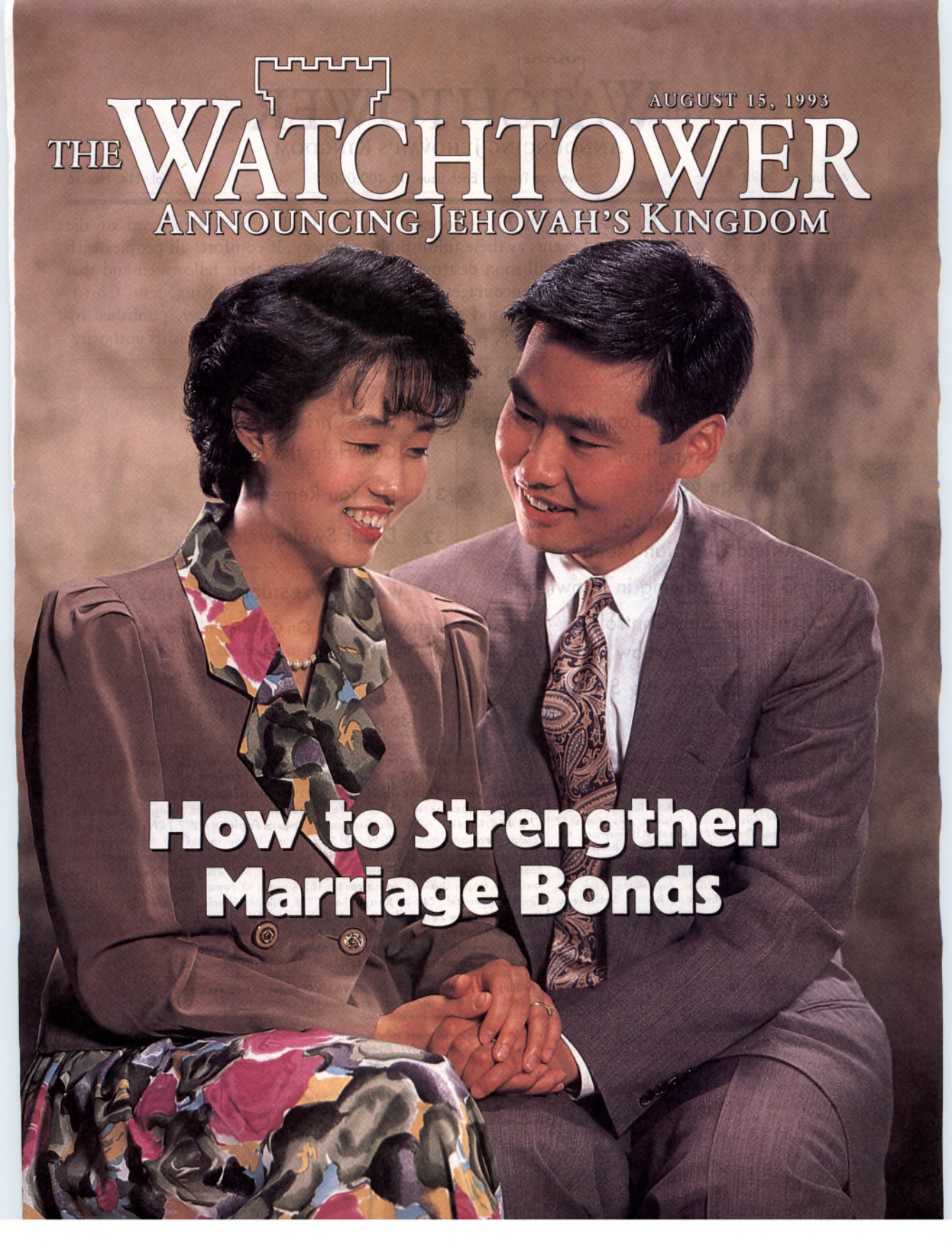


AUGUST 15, 1993

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**How to Strengthen
Marriage Bonds**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these 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 God's 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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The Weakening Bond of Marriage

A YOUNG mother cuddled her two-month-old baby. Then, in a sudden frenzy, she dropped him on the floor. The boy died a few hours later. "I dropped him on purpose," said the mother, "because my husband doesn't care about his family." Instead of talking the matter over with her husband, she vented her anger on the innocent baby.

Few mothers resort to such an extreme measure, but many share her feelings. It is becoming more and more difficult for married couples to make a success of their marriage. "When the probability of marital success is as low as it is in the United States today," says the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, "to make a strong, unqualified commitment to a marriage . . . is so hazardous that no totally rational person would do it."

In these turbulent times, immorality, incompatibility, debts, frictions with in-laws, and selfishness all fuel domestic strife,

which time and again escalates into divorce. So serious is the situation in Japan that even the Catholic Church, famous for its strong stand against divorce, has had to set up a special committee to ease matters for divorced and remarried members. An increasing number of churchgoers are being affected by divorce-related problems.

However, the number of divorces reveals only the tip of the iceberg. Research in the United States shows that it is the deteriorating quality of married life itself that is behind the increase in divorce, rather than just social trends that make divorce easier. With less effort and less commitment, married life loses its shine. Many maintain the front of being a married couple, but they do not share the bedroom, and they hardly ever talk to each other. Some feel as did the Oriental woman who bought her own separate grave, saying, 'I refuse to be with my husband in the grave.' Unable to divorce her

husband now, she aims to have a posthumous divorce. Sadly, although such people are not divorced, married life is not a source of happiness for them.

That was the case with Isao. He had married his wife on a whim, so he felt no motivation to change his egotistical way of life. Although he had a good income as a trucker, he wasted all his earnings on eating and drinking, not taking care of his family. As a result, quarrels with his wife were never-

ending. "Whenever things turned out badly for me," recalls Isao, "I would go home and vent my anger on my family." Like a volcano that would not quiet down, the subject of divorce erupted daily.

Many men and women are enduring a bad marriage. Whether they divorce or not, they are not finding happiness. Is there a way for them to make a success of their marriage? What can be done to strengthen their marriage bond?

How to Strengthen Marriage Bonds

"IS IT lawful for a man to divorce his wife on every sort of ground?" asked the Pharisees who were trying to trap the Great Teacher, Jesus Christ. He answered them by referring to the first human marriage and set out a standard on the matter: "What God has yoked together let no man put apart."

The Pharisees contended that Moses made provisions for divorce by prescribing the issuing of "a certificate of dismissal." Jesus answered them: "Moses, out of regard for your hardheartedness, made the concession to you of divorcing your wives, but such has not been the case from the beginning. I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except on the ground of fornication, and marries another commits adultery." —Matthew 19:3-9.

Originally, marriage was to be a permanent bond. Even death would not have parted the first married couple, for they were created as perfect humans with everlasting

life in view. However, they sinned. Their sin marred human marriage. The enemy death began to separate married couples. God views death as the end of a marriage, as we read in the Bible: "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." (1 Corinthians 7:39) This is very different from such religious ideas as suttee, wherein a wife at the time of her husband's death is persuaded or coerced into burning herself to death in the belief that the marriage bond continues on into some afterlife.

Mosaic Law Provision

By the time the Mosaic Law was given, marital relationships had deteriorated to the point that Jehovah, out of regard for the Israelites' hardheartedness, made a provision for divorce. (Deuteronomy 24:1) It was not God's purpose for the Israelites to misuse this law to divorce their wives because

of petty faults, as is evident from his command that they were to love their fellow as themselves. (Leviticus 19:18) Even the issuing of a certificate of divorce served as a deterrent because, as part of the process of writing the certificate, the husband wanting a divorce had to consult duly authorized men, who would have endeavored to effect a reconciliation. No, God did not give this law to establish any right to divorce one's wife "on every sort of ground."—Matthew 19:3.

However, the Israelites eventually ignored the spirit of the law and exploited this clause to get divorced on whatever basis suited their whims. By the fifth century B.C.E., they were dealing treacherously with the wives of their youth, divorcing them on all sorts of grounds. Jehovah firmly told them that he hated a divorcing. (Malachi 2:14-16) It was against this background that Jesus condemned divorce as the Israelites were practicing it in his day.

Only Legitimate Basis for Divorce

Jesus did, though, mention one legitimate basis for divorce: fornication. (Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:8, 9) The word here translated "fornication" includes all sorts of illicit sexual intercourse outside Scriptural marriage, be it with someone of the same sex or the opposite sex or with an animal.

Even so, Jesus was not recommending divorce from unfaithful partners. It is up to the innocent mate to weigh the consequences involved and decide whether he or she wants a divorce. Wives contemplating a divorce on this Scriptural basis may also want to consider God's statement when he passed judgment on the first woman for her sin. In addition to the death sentence, God specifically told Eve: "Your craving will be for your husband, and he will dominate you." (Genesis 3:16) The *Commentary on the*

Old Testament, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, describes this "craving" as "a desire bordering upon disease." Admittedly, this craving is not that strong in every wife, but when an innocent wife is considering a divorce, she would be wise to take into consideration the emotional needs that women have inherited from Eve. However, as extra-marital sex on the part of a guilty mate could lead to an innocent mate's being infected by sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS, some have decided to resort to divorce as explained by Jesus.

Seeds of Family Trouble Sown

People's hardheartedness finds its origin in the sin that the first human couple committed against God. (Romans 5:12) The seeds of family strife were sown when the first human pair sinned against their heavenly Father. How so? When the first woman, Eve, was tempted by a serpent to eat from the forbidden tree, she went right ahead and ate the fruit. It was only after she had made that significant decision that she talked to her husband about what the serpent had told her. (Genesis 3:6) Yes, she had acted without consulting her husband. Here is the prototype of problems faced by many families today—lack of heart-to-heart communication.

Later, when faced with the consequences of their sin, both Adam and Eve resorted to the same tactics that many couples employ today when in trouble, namely, blaming others. The first man, Adam, blamed what he had done both on his wife and on Jehovah, saying: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree and so I ate." The woman in turn said: "The serpent—it deceived me and so I ate."—Genesis 3:12, 13.

Jehovah's pronouncement of judgment on Adam and Eve forecast yet another

factor in the troubles that would develop. Concerning her relationship with her husband, Jehovah told Eve: "He will dominate you." Many husbands today, like Isao mentioned in our first article, dominate their wives in a ruthless way without regard for their wives' feelings. Still, many wives continue to have a craving for their husbands' attention. When that craving is not satisfied, the wives may demand that attention and act selfishly. With many a husband dominating and many a wife craving, selfishness prevails, and peace flies out the window. In a paper entitled "How to Analyze Today's Divorces," Shunsuke Serizawa said: "If we overlook the tendency at the heart of the issue of 'having one's own way,' namely, giving priority to one's own interests, it would suddenly become impossible to analyze divorces today."

Jehovah has, however, provided guidance in his Word so that obedient married couples can enjoy a measure of marital happiness even in their imperfect state. Isao followed God's direction and is now enjoying a happy family life. Let us see how Bible principles help people to strengthen the marital bond.

Talk Things Out

In many marriages, a lack of communication, the tendency to blame others, and selfish attitudes make it difficult for husband and wife to understand each other's emotions. "Preconditioned on the sharing of feelings, intimacy requires consummate trust. And today trust is in short supply," says researcher Caryl S. Avery. An accumulation of shared innermost feelings builds up such trust. This requires heart-to-heart communication between husband and wife.

Proverbs uses an illustration to encourage the sharing of intimate thoughts, saying: "Counsel in the heart of a man is as deep

waters, but the man of discernment is one that will draw it up." (Proverbs 20:5) Marriage mates must be discerning and draw up the thoughts deep down in their spouses' hearts. Imagine that your mate is upset. Instead of responding: "I've had a hard day myself," why not kindly ask: "Did you have a hard day? What happened?" It may take time and effort to listen to your spouse, but it is usually more pleasant, satisfying, and timesaving to spend time that way than it is to ignore your mate and have to deal with charged emotions that erupt later.

To gain trust, each must be honest and try to express feelings in a way that the other mate can understand. "Speak truth," urges God's Word, "because we are members belonging to one another." (Ephesians 4:25) Speaking truth requires discernment. Suppose a wife feels that she is not being heard. Before she speaks, she should consider the proverb: "Anyone holding back his sayings is possessed of knowledge, and a man of discernment is cool of spirit." (Proverbs 17:27) Rather than accuse her husband, "You never listen to me!" it would be far better calmly to express her feelings before frustration and disappointment build up within her. Perhaps she could reveal how she feels by saying something like, "I know you are busy, but having a little more time with you would make me very happy."

Really, "there is a frustrating of plans where there is no confidential talk." (Proverbs 15:22) Your mate loves you, but that does not mean that she can read your mind. You must let your mate know how you feel in a tactful way. This will help you, as a Christian married couple, to make loving adjustments in order "to observe the oneness of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace."—Ephesians 4:2, 3.

Take Kazuo, for example, who was a henpecked husband with an itch for gambling.

He found himself bogged down with debts amounting to several hundred thousand dollars. Borrowing money to pay off his debts, he sank deeper into the mire. Then he started to study the Bible and finally mustered up the courage to tell his wife about his problems. He was prepared to face her accusations. However, he was taken by surprise when his wife, who had been studying the Bible longer, calmly answered: "Let's try to figure out how we can pay off the debts."

Starting the following day, they visited their creditors and began to pay their debts, even selling their house. It took almost a year to settle the debts. What changed Kimie, his wife? She says: "The words found at Philippians chapter 4, verses 6 and 7, are indeed true. 'Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.'" She added: "A friend of mine, surprised at seeing how cheerful I was despite hardships, started studying the Bible with me." Kazuo and his wife have since been baptized and are now enjoying a happy family life.

In addition to trusting each other by telling the truth, the husbands and wives who had the above experiences did something that helps couples to solve their marital problems. They communicated with the Originator of the marriage arrangement, Jehovah God. Despite pressures and difficulties that couples face, he will bless them



with the peace of God that excels all thought if they do their best to apply his principles and leave the rest in his hand. Praying together is especially helpful. The husband should take the lead and 'pour out his heart' before God, seeking his guidance and direction on any problem that he and his wife are facing. (Psalm 62:8) Jehovah God will definitely hear such prayers.

Yes, it is possible to strengthen the bond of marriage. Even now, living with all our imperfections in a turbulent society, married couples can find considerable joy in their relationship. You can find additional practical suggestions and godly counsel in the book *Making Your Family Life Happy*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. Moreover, couples who earnestly work to apply Bible principles have the hope of being bound together in love in the soon-to-come new world of God's making.



Why You Need to Attend Christian Meetings

FOR months, Rosario, who lives in South America, enjoyed studying the Bible with Elizabeth. It thrilled Rosario to learn about God's Kingdom and how it will bring about Paradise conditions on earth. Yet, whenever Elizabeth invited her to attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall, she declined. She felt that she could study the Bible at home and put into practice what it says, doing so without attending congregation meetings. Have you also wondered whether Christian meetings really benefit you? Why does God arrange for his people to meet together?

Since Christians in the first century were so different from the people around them, right association was vital to their survival. The apostle Paul wrote to one congregation of early Christians: 'You came to be blameless and innocent among a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you are

shining as illuminators in the world.' (Philippians 2:15) Christians had a particularly difficult time in Judea, and it was to them that Paul wrote: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24, 25) How do we incite one another to love and fine works by meeting together?

How Christians "Sharpen" One Another

The Greek word Paul used and that is translated "incite" literally means "a sharpening." A Bible proverb explains how Christians "sharpen" one another when it says: "By iron, iron itself is sharpened. So one man sharpens the face of another." (Proverbs 27:17; Ecclesiastes 10:10) We are like

instruments that need regular sharpening. Since expressing love for Jehovah and making decisions based on our faith means being different from the world, we constantly have to cut a different path, as it were, from the majority.

The constant effort to be different can blunt our zeal for fine works. But when we are with others who love Jehovah, we sharpen one another—we incite one another to love and fine works. On the other hand, when we are alone, we tend to consider ourselves more. Immoral, selfish, or foolish ideas may enter our minds. “One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing; against all practical wisdom he will break forth.” (Proverbs 18:1) That is why Paul wrote to the congregation in the city of Thessalonica: “Keep comforting one another and building one another up, just as you are in fact doing.”—1 Thessalonians 5:11.

When Rosario finished her study of basic Bible teachings, she still held back from associating with the congregation. So, unable to provide more help, Elizabeth stopped visiting her. Some months later a traveling overseer called on Rosario and asked: “Even if each member of a family could find good food by eating out, what would all members miss by not eating together at home?” Rosario replied: “They would miss the companionship of the family.” She got the point and started coming regularly to the meetings. She found it so beneficial that she has been at almost every meeting since.

Hearing other people express faith in the same things that you believe in is encouraging and so is seeing how such faith has changed their lives. Paul knew this from personal experience, and he wrote to the congregation in Rome: “I am longing to see you, that I may impart some spiritual gift to you in order for you to be made firm; or, rather, that there may be an interchange of

encouragement among you, by each one through the other’s faith, both yours and mine.” (Romans 1:11, 12) In fact, it was years before Paul could visit Rome, and when he did, it was as a prisoner in the hands of the Romans. But when he saw brothers from Rome who had walked over 40 miles from the city to meet him, “Paul thanked God and took courage.”—Acts 28:15.

Finding Spiritual Food in Critical Times

While under house arrest in Rome, Paul wrote the Hebrews about not forsaking the gathering of themselves together. It is significant for us that he added the words: “And all the more so as you behold the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:25) Jehovah’s Witnesses have consistently shown from the Scriptures that the year 1914 marked the beginning of this world’s time of the end and that “the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men” has drawn near. (2 Peter 3:7) According to the Bible book of Revelation, when the Devil was cast out of heaven at the beginning of the time of the end, he had great anger and “went off to wage war with the remaining ones . . . who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus.” (Revelation 12:7-17) Therefore, observing the commandments of God is especially difficult now; we need to meet with fellow believers all the more so. Meetings will help us to strengthen our faith and our love for God in order to resist the Devil’s attacks.

Love of God and faith are not like buildings that are permanent once they are built. Rather, they are like living things that grow slowly with constant feeding but that wither and die if starved. That is why Jehovah provides regular spiritual food to strengthen his people. All of us need such food, but

where can we receive it apart from God's organization and its meetings? Nowhere.—Deuteronomy 32:2; Matthew 4:4; 5:3.

Jesus posed a question that can help us to see how he feeds the Christian congregation. He asked: "Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so." (Matthew 24:45, 46) Whom did Jesus appoint in the first century to feed his followers, and whom did he find faithfully feeding them on his return in Kingdom power? Obviously, no human has lived through all those centuries. The evidence points to the slave as being the congregation of spirit-

anointed Christians, just as the nation of Israel was God's servant in pre-Christian times. (Isaiah 43:10) Yes, Jesus provides our spiritual food through that worldwide body of spirit-anointed Christians, which today channels spiritual food through the local congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Jesus' provision of a supply line for spiritual food was further described by the apostle Paul: "When he ascended on high he carried away captives; he gave gifts in men.' . . . He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelizers, some as shepherds and teachers, with a view to the readjustment of the holy ones, for ministerial work, for the building up of the body of the Christ, until we all attain to the oneness in the faith and in the accurate knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to

the measure of stature that belongs to the fullness of the Christ."—Ephesians 4:8, 11-13.

It was principally within the local congregations—at the meetings—that these "gifts in men" built up the brothers. In Antioch, for example, "Judas and Silas, since they themselves were also prophets, encouraged the brothers with many a discourse and strengthened them." (Acts 15:32) Talks

by spiritually qualified men today will similarly nourish our faith so that it will not wither or become inactive.

It may be true that we have made good progress because of the personal help of a member of the congregation even though we may not yet have begun attending meetings. The Bible says that there is

a time when you "need someone to teach you from the beginning the elementary things of the sacred pronouncements of God; and you . . . need milk, not solid food." (Hebrews 5:12) But one cannot remain at the milk stage forever. Christian meetings provide a continuous program of Bible instruction designed to keep love of God and faith in him alive as well as to provide practical help in applying "all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:27) This is more than "milk." The Bible further says: "Solid food belongs to mature people, to those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong." (Hebrews 5:14) At the meetings many subjects are considered that may not be part of a basic course of home Bible instruction, such as verse-by-verse studies of important Bible



prophecies and in-depth discussions of how we can imitate God in our own lives.

Jehovah's Reminders —Like a Voice Behind You

By means of such congregation studies, Jehovah regularly reminds us of what sort of persons we should be. Such reminders are vital. Without them we easily tend toward selfishness, pride, and greed. Reminders from the Scriptures will help us to enjoy successful relationships with other humans and with God himself. "I have considered my ways, that I may turn back my feet to your reminders," confessed the writer of Psalm 119:59.

As we regularly attend Christian meetings, we experience the outworking of Jehovah's prophecy through Isaiah, which says: "Your Grand Instructor will no longer hide himself, and your eyes must become eyes seeing your Grand Instructor. And your own ears will hear a word behind you saying: 'This is the way. Walk in it, you people.'" Jehovah watches over our progress and lovingly corrects us if we take a false step. (Isaiah 30:20, 21; Galatians 6:1) And he provides even more help than this.

Receiving Holy Spirit Through the Congregation

By regularly attending Christian meetings with Jehovah's Witnesses, we are strengthened by God's holy spirit, which is resting upon his people. (1 Peter 4:14) Further, the Christian overseers in the congregation have been appointed by holy spirit. (Acts 20:28) This active force from God has a powerful influence on a Christian. The Bible says: "The fruitage of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22, 23) Holy spirit, working through God's organization, will also help us to gain a wonderfully clear understanding of what

Jehovah has in store for those who love him. After explaining that prominent people of this system of things cannot understand God's purposes, Paul wrote: "It is to us God has revealed them through his spirit." —1 Corinthians 2:8-10.

Besides faith-strengthening spiritual food, the congregation provides training for those who wish to share in the congregation's principal activity. What is that?

Training Provided by the Congregation

The Christian congregation is not a social club where people merely enjoy entertainment and perhaps encourage one another to live better lives. Jesus commissioned the congregation to take the good news of the Kingdom to those living in spiritual darkness. (Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 2:9) From the day it was founded, at Pentecost 33 C.E., it was an organization of preachers. (Acts 2:4) Have you had the experience of trying to tell someone about Jehovah's purposes but failing to convince him? Congregation meetings provide personal training in the art of teaching. By studying Bible examples, we learn how to establish common ground from which to reason, how to use the Scriptures as a basis for logical argument, and how to help others to reason by using questions and illustrations. Such skills can help you experience the unspeakable joy of assisting another person to understand Bible truth.

In this strife-torn, immoral world, the Christian congregation is a real spiritual refuge. Even though it is made up of imperfect people, it is a haven of peace and love. Therefore, be a regular attender at all of its meetings and experience for yourself the truth of the psalmist's words: "Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! . . . Jehovah commanded the blessing to be, even life to time indefinite."—Psalm 133:1, 3.

GO ON GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE

"Supply to your faith . . . knowledge."—2 PETER 1:5.

WHAT could you learn by going outside on a clear, dark night and looking at the bright moon and countless stars? You could learn something about the One who created all of this.—Psalm 19:1-6; 69:34.

² If you wanted to increase that knowledge, would you get up on the roof of your house and look from there? Probably not. Albert Einstein once used such an illustration to make the point that scientists have not really increased very much in knowledge of the universe and certainly very little about the One who created it.* Dr. Lewis Thomas wrote: "The greatest single achievement of science in this most scientifically productive of centuries is the discovery that we are profoundly ignorant; we know very little about nature and we understand even less."

³ Even if you spent all the remaining years of a normal life span seeking such knowledge, you might just become more aware of how short life is and see more clearly that man's use of knowledge is lim-

* "[It] is comparable to that which a man, interested in learning more about the moon, gets when he climbs upon the roof of his house to catch a closer look at that luminary."

1, 2. (a) What could you learn from looking at the heavens? (Romans 1:20) (b) What is the real extent of man's increase in knowledge?

3. In what sense does an increase of knowledge increase pain?

ited by imperfection and by the 'crookedness' of this world. Solomon made that point, writing: "In the abundance of wisdom there is an abundance of vexation, so that he that increases knowledge increases pain." (Ecclesiastes 1:15, 18) Yes, gaining knowledge and wisdom devoid of any link to God's purposes usually involves pain and vexation.—Ecclesiastes 1:13, 14; 12:12; 1 Timothy 6:20.

⁴ Is the Bible recommending that we not be interested in increasing our knowledge? The apostle Peter wrote: "No, but go on growing in the undeserved kindness and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity." (2 Peter 3:18) We can and should accept that exhortation as applying to us, urging us to grow in knowledge. But what kind of knowledge? How can we increase in it? And are we really doing so?

⁵ Increasing in accurate knowledge of the Creator of the universe and of Jesus was a central idea in Peter's second letter. In its opening he wrote: "May undeserved kindness and peace be *increased to you by an accurate knowledge of God and of Jesus* our Lord, forasmuch as his divine power has given us freely all the things that concern

4. What knowledge should we want to gain?

5, 6. How did Peter emphasize that we need to gain knowledge?

life and godly devotion, *through the accurate knowledge of the one who called us through glory and virtue.*" (2 Peter 1:2, 3) So he links having undeserved kindness and peace with our gaining knowledge of God and his Son. That is reasonable, since the Creator, Jehovah, is the focal point of real knowledge. One who fears God is able to see matters in the right light and to come to valid conclusions.—Proverbs 1:7.

⁶ Then Peter urged: "Supply to your faith virtue, to your virtue *knowledge*, to your knowledge self-control, to your self-control endurance, to your endurance godly devotion, to your godly devotion brotherly affection, to your brotherly affection love. For if these things exist in you and overflow, they will prevent you from being either inactive or unfruitful regarding the accurate knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-8)* In the next chapter, we read that the acquiring of knowledge helps people to escape the defilements of the world. (2 Peter 2:20) Peter thus made it clear that those who are becoming Christians need knowledge, as do those who are already serving Jehovah. Are you in one of those categories?

Learn, Repeat, Use

⁷ You may be having a Bible study with Jehovah's Witnesses because you recognize the ring of truth in their message. Once a week, for an hour or so, you consider a Bible topic using an aid such as *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. Excellent! Many who have had such a study with Jehovah's Witnesses have gained accurate knowledge. What, though, can you do to in-

* Faith and virtue, the first two qualities in this passage, were discussed in our issue of July 15, 1993.

7. In what way have many gained accurate knowledge of basic Bible truths?

crease the amount you personally are learning? Here are some suggestions.*

⁸ Beforehand, as you prepare for your study, survey the material to be covered. That means looking over the chapter title, subheadings, and any pictures used to illustrate the material. Then, as you read a paragraph or section of the publication, search for the key ideas and the supporting scriptures, underlining or highlighting these. To see if you learned the truths covered, try to answer the questions on the various paragraphs. In doing this, attempt to frame answers in your own words. Finally, review the lesson, trying to recall the main points and supporting arguments.

⁹ You can expect to increase in knowledge if you apply these suggestions. Why so? One reason is that you will be approaching the material with a keen desire to learn, preparing the soil, as it were. By getting an overview and then looking for the main points and lines of reasoning, you will see how details relate to the theme or conclusion. A final review will help you remember what you have studied. What about later, during your Bible study?

¹⁰ Experts in the field of education know the value of timely and purposeful repetition. This is not a mere parroting of words, which you may have tried in school while learning some name, fact, or idea by rote. Did you find, though, that you soon forgot

* These suggestions can also help longtime Christians to get more from their personal study and preparation for meetings.

8. While preparing for a study, what can a student do to learn more?

9. How will applying suggestions about study help one to learn?

10. (a) Why is merely repeating facts or new information of limited value? (b) What is involved in "graduated interval recall"? (c) How may Israelite sons have benefited from repetition?

what you had recited, that it had quickly disappeared from memory? Why? Just parroting a new word or fact can be boring, and the results are short-lived. What can change that? Your truly wanting to learn will help. Another key is purposeful repetition. Some minutes after you learn a point, before it fades from memory, try to draw from within yourself what you learned. This has been termed "graduated interval recall." By your refreshing your memory before it fades away, you extend the length of retention. In Israel, fathers were to inculcate God's commands in their sons. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) "Inculcate" means to teach by repetition. Likely, many of those fathers first presented the laws to their sons; later they repeated the information; and then they asked their sons questions about what was learned.

¹¹ If a Witness is conducting a Bible study with you, he or she may help you to learn by having progressive summaries at intervals during the course of the study. This is not juvenile. It is a technique that improves learning, so happily share in the periodic reviews. Then, at the end of the study, take part in a final review in which you answer from memory. You might, in your own words, explain the points as you would in teaching another person. (1 Peter 3:15) This will help to make what you learned part of your long-term memory.—Compare Psalm 119:1, 2, 125; 2 Peter 3:1.

¹² Another helpful step will be for you, within a day or two, to tell what you learned to someone else, maybe a schoolmate, a fellow worker, or a neighbor. You could mention the topic and then say that you just

11. What can be done during a Bible study to increase learning?
12. A student himself can do what to improve his memory?

want to see if you can recall the key lines of reasoning or the supporting texts from the Bible. That might spark the other person's interest. Even if it does not, the very process of your repeating the new information after an interval of a day or two will establish it in your memory. Then you will really have learned it, doing what 2 Peter 3:18 urges.

Actively Learning

¹³ Learning is more than merely taking in facts or being able to recall information. Religious people in Jesus' day did that with their repetitious prayers. (Matthew 6:5-7) But how were they affected by the information? Were they producing righteous fruits? Hardly. (Matthew 7:15-17; Luke 3:7, 8) Part of the problem was that the knowledge did not sink down into their hearts, affecting them for good.

¹⁴ According to Peter, it should be different with Christians, back then and now. He urges us to supply to our faith the knowledge that would help us to avoid being inactive or unfruitful. (2 Peter 1:5, 8) For this to prove true in our case, we must want to grow in that knowledge and want to have it affect us down deep, touching our inmost self. That may not always happen.

¹⁵ In Paul's day Hebrew Christians had a problem in this regard. Being Jews, they had some knowledge of the Scriptures. They knew of Jehovah and some of his requirements. Later they added knowledge about the Messiah, exercised faith, and were baptized as Christians. (Acts 2:22, 37-41; 8:26-36) Over the months and years, they must have attended Christian meetings, where they could share in reading scrip-

- 13, 14. Why should we want to go beyond merely gaining and remembering information?
15. What problem developed with some Hebrew Christians?

Do I have a problem with mental permafrost?

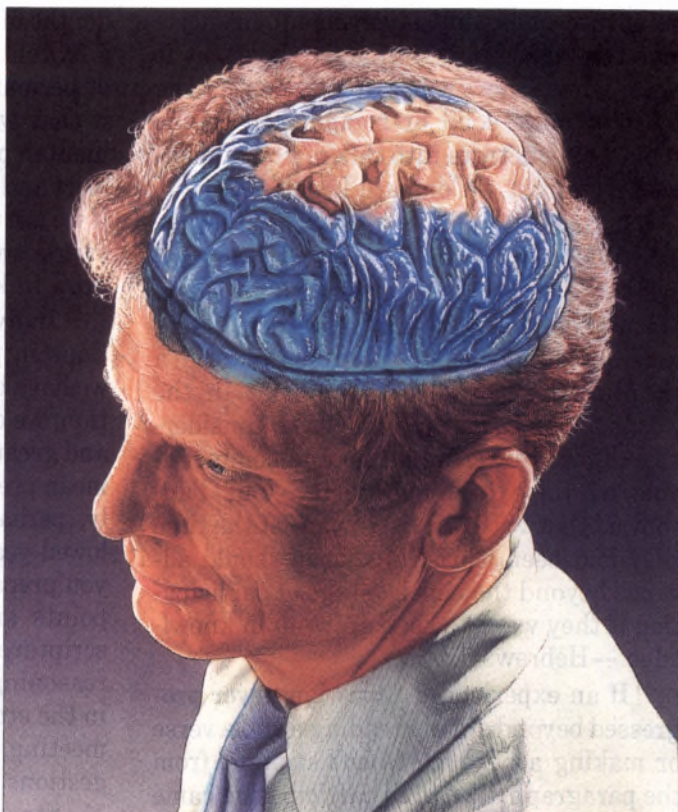
tures and in commenting. Still, some did not grow in knowledge. Paul wrote: "Although you ought to be teachers in view of the time, you again need someone to teach you from the beginning the elementary things of the sacred pronouncements of God; and you have become such as need milk, not solid food." (Hebrews 5:12) How could that be? Might it also happen to us?

¹⁶ As an illustration, consider permafrost, the permanently frozen ground in the Arctic and in other regions where the average temperature is below freezing. The soil, rocks, and groundwater freeze into a solid mass, sometimes to a depth of 3,000 feet. In the summer, thawing may occur in the surface soil (called the active layer). However, this thin layer of thawed soil is usually muddy because moisture cannot drain into the permafrost below. Plants that grow in the thin top layer are often small or stunted; their roots cannot penetrate the permafrost. 'What,' you may wonder, 'does permafrost have to do with whether I am growing in knowledge of Bible truth?'

¹⁷ Permafrost well illustrates the situation of one whose mental powers are not

16. What is permafrost, and how does it affect plants?

17, 18. How may permafrost and its active layer be used to illustrate what developed with some Hebrew Christians?



actively involved with taking in, remembering, and using accurate knowledge. (Compare Matthew 13:5, 20, 21.) The person likely has the mental capacity to learn various subjects, including Bible truth. He studied "the elementary things of the sacred pronouncements of God" and may have qualified to be baptized, as did those Hebrew Christians. He might, though, not "press on to maturity," to things beyond "the primary doctrine about the Christ."—Hebrews 5:12; 6:1.

¹⁸ Visualize some of those Christians at meetings back then. They were present and awake, but were their minds involved in learning? Were they actively and earnestly growing in knowledge? Perhaps not. For the

immature ones, any involvement in meetings took place in a thin active layer, as it were, while below was a frozen depth. The roots of more solid or complicated truths could not penetrate into this region of mental permafrost.—Compare Isaiah 40:24.

¹⁹ It could be similar with a Christian today. While present at meetings he may not use those occasions to grow in knowledge. What about actively sharing in them? For a new or young one to volunteer to read a scripture text or give a comment in the words of the paragraph may take considerable effort, reflecting a fine and commendable exercise of his capacity. But Paul showed that with others, in view of the time they had been Christians, they should advance beyond that initial stage of participation if they want to keep growing in knowledge.—Hebrews 5:14.

²⁰ If an experienced Christian never progressed beyond simply reading a Bible verse or making a basic comment straight from the paragraph, likely his participation came from the top “active layer” of his mind. Meeting after meeting could pass with the

19. In what way might an experienced Christian today become like the Hebrew Christians?

20. What self-analysis should each of us make?

Can You Recall?

- ☐ Why should you be interested in increasing your knowledge?
- ☐ How can a new Bible student get more out of his study?
- ☐ What danger do you want to avoid, as illustrated by permafrost?
- ☐ Why should you be resolved to improve in your ability to increase knowledge?

depths of his mental potential remaining in a frozen state, to continue our illustration of permafrost. We should ask ourselves: ‘Is it that way with me? Have I let a kind of mental permafrost set in? How mentally alert and interested in learning am I?’ Even if we are uncomfortable with our honest answers, we can begin now taking steps to grow in knowledge.

²¹ Individually we can apply the suggestions in paragraph 8. No matter how long we have been associated with the congregation, we can resolve to press on to maturity and greater knowledge. With some that will mean preparing for meetings more diligently, perhaps reviving habits that were followed years ago but that slowly lapsed. As you prepare, try to determine what the key points are and to understand unfamiliar scriptures that are used to develop lines of reasoning. Look for any new angle or aspect in the study material. Similarly, during the meeting, try to apply within yourself suggestions mentioned in paragraphs 10 and 11. Strive to be alert mentally, as though keeping high the temperature of your mind. That will counteract any tendency for “permafrost” to set in; this conscious effort will also thaw any “frozen” condition that may previously have developed.—Proverbs 8:12, 32-34.

Knowledge, an Aid Toward Fruitfulness

²² How will we benefit individually if we work at this matter of growing in the undeserved kindness and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? By our making conscious effort to keep our mental powers alert, ready to take in knowledge, the seeds

21. What steps covered earlier could you apply in preparing for or attending meetings?

22. How will we benefit if we work at increasing our knowledge?

of new and more complicated Bible truths will send down deep roots, and our understanding will increase and become permanent. It will be comparable to what Jesus said in a different illustration about hearts. (Luke 8:5-12) The seeds landing on fine soil can grow strong roots to support plants that produce and bear fruit.—Matthew 13:8, 23.

²³ Jesus' illustration differed somewhat, yet the good results were similar to what Peter promised: "For this very reason, by your contributing in response all earnest effort, supply to your faith virtue, to your virtue knowledge . . . For if these things

23. What results can come when we take 2 Peter 3:18 to heart? (Colossians 1:9-12)

exist in you and overflow, they will prevent you from being either inactive or unfruitful regarding the accurate knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-8) Yes, our growing in knowledge will help us to be fruitful. We will find that taking in even more knowledge will be ever more pleasurable. (Proverbs 2:2-5) What you learn will more readily stay with you and be useful as you teach others to become disciples. So in this way too, you will be more fruitful and will bring glory to God and his Son. Peter closed his second letter: "Go on growing in the undeserved kindness and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity."—2 Peter 3:18.

LET YOUR SELF-CONTROL EXIST AND OVERFLOW

"Supply to your faith . . . self-control."—2 PETER 1:5, 6.

JESUS said: "You will be hailed before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them." (Matthew 10:18) If you were called before a governor, a judge, or a president, what would you speak about? Perhaps first about why you were there, the accusation against you. God's spirit would help you do so. (Luke 12:11, 12) But can you imagine speaking about self-control? Do you consider that an important part of our Christian message?

1. In what unusual situation might a Christian give a witness?

² Consider a real-life example. One of Jehovah's witnesses was arrested and brought to trial. When given an opportunity to speak, he wanted to explain his beliefs as a Christian, as a witness. You can examine the record and you will find that he gave forensic testimony "about righteousness and self-control and the judgment to come." We are referring to an experience of the

2, 3. (a) How did it occur that Paul could witness to Felix and Drusilla? (b) Why was self-control a fitting subject for Paul to speak about in that situation?



apostle Paul in Caesarea. There was an initial interrogation. "Some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla his wife, who was a Jewess, and he sent for Paul and listened to him on the belief in Christ Jesus." (Acts 24:24) History reports that Felix "practised every kind of cruelty and lust, wielding the power of king with all the instincts of a slave." He had been married twice before when he induced Drusilla to divorce her husband (violating God's law) and become his third wife. Maybe it was she who wanted to hear of the new religion, Christianity.

³ Paul went on to talk "about righteousness and self-control and the judgment to come." (Acts 24:25) This would have made

When before Felix and Drusilla, Paul spoke about righteousness and self-control

apparent the contrast between God's standards of uprightness and the cruelty and injustice Felix and Drusilla were part of. Paul may have hoped to move Felix to display justice in the case at hand. But why bring up "self-control and the judgment to come"? This immoral pair were inquiring what "belief in Christ Jesus" entailed. So they needed to know that following him requires restraining one's thoughts, speech, and actions, which is what self-control means. All humans are accountable to God for their thinking, words, and deeds. Thus,

more important than any judgment from Felix in Paul's case was the judgment that the governor and his wife faced before God. (Acts 17:30, 31; Romans 14:10-12) Understandably, upon hearing Paul's message, "Felix became frightened."

It Is Important but Not Easy

⁴ The apostle Paul recognized self-control as a vital part of Christianity. The apostle Peter, one of Jesus' close associates, confirmed this. When writing to those who would "become sharers in divine nature" in heaven, Peter urged displaying certain qualities that were essential, such as faith, love, and self-control. Hence, self-control was involved in this assurance: "If these things exist in you and overflow, they will prevent you from being either inactive or unfruitful regarding the accurate knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."—2 Peter 1:1, 4-8.

⁵ You know, however, that it is easier to say that we should display self-control than it is actually to practice it in our daily life. One reason is that self-control is relatively rare. At 2 Timothy 3:1-5 Paul described attitudes that would prevail in our time, in "the last days." One trait that would characterize our period is that many would be "without self-control." We see this proving true all around us, do we not?

⁶ Many people believe that it basically is healthy to "let go" or to "let off steam." Their view is reinforced by role models in the public eye who seem to ignore self-control of any sort, who simply indulge their impulses. To illustrate: Many who like professional sports have grown accustomed

to wild displays of emotion, even violent rage. Can you not recall, at least from the press, instances where brutal fights or mob scenes erupted at sporting events? Our point, though, does not require that we devote much time to reviewing examples of lack of self-control. You could list many areas in which we need to show self-control—our consumption of food and drink, our conduct with the opposite sex, and the time and money spent on hobbies. But rather than skim over many of such, let us examine one primary area in which we must manifest self-control.

Self-Control Regarding Our Emotions

⁷ Many of us have been reasonably successful in regulating or restraining our actions. We do not steal, succumb to immorality, or commit murder; we know what God's law is about such wrongs. How successful are we, though, in controlling our emotions? In time, those who fail to cultivate emotional self-control often lose self-control in regard to their actions. So let us focus on our emotions.

⁸ Jehovah God does not expect us to be automatons, so that we neither have nor manifest any emotion. At Lazarus' tomb, Jesus "groaned in the spirit and became troubled." Then "Jesus gave way to tears." (John 11:32-38) He showed quite a different emotion when, with perfect control of his actions, he drove money changers from the temple. (Matthew 21:12, 13; John 2:14-17) His loyal disciples also displayed deep emotions. (Luke 10:17; 24:41; John 16:20-22; Acts 11:23; 12:12-14; 20:36-38; 3 John 4)

4. Why is self-control an important part of true Christianity?

5. Why should we be especially concerned about self-control?

6. How is lack of self-control manifested today?

7. What aspect of self-control merits special attention?

8. What does Jehovah expect of us regarding our emotions?

Yet, they realized the need for self-control in order that their emotions did not lead to sin. Ephesians 4:26 makes this quite clear: "Be wrathful, and yet do not sin; let the sun not set with you in a provoked state."

⁹ There is a danger that a Christian might seem to manifest self-control while, in fact, his emotions get out of control. Recall the response when God approved Abel's sacrifice: "Cain grew hot with great anger, and his countenance began to fall. At this Jehovah said to Cain: 'Why are you hot with anger and why has your countenance fallen? If you turn to doing good, will there not be an exaltation? But if you do not turn to doing good, there is sin crouching at the entrance, and for you is its craving.'" (Genesis 4:5-7) Cain failed to control his emotions, which led him to murder Abel. Uncontrolled emotions led to an uncontrolled deed.

¹⁰ Consider, too, an example from the days of Mordecai and Esther. The official named Haman became angry that Mordecai would not bow to him. Later Haman erroneously thought he would be favored. "Haman went out on that day joyful and merry of heart; but as soon as Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate and that he did not rise and did not quake on account of him, Haman was immediately filled with rage against Mordecai. However, Haman kept control of himself and came into his house." (Esther 5:9, 10) He was quick to feel the emotion of joy. Yet he was also quick to feel rage at the mere sight of one against whom he held a grudge. Do you think that when the Bible says that Haman "kept control of himself" it meant he was exemplary in self-control? Hardly. For the time being, Haman

9. Why is controlling our emotions so important?

10. What do you learn from Haman's example?

controlled his actions and any show of emotion, but he failed to control his jealous rage. His emotions led him to plot murder.

¹¹ Similarly, lack of control of emotions today can greatly harm Christians. 'Oh,' some might feel, 'that would not be a problem in the congregation.' But it has been. Two anointed Christians in Philippi had a serious difference, which the Bible does not describe. Imagine this as a possibility: Euodia invited some brothers and sisters for a meal or a pleasant gathering. Syntyche was not invited, and she felt hurt. Perhaps she responded by not inviting Euodia on a later occasion. Then both began looking for the other's mistakes; in time, they hardly spoke to each other. In a scenario like that, would the basic problem be the lack of an invitation to a meal? No. That would be just the spark. When these two anointed sisters failed to control their emotions, the spark became a forest fire. The problem persisted and grew until an apostle had to intervene. —Philippians 4:2, 3.

Your Emotions and Your Brothers

¹² Admittedly, it is not easy to control one's emotions when one feels slighted, hurt, or treated with prejudice. Jehovah knows that, for he has observed human relations from man's beginning. God counsels us: "Do not hurry yourself in your spirit to become offended, for the taking of offense is what rests in the bosom of the stupid ones." (Ecclesiastes 7:9) Notice that God gives attention first to emotions not to actions. (Proverbs 14:17; 16:32; James 1:19) Ask yourself, 'Should I give more attention to controlling my emotions?'

11. In the Philippi congregation, what problem existed and what could have led to it?

12. Why does God give us the advice found at Ecclesiastes 7:9?

¹³ Many people in the world who fail to control their emotions start vendettas—bitter, even violent, feuds over a real or imagined wrong against themselves or a relative. Once emotions get out of control, they can exert their harmful influence for a long time. (Compare Genesis 34:1-7, 25-27; 49:5-7; 2 Samuel 2:17-23; 3:23-30; Proverbs 26:24-26.) Certainly Christians, no matter of what national or cultural background, should see such bitter hostilities and grudges as wrong, bad, to be avoided. (Leviticus 19:17) Do you view avoiding grudges as part of your self-control regarding emotions?

¹⁴ Just as in the case of Euodia and Syntyche, failure to control emotions could lead to problems now. A sister might feel slighted at not being invited to a wedding feast. Or maybe it was her child or her cousin who was not included. Or perhaps a brother bought a used automobile from a fellow Christian, and before long it broke down. Whatever the reason, this caused hurt feelings, emotions were not controlled, and those involved got upset. Then what?

¹⁵ If an upset person does not work at controlling his emotions and making peace with his brother, a grudge could develop. There have been cases when a Witness asked not to be assigned to a certain Congregation Book Study because he did “not care for” some Christian or family attending there. How sad! The Bible says it would be a defeat for Christians to take one another to worldly courts, but would it not be equally a defeat if we avoided a brother over a past slight to us or to some relative? Do

our emotions reveal that we put blood relationships ahead of peace with our brothers and sisters? Do we say that we would be willing to die for our sister, but our emotions so move us that we hardly speak with her now? (Compare John 15:13.) God tells us pointedly: “Return evil for evil to no one. . . . 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.”—Romans 12:17-19; 1 Corinthians 6:7.

¹⁶ A step toward regaining control of our emotions is to make peace or resolve the cause for complaint, rather than letting animosities persist. Recall when the land could not support Abraham’s large herds along with those of Lot, and their hired workers therefore began to quarrel. Did Abraham let his emotions get the better of him? Or did he manifest self-control? Commendably, he suggested a peaceful solution to the business conflict; let each have a separate territory. And he gave Lot the first choice. Proving that Abraham had no bitterness and that he held no grudge, he later went to battle in behalf of Lot.—Genesis 13:5-12; 14:13-16.

¹⁷ We can also learn about self-control from an incident involving Paul and Barnabas. After having been partners for years, they disagreed over whether to take Mark on a trip. “There occurred a sharp burst of anger, so that they separated from each other; and Barnabas took Mark along and sailed away to Cyprus.” (Acts 15:39) That these mature men failed to control their emotions on that occasion should provide a warning for us. If it could happen to them,

16. Abraham set what good example as to dealing with emotions?

17. How did Paul and Barnabas fail on one occasion, but what followed thereafter?

13, 14. (a) In the world, what commonly develops from failure to control emotions? (b) What things might lead Christians to hold grudges?

15. (a) What sad consequences have resulted from grudges between Christians? (b) What Bible counsel bears on a tendency to hold grudges?

it can happen to us. They did not, though, permit a lasting breach to develop or a vendetta to grow. The record proves that the brothers involved regained control of their emotions and later worked together in peace.—Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11.

¹⁸ We can expect that there may be hurt feelings, even grudges, among God's people. They were present in Hebrew times and in the apostles' days. They also have occurred among Jehovah's servants in our time, for all of us are imperfect. (James 3:2) Jesus urged his followers to act quickly to resolve such problems between brothers. (Matthew 5:23-25) But it is even better to prevent them in the first place by improving our self-control. If you feel slighted or offended by a relatively small thing your brother or sister said or did, why not just control your emotions and simply forget it? Is it really necessary to confront the other person, as if you will not be satisfied until that one admits to being wrong? Just how much are you in control of *your* emotions?

It Is Possible!

¹⁹ We have dealt primarily with one aspect of self-control, controlling our emotions. And that is a key area because failure to control our emotions can lead to losing control of our tongue, our sexual impulses, our eating habits, and many other aspects of life where we must display self-control. (1 Corinthians 7:8, 9; James 3:5-10) Take courage, though, for you can improve in maintaining self-control.

²⁰ Jehovah is willing to help us. How can we be sure? Well, self-control is one of the

18. If feelings are hurt, what can the mature Christian do?

19. Why is it fitting that our discussion centered on controlling our emotions?

20. How can we be sure that improvement is possible?

fruits of his spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Thus, to the extent that we work to qualify for and to receive holy spirit from Jehovah and to manifest its fruitage, to that extent we can expect to be more self-controlled. Never forget Jesus' assurance: "The Father in heaven [will] give holy spirit to those asking him!"—Luke 11:13; 1 John 5:14, 15.

²¹ Do not imagine that it will be easy. And it may be harder for some who grew up around people who gave free rein to their emotions, for some with a more excitable temperament, or for some who just never tried to display self-control. For such a Christian, letting self-control exist and overflow may be a real challenge. Yet it is possible. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27) As we get nearer and nearer to the end of the present system of things, stresses and pressures will increase. We are going to need not less self-control but more, much more! Examine yourself as to your self-control. If you see areas in which you need to improve, work at it. (Psalm 139:23, 24) Ask God for more of his spirit. He will hear you and will help you so that your self-control will exist and will overflow.—2 Peter 1:5-8.

21. What are you resolved to do in the future about self-control and your emotions?

Points for Reflection

- ☐ Why is control of your emotions so important?
- ☐ What have you learned from the examples of Haman and of Euodia and Syntyche?
- ☐ What will you honestly try to do if a cause for offense occurs?
- ☐ How can self-control help you to avoid holding any grudge?



Succeeding in the Struggle With **ALCOHOLISM**

"During work, about ten o'clock in the morning, I would begin to think about a drink. By 12 o'clock I'd go out to have one or two. By three o'clock I would be physically shaking. I longed for quitting time so I could have another drink. Often I would have a couple on the way home. About seven o'clock I would have the compulsion again. I would drink, fall off the chair unconscious, wet my pants, and lie in my urine until morning. Take this and multiply it by 7 days a week; multiply that by 52 weeks a year; multiply that by 29 years."

THIS man is an alcoholic. He is not alone. Millions worldwide struggle with this deadly condition that, according to Dr. Vernon E. Johnson, "involves the whole man: physically, mentally, psychologically, and spiritually."*

Many experts say that alcoholism cannot

* Although we will refer to the alcoholic as a male, the principles herein apply equally to the female alcoholic.

be cured but that it can be arrested through a program of lifetime abstinence. This is not an unreasonable requirement, for alcohol is not essential to life. In fact, misuse of alcohol brings God's disfavor. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) It is better to enter God's new world deprived of alcohol than to indulge a craving for it and lose out on everlasting life.—Matthew 5:29, 30.

Perhaps you suffer the degradation and misery that alcoholism produces. If so, do not give up hope. Help is available.

Breaking free—and staying free—from alcohol abuse is often a frustrating challenge. (Compare Romans 7:21-24.) What can help? Let us provide some direct advice. Even if you do not drink alcohol at all, this advice will be informative and may enable you to assist some friend or relative who is struggling with alcoholism.

An Honest Look at Yourself

One of the biggest obstacles to overcome is denial of the fact that you are an alcoholic. Denial is a form of dishonesty. It is rationalization with a purpose: to protect your freedom to drink. 'I'm not *that* bad,' you may reason. 'I still have my family. I still have my job.' Most important, you still have your alcohol.

Denial may keep you from listening to friends who want to help you. Robert observed that his wife's stepfather had adopted unhealthy drinking patterns and rude behavior. "After a few days, I confronted him," says Robert, "asking him if he felt that his drinking contributed to his behavior." The result? "I was met with complete denial, with comments such as, 'You have no proof' and, 'You don't know how I feel.'"

If you are approached by a family member or a friend who is concerned about your drinking, take a hard, honest look at yourself. (Proverbs 8:33) Can you live without alcohol for a whole week, for an entire month, or for several months? If not, why not? Do not be like the man who deceives himself with false reasoning. James says: "This one is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, and off he goes and immediately for-

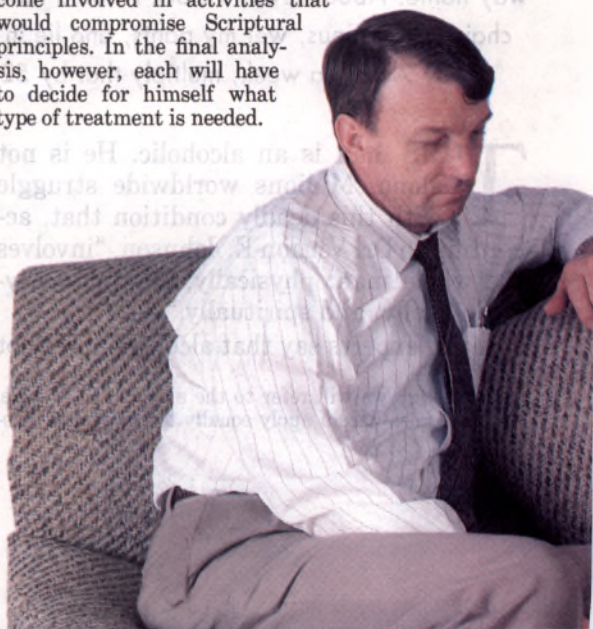
gets what sort of man he is."—James 1: 22-25.

Even after recovery begins, you will still have to beware of denial. The book *Willpower's Not Enough* explains: "The newly abstinent person can mistakenly believe that because he's been able to stop using for a little while—perhaps for the first time—he's now cured." This is addictive thinking at its strongest, and it is the first step to a relapse. If you are to resist such denial, you must not stand alone.

Get Help

Realizing that he could not combat alcoholism alone, a man we may call Leo sought professional help. After a period of intensive treatment, he was on the road to recovery. Leo feels that the value of expert help cannot be overemphasized.* If such help is locally available, you may decide to take advantage of it.

* There are many treatment centers, hospitals, and other recovery programs that can provide help. *The Watchtower* does not endorse any particular treatment. Care must be exercised so that one does not become involved in activities that would compromise Scriptural principles. In the final analysis, however, each will have to decide for himself what type of treatment is needed.



You must realize, however, that there is more to recovery than mere abstinence. Beneath alcoholism there are likely deeper issues that you need to face. Ignoring these can be dangerous. Dr. Charlotte Davis Kasl writes: "I have interviewed people who went through treatment for substance abuse up to fourteen times because the core problems of abuse, dependency, and neglect were not addressed."

Dennis found this to be true. "I was a sober alcoholic who still had lots of problems," he writes. "It wasn't enough to stop drinking. I had to take a look at my past, examine the lessons of my childhood, understand how they were affecting me, and make some changes in my behavior."

Similarly, Leo had to look deep inside himself in order to progress in recovery. "I was an extremely jealous, violent person," he says. "I fluctuated between bouts of low self-esteem and delusions of grandeur." Leo applied the Bible's counsel at Ephesians 4:22: "Put away the old personality which conforms to your former course of conduct." Yes, "your former course of conduct" has

exerted a powerful influence on your personality. As plaster

conforms to a mold, so your personality has in part been shaped by your past course. When wrong conduct is removed, what is left? A personality that has been molded perhaps over a period of many years. Therefore, recovery must include changing the old personality that conforms to your former course of conduct.

Establish a Relationship With God

Leo's recovery also entailed developing a personal relationship with God. "Learning to rely on Jehovah absolutely changed my attitude, behavior, and outlook," he says.

However, caution is appropriate. Any relationship—with humans or with God—requires openness, honesty, and trust. These are the very qualities that alcoholism erodes. They can be cultivated, but it takes time.

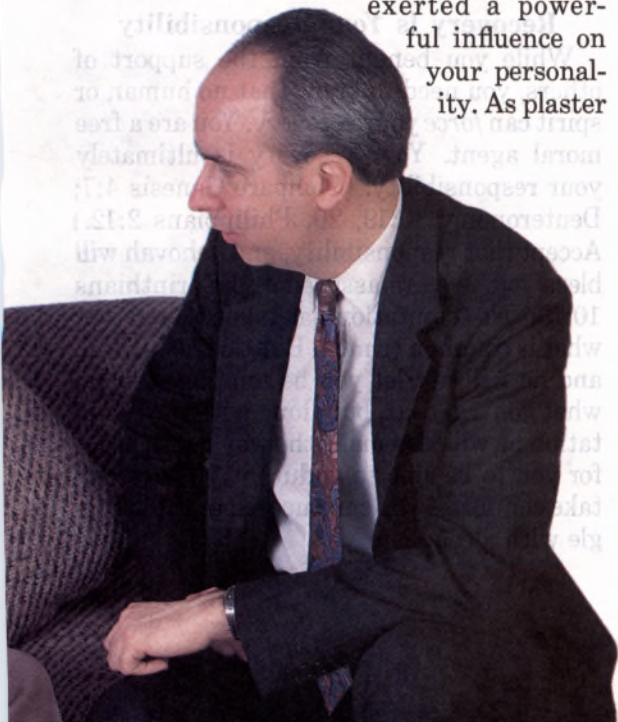
As an alcoholic, you may not know what a close relationship feels like. Perhaps you have never experienced one. So be patient. Do not rush this step, expecting a relationship with God to materialize as an automatic by-product of abstinence. Work hard to understand God and his qualities. Meditate regularly, perhaps carefully reading the Bible's psalms that express deep, appreciative feelings about Jehovah and his ways.*

"Power Beyond What Is Normal"

A trusting, confident relationship with God can have a powerful influence on you. Jehovah will support your efforts to recover. (Compare Psalm 51:10-12; 145:14.) You may approach him in fervent prayer at any time, confident that he will supply to you "power beyond what is normal."—2 Corinthians 4:7; Philippians 4:6, 7.

* Some examples are Psalms 8, 9, 18, 19, 24, 51, 55, 63, 66, 73, 77, 84, 86, 90, 103, 130, 135, 139, 145.

Resist denial by taking a hard, honest look at yourself



IF YOU EXPERIENCE A SLIP

"Being prepared for a slip is like having a fire drill," says the book *Willpower's Not Enough*. "It doesn't mean you expect a fire but that you are prepared to take responsible action should one occur." If you do experience a slip:

- ☐ Pray to Jehovah. Be assured that he understands your problem and wants to help. —Psalm 103:14; Isaiah 41:10.
- ☐ Confide in a Christian elder, having decided beforehand whom to contact should the need arise. Be honest about what happened, and listen carefully to his Scriptural advice.
- ☐ Guard against despair. Self-loathing only moves you closer to a full-blown relapse, so put your mistake in proper perspective. Having lost one battle does not mean that you have lost the war. When a marathon runner falls, he does not go back to the starting line; he gets up and continues the race. Do the same with your recovery. You are still on the road. The weeks, months, or years of abstinence behind you do not cease to exist.

The Creator knows your makeup better than any human. (Psalm 103:14) Human counselors, who are dependent on human wisdom, can help; but how much more can the Creator of man help you in this fight! (Isaiah 41:10; 48:17, 18) He has provided loving support within the Christian congregation.

A Support System

Spiritually mature elders in the Christian congregation can be a great source of help. Few of them would claim to be skilled in the medical or mental-health fields, but they do know and trust God's Word and principles. They can prove to be "like a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rainstorm, like streams of water in a waterless country, like the shadow of a heavy crag in an exhausted land." (Isaiah 32:2) Take full advantage of their help.*

Of course, such Christian elders, along with other family members and friends, will not shield you from the consequences of your own actions. The publication *Coming*

Off Drink explains: "The critical therapeutic ingredient is confronting alcoholics with the damaging consequences of dependence and getting them to take responsibility for their own behaviour." So they will be kind but straightforward, encouraging you to face reality and adhere to whatever treatment and course of conduct is needed to win your war against alcohol.

Recovery Is Your Responsibility

While you benefit from the support of others, you need to know that no human or spirit can *force* your recovery. You are a *free* moral agent. Your recovery is ultimately your responsibility. (Compare Genesis 4:7; Deuteronomy 30:19, 20; Philippians 2:12.) Accept that responsibility, and Jehovah will bless you. We are assured at 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has taken you except what is common to men. But God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it." Therefore, take comfort—you can succeed in the struggle with alcoholism.

* Helpful guidelines for elders are found in *The Watchtower*, May 1, 1983, pages 8-11.

How Christians Can Help the Elderly

“WE DO not give up, but even if the man we are outside is wasting away, certainly the man we are inside is being renewed from day to day. . . . We keep our eyes, not on the things seen, but on the things unseen. For the things seen are temporary, but the things unseen are everlasting.” So said the apostle Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians.—2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

In ancient times, men and women of faith kept their eyes on the things unseen, which included all the things their God, Jehovah, had promised to do in his due time. In the book of Hebrews, Paul speaks highly of such ones, who maintained their faith till the time of their death—and some of them lived to be very old. He points to them as an example for us, saying: “In faith all these died, although they did not get the fulfillment of the promises, but they saw them afar off and welcomed them.”—Hebrews 11:13.

Today we are very close to the fulfillment of these promises. But we have sick and elderly ones among us who do not feel certain that they will personally live to see the end



of this wicked system. Maybe some of these also will die in faith without having seen all the promises fulfilled during their present lifetime. To such ones the words of Paul at 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 can be a great encouragement.

Jehovah remembers all of his loyal ones, including the sick and the elderly. (Hebrews 6:10) Faithful older ones are mentioned honorably at several places in the Bible, and in the Law of Moses, special mention is made of the honor to be shown the aged. (Le-

viticus 19:32; Psalm 92:12-15; Proverbs 16:31) Among early Christians, elderly ones were treated with esteem. (1 Timothy 5:1-3; 1 Peter 5:5) One Bible book contains a beautiful description of the loving care and touching self-sacrifice shown by a young woman toward her aging mother-in-law. The book appropriately carries the name of that young woman, Ruth.

A Devoted Helper

Life was bitter for the aging Naomi. A famine had forced her, together with her small family, to leave friends and inheritance behind in Judah and live east of the

Jordan River in the land of Moab. Here Naomi's husband died, leaving her alone with their two boys. These, in time, grew up and married, but then they too died. Naomi was left with no heirs to take care of her.

She was too old to start a new family, and life seemed to offer very little. Unselfishly, she wanted to send Ruth and Orpah, the widows of her two sons, back to their mothers' homes so that they might find husbands for themselves. She would return alone to her native land. Today, too, some older ones feel depressed, especially if they have lost dear ones in death. Like Naomi, they may need someone to take care of them, but they do not want to be a burden.

Ruth, however, did not abandon her mother-in-law. She loved this older woman, and she loved Jehovah, the God worshiped by Naomi. (Ruth 1:16) So together they set out on the journey back to Judah. In that land, there was a loving arrangement under Jehovah's Law that poor people could glean, or gather, whatever was left in the fields after the harvest was brought in. Ruth, who was younger, willingly offered to do this work, saying: "Let me go, please." She worked untiringly for the benefit of both. —Ruth 2:2, 17, 18.

Ruth's faithfulness and love for Jehovah was a strong encouragement to Naomi, who began to think in a positive and constructive way. Her knowledge of the Law and the customs of the country was useful now. She gave wise advice to her devoted helper so that the younger woman, through a levirate marriage, could win back the inheritance of the family and have a son to continue the family line. (Ruth, chapter 3) Ruth is a beautiful example for those who make sacrifices to care for sick or older ones. (Ruth 2:10-12) Within the congregation today, much can similarly be done to help the sick and the elderly. How?

Organizing Is Valuable

In the early Christian congregation, a list was kept of widows in need of material support. (1 Timothy 5:9, 10) Likewise today, in some cases elders might make up a list of sick and elderly ones who need special attention. In some congregations an elder has been asked to care for this as his special responsibility. Since many elderly ones, like Naomi, are not inclined to seek help, such a brother would need to be skilled in analyzing a situation and—in a tactful and discreet way—make sure that necessary things are done. He could, for example, see if the Kingdom Hall has ample provisions for sick and elderly ones. If practical, he could consider matters like a sloping ramp for wheelchairs, suitable restroom facilities, earphones for the hard of hearing, and a place for special chairs. This brother could also make sure that all who are unable to come to the Kingdom Hall can borrow a tape recording of meetings or listen to them over a telephone hookup.

There may also be a need to organize transportation to meetings and conventions. One elderly sister had a problem because the one who regularly took her to meetings was not available. She had to telephone many individuals before she finally found a ride and consequently came to feel that she was a burden. An arrangement with an elder who could see to all such matters would have eased her embarrassment.

This elder could also ask various families if they would take turns in visiting the elderly. In this way children would learn that care for the elderly is part of a Christian's life. It is good for children to learn to shoulder this responsibility. (1 Timothy 5:4) One circuit overseer states: "In my experience, very few children or young ones visit elderly or sick ones on their own initiative." Maybe

they just do not think of it, or they may feel uncertain as to what to do or say; parents can teach them this.

Remember, though, that most elderly ones would appreciate knowing ahead of time that a friend is coming. This gives them the added joy of expecting a visitor. If the visitors bring refreshments, such as coffee or cake, and quickly clean up afterward, an extra burden on the elderly is avoided. One elderly couple, still with full vigor, have a regular day each week on which they pack a small picnic basket and set out on a series of visits to elderly ones in the congregation. Their calls are highly appreciated.

For the benefit of elderly ones, many congregations have a Congregation Book Study held during daytime hours. At one place some families and single publishers were asked if they would be willing and able to support such a group, and the result was a book study group where elderly and younger ones could care for one another.

It should not be left to the elders alone to take the initiative in this area. All of us must be aware of the needs of sick and elderly ones. We can greet them in the Kingdom Hall and take time to talk with them. An invitation to informal association may be welcome. Or we can invite them to accompany us on a picnic or even a vacation. One Witness often took elderly publishers with him in his car when going out of town on business calls. It is important to help the elderly to continue to feel involved. Do not allow them to withdraw, as Naomi was inclined to do, which would hasten the process of aging or senility.

Young ones who are disabled or sick also need attention. A Witness who had three incurably sick boys, two of whom have since died, says: "It can be difficult for a congrega-

tion to continue showing care when someone has an illness that goes on for an extended period of time. Why not assign some reliable young publishers to discuss the daily text and read a chapter from the Bible each day with their bedridden friend? Young ones, pioneers included, could take turns."

When Death Seems Inevitable

Servants of Jehovah have always boldly faced death, be it due to sickness or persecution. When afflicted ones begin to feel that death may be close, it is natural for them to experience different emotions. After their death, their relatives too would pass through a period of adjustment, grief, and acceptance. So it is often good for the ailing person to speak openly about death, as did Jacob, David, and Paul.—Genesis, chapters 48 and 49; 1 Kings 2:1-10; 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

A Witness who is a physician writes: "We must be very open about this subject. I have never in my career found that it has done a patient any good to hide the fact that he or she is terminally ill." Nevertheless, we need to understand what the patient *himself* wants to know, and *when* he wants to know this. Some patients clearly indicate that they are aware of the closeness of death, and they need to discuss their thoughts and feelings about this. Others seem to insist on hoping, and their friends do well to hope with them.—Compare Romans 12:12-15.

Someone close to death may be so tired or confused that it is difficult for him to pray. Such a patient will probably be comforted by learning from Romans 8:26, 27 that God understands "groanings unuttered." Jehovah knows that under such stress a person may have difficulty in finding words for a prayer.

When possible, it is important to pray with a patient. A brother relates: "When my mother was dying and no longer had the strength to speak, she indicated by folding her hands that she wanted us to pray with her. After our prayer, we sang one of the Kingdom songs, for my mother had always been very fond of music. At first, we were humming the tune, and then we quietly sang the words. She clearly enjoyed it. Undoubtedly, these songs that we connect with our life as Jehovah's Witnesses embody feelings that it might otherwise be hard to express."

Speaking with a dying person requires love, tact, and feeling. A visitor can prepare upbuilding and faith-strengthening matters to mention, and he should be alert to avoid negative talk about other people and their problems. Also, the duration of the visit should be adjusted to what is reasonable and fitting. If the patient seems unconscious, it is good to remember that he may still be able to hear what is said. So be careful about what you say.

A Responsibility We Share

Caring for sick and elderly ones is a heavy responsibility. For those closest to the patient, it is demanding, both physically and emotionally. They need and deserve understanding and help from the rest of the congregation. Those who care for sick family members or fellow believers are doing what is right, even if it means that they miss some meetings or that their share in the field ministry decreases for a period. (Compare 1 Timothy 5:8.) They will be strengthened by the congregation's understanding attitude. At times a brother or a sister may be able to take over temporarily so that the regular care-giver can attend a meeting or enjoy a few refreshing hours in the preaching work.

Of course, if you yourself are the ailing one, you can do something too. Hopelessness and helplessness with regard to your infirmity could make you bitter, but bitterness isolates a person and repels others. You could instead try to express appreciation and be cooperative. (1 Thessalonians 5:18) Pray for others who are in pain. (Colossians 4:12) Meditate on the wonderful truths of the Bible, and discuss these with visitors. (Psalm 71:17, 18) Eagerly keep up-to-date with the faith-strengthening progress of God's people. (Psalm 48:12-14) Give thanks to Jehovah for these happy developments. Meditating on such matters can, like a setting sun that casts an even deeper and warmer light than the sun at noon, give our life's twilight hours a beauty all their own.

We should all struggle to maintain the hope that, especially in trying times, guards our mind like a helmet. (1 Thessalonians 5:8) It is good to meditate on the resurrection hope and its strong foundation. We can look ahead with assurance and eager expectation to the day when there will be no more sickness or weakness due to old age. Then, everyone will feel well. Even the dead will return. (John 5:28, 29) These "things unseen" we see with the eyes of our faith and our heart. Never lose sight of them.—Isaiah 25:8; 33:24; Revelation 21:3, 4.

In Our Next Issue

Can Good-Luck Charms Protect You?

**The Christian Family
Does Things Together**

"The Hand of Jehovah" in My Life

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Have you found the recent issues of *The Watchtower* of practical value to you? Then why not test your memory with the following questions:

□ **If any immoral thought enters our mind uninvited, what should we do?** We should change the subject mentally, go for a walk, do some reading, or perform some household chore. Prayer is also a powerful aid in such a situation. (Psalm 62:8)—4/15, page 17.

□ **Why should young people be careful as to the kind of music they listen to?** Music has the power to move, to enthrall, and to influence. Since many popular pieces of music have a surprising number of sexual innuendos and veiled references to immorality, it is easy to see that great care must be exercised in choosing records, tapes, and discs.—4/15, pages 20-1.

□ **What is meant by the expression "the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ"?** (1 Thessalonians 5:23) This refers to the invisible royal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ as King, from 1914, and following his enthronement in heaven. (Psalm 110:1, 2)—5/1, page 11.

□ **What purpose was served by Jehovah's cleansing his spiritual temple?** (Malachi 3:1-4) Jehovah wanted his temple to be in a clean condition so that when large numbers of worshipers with earthly hopes were brought there, they would find a place where his universal sovereignty is respected, where his divine name is sanctified, and where his righteous laws are obeyed.—5/1, page 16.

□ **What are the "belongings" that Christ Jesus gives to his appointed slave?** (Matthew 24:45-47) These "belongings" refer to all the spiritual assets on earth that have become Christ's property in connection with his authority as heavenly King. This would include the commission to make disciples of Christ from people of all the nations. (Matthew 28:19, 20)—5/1, page 17.

□ **How do Christian elders show 'willingness' in shepherding, according to Peter's urging at 1 Peter 5:2?** A Christian elder who cares for the sheep will perform his shepherding willingly, of his own free will, under the direction of the Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Serving willingly also means that a Christian shepherd submits to the authority of Jehovah and manifests respect for the theocratic arrangement.—5/15, page 20.

□ **What did Jesus mean when he said that anyone following him had to "disown himself"?** (Matthew 16:24) To 'disown yourself' means that you relinquish ownership of yourself to Jehovah. (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20) It means that you live, not to please self, but God. (Romans 14:8)—6/1, page 9.

□ **What does it take to make a person happy?** Enjoying a fine relationship with Jehovah and keeping busy in his service brings true happiness into a person's life.—6/1, page 22.

□ **Why did Jehovah allow Abraham to speak to him so freely about His purpose to destroy Sodom?** (Genesis 18:22-32) One reason was that Abraham was God's friend. (James 2:23) Further, Jehovah was aware of Abraham's distressed feelings. God knew that Abraham's nephew Lot lived in Sodom and that Abraham was very concerned about Lot's safety. For these reasons Jehovah was willing to answer Abraham's questions regarding His purpose to destroy Sodom.—6/15, page 16.

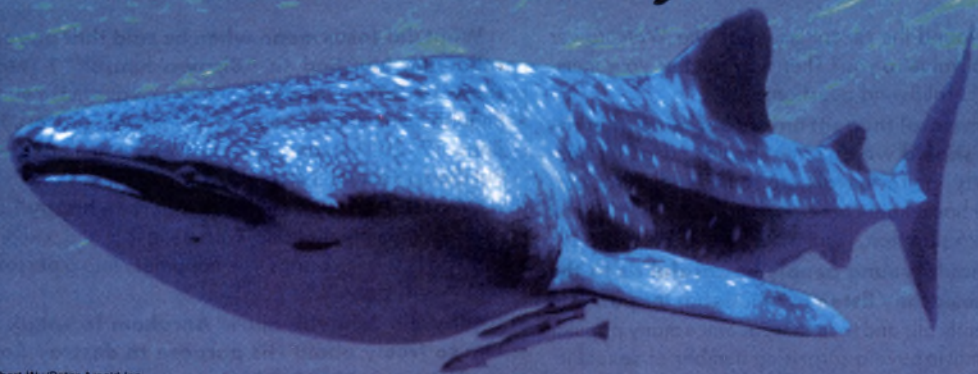
□ **Did the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century mark a return to true Christianity?** No, it did not! Rather than bring a return to genuine Christianity, the Reformation brought forth a host of national or territorial churches that have carried favor with political states and actively supported them in their wars.—7/1, pages 10-11.

□ **What are the "treasures in heaven" that Jesus spoke about at Matthew 6:20?** These are treasures that never fade, including a good name with Jehovah and a record of faithful Christian service. These are among the things that Jehovah never forgets. (Hebrews 6:10)—7/1, page 32.

□ **What qualities does Peter mention as vital elements to our faith?** (2 Peter 1:5-7) Peter said that virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godly devotion, brotherly affection, and love should be supplied to our faith.—7/15, page 13.

□ **What warning for God's servants is contained in the account of David's sin with Bath-sheba?** (2 Samuel 11:2-4) Though free to enjoy pleasure within his own marriage, David let illicit sexual desire grow. Noting how attractive Uriah's wife was, he gave free rein to thought—and deed—of finding illicit thrills with her. The same can happen to any one of God's servants if he does not shun this form of greed. (James 1:14, 15)—8/1, page 14.

Did It Swallow Jonah?



Norbert Wu/Peter Arnold Inc.

THE Bible tells us that Jonah, a prophet of Jehovah in the ninth century B.C.E., fleeing an assignment, boarded a ship. During the stormy voyage in the Mediterranean, the crew hurled him overboard. "Jehovah appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, so that Jonah came to be in the inward parts of the fish three days and three nights."—Jonah 1:3-17.

Some say, 'Impossible! No creature in the sea could swallow a man.' But either a sperm whale or a great white shark could. *National Geographic* (December 1992) offered another possibility—the whale shark. The largest known shark, it can grow to 70 feet in length and weigh 70 tons.

"The whale shark's unusual digestive anatomy lends itself to Jonah stories. It is easy to imagine yourself being inadvertently sucked into a whale shark's mouth, which is huge . . . The cavernous mouth of even a small adult whale shark could easily accommodate a pair of Jonahs."

The whale shark feeds on tiny plankton and krill, which "wash down through the esophagus into the immense and elastic banquet hall that is the cardiac stomach." Yet, how could anyone get out? *National Geographic* says: "Sharks have a nonviolent way of getting rid of large objects of dubious digestibility they swallow . . . A shark can slowly empty its cardiac stomach by turning it inside out and pushing it through the mouth. . . . So, you could come gliding out on a mucus-covered carpet, slimier but perhaps wiser for the experience."

Today whale sharks are not found in the Mediterranean, though they have been found as far north as New York City. Were they present in the Mediterranean in Jonah's time? Who can say? The Bible does not specify what kind of sea creature Jehovah used, but Jesus himself confirmed that the account of Jonah is true.—Matthew 12:39, 40.