they heard were truthful. They had found a valuable treasure and were not going to let opposers turn them away from it. Would this not be the reasonable course to take with regard to the same good news that Jehovah's Witnesses proclaim today?

Why Some Oppose

Sometimes opposers are well-meaning relatives that you love and respect, and you have every reason to believe that they are sincerely interested in your welfare. But you need to consider why they are opposed to your studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Do they have firm Scriptural proof that what you are learning is not the truth? Or is their opposition due to what others have told them? Do they lack accurate knowledge about what the Witnesses teach? Many who opposed Jesus did so in ignorance of what he taught and because they believed the false accusations of opposers.

When Jesus was hanging on the torture stake, people passing by "would speak abusively to him, wagging their heads and saying: 'Bah! You would-be thrower-down of the temple and builder of it in three days' time, save yourself by coming down off the torture stake.' In like manner also the chief priests were making fun among themselves with the scribes and saying: 'Others he saved; himself he cannot save! Let the Christ the King of Israel now come down off the torture stake, that we may

see and believe.’” (Mark 15:29-32) What was the reason for this bad attitude?

The people had permitted their opinion of Jesus to be shaped by the religious leaders who hated him because he had exposed them as false teachers whose actions were not in harmony with their claims of being representatives of the true God. With frankness, Jesus had said to them: “Why is it you also overstep the commandment of God because of your tradition? You hypocrites, Isaiah aptly prophesied about you, when he said, ‘This people honors me with their lips, yet their heart is far removed from me. It is in vain that they keep worshiping me, because they teach commands of men as doctrines.’”—Matthew 15:3, 7-9.

So intensely did the religious leaders hate Jesus and the truths he taught that they conspired to kill him and made every effort to turn the people against him. Today, many religious leaders oppose Jehovah’s Witnesses with the same intensity. And as was the case with the early Chris-

tians, the Witnesses are “spoken against” everywhere. But is it wise to permit this popular opposition to shape your thinking?

The same Scriptural truths about God’s Kingdom that Jesus and his apostles preached are being proclaimed today by Jehovah’s Witnesses. Hundreds of thousands of people all over the world are accepting this good news notwithstanding intense opposition by friends, relatives, and religious leaders. Those accepting the Kingdom message have proved to their satisfaction that it is the truth, and they are determined to hold on to it.

So why be like those of the first century who permitted others to turn them away from the life-giving Scriptural truths that came to them through the unpopular followers of Jesus Christ? Instead, continue studying the Bible with the Witnesses, using the written Word of God to prove to your own satisfaction that what you are learning is indeed the truth. (John 8:32) And with God’s help cling to the truth.

Questions From Readers

■ What is meant at 2 Samuel 18:8, which says: “The forest did more in eating up the people than the sword did”?

King David’s handsome son Absalom usurped the throne and forced his father to flee Jerusalem. Thereafter, in the forest of Ephraim (perhaps east of the Jordan River) a battle took place between Absalom’s forces and those loyal to Jehovah’s anointed king, David. The account at 2 Samuel 18:6, 7 reports that in the fierce battle David’s men slaughtered 20,000 rebels. In part, the next verse adds: “Furthermore, the forest did more in

eating up the people than the sword did in eating them up on that day.”

Some have suggested that this refers to rebel soldiers’ being devoured by wild beasts dwelling in the woods. (1 Samuel 17:36; 2 Kings 2:24) But such literal eating by animals need not be meant, any more than that “the sword” literally ate those slain in battle. Actually, the battle “got to be spread out over all the land that was in sight.” So a more likely

explanation is that Absalom’s routed men, who were fleeing in panic through the rocky forest, perhaps fell into pits and hidden ravines, and became entangled in dense underbrush. Interestingly, the account goes on to relate that Absalom himself became a victim of the forest. Apparently because of his abundant hair, his head got caught in a big tree, leaving him helplessly exposed to a fatal attack by Joab and his men. Absalom’s corpse was ‘pitched in the forest into a big hollow, and a very big pile of stones was raised up over him.’—2 Samuel 18:9-17.

'It Exceeds All Expectations'

A man in the Netherlands employed as a scientific researcher writes: "It is not often that I take my pen to express my appreciation for things I have read. But the publication *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* really is a unique book."

The man explains that he comes in daily contact with biologists and that "it would take a miracle for such a one ever to be convinced of creation. But this book really does exceed all expectations. The logical buildup of the chapters and the illustrations are scientifically so up-to-date that you would have to be blind to raise any objections to them. . . . What more than anything else makes this book credible are the literature references, in which famous evolutionists are allowed to speak . . . I certainly intend to bring this book to the notice of some of my (former and future) colleagues."