

The Watchtower

November 15, 1987

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



**Can Religion
Satisfy Our Needs?**

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

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Has Religion *Satisfied Our Needs?*



MARIA was a Roman Catholic nun for 21 years. She grew up in a very religious environment. Why, even as a child, she would get up at night to pray for others! Eventually, however, the poverty, suffering, and injustice that persisted despite thousands of years of religious influence made her wonder: 'Has religion really satisfied our needs?'

Most religions advocate high ideals and moral principles. But religion is often viewed as causing problems, adding to our difficulties, rather than satisfying our needs. For instance, consider these comments by observers of the religious scene: "The innermost reason for inhuman savagery is religious." (*National Review*) "The chief motivation for war is no longer greed but religion." (*Toronto Star*) "The Holocaust 'was all done by baptized Christians.'"—*The Tampa Tribune*.

Is it any wonder that people dismiss religion's claims that it is the satisfier of our needs? They have seen its fruitage. For example, "it was Shinto, the native religion of Japan, that had not only given

its wholehearted support to the war machine but had provided its very rationale," said *The Christian Century*. How many religions have done just that—'given wholehearted support to the war machine'! Think of the massacres and reprisals perpetrated by Buddhists and Hindus in Sri Lanka, the murders and atrocities involving Catholics and Protestants in Ireland—why, the list seems endless! "Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs and other sects have been bloodying each other for centuries in India," lamented *U.S. News & World Report*.

Others may not see religion as a force for bad, but they surely do not look upon it as a powerful force for good. The *National Catholic Reporter* spoke of "the traditional church's failure to adequately address human wants and needs." And the journal *Liberty* said that society seems to view the clergyman as a "blesser-sanctifier-benedictor" brought out only on ceremonial occasions. It added: "In the minds of many people he is the *minister of the status quo*." Have you viewed religion

in that light—not likely to do us harm but also unlikely to do us much good?

Religion today is much as it was when Jesus Christ was on the earth. He said that the religious leaders of his day honored God only with their lips. The result of their practices was that they added to

people's burdens instead of satisfying their needs. "They bind up heavy loads and put them upon the shoulders of men," he said. (Matthew 23:4) Today, religion promises much but seems to deliver very little. So is there any reason to believe that religion can satisfy our needs?

Can Religion *Satisfy Our Needs?*



WHAT are we to eat? What are we to drink? What are we to put on? There is an urgency about these questions, especially when it is difficult to get the basic necessities of life. Yet, notice what Jesus Christ said: "Stop being anxious about your souls as to what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your bodies as to what you will wear." (Matthew 6:25) Does that seem strange? After all, if someone lacks food, clothing, and shelter, what he needs is practical help, not what some might view as a religious platitude.

Jesus was not unsympathetic, nor was he trying to dodge the issue. He was well

aware of people's needs. Nevertheless, he also knew of a very real danger. When it comes to satisfying our needs, it is so easy to center our lives around material things and to feel that God is unimportant. Therefore, we need to get our priorities straight.

We will be getting our priorities straight if we follow Jesus' advice: "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and [God's] righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33) If we follow this advice, religion—true religion based on Bible truths—*can* satisfy our needs.

Jesus was not so unrealistic as to suggest, however, that merely becoming one of his disciples and following his religious teachings would immediately solve all our problems; neither did he mean that his disciples should just sit back and wait for God to provide for them miraculously. Why, everyone might become a Christian if that meant instantaneous freedom from all life's difficulties! What Jesus did mean was that his Father, Jehovah God, provides everything necessary to satisfy all our needs. That is why Jesus also said: "Your heavenly Father knows you need all these things."—Matthew 6:32.

Jehovah also satisfies our vitally important spiritual needs. By means of the Holy Scriptures, he has given us inspired guidance to direct our lives in the best possible manner. (Isaiah 48:17) God has established an association of worshipers who give support when required. (Acts 4:34) He also steps in to help his servants by means of his holy spirit, or active force. (Luke 11:13; Galatians 5:22-25) Moreover, God has made provision to restore Paradise to the earth.—Luke 23:43; Revelation 21:1-4.

Satisfying Our Material Needs

Consider now some Bible principles that have helped people to satisfy their material needs. The Christian apostle Paul wrote:

***"Let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit."
(2 Corinthians 7:1)***

Think of all the problems we can escape if we avoid defilement by tobacco, illegal drugs, and other things that pollute the body. And how much better off we are if we do not squander money, time, and thought on immoral literature and entertainment that can defile our spirit!

The Scriptures also say:

***"Do not come to be among heavy drinkers of wine, among those who are gluttonous eaters of flesh. For a drunkard and a glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe one with mere rags."
(Proverbs 23:20, 21)***

Notice the final result of drunkenness and gluttony—poverty and rags. Many today—even very religious people—remain in poverty because they overindulge in alcoholic beverages or are addicted to things that defile the flesh. Avoiding such things so as to conform to Bible standards can do much to help us satisfy our needs for food, clothing, and shelter.

Another principle that has helped Christians to satisfy their needs is seen in the apostle Paul's words:

***"We trust we have an honest conscience, as we wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things."
(Hebrews 13:18)***

Honesty in all their dealings has enabled many Christians to provide well for themselves and their families. It has won them a good reputation, and others are then more likely to do business with them. An honest person may not always have the most in a material way, but he usually has the basic necessities of life and preserves his self-respect.

Closely related to this is the counsel:

***"Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work."
(Ephesians 4:28)***

Applying this principle has assisted many to obtain and hold on to employment because they are trustworthy. Consequently, they are able to provide for themselves and their families. Rather than being infected by the spirit of this world, which

turns a blind eye to many dishonest practices, Christians are honest, and this brings good results.

To illustrate: One of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan wanted to work fewer hours each week so as to have more time for spiritual pursuits. When he made this request, however, his employer dismissed him from his job. At that, the employer's mother asked: "Did you fire the most reliable man?" Things got worse for the Witness when he injured his back doing other work. Soon thereafter, he met his former employer, who was upset because he had just learned that one of his employees had been stealing gold, platinum, and rings from his jewelry company. The employer immediately asked the Witness to return to work, this time on his own conditions. The man wanted an honest worker.

According to the apostle Paul, a Christian should "do hard work" not only to provide for himself but also to "have something to distribute to someone in need." (Ephesians 4:28) In times of need, true Christians are always willing to help others. A certain family in Fiji experienced this when their home was severely damaged by cyclones while they were at a Christian convention. Upon returning home, they found a scene of devastation. But they also found fellow believers who gladly used their resources to provide the family with shelter and assistance to rebuild their home. "It is comforting," said the father, "when you know there are Christians who really care about you."

Jesus Christ felt great sympathy for the needy. On many occasions, he personally assisted the disadvantaged in one way or another. Of course, Jesus knew that as long as this corrupt system of things is allowed to exist, poverty and other social problems will remain. (John 12:8) Therefore, although he did much to help people

materially, the real thrust of his ministry was to satisfy their spiritual needs.

When a crowd whose hunger had been satisfied followed Jesus to Capernaum, he made this significant comment: "You are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate from the loaves and were satisfied. Work, not for the food that perishes, but for the food that remains for life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you." (John 6:26, 27) What did Jesus mean?

Jesus meant that there was a danger that people would associate with him and his disciples solely for material advantage. But he knew that this would not bring lasting benefits. So he said: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need, since the kingdom of the heavens belongs to them. Happy are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness, since they will be filled."—Matthew 5:3, 6.

Besides a hunger for material food, there is a hunger for truth and spiritual fulfillment. True happiness results when this spiritual hunger is satisfied. Christendom has produced a materialistically minded society. Eastern religions have left people in spiritual darkness. But true worship—the religion of Jesus Christ—has satisfied people's spiritual needs. It can do the same for you. These provisions can be yours if you will avail yourself of them.

For example, from a Christian engaged in street witnessing, one young man in Mauritius accepted copies of *The Watchtower* and its companion journal *Awake!* The following week, he came back for more magazines. He explained that he had been contemplating suicide because of his financial problems, but the magazines had helped him to realize that there is a God who cares for us. The young man's spiritual hunger was beginning to be satisfied.



True religion will satisfy all our needs

Will we ever see a time when all our needs are fully satisfied? The Bible promises that we will. True, people are weary of hearing promise after promise of better things to come. They have been disappointed so often. But we can have confidence in the promises of the Bible. Its Author, Jehovah God, fulfills every promise he makes. Joshua expressed this well when he reminded his fellow Israelites: "You well know with all your hearts and with all your souls that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed."—Joshua 23:14.

The real solution to all our problems lies in the fulfillment of God's marvelous promises to cleanse the whole earth. (Revelation 11:18) All our needs will be satisfied when his Kingdom restores Paradise on the earth,

fulfilling his original purpose for mankind. (Matthew 6:9, 10) Then we will not hear 'the sound of weeping or a plaintive cry' from people whose needs cannot be satisfied. Through honest work and by applying godly principles, they will enjoy a full, satisfying life.—Isaiah 65:17-25.

Maria, the former Catholic nun mentioned earlier, gained this confidence. She realized that she had lived in spiritual darkness for years, plagued by fears about the future and unable to see real meaning in life. But learning Bible truth changed all of that. "I came from the dark into an ever-brighter shining light," she said. (Psalm 43:3; Proverbs 4:18) This not only helped her to meet her immediate material needs but also satisfied her spiritual hunger and thirst. Yes, religion—true religion—can satisfy our needs.

Compassion for the Afflicted

AFTER denouncing the Pharisees for their self-serving traditions, Jesus leaves with his disciples. Not long before, you may recall, his attempt to get away with them to rest up a bit was interrupted when crowds found them. Now, with his disciples, he departs for the regions of Tyre and Sidon, many miles to the north. This apparently is the only trip Jesus makes with his disciples beyond Israel's borders.

After finding a house to stay in, Jesus lets it be known that he does not want anyone to learn of their whereabouts. Yet, even in this non-Israelite territory, he cannot escape notice. A Greek woman, born here in Phoenicia of Syria, finds him and begins begging: "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David. My daughter is badly demonized." Jesus, however, does not say a word in reply.

Eventually, his disciples tell Jesus: "Send her away; because she keeps crying out after us."

Explaining his reason for ignoring her, Jesus says: "I was not sent forth to any but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

However, the woman does not give up. She approaches Jesus, prostrates herself before him, and pleads, "Lord, help me!"



How Jesus' heart must be moved by the woman's earnest appeal! Yet, he again points to his first responsibility, to minister to God's people of Israel. At the same time, apparently to test her faith, he draws on the Jews' prejudiced view of those of other nationalities, arguing: "It is not right to take the bread of the children and throw it to little dogs."

By his compassionate tone of voice and facial expression, Jesus surely reveals his own tender feelings toward non-Jews. He even softens the prejudiced comparison of Gentiles to dogs by referring to them as "little dogs," or puppies. Rather than taking offense, the

woman picks up on Jesus' reference to Jewish prejudices and makes the humble observation: "Yes, Lord; but really the little dogs do eat of the crumbs falling from the table of their masters."

"O woman, great is your faith," Jesus replies. "Let it happen to you as you wish." And it does! When she returns to her home, she finds her daughter on the bed, completely healed.

From the coastal region of Sidon, Jesus and his disciples head across country toward the headwaters of the Jordan River. They apparently ford the Jordan somewhere above the Sea of Galilee and enter the region of the Decapolis, east of the sea. There they climb a mountain, but the crowds find them and bring to Jesus their lame, crippled, blind, and dumb, and many that are otherwise sick and deformed. They fairly throw them at Jesus' feet,

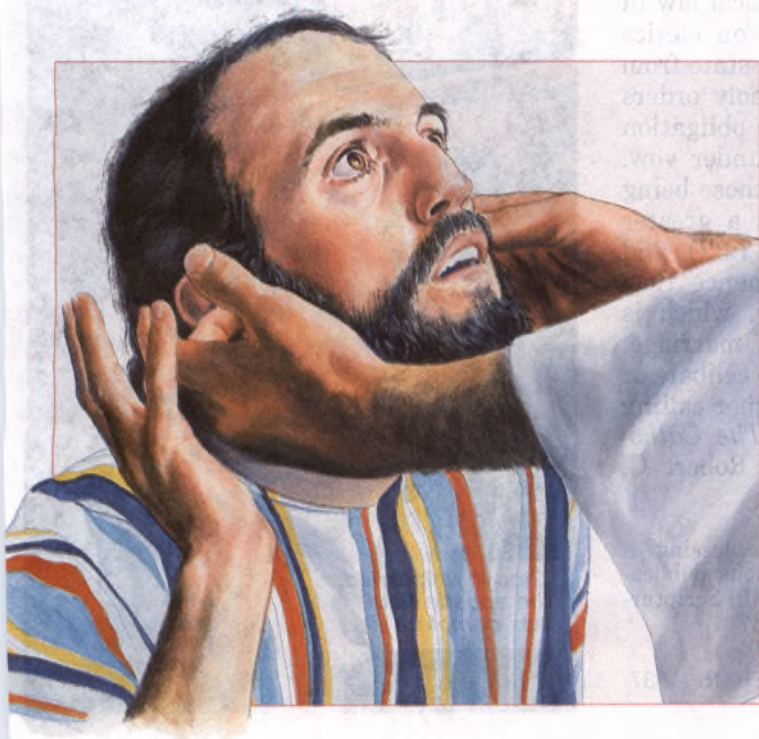
and he cures them. The people are amazed as they see the dumb speaking, the lame walking, and the blind seeing, and they praise the God of Israel.

One man who is deaf and hardly able to talk is given Jesus' special attention. The deaf are often easily embarrassed, especially in a crowd. Jesus may note this man's particular nervousness. So Jesus compassionately takes him away from the crowd privately. When alone, Jesus indicates what he is going to do for him. He puts his fingers into the man's ears and, after spitting, touches his tongue. Then, looking toward heaven, Jesus sighs deeply and says: "Be opened." At that, the man's hearing powers are restored, and he is able to speak normally.

When Jesus has performed these many cures, the crowds respond with appreciation: "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the speechless speak."

**Matthew 15:21-31;
Mark 7:24-37.**

- ☐ Why does Jesus not immediately heal the Greek woman's child?
- ☐ Afterward, where does Jesus take his disciples?
- ☐ How does Jesus compassionately treat the deaf man who can hardly speak?



Unmarried but Complete for God's Service

"He also that gives his virginity in marriage does well, but he that does not give it in marriage will do better."—1 CORINTHIANS 7:38.

JEHOVAH never expected the first man to remain single. Rather, God created a marriage mate for Adam, the progenitor of the human race. (Genesis 2:20-24; Acts 17:26) And what a blessing marriage proved to be! It supplied companionship, made mutual assistance possible, was an honorable arrangement for producing offspring, and contributed greatly to human happiness. Why, even the poor and down-trodden can enjoy what no amount of money can buy—marital love!—Song of Solomon 8:6, 7.

² Some, however, view marriage in a different way. Says one religious publication: "Celibacy is the ecclesiastical law in the Western Church imposed on clerics forbidding those in the married state from being ordained and those in holy orders from marrying. It includes the obligation of observing perfect chastity under vow. The reasons for this are: that those being ordained may serve God with a greater singleness of purpose (1 Cor. 7:32), and that so living a life of continence they observe the state of virginity, which is holier and higher than that of marriage. In the NT [New Testament] the celibate or virginal state is raised to a higher calling than that of the married."—*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, compiled by Robert C. Broderick.

1. How has marriage proved to be a blessing?
- 2, 3. (a) What view did one religious publication take of celibacy and marriage? (b) Scripturally, how should marriage be viewed?

³ Is it really possible that enforced celibacy is 'holier and higher than marriage'? Not according to the "New Testament," which says in the Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*: "The Spirit has explicitly said that during the last times there will be some who will desert the faith and choose to listen to deceitful spirits and doctrines that come from the devils; and the cause of this is the lies told by hypocrites whose consciences are branded as though with a red-hot iron: they will say marriage is forbidden, and lay down rules about ab-



Though unmarried, the apostle Paul was complete

staining from foods which God created to be accepted with thanksgiving by all who believe and who know the truth." (1 Timothy 4:1-3) Actually, marriage is a gift from God, and it is good.—Ruth 1:9.

⁴ Although marriage is a gift from God, the apostle Paul wrote: "He also that gives his virginity in marriage does well, but he that does not give it in marriage will do better." (1 Corinthians 7:38) Why did Paul indicate that it would be better to remain unmarried? Should a single person feel incomplete? And can singleness be rewarding?

The Centerpiece of Christian Life

⁵ Serving Jehovah should be the very centerpiece of our Christian life, whether we are single or married. Sacred service joyfully rendered to God gives evidence of our attachment to him as the Universal Sovereign. Wholehearted obedience and zealous participation in the Christian ministry are ways to demonstrate that attachment. (1 John 5:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 9:16) Both the ministry and other obedient actions in harmony with the divine will can be accomplished if a person is unmarried.

⁶ Evangelizers are now carrying out the Kingdom-preaching work to Jehovah's praise. And whether we are married or single, a zealous ministry affords us opportunity to focus at least some of our personal resources and endowments on God's service. But we must develop and control our circumstances so that the ministry is never relegated to a place that is less than central to our life. We must 'seek the Kingdom first.' (Matthew 6:33) There

is joy in concentrating on divine interests rather than merely on personal interests.

Complete for the Ministry

⁷ Christians can be complete for the ministry whether they are single or married. So the unmarried state is a foundation not necessarily requiring a change. (Compare 1 Corinthians 7:24, 27.) God's Word does not take the view of some tribes that a man does not reach his full estate unless he is married. Jesus Christ died unmarried, and a spiritual bride in heaven is the only wife Jehovah has authorized Jesus to have. (Revelation 21:2, 9) Yet, God's Son, though unmarried as a human, was the foremost example of a person complete for the ministry.

⁸ Actually, being unmarried allows greater personal freedom and time for the ministry. Recommending singleness, Paul said: "I want you to be free from anxiety. The unmarried man is anxious for the things of the Lord, how he may gain the Lord's approval. . . . Further, the unmarried woman, and the virgin, is anxious for the things of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:32-34) This applies to single Christians and to those once married but whose circumstances have changed, returning them to an unmarried state.—Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:2, 3.

⁹ Attaining physical, mental, and spiritual maturity brings completeness for God's service. Jesus Christ needed no marriage mate to be complete for the role of God's Chief Minister and the one through whom the ransom would be provided. (Matthew 20:28) Being unmarried,

7. What example is there to show that an unmarried Christian can be complete for the ministry?

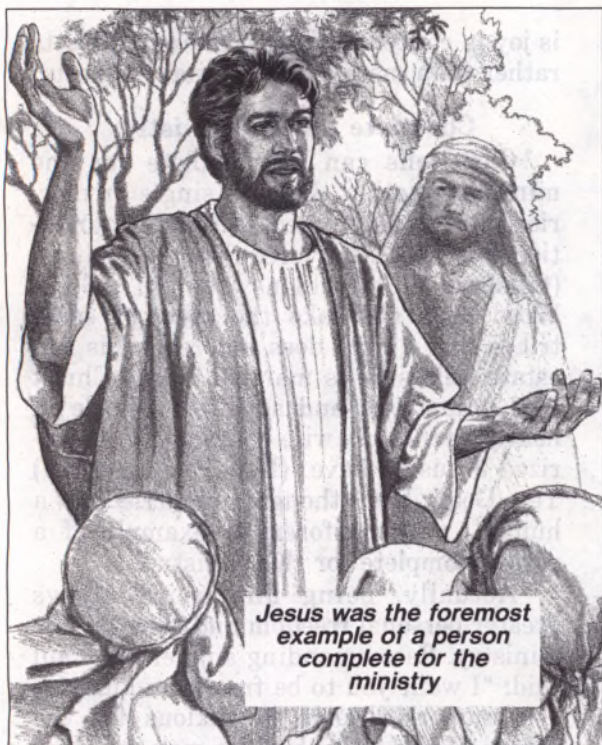
8. As Paul shows, being unmarried allows for what?

9. How does Jesus' example show that being unmarried does not make a person incomplete for the Christian ministry?

4. In view of 1 Corinthians 7:38, what questions arise?

5. What should be the centerpiece of Christian life?

6. Whether we are married or single, a zealous ministry enables us to do what?



Jesus was the foremost example of a person complete for the ministry

Jesus was free to focus his full powers on his ministry. His unmarried state differed sharply from the Jewish norm, under which marriage and children were emphasized. Nevertheless, Jesus was fully capable of finishing his God-given work. (Luke 3:23; John 17:3, 4) Hence, being unmarried does not make a person incomplete for the Christian ministry.

Married Persons "Divided"

¹⁰ In contrast with single people, married Christians should pursue the ministry with recognition of their "one flesh" bond. (Matthew 19:5, 6) Because of that bond and its various responsibilities, Paul said that married individuals are "divided." He wrote: "I want you to be

10. Because of the "one flesh" bond, what did Paul say about those married as compared with those unmarried?

free from anxiety. The unmarried man is anxious for the things of the Lord, how he may gain the Lord's approval. But the married man is anxious for the things of the world, how he may gain the approval of his wife, and he is divided. Further, the unmarried woman, and the virgin, is anxious for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in her body and in her spirit. However, the married woman is anxious for the things of the world, how she may gain the approval of her husband. But this I am saying for your personal advantage, not that I may cast a noose upon you, but to move you to that which is becoming and that which means constant attendance upon the Lord without distraction."—1 Corinthians 7:32-35.

¹¹ Clearly, for a more undistracted life, Paul recommended singleness. He himself may have been a widower who did not choose to remarry. (1 Corinthians 9:5) In any case, he knew that there are anxieties associated with married life in this world. He was showing the comparative freedom that unmarried Christians can enjoy and how the interests of married believers necessarily are divided between fleshly and spiritual matters. The married person does not exercise full authority over his body, for his mate is one flesh with him and therefore has a claim upon his body. (1 Corinthians 7:3-5) In view of this, Paul correctly said that the unmarried Christian is able to be holy, that is, fully set apart and reserved for Jehovah God's direct use, both in body and in spirit.

11. What was Paul showing at 1 Corinthians 7:32-35?

¹² The single Christian's spirit, or mental inclination, moves him to the active, undistracted service of God's Kingdom. Having no spouse claiming partial control of his body, he can follow the spirit, or inclination, of his mind and heart. He can specialize on Jehovah's service with concentration of body and mind. So the unmarried man or woman can best look to pleasing only the Lord with the greatest personal liberty. We cannot rightly take exception to what Paul said, for Jehovah saw fit to have it recorded for our instruction.

A Married Person Incomplete?

¹³ With the mistaken idea that they could do more in God's service, some married Christians might relegate their marriage to a rather insignificant place in life. For instance, the wife might start acting independently of her husband in consequential ways. The husband might become preoccupied with congregational activities. Under such circumstances, they might conclude that they are doing quite well in Jehovah's service. Actually, however, they might be taking a course that slights the "one flesh" bond. If so, that would not please Jehovah.

¹⁴ In fact, slighting the "one flesh" bond would make a married person incomplete for the Christian ministry. Marriage does not add to ministerial completeness but reduces personal attention that can be given to the ministry. (Compare Luke 14: 16, 17, 20.) Yet, if married people are to please God and be complete as his ministers, they must live up to their marital obligations.

12. Having no spouse, what can an unmarried person do?

13, 14. What mistaken course slights the "one flesh" bond and would make a married person incomplete for the Christian ministry?

Unmarried for the Kingdom's Sake

¹⁵ While married servants of Jehovah should live up to their marital obligations, single Christians should cultivate contentment in their unmarried completeness. As Paul said: "Now I say to the unmarried persons and the widows, it is well for them that they remain even as I am [unmarried]. Are you bound to a wife? Stop seeking a release. Are you loosed from a wife? Stop seeking a wife." (1 Corinthians 7: 8, 27) With Jehovah's help, as a single person, cultivate the settled state that God makes possible. Any change of status should not be a foregone conclusion, just a matter of custom or a reaction to peer pressure. Rather, it should arise from Scriptural necessity, for Paul said: "If anyone thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virginity, if that is past the bloom of youth, and this is the way it should take place, let him do what he wants; he does not sin. Let them marry. But if anyone stands settled in his heart, having no necessity, but has authority over his own will and has made this decision in his own heart, to keep his own virginity, he will do well."—1 Corinthians 7:36, 37.

¹⁶ Thus Paul showed that it would not be wrong to marry if a person was behaving in some unseemly way toward his virginity, although the apostle doubtless was not alluding to gross sin. As he said earlier, "It is better to marry than to be inflamed with passion." (1 Corinthians 7:9) Of course, he was referring to marriage under those circumstances if a person was

15. (a) Unmarried Christians should cultivate what quality? (b) What basic point about marriage and singleness did Paul make at 1 Corinthians 7:36, 37?

16. (a) What does it mean to be "past the bloom of youth"? (b) Of what should the Christian remaining unmarried be convinced?

"past the bloom of youth," beyond the time when sexual interest first became strong. If a mature individual had "authority over his own will" and had firmly decided in his heart to make room for singleness, he would do well. Successful singleness does not mean suppressing a nagging and nearly overpowering desire for marriage and family life. Rather, the Christian choosing to remain unmarried should be fully convinced at heart that maintaining singleness is right in his or her case and should be willing to put forth whatever effort is required to maintain that state in chastity. The Christian doing so would have fewer distractions and greater freedom to serve the Lord.

¹⁷ Unmarried Christians will be helped to maintain the single state if they cultivate the mind of Jesus Christ. Though he was unmarried in a culture that stressed marriage, he concentrated his time and gifts on his unrepeatable ministry. Like Jesus, an unmarried Christian can rejoice in the gift of singleness that God grants to those who make room for it. Concerning this, Jesus said: "Not all men make room for the saying, but only those who have the gift. For there are eunuchs that were born such from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs that were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs that have made themselves eunuchs on account of the kingdom of the heavens. Let him that can make room for it make room for it."—Matthew 19:11, 12.

¹⁸ Jesus did not say that a single person is superior to a married person. He did not urge singleness simply to have a carefree life, and he surely did not recommend it so that the unmarried person could spread his or her attentions to a number of the

17. According to Jesus, why do some remain unmarried?

18. What keeps "eunuchs" for the Kingdom's sake from getting married?

opposite sex. No, but those who make themselves "eunuchs" for the Kingdom's sake are morally upright persons who make room for this in their hearts. What keeps them from getting married? Not some physical disability but an overpowering desire to apply themselves as fully as possible to God's service. This service is especially important now since the Kingdom was established in heaven in 1914 and "this good news of the kingdom" must be preached earth wide for a witness before the rapidly approaching end of this doomed system of things.—Matthew 24:14.

Commend Unmarried Christians

¹⁹ All Christians should commend and encourage those who remain unmarried for the Kingdom's sake. After all, being single "means constant attendance upon the Lord without distraction." (1 Corinthians 7:35) Parents will do well to teach their children what the Bible says about the unmarried state and its advantages for the service of Jehovah. All of us can encourage unmarried fellow believers and should never weaken

19. As regards those remaining single for the Kingdom's sake, what should all Christians do?

What Are Your Answers?

- ☐ What should be the centerpiece of Christian life?
- ☐ Why can unmarried servants of Jehovah be complete for the Christian ministry?
- ☐ In what way could a married person be incomplete?
- ☐ What does it mean to be a "eunuch" for the Kingdom's sake?
- ☐ Why should we encourage unmarried Christians?



Do you commend those who remain unmarried for the Kingdom's sake?

Singleness *A Rewarding Way of Life*

JEHOVAH deserves the whole-souled worship of all those dedicated to him. Whether married or single, we should love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. (Mark 12:30) True, the single Christian has fewer distractions than do those united in wedlock. But can the unmarried servant of Jehovah be truly happy?

1. Whether we are single or married, what do we owe Jehovah?

their resolve to remain unmarried for the sake of the Kingdom.

²⁰ Unmarried Christians can rejoice as complete ministers of God. In these climactic times, they are delighted to share in the urgent work of Kingdom preaching. Therefore, if you are single, rejoice in being used by Jehovah as a complete unmarried Christian minister. 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, while you shine as an illuminator in the world, keeping a tight grip on the word of life.' (Philippians 2:12-16) Concentrate on Kingdom interests as you remain united with the international brotherhood of Jehovah's Witnesses and fulfill the Christian ministry. Doing so as a single person is a rewarding way of life, as we shall see.

20. If you are an unmarried Christian, what should you do?

"She is free to be married to whom she wants, only in the Lord. But she is happier if she remains as she is."
—1 CORINTHIANS 7:39, 40.

² The apostle Paul answers yes. Concerning those once married but whose circumstances had changed, he wrote: "A wife is bound during all the time her husband is alive. But if her husband should fall asleep in death, she is free to be married to whom she wants, only in the Lord. But she is happier if she remains as

2, 3. (a) In essence, what did Paul say at 1 Corinthians 7:39, 40? (b) What questions merit consideration?

she is, according to my opinion. I certainly think I also have God's spirit."—1 Corinthians 7:39, 40.

³ Since Paul indicates that unmarried people can be happy, who might reasonably consider remaining single, at least for some time? What contributes to the happiness of unmarried Christians? Indeed, how can singleness be a rewarding way of life?

Rewarding Years of Singleness

⁴ Wise King Solomon urged: "Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood, before the calamitous days [of old age] proceed to come, or the years have arrived when you will say: 'I have no delight in them.'" (Ecclesiastes 12:1) The years of young manhood and womanhood generally are a time of at least comparative vitality and good health. How appropriate, then, that these assets be used in Jehovah's service without distraction! Moreover, these earlier years are a time to gain experience in life, to develop stability. But this is also a period when young people of the world experience infatuation. For instance, consider the results of a survey involving 1,079 persons between the ages of 18 and 24. They had had an average of seven "romantic experiences" each and invariably said that their current experience was true love, not infatuation.

⁵ Statistics for separation, divorce, and otherwise broken families spell out the inadvisability of early marriage. Rather than rushing into dating, courtship, and wedlock, young Christians are wise to think positively about how they can use at least their earlier years in undistracted service to Jehovah. In evaluating your cir-

cumstances as a young person, you may well ask yourself such questions as these: Am I now emotionally mature and ready to think seriously of wedlock? Do I have enough experience in life to be a good marriage mate? Could I properly shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and possibly of a family with children? In view of my dedication to Jehovah, should I not give him the energy and strength of youth without the distractions related to marriage?

Rewards of Chaste Singleness

⁶ Unmarried Christians enjoy freedom from distraction and can find "plenty to do in the work of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:32-34; 15:58) Instead of focusing attention on one individual of the opposite sex, the single person has more opportunities to widen out in Christian love for many in the congregation, including the elderly and others who are in need of loving assistance. (Psalm 41:1) Generally, single persons have more time for study and meditation on God's Word. (Proverbs 15:28) They have a greater opportunity to cultivate a close relationship with Jehovah, learning to rely heavily on him and seek his direction. (Psalm 37:5; Philippians 4:6, 7; James 4:8) An unmarried man who has served Jehovah for years as a missionary in Africa said:

⁷ "Life in the African villages has been simple over these years, with not too many distractions of modern civilization. Without these distractions, I have had ample opportunity to study and meditate on God's Word. This has kept me strong. Yes, missionary life has been a real blessing and protection against materialism. During the pleasant tropical evenings

6, 7. (a) What are some advantages generally enjoyed by unmarried Christians? (b) In this regard, what did an unmarried missionary in Africa say?

4. What is true of the years of young manhood and womanhood?

5. Regarding marriage, what personal questions is it appropriate for a young person to consider?

there has been ample time to meditate and reflect on Jehovah's creation and draw near to him. My greatest happiness comes each evening when my mind is still awake, and while alone I can spend some time under the starry heavens walking and talking with Jehovah. This has drawn me closer to Jehovah."

⁸ Noteworthy, too, is this comment of a single sister with many years of service at the Watch Tower Society's headquarters: "I have chosen to lead a single life in my service to Jehovah. Do I ever get lonely? Not at all. Really, my moments alone are among some of the most precious. I can commune with Jehovah in prayer. I can enjoy meditation and personal study without distraction. . . . Singleness has contributed not a little to my joy."

⁹ A single person can also accept privileges of service that may not be open to married persons having family responsibilities. For instance, there may be opportunities to engage in the full-time ministry as a pioneer in an area where the need for Kingdom proclaimers is great. Or a single young man may be privileged to

8. Regarding singleness, what was said by an unmarried sister with many years of service at the Society's headquarters?

9. What are some privileges of service that a single Christian may be able to enjoy?

In Our Next Issue

■ Faith Healing—Is it From God?

■ Maintain Your Fear of Jehovah

■ The Value of Singing
in True Worship

serve as a member of the Bethel family at the Watch Tower Society's headquarters or a branch office. A young unmarried woman may be able to join a somewhat older single sister in pioneer service in their home congregation or another having territory that needs to be covered. Why not discuss such possibilities with the circuit overseer? As an unmarried Christian, make yourself available for increased service to Jehovah's praise, and he will bless you abundantly.—Malachi 3:10.

Examples From the Past

¹⁰ The prime example of an unmarried servant of Jehovah was Jesus Christ. He was totally absorbed in doing God's will. "My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work," said Jesus. (John 4:34) How busy he was—preaching, healing the sick, and so forth! (Matthew 14:14) Jesus had genuine interest in people and was comfortable in the presence of men, women, and children. Indeed, he traveled about in his ministry, with others accompanying him on certain occasions. (Luke 8:1-3) But how difficult that activity would have been if he had been accompanied by a wife and small children! Unquestionably, singleness was an advantage in Jesus' case. Today, a single Christian may enjoy similar advantages, especially if called upon to declare the Kingdom message in remote or dangerous areas.

¹¹ But others also found singleness practical and rewarding. Jephthah's daughter voluntarily fulfilled her father's vow by remaining single in a society that placed great stress on marriage and children. She found joy in her service to Jehovah, and it

10. Who provided the prime example of an unmarried servant of Jehovah, and why do you think that his singleness was advantageous?

11, 12. What fine examples are cited for single women serving Jehovah today?

is noteworthy that others regularly encouraged her. Why, "from year to year the daughters of Israel would go to give commendation to the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite, four days in the year"! (Judges 11:34-40) Similarly, married Christians and others should commend and encourage single women valiantly serving Jehovah today.

¹² Philip's four virgin daughters "prophesied." (Acts 21:8, 9) These unmarried women must have drawn much satisfaction from their active service to Jehovah's praise. Comparably, many young single women today have the rewarding privilege of serving as pioneers, or full-time Kingdom proclaimers. Surely, they deserve commendation as part of the 'large army of women declaring the good news.' —Psalm 68:11.

¹³ The apostle Paul found singleness to be advantageous. He traveled thousands

13. How does Paul's case illustrate that singleness can be a rewarding way of life?

of miles in his ministry and faced great hardships, many dangers, sleepless nights, gnawing hunger. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27) Undoubtedly, all of this would have been much more difficult and distressing if Paul had been married. Moreover, it is not at all likely that he would ever have had his privileges as "an apostle to the nations" if he had been raising a family. (Romans 11:13) Despite the trials he faced, Paul had firsthand evidence that singleness can be a rewarding way of life.

Modern-Day Examples

¹⁴ Like Paul and other unmarried early Christians, a number of God's people who shared in colporteur work (from 1881 onward) were single persons without dependent families. They willingly went into unfamiliar cities, towns, and rural areas, seeking those with good hearts and plac-

14. What experiences were enjoyed by colporteurs, most of whom were unmarried?



Jephthah's daughter, the apostle Paul, and other servants of Jehovah found singleness to be a rewarding way of life. Can you?



ing Bible literature with them. Travel might be by train, bicycle, horse-drawn buggy, or automobile. Mostly, they happily walked from house to house. (Acts 20: 20, 21) "Sometimes they would trade [Bible literature] for farm produce, chickens, soap and what-not, which they would use or sell to others," recalled one witness of Jehovah, adding: "At times, in a sparsely settled area, they stayed with farmers and ranchers overnight, and at times even slept in haystacks . . . These faithful ones [most of whom were unmarried] kept on for years and years until age overtook them." Surely, one of them spoke for those old-time colporteurs in general when she wrote: "We were young and happy in the service, delighted to expend our strength in serving Jah."

¹⁵ Many pioneers, or full-time Kingdom proclaimers, of later times were also unmarried. They often witnessed in isolated areas, helped to start new congregations, and enjoyed other blessings in Jehovah's service. For some of them, an exciting door leading to greater activity swung open when the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead began to function in 1943 while World War II was still raging. (1 Corinthians 16:9) Yes, many of those unmarried pioneers received missionary training at Gilead School and were soon spreading the Kingdom message in new territories. Unencumbered by marital responsibilities, they made themselves available for Jehovah's service, and some of those early graduates are still single and active in the missionary field or some other avenue of full-time service.

¹⁶ Many unmarried Christians have

15. For many unmarried pioneers, what door leading to greater activity swung open some 45 years ago?

16. What evidence is there that unmarried members of the Bethel family have found singleness to be a rewarding way of life?

Aids in Maintaining Chaste Singleness

- ♦ Pray regularly for God's spirit and his help in displaying its fruitage
- ♦ Ponder over and always apply the counsel of God's Word
- ♦ Avoid pornography and immoral entertainment
- ♦ Guard your associations
- ♦ Shun unclean speech and obscene jesting

served for years as members of the Bethel family at the Watch Tower Society's headquarters or at its branches elsewhere in the world. Have they found singleness to be a rewarding way of life? Yes, indeed. For instance, a single brother who had served at Brooklyn Bethel for many years remarked: "The joy of seeing millions of magazines and other publications bearing the message of God's Word spreading to the ends of the earth has been a marvelous reward in itself." After some 45 years of Bethel service, another unmarried brother said: "Every day I ask our dear heavenly Father in prayer for help and wisdom to keep myself spiritually as well as physically healthy and strong so that I can keep on doing his holy will. . . . I have indeed enjoyed a happy, rewarding and blessed way of life."

Maintaining Chaste Singleness

¹⁷ That a life of singleness can be rewarding is evident from Biblical and modern-day examples. Of course, during whatever period of your life is spent in the

17. What are two aids in maintaining chaste singleness?

single state, you need to 'stand settled in your heart.' (1 Corinthians 7:37) But what can help you to maintain chastity while unmarried? The greatest Source of help is Jehovah, the "Hearer of prayer." (Psalm 65:2) So make it a habit to petition him often. "Persevere in prayer," asking for God's spirit and his help in displaying its fruitage, which includes peace and self-control. (Romans 12:12; Luke 11:13; Galatians 5:22, 23) Then, too, with a prayerful attitude, regularly ponder over and always apply the counsel of God's Word.

¹⁸ Another aid in maintaining chaste singleness is avoiding anything that arouses sexual passion. Obviously, this includes pornography and immoral entertainment. Paul said: "Be babes as to badness; yet become full-grown in powers of understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:20) Do not seek knowledge or experience regarding evil, but with God's help wisely remain inexperienced and innocent as a baby in this regard. At the same time, remember that sexual immorality and wrongdoing are improper in Jehovah's sight.

¹⁹ You will also be helped to remain chaste as an unmarried person by guarding your associations. (1 Corinthians 15:33) Avoid associating with those who make sex and marriage big features in their lives and conversations. By all means shun obscene jesting! Paul counseled: "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, things which are not becoming, but rather the giving of thanks."—Ephesians 5:3, 4.

18. How does 1 Corinthians 14:20 relate to one's remaining chaste as an unmarried person?

19. What scriptures point to other ways to remain chaste as a single person?

A Rewarding Future

²⁰ Putting your years as an unmarried Christian to the best possible use in Jehovah's service will bring present satisfaction and peace of mind. Doing so will also contribute to your spiritual maturity and stability. If you remain single for the Kingdom's sake until the end of this wicked system of things, Jehovah will not forget your self-sacrificing efforts in his sacred service.

²¹ If you diligently pursue Kingdom interests as an unmarried man or woman, you will enjoy many blessings. (Proverbs 10:22) Then if you should get married later in life, you will enter wedlock with greater experience and a rich spiritual background. Moreover, by following the counsel of the Scriptures, you will choose a dedicated integrity-keeping mate who will help you to serve God faithfully. In the meantime, you can find singleness to be a rewarding way of life in the service of our loving God, Jehovah.

20. Putting one's years of singleness to the best use in Jehovah's service will result in what?

21. If you should get married after a period of chaste and rewarding singleness, with what are you likely to enter wedlock?

How Would You Respond?

- ☐ Among Jehovah's servants, what are some rewards of chaste singleness?
- ☐ What Scriptural examples are there to show that singleness can be rewarding?
- ☐ In modern times, what examples of rewarding singleness do we have?
- ☐ What can help a Christian to remain chaste while unmarried?

Anabaptists and “the Pattern of Healthful Words”

THE apostle Paul warned that after his death, apostate Christians, like “oppressive wolves,” would enter in among the flock of God and would seek to “draw away the disciples after themselves.” How would they do this? By bringing in traditions and false teachings to distort the truth of the Scriptures.—Acts 20:29, 30; 1 Timothy 4:1.

For this reason, Paul exhorted the young man Timothy: “Keep holding the pattern of healthful words that you heard from me with the faith and love that are in connection with Christ Jesus. This fine trust guard through the holy spirit which is dwelling in us.” What was this “pattern of healthful words”?—2 Timothy 1:13, 14.

“The Pattern” Established

All the books of the Christian Greek Scriptures were completed in the first century of our Common Era. Although they were penned by different writers, God’s holy spirit, or active force, ensured that they were harmonious not just within themselves but also with the earlier Hebrew Scriptures. In this way, a “pattern” of sound Scriptural teaching was formed and had to be adhered to by Christians, even as Jesus Christ had become “a model” for them to follow.—1 Peter 2:21; John 16:12, 13.

During the spiritually dark centuries following the death of the apostles, what happened to “the pattern of healthful words”? Many sincere people tried to rediscover it, although a full restoration would have to wait until “the time of the

end.” (Daniel 12:4) Sometimes it was a lone voice, and at other times it was a small group of people who were searching for “the pattern.”

The Waldenses appear to have been such a minority.* They lived in France, Italy, and other areas of Europe during the 12th to the 14th centuries. From this movement the Anabaptists later emerged. Who were they, and what did they believe?

Basic Teachings

The Anabaptists first became prominent about the year 1525, in Zurich, Switzerland. From that city their beliefs spread rapidly to many parts of Europe. The early 16th-century Reformation had made some changes, but in the eyes of the Anabaptists, it had not gone far enough.

In their desire to get back to the Christian teachings of the first century, they rejected more of the Roman Catholic dogma than did Martin Luther and other reformers. For example, the Anabaptists maintained that there could only be an adult dedication to Christ. On account of their practice of adult baptism, even for a person who had been baptized as an infant, they were given the name “Anabaptists,” which means “rebaptizers.”—Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:44-48.

“To the Anabaptists the real Church was an association of believing people,” writes Dr. R. J. Smithson in his book *The Anabaptists—Their Contribution to Our Protestant Heritage*. As such, they

* See *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1981, pages 12-15.

considered themselves to be a society of believers within the community at large and at the outset did not have a specially trained, or paid, ministry. Like the disciples of Jesus, they were itinerant preachers who visited towns and villages, talking to people in marketplaces, workshops, and homes.—Matthew 9:35; 10:5-7, 11-13; Luke 10:1-3.

Each individual Anabaptist was considered personally accountable to God, enjoying freedom of will and showing his faith by his works, yet recognizing that salvation did not come from works alone. If somebody transgressed the faith, he could be expelled from the congregation. Reinstatement followed only upon evidence of proper repentance.—1 Corinthians 5: 11-13; compare 2 Corinthians 12:21.

Their View of the World

The Anabaptists realized that they could not reform the world. Although the Church had become allied with the State since the time of Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth century C.E., to them this did not mean that the State had become Christian. From what Jesus had said, they knew that a Christian had to be “no part of the world,” even if this resulted in persecution.—John 17:15, 16; 18:36.

Where there was no conflict between the Christian conscience and secular interests, the Anabaptists acknowledged that the State should rightly be respected and obeyed. But an Anabaptist would not get involved in politics, hold a civil office, be a magistrate, or swear oaths. Rejecting all forms of violence and force, he would also take no part in warfare or military service.—Mark 12:17; Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-7; 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4.

The Anabaptists maintained a high moral standard in a sober simplicity of life, basically free from materialistic goods and desires. Because of their love for one

another, they often established settlements, although most of them rejected communal living as a way of life. On the basis that everything belongs to God, however, they were always ready to make use of their material possessions for the good of the poor.—Acts 2:42-45.

Through a close study of the Bible, especially of the Christian Greek Scriptures, some Anabaptists refused to accept the Trinity doctrine of three persons in one God, as some of their writings testify. Their way of worship was usually quite simple, with the Lord's Supper holding a special place. Rejecting the traditional Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinistic views, they saw this act of commemoration as a memorial of Jesus' death. “To them,” writes R. J. Smithson, “it was the most solemn act in which a Christian can participate, involving the renewal of the believer's covenant to devote his life unreservedly to Christ's service.”

Persecution—And After

The Anabaptists were misunderstood, as were the early Christians. Like them, they were viewed as upsetting the established order of society, ‘overturning the inhabited earth.’ (Acts 17:6) In Zurich, Switzerland, the authorities, linked with reformer Huldrych Zwingli, especially took issue with the Anabaptists over their refusal to baptize infants. In 1527 they cruelly drowned Felix Manz, one of the Anabaptist leaders, and so bitterly persecuted the Swiss Anabaptists that they were almost wiped out.

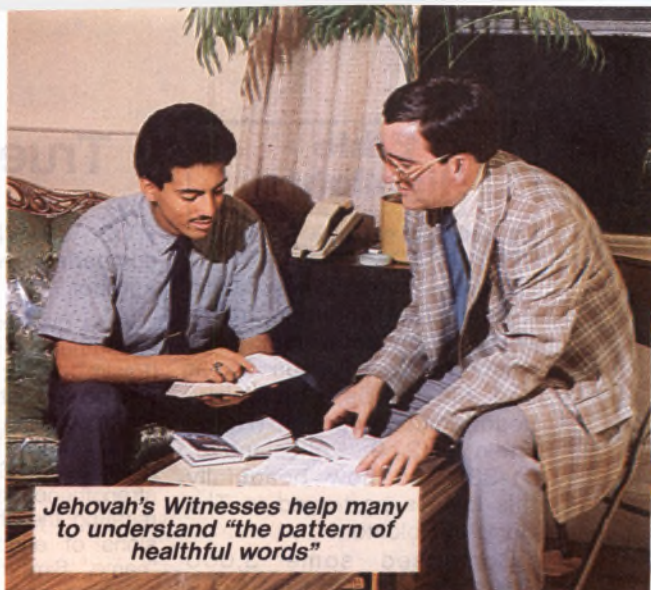
In Germany the Anabaptists were bitterly persecuted by both Catholics and Protestants. An imperial mandate, passed in the year 1528, imposed the death penalty on any who became Anabaptists—and that without any form of trial. Persecution in Austria caused most Anabaptists there to seek refuge in Moravia, Bohemia,

and Poland, and later on in Hungary and Russia.

With the death of so many of the original leaders, it was inevitable that extremists should come to the fore. They brought with them an imbalance that led to much confusion and a subsequent falling away from the standards that had marked earlier days. This was tragically evident in the year 1534, when such extremists forcibly took over the municipal government of Münster, Westphalia. The following year the city was recaptured amid much bloodshed and torture. This episode was out of harmony with true Anabaptist teaching and did much to discredit them. Some followers sought to disown the name Anabaptists in favor of the title "Baptists." But whatever name they chose, they still became the victims of opposition and of the Catholic Inquisition in particular.

Eventually, groups of Anabaptists emigrated in search of greater freedom and peace. Today, we find them in North and South America, as well as in Europe. Many denominations have been influenced by their early teachings, including the Quakers, the modern-day Baptists, and the Plymouth Brethren. The Quakers share the Anabaptist hatred of war and the idea of guidance by an 'inner light.'

The survival of the Anabaptists is most clearly seen today in two particular groups. The first is the Hutterian Brethren, named after their 16th-century leader, Jacob Hutter. They founded community settlements in England, Western Canada, Paraguay, and South Dakota in the United States. The Mennonites are the other group. They take their name from Menno Simons, who did much to obliterate the bad record left in the Netherlands following the Münster affair. Simons died in 1561. Today, Mennonites are found in Europe and North America, along with the Amish Mennonites.



Jehovah's Witnesses help many to understand "the pattern of healthful words"

"The Pattern" Today

Although the Anabaptists may have sought "the pattern of healthful words," they did not succeed in discovering it. Moreover, in his book *A History of Christianity*, K. S. Latourette observes: "Originally vigorously missionary, persecution caused them largely to withdraw within themselves and to perpetuate themselves by birth rather than conversion." And the same is true even now of those small groups traceable to the Anabaptist movement. Their desire to stand apart from the world and its ways has led them to keep distinctive modes of dress, encouraged by their often separate community life.

So, then, can "the pattern of healthful words" really be found today? Yes, but it does take time and a love of truth to find it. Why not check to see if what you believe measures up to the divinely revealed "pattern"? It is not difficult to determine what is man-made tradition and what is Scriptural fact. Jehovah's Witnesses in your locality will gladly help you, for they themselves appreciate the way they have been helped to understand "the pattern of healthful words."

Bible Highlights

The Song of Solomon 1:1-8:14

There is love that never fails. It is constant, enduring, triumphant. Such unswerving love exists between Jesus Christ and his "bride," or spirit-begotten congregation. (Revelation 21:2, 9; Ephesians 5:21-33) And how beautifully this love is portrayed in The Song of Solomon!

Composed some 3,000 years ago by wise King Solomon of Israel, this "superlative song" (1:1) tells of the love existing between a shepherd and a country girl from the village of Shunem (Shulem). With all his wealth and splendor, the king was unable to win the Shulammitte's love, for she was loyal to her beloved shepherd.

When this poetic book is read with due care and appreciation, it gives single and married servants of Jehovah much food for thought regarding the purity, tenderness, loyalty, and abiding love that should be hallmarks of Christian wedlock. Indeed, all of us can benefit from this song about the triumph of true love.

The Shulammitte in Solomon's Camp

Please read The Song of Solomon 1:1-14. In the royal tents, the Shulammitte spoke as if her beloved shepherd were present. Solomon extolled her beauty and promised to adorn her with articles of gold and silver. But the maiden resisted his advances and let him know that she had true love only for the shepherd.

True Love Is Triumphant!

♦ 1:2, 3—Why were these comparisons with wine and oil apropos?

Wine gladdens the heart and strengthens the depressed soul. (Psalm 104:15; Proverbs 31:6) Oil was poured out on favored guests for its soothing properties. (Psalm 23:5; Luke 7:38) Thus the distressed Shulammitte was strengthened and comforted by recalling the shepherd's "expressions of endearment" and his "name." Similarly, the remnant of Christ's anointed followers are encouraged by meditating on the love and assurances of their Shepherd, Jesus Christ, although they are yet in the world and separated from him.

Lesson for Us: Solomon would have decked the Shulammitte with "circlets of gold" and "studs of silver," but she resisted these material temptations and affirmed her unflinching love for the shepherd. (1:11-14) Reflecting on her attitude can strengthen the resolve of the "bride" class to spurn the world's seductive materialism and remain faithful to their heavenly Bridegroom. If our hopes are earthly and we are contemplating matrimony, may this maiden's example move us to make spiritual, not material, interests our prime concern.

Mutual Longing

Read 1:15-3:5. The shepherd entered the royal camp and voiced his love for the modest Shulammitte, who esteemed him above all others. When they were separated, the maiden recalled joyful times with her beloved and pleaded that he hasten to her

side. At night, she longed for him.

♦ 2:1-3—What is meant by these figures of speech?

The Shulammitte called herself "a mere saffron of the coastal plain" because she was a humble, modest young woman who viewed herself as only one of many common flowers. The shepherd, however, realized that she was "a lily among thorny weeds," for she was comely, capable, and faithful to Jehovah. To the maiden, the shepherd was "like an apple tree among the trees of the forest" because he was a spiritually inclined young man similarly devoted to God and having very desirable traits and abilities. An unmarried Christian seeking a partner in life should be looking only for a faithful fellow believer having qualities like those of the Shulammitte or her beloved shepherd.

♦ 3:5—Why was this oath associated with these animals?

Gazelles and hinds are gentle, graceful, and beautiful animals that are also swift and surefooted. In essence, then, the maiden was binding the "daughters of Jerusalem" in an oath by all that is graceful and beautiful. By these creatures, she was obligating these women to refrain from trying to arouse love in her for anyone other than her beloved shepherd.

Lesson for Us: The maiden put the "daughters of Jerusalem," or court women who waited on the king, under oath 'not to arouse love in her until it felt inclined.' (2:7; 3:5) This indicates that it is not possible to have romantic love for just anyone. The maiden herself felt no attraction for Solomon. How wise it is, then, for an

unmarried Christian contemplating wedlock to consider only an eligible and faithful worshiper of Jehovah who can truly be loved!—1 Corinthians 7:39.

The Maiden in Jerusalem

Read 3:6-6:3. Solomon returned to Jerusalem in splendor. The shepherd got in touch with the maiden there and strengthened her with expressions of endearment. In a dream, she belatedly responded to the knock of her beloved and was mistreated by watchmen as she made a desperate search for him. Asked what made her dear one outstanding, she gave the "daughters of Jerusalem" a glowing description of him.

♦ 5:12—How were the shepherd's eyes 'like doves bathing in milk'?

Earlier, the Shulammite's eyes had been likened to those of a dove because of being soft, gentle. (1:15; 4:1) For that matter, the shepherd had called the maiden herself his "dove." (5:2) Here the lovesick young woman likened the shepherd's eyes to blue-gray doves bathing in pools of milk. (5:8, 12) Likely, this simile referred to the shepherd's dark iris surrounded by the gleaming white of his eyes.

Lesson for Us: The Shulammite was like "a garden barred in." (4:12) Often a garden in ancient Israel was park-like, a veritable paradise with a good water source and a variety of vegetables, flowers, and trees. Usually, it was enclosed by a hedge or a wall and could be entered only through a locked gate. (Isaiah 5:5) To the shepherd, the Shulammite's moral purity and loveliness were like a garden of rare beauty, fine fruitage, delightful

fragrances, and exhilarating pleasantness. Her affections were not available to just any man, for she was chaste, like "a garden barred" to unwelcome intruders and open only to its lawful owner. In moral rectitude and loyalty the Shulammite thus set a fine example for yet unmarried Christian women today.

"The Flame of Jah"

Read 6:4-8:14. Solomon praised the maiden's beauty, but she rejected him and declared her devotion to the shepherd. Unable to gain her love, Solomon let her go home. With her "dear one" at her side, she returned to Shunem as a mature woman of proved stability. The love between her and the shepherd was as strong as death, and its blazings were as "the flame of Jah."

♦ 6:4—What was "Pleasant City"?

This expression can be rendered "Tirzah," meaning "Pleasantness, Delightfulness." Tirzah was a city of renowned beauty that became the first capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. —1 Kings 14:17; 16:5, 6, 8, 15.

♦ 7:4—How was the maiden's neck "like an ivory tower"?

Apparently it had the smoothness of ivory and the slenderness of a tower. Earlier, her neck had been likened to "the tower of David," perhaps the tower of the King's House along Jerusalem's east wall. Upon it 'were hung a thousand circular shields of mighty men,' suggesting that the Shulammite's stately neck was graced with a necklace strung with round ornaments or jewels. —4:4; Nehemiah 3:25-27.

♦ 8:6, 7—How is love "as strong as death"?

Death has unfailingly claimed

the lives of sinful humans, and true love is that strong. In its insistence on exclusive devotion, such love is just as unyielding as Sheol (grave-doom) is in demanding the bodies of the deceased. Since Jehovah God put the capacity for love within humans, this quality emanates from him and is fittingly termed "the flame of Jah." Not even rich King Solomon could buy such love.

Lesson for Us: The Shulammite's experience with King Solomon was a searching test that she passed successfully. She was not unsteady in love and virtue, like a door easily turning on its hinges and needing to be barred with a cedar plank to prevent its swinging open to someone unwelcome or unwholesome. No, the maiden triumphed over the enticements of the king, standing like a wall against all the material attractions of this world. With reliance on God and by recalling the Shulammite's fine example, Christian women today can similarly prove their stature as individuals firm in virtuous principles to Jehovah's praise.—8:8-10.

Surely, this "superlative song," having love as its theme, heightens our appreciation for the bond existing between Jesus and those chosen to be his heavenly "bride." But all young men and women as well as husbands and wives devoted to Jehovah can benefit from seeking to imitate the integrity of the Shulammite and the shepherd in the face of trials and temptations. And this splendid portion of God's Word should move all of us to remain ever loyal to Jehovah, the Source of triumphant love.

Answering the Call of the Micronesian Islands



NAMES like Truk, Yap, Ponape, Guam, and Saipan may sound somewhat familiar to you. But what about Belau, Rota, Kosrae, Nauru, or Kiribati? These and others are all part of the more than 2,000 islands and atolls scattered over some three million square miles of the Western Pacific and known collectively as Micronesia, or small islands.

Within this vast expanse, approximately the size of Australia or the continental United States, Jehovah's Witnesses are busy proclaiming the Kingdom good news. (Mark 13:10) Currently, this work is being done by about 740 Kingdom publishers in 13 congregations. Indeed, there is a great need for more workers to bring in the harvest in these faraway islands of the sea.—Compare Jeremiah 31:10.

Over the last 20 years or so, individuals from Hawaii, the Philippines, Canada, the United States, and Australia have answered the call and taken up missionary service in the Micronesian islands. When the first of them arrived in 1965, there

were only 76 Kingdom publishers in all of this vast territory. In 1987, however, a total of 4,510 persons attended the Memorial of Jesus Christ's death. Clearly, Christian labors of love over the years had been richly blessed.

Today, there are 49 missionaries serving out of 14 missionary homes scattered among the islands, all working under the supervision of the Watch Tower Society's Guam branch. Their love for Jehovah and for their Micronesian neighbors has moved them to answer the missionary call. What experiences have they had while serving in these remote islands? In terms of new languages and customs, what challenges have they had to overcome? And what has helped them to stay in their assignments? Let us hear from some of them about their work in these islands.

The Challenge of New Languages

There are eight or nine major languages in Micronesia. But because these are not

considered written languages, it is difficult for the new missionaries to find books to use in learning them. Still, they work hard at it. One effective method, they were told, was to try to use what had been learned immediately in the preaching work. Well, they still remember the many hilarious—and embarrassing—situations that developed when they tried to do that.

Roger, a native of Hawaii, recalls one such situation when he first came to Belau 13 years ago. "When one householder said, 'I'm a Catholic,' the only Palauan word I knew to answer with was 'Why?'" The householder then went into a long explanation. "I did not understand a word she said. At her conclusion, I said the only other word I knew, 'Thank you,' and left!"

Salvador, who came to Truk with his wife, Helen, ten years ago, remembers trying to ask a Trukese lady if she wanted to be happy (*pwapwa*). Instead, he asked if she wanted to be pregnant (*pwopwo*). And Zenette, who came from Canada with her husband, David, recalls the time when she tried to say "Thank you" (*kilisou*) but wound up saying "Horsefly" (*kiliso*). Needless to say, they know those words well now.

When James was transferred to the island of Kosrae after serving four years in Ponape, he had to start all over again. He especially remembers trying to befriend one householder. But instead of asking, "How are you?" he told him, "You are a freak"! Now, after ten years, he confesses: "At first, it was hard to say some of the Kosraean words because they sounded so much like swear words in English."

Such experiences, however, never discourage these missionaries from pressing on with their language studies. "There is little one can do to help the people without learning the language," said one mission-

ary. "This provides real incentive to study diligently."

Customs and Superstitions

To the newcomers, many of the local customs seemed amusing. For instance, David met a man who had named his three sons Sardine, Tuna, and Spam. Later, he was introduced to three men named Desire, Sin, and Repent. Zenette found it strange that people call their grandparents Papa and Mama and their parents by their first names. When Sheri first came from Hawaii, she thought it was most amusing that people use their nose to point out directions. And it took some time to get used to this custom: When a woman enters a public gathering, she "walks" on her knees to her "seat" on the floor to show respect for the men.

Many, too, are the superstitious beliefs. In the Marshall Islands, for example, when someone dies the family will put food, cigarettes, and flowers on the grave for the deceased. Or when a bird flies around the house singing, this is taken to mean danger and imminent death for someone in the family.

Some in the islands are also deeply involved in spiritism. Jon was one of them. Once an elder in a Protestant church, he was able to expel demons by prayers and by using medicine prepared from coconut oil.

"One day an ugly face of a demon as wide as a door appeared at the entrance of my room," Jon related. At first Jon thought he was dreaming but soon realized that he was fully awake.

"The demon told me that he was the source of my magical powers. This shocked me and caused me to wonder why the demons would work through me, a deacon in the church, and why the minister himself sought my demonistic services." Jon was soon contacted by the

Witness missionaries and started to study the Bible.

"It brought me great joy to learn the truth about the demons and about how to identify the true religion," Jon recalled. He withdrew from his church and discontinued his practice of demonism. Today he warns others to avoid all demonistic practices.—Deuteronomy 18:9-13; Revelation 21:8.

Reaching the Smaller Islands

Taking the good news to people on the small outer islands is a real challenge. Often the only way to reach them is to book passage on a copra ship. As the ship stops at each islet for a few hours or days to pick up cargo, the missionaries and other Kingdom publishers busy themselves in witnessing to the islanders. Weekly radio broadcasts are another way of bringing the good news to them.

Residents of the outer islands often travel to the main island centers for food, medical attention, and schooling. While there, they may be contacted by Jehovah's Witnesses and may obtain Bible literature. Interest is followed up by mail or when publishers visit their island. One couple was contacted this way in Majuro in the Marshall Islands and then returned to their home island of Ailuk, 250 miles away. They began making progress in their understanding of the Bible. Soon they severed ties with their church, legalized their marriage, and got baptized. Now both preach zealously on their isolated island, frequently serving as auxiliary pioneers.

Missionaries in Ponape, Truk, and Belau use their own boats for island witnessing. Since there are no docking facilities at most places, they often have to wade ashore in mud up to their knees. Most residents are friendly and welcome the visitors by spreading out woven floor mats

for them and serving them cool coconut water. The entire family is summoned and will listen attentively. Because many do not have money, it is not uncommon to see publishers returning after two or three days with their boat loaded with fruit received in exchange for Bible literature.

Sacrifices and Rewards

For the missionaries, life in the islands is not what it was back home. They have to get used to frequent power failures and water shortages, depending on rainwater for their supply. On some islands, there are no power, water, or sewage systems, no paved roads, and no automobiles. But the missionaries have learned to be adaptable. "When I see the local brothers living in houses built out of discarded lumber and flooring, we feel empathy for them, and this tends to keep us balanced in our needs and wants," observes Julian, who has served faithfully for 17 years in Guam and the Marshall Islands.

Rodney and Sheri came to Truk from Hawaii. He admits: "Frankly, I experienced a culture shock." Now, ten years later, he writes: "We have a very satisfying work to do here. We have our ups and downs; at times we feel discouraged and lonely. But we want to continue to pursue our purpose in life in missionary work here." And Sheri cheerfully adds: "Self-sacrificing people are happy people."

Indeed, their sacrifices are richly rewarded. Clemente and his wife, Eunice, who came to the Marshall Islands ten years ago, now conduct 34 weekly home Bible studies. "Fourteen of the students have symbolized their dedication to Jehovah by water immersion," he reports, "and others are progressing toward baptism. Such lifesaving work is of great value in our eyes." James, a missionary for more than ten years, states: "To see the endurance of our Kosraean brothers year after

year is a real blessing." Over in Belau, Roger comments: "We have been blessed with a new Kingdom Hall and a loyal group of publishers." And looking back over the years, Placido says: "Jehovah's direction and holy spirit have been evident in our lives. This has helped us to draw very close to him."

Such experiences have encouraged the missionaries to remain in their assignments. Many of them can look back and remember the formation of the first congregation in their area. Like the apostle Paul, they have the unique joy of 'not building on another man's foundation.'

(Romans 15:20) Their feeling is well expressed by this comment: "There is still much work to be done. I believe Jehovah will yet open up many opportunities to bring in more sheeplike ones in the islands, and we are privileged to share in it."

"The blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it," says the Bible at Proverbs 10:22. Those who have answered the missionary call of the Micronesian islands have truly experienced this blessing along with the joy and satisfaction that come from serving Jehovah.

Questions From Readers

■ Was Paul referring to Jehovah or to Jesus when he wrote: *'The Lord said to me: "My power is being made perfect in weakness"'*?

It seems that the apostle Paul was referring to the Lord Jehovah. By noting Paul's words in context, not only can we see why this is so but we can also deepen our appreciation for the relationship between God and his Son. Paul wrote:

"That I might not feel overly exalted, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan, to keep slapping me, that I might not be overly exalted. In this behalf I three times entreated the Lord that it might depart from me; and yet he really said to me: 'My undeserved kindness is sufficient for you; for my power is being made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, will I rather boast as respects my weaknesses, that the power of the Christ may like a tent remain over me."—2 Corinthians 12:7-9.

The thorn in Paul's flesh may have been either some eye affliction or false apostles who chal-

lenged his apostleship. (Galatians 4:15; 6:11; 2 Corinthians 11:5, 12-15) Whichever it was, it tended to discourage Paul or keep him from exulting over his ministry. So he thrice asked that it be removed. But whom did he ask, and who responded by speaking of "my power"?

Since the passage mentions "the power of the Christ," it might seem that Paul had asked the Lord Jesus. Unquestionably, he has power and can impart it to his disciples. (Mark 5:30; 13:26; 1 Timothy 1:12) In fact, the Son of God "sustains all things by the word of his power."—Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17, 29.

However, the Lord God is the ultimate source of power, which he can and does supply to his worshipers. (Psalm 147:5; Isaiah 40:26, 29-31) Such power from God enabled Jesus to perform miracles and will yet enable him to act. (Luke 5:17; Acts 10:38) Similarly, Jesus' apostles and

other disciples received power from Jehovah. (Luke 24:49; Ephesians 3:14-16; 2 Timothy 1:7, 8) This included Paul, who ministered "according to the free gift of the undeserved kindness of God that was given [the apostle] according to the way his power operates."—Ephesians 3:7.

Since Paul asked for the removal of the 'thorn in his flesh, an angel of Satan,' it is logical that he looked to the Lord God to do this, Jehovah being the one to whom prayers are directed. (Philippians 4:6; Psalm 145:18) Furthermore, Jehovah's somehow encouraging Paul with the words, "My power is being made perfect in weakness," does not leave out Christ. Power from the Lord God could be described as "the power of the Christ [that was] like a tent" over Paul, for 'Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.' (1 Corinthians 1:24) Thus, 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 helps us to appreciate better the pivotal way in which Jehovah uses his Son in the outworking of the divine will.

From Brickmaking Slavery to Freedom!



DO THE pyramids of Giza (near modern Cairo) bring to mind abused slaves toiling under a hot sun to drag huge stones into place? And do you imagine Hebrew slaves among them?

Actually, the Egyptian pyramids seen on the next page date from before the time when the family of Joseph's father Jacob (or, Israel) moved to Egypt. But more common than building with huge stones was the use of bricks, produced by the millions under the same blazing sun.

The Hebrews who were welcome in Egypt during Joseph's time were blessed by God with increase, bringing dread to the Egyptians. We read: "So they set over [the Hebrews] chiefs of forced labor for the purpose of oppressing them in their burden-bearing; and they went building cities . . . The Egyptians made the sons of Israel slave under tyranny. And they kept making their life bitter with hard slavery at clay mortar and bricks."—Exodus 1:7-14.

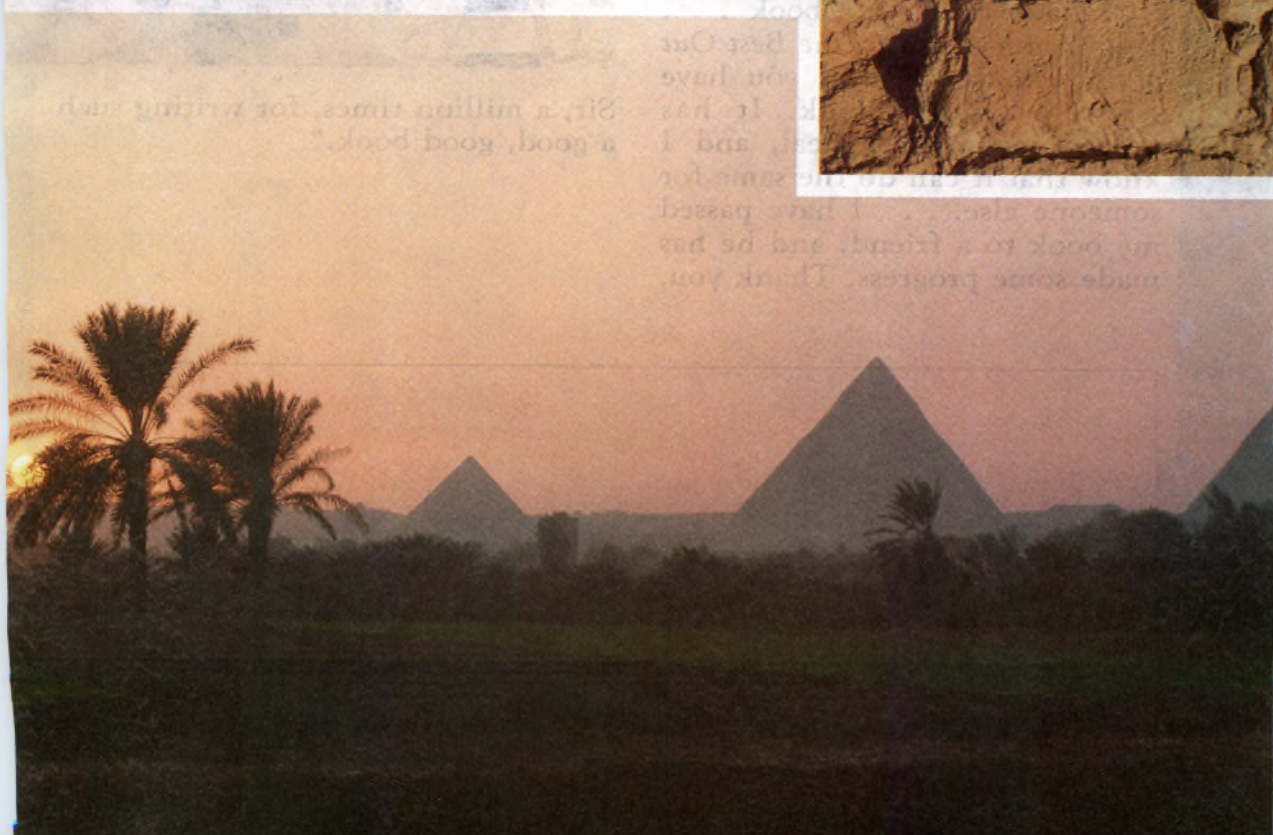
On the right, you can see that bricks are still made in Egypt, some being baked in kilns such as the one seen here. (Compare Genesis 11:1-3; 19:

28.) Evidently, however, most ancient Egyptian bricks were sun dried. What persists is the use of straw in making bricks. Straw is visible in bricks found in the unearthed ruins of ancient Beer-sheba (inset).

Adding straw strengthened the bricks. To make them, mud (or clay), water, and straw were slowly trampled by foot, then pressed in molds, and finally set out to dry. Imagine toiling at such work one long day after another. Surely, you can understand why the Israelites 'sighed because of the slavery and cried out in complaint, so that their cry for help kept going up to the true God.'—Exodus 2:23.

Jehovah heard them and sent Moses to Pharaoh to gain the Israelites' freedom. Instead, haughty Pharaoh increased their burden. Now they would have to gather their own straw, still maintaining their quota of bricks as before. Why, this was like a death sentence! God said: "Now you will see what I shall do to Pharaoh, because on account of a strong hand he will send them away."—Exodus 5:1-6:1.

You probably know the rest. Jehovah was capable of defeating tyrannical Pharaoh. After the tenth plague, God 'brought the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt.' (Exodus 12:37-51) Leaving behind the pyramids, the bricks, and the harsh slavery, Israel marched toward the Promised Land. Such historical facts should reassure us of Jehovah God's ability to provide true freedom for Christians in the coming new world, with its earthly Paradise.—Compare Romans 8:20, 21.



'It Helped Me a Great Deal'

Youths surely need help today, what with an epidemic of teenage suicides, pregnancies, alcoholism, drug abuse, and other problems. But where can they receive it? A youth from Buffalo, New York, wrote the Watchtower Society:

"I have read your book . . . *Your Youth—Getting the Best Out of It*. I must say that you have written a good book. It has helped me a great deal, and I know that it can do the same for someone else. . . . I have passed my book to a friend, and he has made some progress. Thank you,



Sir, a million times, for writing such a good, good book."