The Watchtower
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom
September 15, 1987

How You Can Make TRUE FRIENDS

The Watchtower®
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

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In This Issue

The Quest for True Friends 3

How You Can Make True Friends 5

A Desired Superhuman Ruler 8

Breathing This World's "Air" Is Death-Dealing! 10

Keep Submitting to "the Spirit That Is Life-Giving" 15

Witnessing in the Land of 700 Languages 21

"Fear the True God and Keep His Commandments" 24

Is Religious History of Any Benefit to You? 26

Dangers of Wealth and of Poverty 30

Questions From Readers 31

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The Quest for *True Friends*

A YOUNG man was badly hurt in a motorcycle accident. For weeks he was in a coma and then began to recover slowly. "If I had as many good friends as I do acquaintances I would recover at a much faster rate," he said. 'A lot of the friends I had before the accident have left me. But good friends can be very curative.'

This situation is typical of today's unfriendly world. So-called friends can be many when all goes well. But when misfortune strikes, they disappear. True friends are usually hard to find.

Yet, having just one or two true, warm friends makes a vast difference in life. Experts on the subject say: "The yearning for closer personal ties is a major theme of our times." And as an old saying puts it: 'Friends in need are friends indeed.'

At one time, people were more concerned about others and were willing to help their friends or neighbors. But the pivotal period of World War I brought a general worsening of human relations. An ungrateful, callous, me-first attitude is now the norm.

This sad state of affairs was foretold 19 centuries ago in these words: "In the last days it is going to be very difficult to be a Christian. For people will love only themselves and their money; they will be proud and boastful, sneering at God, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful to them, and thoroughly bad. They will be hardheaded and never give in to others; they will be constant liars and troublemakers and will think nothing of immorality. They will be rough and cruel, and sneer at those who try to be good. They will betray their friends."—2 Timothy 3:1-4, *The Living Bible.*

What a gloomy yet accurate picture of the world today! And it apparently gives us little hope of finding true friends. Nevertheless, even now it is possible to make true friends. And how precious they are! You can always turn to them for help,

advice, comfort, and warm companionship. But it is vital to distinguish between true and false friends.

Not All "Friends" Are True Friends

The young man hurt in the accident mentioned at the outset was a member of a football team and had many "friends." Members of clubs or small communities often form relationships that are pleasant. But such "friendships" may not be very stable. And to have many "friends" and then lose all of them is very discouraging, as the young man discovered. To acquire acquaintances is easy; to make true friends is not.

Wealthy people or those in high station can easily make many "friends." As the Bible says: "The rich have many friends." "Everyone tries to gain the favor of important people; everyone claims the friendship of those who give out favors." (Proverbs 14:20; 19:6, *Today's English Version*)

Your companions can powerfully influence you

But how many of them have ulterior motives? And if the much-befriended persons lose wealth or status, they may soon be completely friendless.

Physically attractive people often have lots of "friends" too—many of them influenced by physical factors. But such "friendships" can be very harmful and can vanish amid adversity like mist in the heat. So there is a real need to . . .

Be Selective

Yes, there is wisdom in being selective about friends. False friends are often great flatterers who curry favor with some ulterior motive. "The man who flatters his neighbour spreads a net for his feet." —Proverbs 29:5, *The Jerusalem Bible.*

Therefore, think carefully about your present circle of friends. Do they influence you for good or for bad? Are they self-centered, opinionated, or conceited? Do they act rashly and delight in taking risks? What is their attitude toward those of the opposite sex? Are they courteous and respectful or overly familiar, perhaps actually immoral? Have your regular companions proved to be dishonest, unreliable people? Are they drug takers? Heavy drinkers? If so, you are in danger. You may be honest, clean, and humble, but remember: "Bad associations spoil useful habits."—1 Corinthians 15:33.

The great danger in having bad companions is that you will imitate them. Slowly, maybe imperceptibly, their ways and attitudes will rub off on you. As the Bible says: "Keep company with the wise and you will become wise. If you make friends with stupid people, you will be ruined."—Proverbs 13:20, *TEV.*

It is easy to take a false step when acquiring friends. But do not be discouraged. There are still millions of fine, friendly people in the world. So how can you find such true friends?

How You Can Make *True Friends*

"THE only way to have a friend is to be one," wrote Emerson, the American poet. Friendship is a two-way street involving the spirit of giving. Introverts and those with selfish tendencies find it difficult to make true friends. Nevertheless, they can succeed, as we shall see.

True friendship grows out of love because love draws people. Yet some have difficulty making friends. How can a person overcome this?

"Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves," advised Dale Carnegie. When strangers meet, perhaps at a social gathering, who are the ones that make friends? Not the big talkers but those who take a warm interest in others, drawing them out and really listening to them. Remembering names and interesting facts about new acquaintances can also help to develop friendships.

In *Fundamentals of Interpersonal Communication,* Kim Giffin and Bobby R. Patton recommend self-disclosure and genuineness. "For someone to be important to you," they say, "you must know something about him/her that matters to you . . . [Be] open and frank at all times . . . Your responses to the other person must be sincere."

True friends are not only honest but also considerate, never imposing on each other or being overly possessive. They understand each other, can sense the other person's view of things, and can thus show empathy. As the relationship grows, they open their hearts to each other, becoming not only true friends but also close friends. Not all true friends are *close* friends. Jesus Christ, the friendliest person ever on earth, made many friends, but only a few were really close friends. —Mark 9:1-10; Luke 8:51.

The Book of True Friendship

The Bible, by far the best book on the subject of friendship, says: "A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress." (Proverbs 17:17) True friends are compassionate and ready to provide help when problems arise. Here is a fine example of this—a story from the days of ancient Israel.

Because of famine, a man of Judah moved to Moab with his wife, Naomi. In time he died. Later, his two sons married the Moabite girls Ruth and Orpah. Then the sons died, leaving three widows alone. Naomi, the mother, decided to return to Judah, and her two daughters-in-law set off with her. However, along the way Naomi urged the young women to go back and seek new husbands among their own people. Orpah did so, but Ruth insisted on going with Naomi. Why? Because she was much more than a daughter-in-law; she was also a true friend. For one thing, her compassionate nature would not permit her to let the elderly widow, bereft of her family, go on alone.—Ruth 1:1-17.

Ruth showed real empathy, kindness, loyalty, and love. Those qualities form the solid basis of true friendship. There was, however, another factor involved in Ruth's relationship with Naomi.

Friendship on a Higher Plane

When Naomi urged her to go back, Ruth said: "Do not plead with me to abandon you, . . . for where you go I shall go . . . Your people will be my people, and *your God my God.*" (Ruth 1:16) Naomi had helped Ruth, formerly a pagan, to know and love the true God, Jehovah. Their shared belief became a powerful spiritual bond drawing the two women together as true friends. And Jehovah blessed them with a new family. In time, Ruth married Boaz, a prosperous landowner in Judah, and had a son named Obed, who became the grandfather of King David.—Ruth 4: 13-22; Matthew 1:5, 6.

This spiritual factor puts friendship on a higher plane. How? In the case of Ruth and Naomi, both worshiped Jehovah, "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth." (Exodus 34:6) "God is love," and if we sincerely worship him with spirit and truth, we are sure to grow in love for him and fellow creatures. (1 John 4:8; John 4:24) Thus, we change. We develop a friendly interest in others, especially the meek, suffering people of all races. Introverts thus become less self-centered. Selfish people develop concern for others. We begin to display the fruitage of God's spirit—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control."—Galatians 5:22, 23.

These qualities help us to develop the vital ability to forgive weaknesses and mistakes in others—"not, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy-seven times," as Jesus said. (Matthew 18:21, 22) Many friendships founder on this point. But Jesus Christ both preached and practiced this. How often he forgave his imperfect, fallible disciples for their errors, including even Peter's shameful denial of the Lord! —Matthew 26:69-75.

As a result of all this spiritual development, our circle of friends grows. Eventually, we find that we belong to a vast, global family of friends! We also find that the general standard of our friends is much higher. For example, Brian, a fairly new worshiper of Jehovah, recalls that former friends got him involved in drinking and neglecting his wife and children. But now he is very devoted to his family. Concerning his many new friends with the same faith in Jehovah, he says: "If I have a problem, I know that I can pick up a phone and call any one of them, and they would be happy to help."

Alan had friends whose conversation usually centered around cars and girls. But he found those topics "flat and empty" when he made many new friends, fellow lovers of Jehovah. They overwhelmed Alan by their "spontaneous, genuine, loving interest" in him.

Our Best Friends

All these individuals and millions more form a worldwide, nonpolitical family of

Some Guidelines for True Friendship

Be selective about those with whom you associate.

Take a warm interest in others, and be a good listener.

Do things together—shared experiences strengthen friendship.

Be frank, open, and sincere at all times.

Show empathy and compassion when others are in trouble.

When friends make mistakes or upset you, be ready to forgive—even "up to seventy-seven times."—Matthew 18:22.

When friends are slandered or unfairly criticized, be loyal and defend them.

Shared worship of Jehovah immeasurably strengthens friendship.

Ruth would not abandon Naomi because their friendship had a solid spiritual basis. Do you have such true friends?

friends that transcends national, racial, and social barriers—a true brotherhood of mankind, just like that of the early Christians. (3 John 14) The same bond that drew Ruth and Naomi together also unites this family, namely, pure worship of Jehovah God. All of them humbly and gratefully recognize that Jehovah and Jesus Christ are their best friends.

'Almighty God and his Son as friends?' you may wonder. 'How is that possible? Is that not presumptuous?' Well, the Bible says: "Abraham put faith in Jehovah, . . . and he came to be called 'Jehovah's friend.'" That certainly was undeserved kindness. Yet Jehovah's Word says: "God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones." —James 2:23; 4:6.

Perhaps some feel too sinful for such a privilege. But James goes on to say: "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you indecisive ones. Humble yourselves in the eyes of Jehovah, and he will exalt you."—James 4:8, 10.

Jesus said: "You are my friends if you do what I am commanding you." He also pointed out that the greatest commandments are to 'love Jehovah God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and our neighbor as ourselves.' (John 15:14; Matthew 22:37-40) If we do that, we will have many true friends. Moreover, we will thus qualify for another great privilege—everlasting life on a cleansed earth under God's Kingdom. (Matthew 6:9, 10) As Jesus said: "His [Jehovah's] commandment means everlasting life."—John 12:50.

Will you allow Jehovah's Witnesses to help you? As genuinely friendly people, they are willing to visit you and discuss this vital matter with you free of charge. They can assist you to make many true friends.

A Desired Superhuman Ruler

WHEN Jesus miraculously feeds the thousands, the people are amazed. "This is for a certainty the prophet that was to come into the world," they say. They conclude not only that Jesus must be that prophet greater than Moses but also that he would make a most desirable ruler. So they plan to seize him and make him king.

Jesus, however, is aware of what they are planning. So he quickly moves to avoid being forcibly drafted by them. He dismisses the crowds, compels his disciples to get in their boat and head back toward Capernaum, and then withdraws into the mountain to pray. That night Jesus is there all alone.

Shortly before dawn Jesus looks out from his elevated vantage point and observes waves being whipped up on the sea by a strong wind. In the light of the almost full moon, since it is near Passover, Jesus sees the boat with his disciples struggling to make headway against the waves. The men are rowing with all their might.

At seeing this, Jesus descends from the mountain and begins walking toward the boat across the waves. Covering a distance of about three or four miles, he reaches his disciples. However, he continues on as though he is going to pass them by. When they see him, they cry: "It is an apparition!"

Jesus comfortingly responds: "It is I; have no fear."

But Peter says: "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you over the waters."

"Come!" Jesus answers.

Thereupon, Peter, getting out of the boat, walks over the waters toward Jesus. But looking at the windstorm, Peter becomes afraid, and starting to sink, he cries: "Lord, save me!"

Immediately stretching out his hand, Jesus catches him, saying: "You with little faith, why did you give way to doubt?"

After Peter and Jesus get back into the boat, the wind stops, and the disciples are amazed. But should they be? If they had grasped "the meaning of the loaves" by appreciating the great miracle Jesus performed a few hours earlier of feeding thousands with only five loaves and two little fishes, then it should not have seemed so amazing that he could walk on water and cause the wind to abate. Now, however, the disciples do obeisance to Jesus and say: "You are really God's Son."

In a short time they reach Gennesaret, a beautiful, fruitful plain near Capernaum. There they anchor the boat. But when they go ashore, people recognize Jesus and go into the surrounding country, finding those who are sick. When these are brought on their cots and just touch the fringe of Jesus' outer garment, they are made completely well.

The next day the crowd that witnessed the miraculous feeding of the thousands discover that Jesus has left. So when little boats from Tiberias arrive, they board these and sail to Capernaum to look for Jesus. When they find him, they ask: "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus' answer will be quite revealing. **John 6:14-25; Matthew 14:22-36; Mark 6:45-56.**

- After Jesus miraculously fed the thousands, what do the people want to do to him?
- What does Jesus see from the mountain to which he has withdrawn, and what does he then do?
- Why should the disciples not be so amazed by these things?
- What happens after they reach the shore?

Breathing This World's "Air" Is Death-Dealing!

"It is you God made alive though you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you at one time walked . . . according to the ruler of the authority of the air."—EPHESIANS 2:1, 2.

A BREATH of fresh air! How refreshing after one's being in a stuffy room! But even in the wide open spaces, pollution is a major problem today. Poisons spewed into the atmosphere are at alarming levels in many countries. Toxic fumes, radioactive dust, disease-causing germs, and certain viruses all travel by air. Life-sustaining air, so generously provided by our loving Creator, is becoming more and more death-dealing due to man's greed and carelessness.

1. How has air pollution come to be death-dealing to humans?

[2] As dangerous as air pollution is, however, there is an even more deadly form of polluted "air." It is not contaminated air from the nuclear accident at Chernobyl (U.S.S.R.) or smog-filled air of Los Angeles, California (U.S.A.). No, we are in danger of breathing much more lethal "air." The apostle Paul mentioned it when he told fellow Christians: "It is you God made alive though you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you at one

2. What contaminated "air" is more dangerous than the polluted air we may breathe?

time walked according to the system of things of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience." —Ephesians 2:1, 2.

[3] What is this "air"? Paul shows that it has "authority," or power, and there is a "ruler" over it. There is no doubt who this ruler is. He is Satan the Devil, the one Jesus Christ called "the ruler of this world." (John 12:31) Realizing this, some Bible scholars feel that Paul here borrowed from Jewish or pagan sources and spoke of the air as being the abode of the demons over which the Devil has control. Many Bible translations reflect this view. But this "air" is not the same as "the heavenly places" in which "the wicked spirit forces" dwell.—Ephesians 6:11, 12.

[4] When Paul wrote to Christians at Ephesus, Satan and the demons were still in heaven, although being outside God's favor. They were yet to be cast down to the vicinity of the earth. (Revelation 12: 7-10) Moreover, air relates more to humans than to spirit creatures. Accordingly, human society was to feel the effects when the last bowl of God's anger was poured out upon "the air."—Revelation 16:17-21.

[5] Hence, it appears that Paul uses the literal air, or atmosphere, to illustrate the general spirit, or dominant attitude of selfishness and disobedience, reflected by people alienated from God. It is the same as "the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience" and "the spirit of the world." (Ephesians 2:2; 1 Corinthians 2:12) Just as the literal air is everywhere, ready to be breathed in, so "the spirit of the world" is always present. From infancy to the grave, it permeates, influences, and shapes the way people think and act as they seek to fulfill their desires, hopes, and ambitions.

[6] This spirit of sinfulness and rebellion predominates in imperfect human society. As this "air" is breathed in, its lethal potency is intensified by peer pressure and an ever-increasing appetite for sensual pleasure. Thus, it has pronounced "authority" over people. (Compare Romans 6: 12-14.) The Devil, of course, is the originator of all that is wicked. (John 8:44) So he influences humans to imitate his own rebellious course and thereby inspires, shapes, and controls this community spirit, or "air." As the "ruler" over this sinister power, or "authority," Satan uses it to control the thinking of people. Its elements are formulated to keep people so occupied with satisfying fleshly desires and pursuing worldly interests that they have no time or inclination to get to know God and submit to his holy spirit, "the spirit that is life-giving." (John 6:63) Spiritually speaking, they are dead.

[7] Christians too were under the "authority," or control, of this polluted "air" before they learned the truth of God's Word and began to conform to his righteous standards. "Yes, among them [worldly people] we all at one time conducted ourselves in harmony with the desires of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and the thoughts, and we were naturally children of wrath even as the rest." But upon becoming Christians, we stopped breathing in the death-dealing "air" of

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3, 4. (a) Who is "the ruler of the authority of the air"? (b) Why is the "air" of Ephesians 2:1, 2 not the abode of the demons?

5. What is the "air" here under discussion, and what effect does it have upon people?

6. (a) How is the potency of this world's "air" intensified, and how does it exercise "authority"? (b) How can breathing this "air" induce one to imitate the Devil's rebellious course?

7. (a) In what way were Christians "children of wrath" at one time? (b) Upon our becoming Christians, what transformation took place?

this world. We 'put away the old personality which conformed to our former course of conduct and put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty.'—Ephesians 2:3; 4:22-24.

[8] The danger now is that after escaping from this world's polluted atmosphere we may be enticed to go back into it. Here we are, deep into "the time of the end" and on the very threshold of the new world. (Daniel 12:4) Surely, we do not want to lose out because of falling into the same traps as did the Israelites. After they had been miraculously delivered from Egypt and had arrived at the border of the Promised Land, thousands "were laid low in the wilderness." Why? Because some became idolaters, others committed fornication, and still others put Jehovah to the test by their murmuring and complaining. Paul makes a powerful point in saying: "Now these things went on befalling them as examples, and they were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived."—1 Corinthians 10:1-11.

[9] Regarding his disciples, Jesus prayed: "They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world. I request you, not to take them out of the world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one." (John 17:14, 15) Jehovah will safeguard us, but he does not place "a hedge" around us, nor does he miraculously shield us from this world's "air." (Job 1:9, 10) So our challenge is to be in Satan's world, yet being no part of it, to be surrounded by its contaminated "air," yet not breathing it in. When we read secular publications, watch television, or go to places of entertainment, we are likely to be exposed to the world's "air." While some contact with worldly people is unavoidable—at work, at school, and otherwise—we must be vigilant so as to keep from being sucked back into the death-dealing atmosphere of this world.—1 Corinthians 15:33, 34.

[10] We might compare our situation to sitting in a restaurant having "smoking" and "no smoking" areas. As Christians in Jehovah's spiritual paradise, we are properly in the "no smoking" section, away from the spirit of this world. Surely, we would not deliberately sit in the "smoking" section. That would be foolish. But what often happens when we are in the "no smoking" section of a restaurant? Why, the smoke-saturated, filthy air drifts over, and we get whiffs of it! When this happens, do we find the polluted air enticing? Or do we not rather get away from it as quickly as we can?

[11] But what do you do when whiffs of this world's "air" come your way? Do you take immediate action to get away from this foul influence? If you stay there and breathe it in, you can be sure that your thinking will be affected. The longer you breathe in this "air," the more tolerance you build up for it. Moreover, in time the smell is not so repulsive but is alluring, intoxicating, desirable to the flesh. It may intensify some secret desire you have been fighting to control.

[12] Some death-dealing pollutants of this world's "air" are not easily detected, even as such contaminants of the literal air as carbon monoxide are odorless and taste-

8. How is our situation today similar to that of the nation of Israel in the wilderness?
9. (a) How can we be in the world and yet be no part of it? (b) What must we be to keep from being sucked back into the death-dealing atmosphere of the world?

10, 11. (a) How might our being in Jehovah's spiritual paradise be compared to occupying a "no smoking" area? (b) What steps should be taken if whiffs of this world's "air" are detected?
12. What is required to avoid being affected by those aspects of this world's "air" that are not easily detected?

less. The danger, then, is that we may not detect the 'deadly fumes' until they have overcome us. Thus, we need to be alert that we may not be led into a death trap by this world's permissive attitudes or its disobedience to God's standards of righteousness. Paul encouraged his fellow Christians to "keep on exhorting one another each day . . . for fear any one of you should become hardened by the deceptive power of sin."—Hebrews 3:13; Romans 12:2.

What Makes Up This World's "Air"?

[13] What common attitudes might we begin to adopt, even before we realize it, because of the strong influence of this world's "air"? One is the inclination to *toy with things immoral.* This world's ideas on sex and morality are all around us. Many say: 'It's all right to commit fornication, bear children out of wedlock, and practice homosexuality. We're just doing what's normal, natural.' Has this "air," or worldly spirit, affected Jehovah's people? Unfortunately, during the 1986 service year, 37,426 had to be disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation, the greater number of them for practicing sexual immorality. And this does not include the even higher number reproved for immorality but not disfellowshipped because they were sincerely repentant.—Proverbs 28:13.

13. (a) What is one form of this world's "air" that we should guard against? (b) How is it apparent that this "air" has affected some of Jehovah's people?

[14] What happens in the case of those who succumb to sexual immorality? When the facts become known, often it is found that they have resumed breathing in the death-dealing "air" of this world. They have let worldly attitudes cause them to lower their standards. For example, they may start watching movies that they would have walked out on years earlier. Worse still, on home video equipment they may watch movies clearly unfit for a Christian. Such toying with things immoral is in direct opposition to the Scriptural injunction: "Let fornication and uncleanness of every sort or greediness not even be mentioned among you, just as it befits holy people; neither shameful conduct nor foolish talking nor obscene jesting."—Ephesians 5:3, 4.

[15] True, you may quickly reject any outright proposal to commit fornication. But

14. Why do some Christians go astray morally, rejecting what Scriptural counsel?
15. How might temptation to toy with sexual immorality begin casually?

how do you act when someone on the job or at school attempts to flirt with you, tries to get overly familiar in a physical way, or invites you to go out on a date? Whiffs of this world's "air" have thus drifted your way. Do you allow yourself to enjoy the attention, to encourage it? According to reports received from elders, wrongdoing often starts in such casual ways. A worldly man may say to a Christian woman: "How nice you look today!" That may be pleasant to hear, especially if the woman feels somewhat lonely. More seriously, some have not reacted wisely to attempts at improper touching. They have given the appearance of objecting but in such a halfhearted way that the worldly person was encouraged to continue what he was doing. What if such immoral advances toward a Christian woman persist, like strong puffs of polluted air blown her way? In a firm way, she should tell him that she does not want and will not accept his attentions. If she continues to breathe in this "air," her resistance will likely break down. She could be led into immorality, if not into an unwise marriage.

How Would You Answer?

- □ What is this world's "air," and who dominates it?
- □ The world's "air" has what "authority" over people?
- □ Why may it be said that Christians are in a "no smoking" area?
- □ As to toying with things immoral, how can this world's "air" affect Jehovah's people?
- □ How can modesty help us to avoid being influenced by this world's "air" as regards dress and grooming?

—Compare Proverbs 5:3-14; 1 Corinthians 7:39.

[16] Be quick, therefore, to reject the immoral, death-dealing "air" of this world. Instead of submitting to its alluring smell and bringing reproach upon Jehovah's name and organization, become a pleasant odor to God by your godly attitude and conduct. Paul put it this way: "For to God we are a sweet odor of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the latter ones an odor issuing from death to death, to the former ones an odor issuing from life to life." (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16) What does it matter if many turn up their noses at the Christian course? (1 Peter 4:1-5) Let the world go along in its way, reaping its bad fruitage in the form of broken homes, illegitimate births, sexually transmitted diseases, such as AIDS, and countless other emotional and physical woes. Not only will you be spared many pains but you will also have the favor of God. Moreover, at least some will be impressed by your good conduct and the Kingdom message you preach, thereby being attracted by the "odor issuing from life to life."

The "Air" of Worldly Styles

[17] Another aspect of this world's "air" pertains to *styles of clothing and grooming.* Many in the world dress in order to make themselves sexually alluring. Even preteens want to make themselves up to appear older, accentuating sex. Are you affected by this widespread "air," or attitude? Do you dress to thrill, to tease, to arouse improperly the interest of those of the opposite sex? If so, you are playing with fire. Breathing this "air" will choke

16. What is required in order to be "a sweet odor of Christ"?
17. How may styles of clothing and grooming reveal that one has been influenced by the spirit of this world?

your spirit of modesty, your desire to be chaste. (Micah 6:8) Those who have a worldly spirit will be drawn to you. From your actions, they will get the message that you are ready to join them in immorality. But why start in this direction by letting such "air" entice you to do what is bad in God's sight?

[18] To be modest, we do not have to dress or groom ourselves shoddily or unattractively. Consider the way the vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses dress and groom themselves. They avoid the extreme styles of this world but present themselves attractively, keeping in mind that they are ministers representing the Sovereign of the universe, Jehovah. Let the old world be critical of their modest styles. They dare not let this world's attitudes cause them to lower their Christian standards. "This, therefore, I say and bear witness to in the Lord," wrote the apostle Paul, "that you no longer go on walking just as the nations also walk in the unprofitableness of their minds . . . Having come to be past all moral sense, they gave themselves over to loose conduct to work uncleanness of every sort." (Ephesians 4:17-19) The mature Christian will dress modestly, not walking just as the nations do.—1 Timothy 2:9, 10.

18. How will always remembering that we represent Jehovah help us in selecting styles of dress and grooming?

[19] So far, we have considered only two aspects of the "air" of this world. But already we have seen that this "air" is very harmful to spiritual health. In the next article, we will take up other features of this deadly "air" that the Devil and his system continually blow toward Christians, hoping that they will succumb to it. How important that we avoid such "air," for absorbing the spirit of this world is like breathing the vapors of death!

19. Having considered two major aspects of this world's "air," what is already apparent as to the danger of breathing it in?

Keep Submitting to *"the Spirit That Is Life-Giving"*

"It is the spirit that is life-giving; the flesh is of no use at all."—JOHN 6:63.

JEHOVAH GOD'S holy spirit is vitally needed if we are to resist the influence of this world's "air," or its attitudes. (Ephesians 2:1, 2) We also need the Bible, which contains God's thoughts recorded under the guidance of the holy spirit. And we need to have a humble Christian attitude, produced by cultivating the fruits of God's spirit—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control." The apostle Paul urged: "Keep walking by spirit and you will carry out no fleshly desire at all. For the flesh is against the spirit in its desire, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, so that the very things that you would like to do you do not do."—Galatians 5:16, 17, 22, 23.

1. (a) How does Jehovah help his people to resist the influence of this world's "air"? (b) How will cultivating the fruitage of God's spirit assist us to have the right mental inclination?

Is your family strong enough spiritually to resist this world's "air"?

[2] Paul also wrote: "We received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been kindly given us by God." (1 Corinthians 2:12) The "air," or mental attitude, of this world kills, but what God gives by holy spirit brings everlasting life to those who accept it. Jesus said: "It is the spirit that is life-giving; the flesh is of no use at all. The sayings that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." (John 6:63) Since "the flesh is of no use at all," we need divine help to conquer sin and resist the world's spirit.

[3] In the previous article, we discussed two dangerous aspects of this world's "air"—toying with things immoral and improper styles of clothing and grooming. But there are many other aspects. For example, this world's atmosphere is saturated with *greed,* by an intense selfish desire for material advantages or material things. 'The ruler of the air' has seen to it that this world's propaganda and advertising make you feel unfulfilled if you do not have an abundance of material possessions. This aspect of the world's "air" can intoxicate you with the idea that these are the big things in life. Have you been affected by this materialistic "air"?

[4] The Bible says: "No fornicator or unclean person or *greedy person—which means being an idolater*—has any inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and of God." (Ephesians 5:5) Note that a greedy person is really an idolater. You may think, 'Surely, I will not go that far, becoming an idolater.' But what is idolatry? Is it not putting something else in the place of Jehovah and his worship, giving attention to it rather than to God and his service? Greed may involve the virtual worshiping of money and its power and influence. If you put the getting of a new automobile, a video cassette recorder, or any other material thing ahead of increasing your opportunities in Jeho-

2. How does what is produced by God's spirit contrast with the results of adopting "the spirit of the world"?

3, 4. (a) What is greed, and how does 'the ruler of the air' play upon fleshly desire for material things? (b) How is a greedy person an idolater?

If we do things "as to Jehovah," we will not be affected by the selfish, lazy "air" of this world

vah's service, is that not evidence that this world's "air" is affecting you detrimentally? Are not material things becoming like idols to you?

[5] If you are seeking advanced education or a lucrative job, are you doing so to get rich and have more material advantages than you need? Are you intrigued by get-rich-quick schemes, wanting to get involved in them? This world's "air" is filled with selfish desire for wealth and cheating as regards the paying of government-imposed taxes. In this atmosphere gambling and similar activities flourish. Do not be tempted. Those who avoid the influence of this world's greed-laden "air" find that genuine happiness comes from being content with necessities and putting Kingdom interests first.—Matthew 6:25-34; 1 John 2:15-17.

Proper Use of the Tongue

[6] What about our *speech habits?* Obscenities, angry words, lying—this world's "air" is thoroughly polluted with such foul speech. Yet, even the speech of a few associated with the Christian congregation at times reflects coarseness, even vulgarity. The disciple James forcefully tells us: "Out of the same mouth come forth blessing and cursing. It is not proper, my brothers, for these things to go on occurring this way. A fountain does not cause the sweet and the bitter to bubble out of the same opening, does it?" (James 3: 10, 11) Have you picked up some of the jargon or slang of this world? Do you have two vocabularies, one for use among Christians, the other for use elsewhere? Paul wrote: "Let a rotten saying not proceed out of your mouth, but whatever saying is good for building up as the need may be, that it may impart what is favorable to the hearers." (Ephesians 4:29) How important it is to use proper, clean speech all the time!

[7] We also need to be careful that we

5. In what ways is this world's "air" filled with selfish desire for riches?
6. What effect can this world's speech habits have on us as Christians?
7. What is included in 'putting away falsehood and speaking the truth'?

always tell the truth. Being devious or deliberately misleading others in order to avoid responsibility really amounts to lying. So be sure to heed Paul's counsel: "Now that you have put away falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, because we are members belonging to one another."—Ephesians 4:25; Proverbs 3:32.

[8] Unrestrained *venting of anger* is another feature of this world's spirit. Many worldly people lose self-control easily. They blow up, then excuse themselves by saying that they were just letting off steam. But this is not what Paul advised, for he wrote: "Let all malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech be taken away from you along with all badness." (Ephesians 4:31) But what if anger builds up despite our developing self-control and other fruits of God's spirit? "Be wrathful, and yet do not sin," wrote Paul. "Let the sun not set with you in a provoked state, neither allow place for the Devil." (Ephesians 4:26, 27) So if we are provoked to anger, we should settle the matter quickly, before the day ends. Otherwise, bitterness and resentment begin to take root in the heart, and they are hard to uproot. Do not allow yourself to breathe in the angry, vengeful "air" of this world!—Psalm 37:8.

[9] What about your *work habits?* Loafing on the job and stealing items from an employer are common today. Have you absorbed some of this "air"? Has the attitude that 'everybody does it' rubbed off on you? Never forget that the way we do our work as Christians reflects on Jehovah and his true worship. Would you want someone to reject the truth spoken by one of Jehovah's Witnesses at his door because of the way you act on the job? "Let the stealer steal no more," said Paul, "but rather let him do hard work . . . that he may have something to distribute to someone in need."—Ephesians 4:28.

[10] Although the master-slave relationship that existed in the first century is rare today, Christian employees can learn from what Paul wrote to Christian slaves at Ephesians 6:5-8. There workers were told to 'be obedient to those for whom they worked, not simply as men pleasers, but as Christ's slaves.' So a Christian should never maneuver things to avoid giving a full day's work or providing promised goods or services. If we do things "as to Jehovah," we will have the right attitude and will not be affected by the selfish, lazy "air" of this world.

Food, Drink, and Entertainment

[11] Has the world's *immoderate use of food and drink* affected you? Its attitude is 'eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die.' (1 Corinthians 15:32) And this spirit has affected some of God's servants, even since ancient times. Recall the occasion in the wilderness when the Israelites "sat down to eat and drink. Then they got up to have a good time." (Exodus 32:6) That "good time" led to unrestrained loose conduct and idolatry, so that God's anger blazed against them. Let us never follow that course.—1 Peter 4:3-6.

[12] Jehovah has given us a huge variety of tasty, colorful, and nutritious foods and drinks, but he wants us to use these

8. (a) How do many worldly people act when provoked? (b) If we are provoked to anger, what should we do?
9. What are some common attitudes of employees, and why should we examine our work habits?
10. In doing secular work, how can we show that we are not being affected by the selfish "air" of this world?
11. How did a worldly attitude toward food and drink affect some of Jehovah's people in Bible times?
12. If our eating and drinking habits need some attention, what should we do?

things in moderation. Gluttony and drunkenness are condemned in the Bible. (Proverbs 23:20, 21) So be honest and ask yourself: Is there room for improvement in my eating and drinking habits? If you need to exercise greater self-control, recognize this and work in harmony with your prayers for God's spirit to help you overcome this problem. "Do not be getting drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery, but keep getting filled with spirit," said Paul. (Ephesians 5:18) Yes, become filled with God's spirit, and do not succumb to the unrestrained spirit of this world! "Whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, do all things for God's glory." (1 Corinthians 10:31) If you have persistent problems along these lines, however, seek the help of spiritually mature men in the congregation.—Galatians 6:1; James 5:14, 15.

[13] This world is strongly addicted to *sports, music, and various forms of entertainment.* Unless they violate Scriptural principles, enjoying such things is not necessarily wrong. But the problem is that Satan, "the ruler who governs the air," has corrupted much of the entertainment available today. (Ephesians 2:2, *The Jerusalem Bible*) Often, immorality is promoted, violence is condoned, and success through deceit, fraud, and even murder is portrayed. When we watch such entertainment, we breathe these attitudes deeply into our system, and their toxic effects are bound to harm us. Moreover, even where some forms of entertainment are not Scripturally objectionable, there is a danger of becoming addicted to them, so that little time is left for spiritual things. Hence, we need to be selective. Take time to enjoy some healthful and beneficial relaxation in moderation, but avoid imitating the excesses of the world. Whether this world's "air" smells good or acrid, it is polluted and deadly!—Proverbs 11:19.

13. (a) How is it evident that the Devil has corrupted much of the entertainment available today? (b) How can we avoid this world's attitude toward entertainment?

Pride of Race—An Evil Wind

[14] A rather subtle aspect of this world's "air" is *pride of race and nationality.* Some promote the erroneous idea that certain races are superior and others inferior. Nationalism encourages people to view their native land as superior to all others. In fact, many suffer needlessly and are deprived of basic human rights and necessities because of the selfishness and prejudice of others. Resentment, even violence, results. Many rise up in revolt, taking the law into their own hands, confident of solving social problems their own way. We, too, might get caught up in these ideas. When we observe or suffer injustices and then hear those who are pressing for social change, we could be influenced if we are not careful. We could begin to abandon our neutral position and take sides. (John 15:19) Even more serious, we might feel tempted to join in picketing, campaigning, or resorting to violence in order to force changes.

[15] A congregation's spirit can be affected detrimentally by racial or nationalistic feelings. (Compare Acts 6:1-7.) But we will have the right spirit if we heed the counsel: "If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men. Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah.'" (Romans 12:18, 19) Since all races came from the first human pair, and God is not partial, there is no room for pride of race or nationality in the Christian

14. With regard to social problems, how could we be affected by this world's "air"?
15. What course does the Bible recommend when we feel inclined to 'avenge ourselves'?

congregation.—Acts 10:34, 35; 17:26; Romans 10:12; Ephesians 4:1-3.

Keep Breathing Life-Giving "Air"

16 We have discussed the main death-dealing features of this world's "air," or spirit. It surrounds us and exerts such pressure that if we allow a vacuum to develop in our spirituality, this foul "air" will rush in to fill it. Success in resisting it depends greatly on how much we love what is pure, clean, and righteous, and hate what is impure, unclean, and wicked. We will keep breathing the right "air" if we keep cultivating the right mental attitude in response to the leading of Jehovah's holy spirit.—Romans 12:9; 2 Timothy 1:7; Galatians 6:7, 8.

17 By all means, do not let any of this world's foul "air" begin to smell pleasant to you. The ruler of this "air" knows just what is needed to appeal to the senses and to set up a craving that often leads to sin. (James 1:14, 15) Keep in the "no smoking" section, Jehovah's spiritual paradise. When you detect a whiff of this world's "air" coming your way, shun it. Turn aside from it just as you would shun death-dealing poison. "Keep strict watch that how you walk is not as unwise but as wise persons, buying out the opportune time for yourselves, because the days are wicked. On this account cease becoming unreasonable, but go on perceiving what the will of Jehovah is."—Ephesians 5: 15-17.

18 It is God's will that we serve him as integrity keepers. Doing so will mean life in his new system, now very near. When we take in a breath of air then, how refreshing it will be! No death-dealing pollutants, just pure life-sustaining air. That will be true of the physical air and, more importantly, of the spirit of those privileged to live on the cleansed earth. They will have an obedient, humble, responsive attitude. The "air" of this old world, filled with rebellious, corrupt, and ungodly influences, will be gone.—Revelation 21:5-8.

19 Surely, we do not want to be among those breathing the "air" of this system when Jehovah clears away both pollution and polluters at Armageddon. When the old world is gone and 'the ruler of the air' has been abyssed, what relief there will be! Everyone who loves Jehovah and keeps loving what is clean, decent, and righteous will be there. Jehovah wants them there and will help them by his spirit. He will give them eternal life in a clean, healthy new system. Let us not lose out on that privilege because of breathing in the death-dealing "air" of this old system!

16. What will help to prevent our being affected by the spirit of this world?
17. What should be done immediately if we detect some of this world's "air" blowing our way?
18. What will be the spirit of those privileged to live on the cleansed earth?
19. Who will survive into Jehovah's new system?

How Would You Respond?

- ☐ In what way does a greedy person become an idolater?
- ☐ How might this world's "air" affect your speech habits?
- ☐ What spirit should Christian employees reflect while doing secular work?
- ☐ How can you avoid being affected by this world's attitude toward food, drink, and entertainment?
- ☐ What spirit as to race and nationalism must not come into the Christian congregation?

Witnessing in the Land of 700 Languages

DO YOU know of a country with a land area smaller than that of Spain, yet whose population of well under four million speak almost a quarter of the world's languages? Can you name the country that occupies roughly half of the second-largest island in the world? The island is New Guinea, the country is Papua New Guinea, and the number of languages spoken by its inhabitants is over 700! How did this linguistic melting pot come about?

A Vast Melting Pot

Papua New Guinea is an island country situated just to the north of Australia and only a few degrees south of the equator. It is made up of some 600 tropical islands sprawled out over a distance of 1,000 miles (1,600 km). However, over four fifths of the total land area of Papua New Guinea is on the huge island of New Guinea, which the nation shares with Indonesia, to the west.

Papua New Guinea's earliest inhabitants are said to have migrated from Asia through Indonesia. These were later joined by Melanesians and Polynesians. The people range in skin color from light brown to jet black and in stature from short and heavyset to tall and thin. Because of the rugged nature of much of the interior, with its thick forests and high mountains, the many tribes lived virtually isolated from one another and developed their own languages. Most of these Papuan languages have extremely complex grammar. Yes, Papua New Guinea is the land of some 700 *languages,* not dialects!

In 1975 Papua New Guinea became an independent nation within the British Commonwealth. It is a parliamentary democracy with the British monarch as head of state but with a local prime minister. Although English is the official language today, large numbers of those within the 700 linguistic groups speak either of two common languages, Hiri Motu or New Guinea Pidgin.

Another Language Added

Yet, believe it or not, some years ago one "language" was still missing in this land of 700 languages. Which one was that? It was the "pure language"—Bible truth about God and his Kingdom. (Zephaniah 3:9) This new tongue was not introduced into Papua New Guinea until the mid-1930's.

It all started in 1935 when the *Lightbearer,* a small motorized sailing ship manned by a crew of Jehovah's Witnesses, left Australia and eventually put into Port Moresby on the southeastern coast of Papua New Guinea. This was the first time that the populace heard the sound of the "pure language"—literally hearing the message of God's Kingdom as it was broadcast by means of sound equipment on the deck of the *Lightbearer.*

However, it was not until 1951 that this "pure language" became better known and used. From that year on, Witnesses from Australia, Canada, the United States, Germany, England, and New Zealand volunteered to go to the Territory of Papua and New Guinea, as it was then called. After witnessing to Europeans there, they soon found ways and means of talking to the native Papuans about God's Kingdom. This involved going from house to house, which took extra effort because some houses were built on stilts above water or on land.

Of course, in order to teach the "pure language" to this multilingual population, the Witnesses from abroad had to learn at least one of the two common, or trade, languages. This did not solve all their problems because neither of these two languages was the mother tongue of the inhabitants but merely linguistic mixtures that enabled people speaking different languages to communicate. And even these two were not spoken by everyone on the islands. So witnessing often involved a laborious process of speaking to a person in one of the trade languages and then having him translate the message for the benefit of others present.

The Witnesses also resorted to using original teaching methods, such as drawing simple pictures on a blackboard or any other material available. In time, Bible literature and magazines became available in the trade languages of Hiri Motu and New Guinea Pidgin. The brochure *Enjoy Life on Earth Forever!* in these two languages has been particularly useful in teaching the islanders the "pure language."

Royalty Hears the "Pure Language"

Jesus Christ said that his disciples would be 'put on the stand before governors and kings for his sake, for a witness to them.' (Mark 13:9) On August 9, 1984, some missionaries of Jehovah's Witnesses on Manus Island were given the opportunity to witness to royalty, though under more pleasant circumstances. On that day Prince Charles, heir to the throne of Great Britain, visited the island.

In their decorated canoes, members of the Titan tribe escorted Prince Charles from his ship to the beach, just across the road from the missionary home. After he was greeted by a hundred dancers and was crowned as a "chieftain," he attended a luncheon to which the Premier of Manus Island had invited the missionaries. When the Prince asked them what they were doing on the island, they gladly gave him a brief explanation of their work. They were delighted to have an opportunity to inform him that Jehovah God has Witnesses also on distant Manus Island.

Incidentally, the official who introduced the missionaries to Prince Charles has herself read the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth.* On occasion, she has also dropped by the missionary home for a chat over coffee and cake.

A New Language for a Politician

A New Guinea businessman was involved in politics and in the Lutheran Church. However, the local church he attended was so divided that the two opposing pastors formed two clans that fought

each other for nearly a year with bows, arrows, spears, and war shields. The fighting left nine people dead and many injured. The man decided to leave the Lutheran Church but did not know where to look for truly united Christians. 'Not Jehovah's Witnesses, for they are false prophets,' he thought.

He was still of this frame of mind when a local group of Jehovah's Witnesses applied to hire his bus in order to attend a district convention. For business reasons, he accepted and actually drove the bus himself. He attended the Sunday program and was greatly impressed with the peace and quiet, the rapt attention of the audience—adults and children—who followed the speakers by consulting their Bibles. He was even more impressed during the lunch hour, when he saw the happy Witnesses patiently line up for their meal, the whites and the speakers awaiting their turn like the others and eating the same food. During the six-hour return trip, he heard the Witnesses happily singing Kingdom songs. 'What a contrast with the warring Lutherans!' he thought.

This man agreed to study the Bible with a local Witness, but secretly, so as not to offend his fellow Lutherans. However, he quickly acquired the spiritual strength to resign both from the church and from his political functions. He and his wife underwent "the change to a pure language" and began "to call upon the name of Jehovah, in order to serve him shoulder to shoulder" with His united witnesses.—Zephaniah 3:9.

Still Much Teaching to Be Done

What a marvelous work has been done by the missionaries and other Witnesses who have volunteered to come from other countries to teach the "pure language" in Papua New Guinea! From just two publishers in 1951, the number of Witness preachers and teachers has grown to over 1,800, most of whom are now from the local population.

These local Witnesses are a source of encouragement to those who have come from other lands to serve here. An English brother living on the island of Bougainville writes: "One of the most encouraging things that motivates us to continue serving Jehovah here is to see how our Papua New Guinean brothers continue to serve Jehovah faithfully, often under very difficult conditions. Many of them do not have homes of their own but have to live with relatives. Often they have to walk long distances in very hot weather or in heavy rain to come to meetings or go out in the field service. One of our local sisters lives out in the bush. In order to save time when she meets us for street witnessing, her husband ferries her, along with her small daughter and baby, across a river on a large inner tube."

There is still much teaching work to be done among the local population. The interest is there. This is evident from the fact that 10,235 persons attended the Memorial of Christ's death in 1987. But more help is needed to take care of all this interest in the "pure language." As a foreign Witness, who came here to serve where the need was greater, expressed it: "It makes my heart sad to think of the many interested people in these way-out bush villages of Papua New Guinea. We just don't have enough workers in the field here. There is certainly a great need in this part of the world. We know that Jehovah is aware of this and that he will make provisions to care for these truth-hungry people."

What about you? Would you like to share in teaching the "pure language" in this land of 700 languages?

Bible Highlights

Ecclesiastes 1:1–12:14

"Fear the True God and Keep His Commandments"

In this day and age, fearing and obeying God is, at best, considered impractical. But the book of Ecclesiastes (Hebrew, *Qo-he'leth,* congregator), written some 3,000 years ago by King Solomon (1:1), describes the futility of human endeavors that ignore God's purpose.

What makes this book so fascinating is the wide range of subjects the writer delves into—human wisdom and rule, material wealth and pleasures, formalistic religion, and so forth. All these things are vanity, for they are not lasting. On the other hand, meditating on them leads the perceptive mind to one conclusion: "Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man."—Ecclesiastes 12:13.

"Everything Is Vanity!"

Please read chapters 1 and 2. Compared with the never-ending cycles of nature, all human striving is fleeting and temporary (1:4-7). Even the great accomplishments of the congregator must be passed on to someone perhaps less worthy (2:18, 19). "Vanity," in Hebrew, means "vapor" or "breath."

♦ 1:9—In what way is there "nothing new under the sun"?

In the natural cycles of day-to-day living upon which the sun shines, there is nothing altogether new. Even "new" inventions are mostly applications of principles Jehovah had already applied in creation. But "under the sun" Jehovah has brought about new spiritual developments affecting mankind. —See *The Watchtower,* March 1, 1987, pages 27-9.

♦ 2:2—Is it wrong to have a good time?

No, it is not. Laughter, or having a good time, may help take the mind off one's problems temporarily, but the problems do not go away. So trying to find true happiness by merrymaking is "insanity"; it makes no sense. Similarly, "rejoicing" does not solve life's problems. Merriment and pleasures are thus contrasted with the happiness that results from having Jehovah's blessing upon one's work.—2:24.

Lesson for Us: We should heed Solomon's counsel and not make the pursuit of material advantages and thrilling new experiences life's sole objective. Rather, we should be 'good before Jehovah' by obeying him. Then we will enjoy his blessing of "wisdom and knowledge and rejoicing."—2:26.

A Time for Everything

Read chapters 3 and 4. Solomon was not promoting a fatalistic view of life (3:1-9). Rather, he was pointing out that man simply cannot alter what God has set in motion (3:14). In this regard, humans are not better than the beasts (3:19-21). So a cooperative attitude (4:9-12) is far more rewarding than a competitive spirit (4:4).

♦ 3:11—How has God made everything "pretty in its time"?

The word "pretty" also has the meaning of "good, proper, appropriate." In its own time, the proper place in which each work of God fits into his purpose will be revealed. God has made many things "pretty" for mankind. For example, he gave humans a perfect start in Eden. He foretold the coming of a redeeming Seed when man fell in sin. At the proper time, God sent the Seed. And, 'prettiest' of all, Jehovah made the Seed the King of His Kingdom.

♦ 4:6—Was Solomon advocating an easy life?

No. But Solomon observed that hard work and proficiency for profit's sake often lead to competition and rivalry (4:4). In turn, this can result in problems and even an early grave. (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) So, what is the balanced view? Be content with less gain coupled with peace, rather than double the gain along with toil and strife.

Lesson for Us: Now is the time to seek first God's Kingdom rather than ambitious personal interests (3:1). We should work in cooperation with fellow Christians rather than in isolation (4:9-12). In that way, we can receive the needed help and encouragement in spite of hardship and opposition.

True Worship Satisfies

Read chapters 5 and 6. Since Jehovah is almighty, we must take our relationship with him seriously, not acting foolishly and expecting him to accept our "sacrifice" (5:1, 2). One who fears God receives satisfaction from using his material wealth, but one who hoards it gets no enjoyment. —Compare 5:18-20 with 6:2, 3.

♦ 5:2—How does this advice apply?

We should pour out our hearts to God, but we must guard against impulsive, thoughtless words because of his greatness and majesty. (Psalm 62:8) Rather than rambling on, we should use simple, heartfelt expressions. (Matthew 6:7) In only five short Hebrew words, Moses pleaded for Miriam and received a favorable reply.—Numbers 12:13.

♦ 6:9—What is "the walking about of the soul"?

"Soul" here has the meaning of "soulful desire." So this expression

refers to the endless search to satisfy desires that cannot be fulfilled. This is contrasted with "seeing by the eyes," that is, facing reality. Thus, knowing that only God's Kingdom can bring about real change, we should be content and not allow unrealistic or unattainable desires to deprive us of peace.

Lesson for Us: At our place of worship, we must conduct ourselves with proper dignity and should be attentive (5:1). We must also be quick to fulfill our obligations before Jehovah. If we are married, this includes fulfilling our marriage vow.—5:4.

Words of Wisdom

Read chapters 7 and 8. The congregator considers the sobering effect of death (7:1-4) and the value of wisdom (7:11, 12, 16-19); he also warns against the bad woman (7:26). Advice is given on such matters as acting wisely toward rulers (8:2-4) and not getting heated up over injustices.—8:11-14.

♦ 7:28—Are these words downgrading womankind?

It appears that the prevailing moral standard was very low. Thus, Solomon was speaking about the rarity of righteous men or women *at the time.* Among a thousand people, it was hard to find one righteous man, and it was even harder to find one righteous woman. The Bible, however, speaks about the "excellent woman" and the "capable wife." (Ruth 3:11; Proverbs 31:10) This verse may also be prophetic, for never has a woman given Jehovah perfect obedience, whereas there has been such a man—Jesus Christ.

♦ 8:8—Of what was the congregator here speaking?

He was speaking of death. No one can prevent the life-force from departing from his cells in order to postpone the day of death. In the war waged with our common enemy death, no one can get a discharge or send a substitute. (Psalm 49:7-9) Even the wicked ones with their devious schemes will not escape death.

Lesson for Us: Though material riches have become the life goal of many, only godly wisdom can lead to everlasting life. (7:12; Luke 12:15) Longing for 'the good old days' will not make things better for us (7:10). Rather, matters will "turn out well" for us only if we continue to fear God.—8:5, 12.

Life's Eventualities

Read chapters 9 and 10. Life is precious, and God wants us to enjoy it (9:4, 7). Since we have no control of life's outcome (9:11, 12), it is better to heed godly wisdom, even though most people do not appreciate it (9:17). Because of life's uncertainties, we should guard our heart (10:2), exercise caution in all we do, and act with practical wisdom.—10:8-10.

♦ 9:1—How are the works of the righteous in God's hand?

Though calamity besets the wise and the righteous, this happens only by God's permission, and he will never abandon them. By God's "hand," or applied power, righteous ones can either be delivered from a trial or be strengthened to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13) Remembering this fact can be of comfort to a servant of Jehovah when difficulties occur.

♦ 10:2—How is the heart at the right hand?

The "right hand" often denotes a position of favor. (Matthew 25:33) So the fact that the heart of the wise person is "at his right hand" indicates that it motivates him to pursue a good, favorable course. But the stupid individual lacks good motive and acts foolishly and improperly. His heart's being at his "left hand" indicates that he is motivated to follow a wrong path.

Lesson for Us: Since sudden death can befall any one of us (9:12), we should be using our life in Jehovah's service in case our demise should bring everything to a halt (9:10). We also need to become skillful in our service because incompetence, even in such simple things as digging a hole or chopping wood, can be damaging to ourselves and others.—10:8, 9.

Youth and Life's Purpose

Read chapters 11 and 12. All of us should practice generosity and take decisive action (11:1-6). Youths who use their time and energy well in serving the Creator will have no regrets later in life (11:9, 10). Rather, they will have the satisfaction of pleasing God before they lose their health and vigor.—12:1-7; see *The Watchtower,* December 15, 1977, page 746.

♦ 11:1—What is meant by thus 'sending out bread'?

Bread is the staff of life. To send it out on "waters" is to part with something valuable. Yet, "you will find it again," for in an unexpected way the generous one will be repaid.—Luke 6:38.

♦ 12:12—Why such a negative view regarding books?

Compared with the Word of Jehovah, the 'endless' volumes of the world contain mere human reasoning. Much of this thinking reflects the mind of Satan. (2 Corinthians 4:4) Accordingly, "much devotion" to such secular material produces little of lasting value.

Lesson for Us: Like Solomon, we should meditate on what God's Word says about life. Then our resolve to fear and obey God will be strengthened. Knowing that Jehovah is intimately concerned about us (12:13, 14) draws us closer to him.

May we, therefore, "fear the true God and keep his commandments." This is our obligation and will bring us lasting happiness.

Is Religious History of Any Benefit to You?

"AT SCHOOL, I didn't like history at all," Barbara openly admits. But now she appreciates knowledge about World War I, for example. Along with her Bible, this information helps her to explain more effectively why the world since 1914 has been without peace. (Revelation 6:4) Similarly, religious history can assist us to understand the world we live in.

Why have nations, communities, and even families been split between Catholic and Protestant faiths since the 16th century? "In the struggle for the pure teaching of the Gospel, then initiated mainly by German, Swiss, and French teachers of the church, Rome was unwilling to give in," comments historian Friedrich Oehninger. This led to the formation of denominational churches.

But was "the pure teaching of the Gospel" truly reestablished? A look at religious history will help us to discover what really happened.

What the Sale of Indulgences Revealed

"The Reformation started off with Luther's fight against abuse in the sale of indulgences, seemingly a matter of practical significance only to the church," remarks historian Gottfried Fitzer. "But in reality it revealed that ecclesiastical matters had become closely entwined with finance, economics, and politics." Let us take a closer look.

Prince Albert of Brandenburg acquired several influential positions in the church. He had to pay the Vatican the equivalent of about a quarter of a million dollars, financed by a bank loan. The pope appointed Archbishop Albert as his commissioner for indulgences for central Germany and allowed him half of the profits to repay his debts.

Albert's indulgence preachers canvassed effectively, assuring "total remission of all sins" and immediate release from purgatory. Strictly speaking, the church offered only remission from church penalties, but people believed that the indulgence letters would free them from all sin. Martin Luther was indignant and, in 1517, published his famous 95 theses, "out of love for truth," as he wrote in the introduction.*

* In modern times, Roman Catholic Church historians have asserted that Luther's nailing of the theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, is "a legend of history by the Protestant churches." Uncontested, however, is the fact that he wrote a respectful letter to Archbishop Albert that day and enclosed a copy of the theses. Luther asked him to reprove his indulgence preachers and to cancel the instructions. The original letter still exists in the Swedish State Archives in Stockholm.

Since Luther merely sought discussion among scholars, to which he as a professor had the right, the theses were written in Latin. But they created "a startling sensation," according to Friedrich Oehninger. "Within 14 days they [the printed German translations] were known all over Germany, within 4 weeks in all Christendom. Some rejoiced that finally one man had taken a stand against the Roman oppression; for others, Luther became an object of hatred." The effect of his theses surprised Luther himself. What did they reveal?

What Luther's 95 Theses Revealed

According to his first thesis, "the believers' whole life should be penance." The sinner could attain peace with God not through letters of indulgence but through genuine repentance and Christian conduct. One of the last theses read: "Away, therefore, with all those prophets who preach to Christians: 'Peace, peace,' and yet there is no peace."—92nd.

Not tradition but the gospel must be "the highest" and the "real treasure," Luther wrote. (55th, 62nd, 65th) True. Jesus set the pattern by teaching with the inspired Scriptures, saying of God's Word: "Your word is truth." (John 17:17; Luke 24:44) By deviating from this pattern, the clergy rejected the Bible as the highest authority and were caught in the trap of human teachings. Luther reproached them, saying: "Teachings of men are preached by those who say that the soul flies (out of purgatory) as soon as money *jingles* in the box."—27th.

Luther warned that "profit and greed increase" through such preaching. (28th) Religious history proves that the clergy neglected Scriptural warnings and became victims of the love of money. (Hebrews 13:5) A Catholic history book admits: "The root cause of decay in the church of that period was the fiscal policy of the Curia, which was thoroughly blemished by simony."

When Luther raised his voice against "the 'sanctified' church tradition" and "bluntly denounced the church's decline into the realms of money and power," as one Protestant historian expressed it, he touched the heart of the problem: the general abandonment of early Christian teachings.

How Desertion of True Faith Started

The 11th thesis described one unscriptural doctrine as "a weed that obviously was sown when the bishops were sleeping." This reminds us of Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds, in which he prophesied the planting of imitation Christians. (Matthew 13:36-43) After the death of the apostles, these false Christians, together with apostate teachers, mixed pure Bible teachings with Greek philosophy and introduced unscriptural doctrines such as immortality of the soul, hellfire, and the Trinity.*—Acts 20:29, 30.

For example, the early Christians had no pictorial art, and the so-called Church Fathers viewed the veneration of an image as an "aberration and offense." By the end of the fourth century, however, the churches were already full of portrait images of Jesus, Mary, the apostles, angels, and the prophets. According to Epiphanius of Salamis, the ones portrayed received improper veneration when persons curtsied before them. Gradually, the warning "guard yourselves from idols" began to be ignored.—1 John 5:21; compare Acts 10:25, 26.

Professed Christians rejected Jesus' command when they started to "lord it

* See "A Field Producing Wheat and Weeds" in *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1981, pages 16-20, and "Quietly Bringing in Destructive Sects" in *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1983, pages 10-15.

The indulgence is the remission of (temporal) punishment for sins . . . The remission is effective here or in purgatory. —*Catholic scholar Josef Lortz.*
Even today, scholars disagree as to what indulgence is and what it means for the life of the Catholic.—*Protestant historian Heinrich Bornkamm.*

The Indulgence—A Special Catholic Doctrine

The confessor imposes upon the repentant Catholic a penance (such as prayer, fasting, alms, or pilgrimage). The pope can remit these penalties because, according to Roman Catholic theory, he is lord over all temporal punishments (including purgatory) and grants indulgence from the so-called treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints. In the Middle Ages, this privilege lent itself to serious abuse and was described as "a commercial business of great dimensions, carried out at the expense of moral standards and in contradiction to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures."

The church does not equate penance with the pardoning of sins. However, even in medieval times, people retained "the simple belief that through payment the [sin] debt was canceled," and preachers of indulgences supported this notion. Luther's theses were directed against those "fables" and were thus summarized: "Indulgences are works of men and have nothing in common with the pure gospel."

Pope Clement VI established the doctrine in 1343 but did not clearly define it. Thus, Luther could appeal to its noncommittal nature. The church quickly made up for this by issuing an official definition of indulgence in 1518. But the papal bull of Leo X offered no "biblical proof for making the merit of Christ and the saints equal to the treasury of indulgences." This prompted in Catholic Luther a momentous decision. His rejection of the unscriptural indulgence system unleashed the Reformation, and the dismissal of his critique led to the great church division.

In modern times, severe criticism from within the ranks of the Roman Catholic Church "did not lead to a change of the system but only led to reforms of the practice." In 1967 Pope Paul VI decided in favor of the old indulgence theory. For Catholics, the decisive question still is: Do I follow God's Word, or do I believe doctrines of men?

over" their brothers by organizing a clerical hierarchy. (Matthew 20:25-27; 23: 8-11) Later, bishops of Rome claimed preeminence. While the "decay of ecclesiastical life under the reign of the secularized papacy proceeded unchecked," the church made attempts "to reform itself but was incapable of doing so," comments historian Oehninger.

The 16th century saw more changes. "The mood of the time was in his [Luther's] favor," Oehninger says, adding that "opponents attacked him, threatening him with death as a heretic, but they only drove him to make more and newer investigations on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, until the whole Roman system, as a mere human creation, began to crumble before his eyes." But were the newborn churches truly free, as they claimed, from "awful abuses and false doctrines"?

The Reformation—No Restoration

The call for reform in the 16th century led to a restoration of neither the "universal" church nor early Christian teachings but caused only a splitting of apostate Christendom into apostate parts that separated again. Today's bishops, including Luther's heirs, still seem to be "sleeping," as the 11th thesis mentioned.

The Protestants rejected the doctrine of indulgences but adopted many other false teachings. "From Greek philosophy, Christian theology also accepted the doctrine of the *immortality of the soul,*" says *Evangelischer Erwachsenenkatechismus* (Protestant Catechism for Adults). It was "combined . . . with the biblical witness about the resurrection of the body."

By using doctrines of men and mixing their ministry with worldly things, including politics, Christendom's leaders, as in the days of Luther, undermine the Bible's authority. Therefore, their mere "form of godly devotion" proves to be without power and is unable to reverse shrinking attendance at church services, indifference of church members, the politicizing of church discussions, and the increasing withdrawals of membership.—2 Timothy 3:5.

Just as information concerning a patient's past can help a doctor to diagnose the person's illness, so religious history

can assist us in understanding why Christendom remains terminally ill in our day. Is there, then, no hope for pure Christianity? On the contrary! Jesus' parable indicated that his wheatlike followers, the true "sons of the kingdom," would be identified at the harvest in "the time of the end." (Matthew 13:38, 39; Daniel 12:4) How would this come about?

A Lesson From Modern Religious History

In 1891 a group of Bible Students visited Luther's former home in Wittenberg. "How vividly it brought to mind those stormy times," one traveler reported. Among those who entered Luther's "study and sat in his old chair" was Charles Taze Russell. The report continues: "[We] have great cause for rejoicing today that, although the beginners of the great reformation stopped short in the work and went about organizing other systems of error, nevertheless, under divine providence, the cleansing of the sanctuary progressed to completion, and the golden vessels of divine truth are now being replaced in order." What Luther failed to achieve, this visitor helped to accomplish.

It was an event of historical dimensions when Russell—together with other truth-loving men and women—started an independent Bible study in the 1870's. Between 1870 and 1875, however, they were "merely getting the outlines of God's Plan and unlearning many cherished errors, the time for the clear discernment of the minutia not having fully come," as Russell later wrote. But the following years became milestones in restoration of original Christian standards.

Through the magazine *Zion's Watch Tower,* the Bible Students announced that the name of the Most High is Jehovah, that the soul is mortal (1881), that the Trinity is unscriptural (1882), and that the Bible hell is the grave (1883). Just as false doctrines entered gradually, so now the light of truth gradually got lighter and lighter. (Proverbs 4:18, 19) From the beginning, these Christians understood the basic truth regarding Jesus, who gave his life as a ransom, and they made his invisible return and God's Kingdom the heart of their activity.—1 Timothy 2:6.

For better organized "dissemination of Bible truths in various languages" by means of publications, the Bible Students in 1884 legally incorporated in the United States the already established Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society. The previous year had already seen publications in Swedish, and then in 1885, the first German literature. In 1892 missionary work in foreign countries was considered. Today, the Bible Students—well known as Jehovah's Witnesses—preach "this good news of the kingdom" in 208 countries and territories and in some 200 languages. —Matthew 24:14.

Most of the Witnesses were members of Christendom's churches or of other religions and believed God-dishonoring doctrines. After taking in accurate knowledge about God and exercising faith, they repented of their wrong course, turned around, and became dedicated, baptized servants of Jehovah. Their "doing works

In Our Next Issue

- **How Practical Is Modern-Day Religion?**
- **Discipline Yields Peaceable Fruit**
- **The Reformation Waters Burst Forth**

that befit repentance" resulted in a clean conscience and in peace with God.—Acts 26:20; John 17:3.

Is Religious History of Any Benefit?

Indeed it is. Large parts of the Bible contain beneficial religious history. (Romans 15:4) The Gospels show how Jesus taught the truth about God and His purpose for the earth. Jesus' followers were to wait for the heavenly Kingdom that would solve earthly problems. "Keep on the watch, therefore, because you know neither the day nor the hour," Jesus said. —Matthew 6:9, 10; 25:1-13.

Religious history confirms the coming of the predicted imitation Christians, who established their own earthly reign. The Reformation changed the face of the world but did not restore pure Bible teachings. History also points to the existence of modern Christians who "keep on the watch," are "no part of the world," and put God's Kingdom first. (John 17:16) This information has helped many people to identify Jesus' true followers today.

Barbara, mentioned at the beginning of this article, is one of the more than 3,000,000 active Witnesses worldwide who try to reach honest people with "the pure teaching of the Gospel." A certain amount of knowledge about religious history has been of benefit to these Kingdom proclaimers too.

Dangers of Wealth and of Poverty

DOES the Bible disparage wealth and encourage poverty? Many people think so. But two related proverbs help to clarify this.

Proverbs 10:15 states: "The valuable things of a rich man are his strong town. The ruin of the lowly ones is their poverty." Then verse 16 adds: "The activity of the righteous one results in life; the produce of the wicked one results in sin." Note how these two complement each other.

Verse 15 testifies that wealth has its advantages, poverty its disadvantages. Riches may help to protect a person from *some* of the uncertainties of life. The poor person, though, may have added problems because of being financially unable to cope with unexpected developments. In this the Bible is realistic.—Ecclesiastes 7:12.

However, verse 15 can also be understood as hinting at a danger involving wealth or poverty. Many a rich man puts his complete trust in his money; he views it as all the protection he needs. (Proverbs 18:11) Yet, riches cannot help him to get a good name with God or ensure his lasting happiness. In fact, riches can make that more difficult. Jesus' illustration of the rich man who built bigger storehouses but was not rich toward God bears this out. (Luke 12:16-21; 18:24, 25) On the other hand, many poor people mistakenly take the

view that their poverty makes their future hopeless.

Notice how verse 16 rounds out the matter. Whether a righteous person has much or little financially, his work can bring him pleasure. He does not let the financial gain from his labor interfere with his good standing before God. Rather, a righteous man's efforts in life bring him, in addition to happiness now, assurance of everlasting life in the future. (Job 42:10-13) The wicked one, though, does not benefit even if he gains much money. Instead of appreciating money's protective value and living in accord with God's will, he uses his riches to promote a life of sin.

Questions From Readers

■ **What is "the seed of God" mentioned at Malachi 2:15?**

This intricate verse reads, in part: "And there was one who did not do it, as he had what was remaining of the spirit. And what was that one seeking? The seed of God." "The seed" evidently refers to the nation of ancient Israel, which at the time the verse was written was in danger of religious contamination.

Malachi prophesied during a period of national moral decay. Some Israelite men were not only taking 'the daughters of a foreign god as brides' but also divorcing their original Jewish wives, the 'wives of their youth,' to take on perhaps younger heathen wives. Yet, not all Israelite men did this "detestable thing." (Malachi 2:11, 13, 14; Deuteronomy 7:3, 4) Evidently referring to individuals who refused to break their marriage covenant with a fellow worshiper of Jehovah, Malachi wrote: "And there was one who *did* not do it, as he had what was remaining of the spirit."

The "spirit" is God's holy spirit, which he had poured out on the nation. The disobedient Israelites, however, were resisting, and hence grieving, that spirit. (Isaiah 63:10; Acts 7:51-53; compare Ephesians 4:30.) Some individual Jews were loyal to God's laws, and by their obedience they had retained what "was remaining of the spirit." These faithful worshipers did not seek their own selfish pleasure. Of such an individual, Malachi wrote: "What was that one seeking? The seed of God." This "seed" was the nation of ancient Israel, which Malachi said was 'created by God.' This 'creation' occurred when Jehovah drew the Israelites into a covenant with him at Mount Sinai, making them his "special property" and "a holy nation." The true "seed" of Abraham that would bless people of all the earth was to come through this nation. —Malachi 2:10; Exodus 19:5, 6; Genesis 22:18.

However, the Israelites had to keep religiously pure by not intermarrying with people of the nations who did not worship Jehovah. The ungodliness of such persons would be corrupting, as can be seen from the situation in Ezra's time. The Israelites then "accepted some of [the surrounding nations'] daughters for themselves and for their sons; and they, the holy seed, [became] mingled with the peoples of the lands." (Ezra 9:2) This same "great badness" occurred during the days of Nehemiah, a contemporary of Malachi. Jewish men loyal to God saw the clear spiritual peril to themselves and to the children born of such a union. There was the danger of being drawn away from Jehovah's worship by a wife who was not devoted to Him. Nehemiah even reported that among those Jews who had intermarried, 'none of their children knew how to speak Jewish.'—Nehemiah 13:23-27.

The disloyal Jews were seeking their own pleasure regardless of the detrimental religious impact on their nation, "the seed of God." No wonder Malachi admonished: "And you people must guard yourselves respecting your spirit, and with the wife of your youth may no one deal treacherously"! (Malachi 2:15) The faithful Jews guarded their spirit, or attitude, so as to stay loyal to their Jewish wives. These men highly valued the religious purity of their "holy nation." They desired that their children read God's Word and grow up to love Jehovah, contributing to the religious strength of the nation.

Dedicated Christians today need to exercise the same diligence over their spirit, or dominant attitude. If married, these individuals need to avoid treacherously divorcing their mates. And a single Christian should heed the counsel of the apostle Paul to marry "only in the Lord," entering wedlock only with another dedicated, baptized witness of Jehovah. —1 Corinthians 7:39.

'Rhythms That Calm the Heart'

Surely, these are most desirable in these hectic times. In this connection, a young mother from Japan wrote regarding the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses:

"When I first went to the Kingdom Hall and heard the songs of praise, I thought, 'What beautiful music, . . . rhythms that calm the heart!' . . . I had been wondering for some time whether there were cassette tapes or records of these songs of praise. If there are any, I would like to buy them. . . . I consider the songs of praise to be exactly right. If we had the cassette tapes, I could listen to them while I do my housework and when playing with my child, and that would be wonderful."