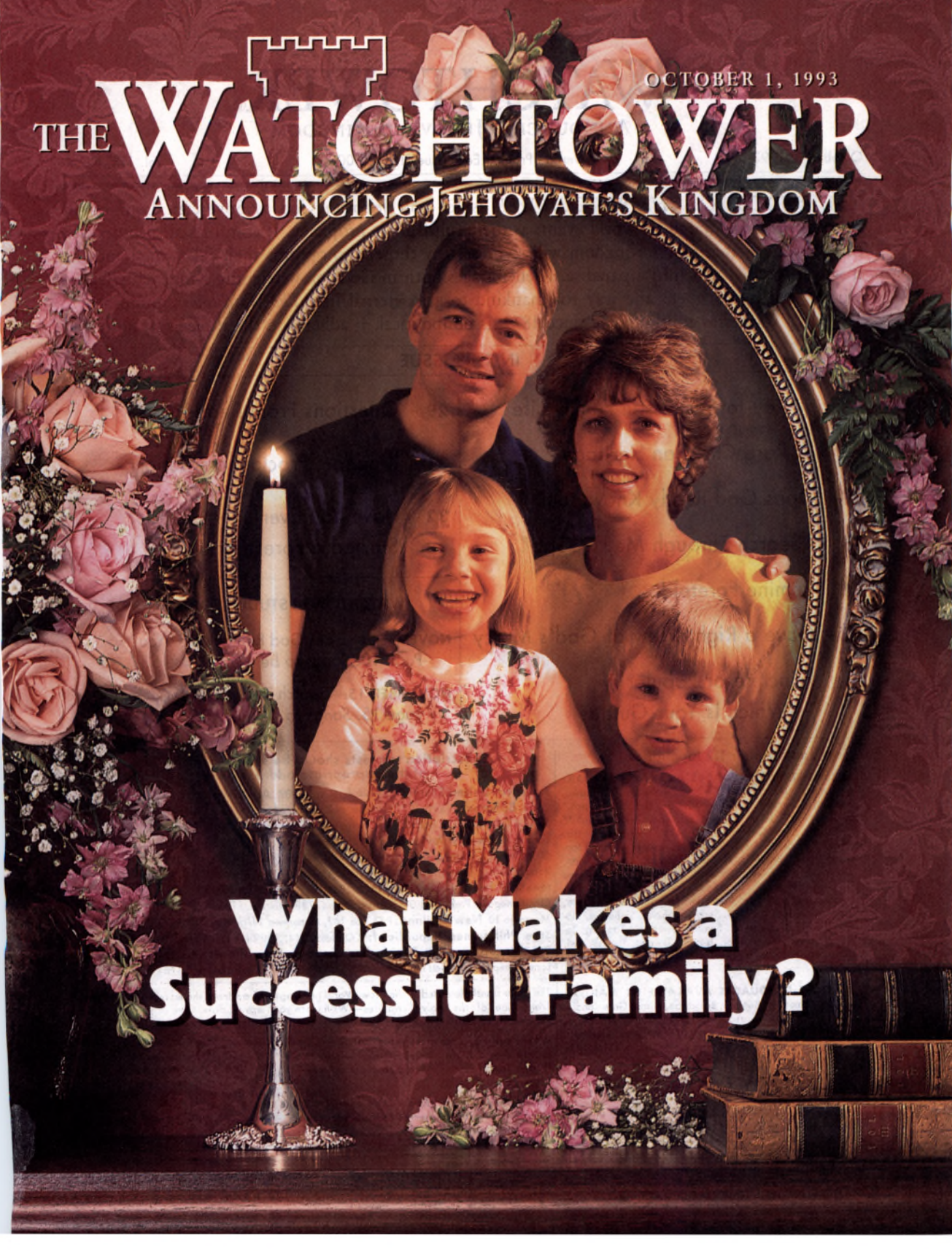


OCTOBER 1, 1993

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

A family portrait of a man, a woman, and two children is framed in an ornate oval mirror. The mirror is surrounded by a lush arrangement of pink roses and smaller pink flowers. To the left of the mirror, a lit candle sits in a silver candlestick. At the bottom of the image, there is a small pile of pink flowers and a stack of three old, leather-bound books. The background is a dark, textured red.

**What Makes a
Successful Family?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

October 1, 1993

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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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“WE HAVE a deteriorating family unit,” noted a candidate for the U.S. presidency last year. Indeed, the extent of the family’s deterioration numbs the senses. “Changes of similar magnitude in economic or industry data over the same period,” reported *Fortune* magazine, “would make us gape in amazement.”

Even families who try to follow Bible principles are often affected tragically. A few years

A key to A successful family life

ago, a father of six preteen-agers was told by a well-meaning fellow Christian: “You can expect to lose four of your children to the world.” Yet, this father did not believe that this had to happen to even one

of his children. He explained why. “Our children are not really ours,” he said. “They were entrusted to my wife and me by Jehovah God, an ‘inheritance,’ or a gift, from him. And he said that if we train them up in the proper way, ‘they will not turn aside from it.’ So we have always tried to care for them as though they belonged to Jehovah.”—Psalm 127:3; Proverbs 22:6.

The father here identified a key to successful family life—parents should care for their children as though they were caring for God’s property. While this does not mean that children in every instance will heed your fine direction, you have the responsibility to care for the children God has entrusted to you.

A Serious Responsibility

You properly provide this care with reverence and deep concern, not carelessly or indifferently. You work at it with the realization that you will answer to God for his inheritance, or gift, to you. There is no need to experiment with various methods of child rearing. Parents need only God’s instructions as provided in his Word, the Bible, and should follow these carefully.

This is Jehovah God’s instruction: “You must incul-



cate [my words] in your [children] and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up. And you must tie them as a sign upon your hand, and they must serve as a frontlet band between your eyes; and you must write them upon the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” The Bible also urges: “You, fathers, . . . go on bringing [your children] up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah.”—Deuteronomy 6:7-9; Ephesians 6:4.

So caring for children requires daily attention; yes, it means giving them unstintingly of your time and especially of your love and deep concern. Parents who give their children these basic needs are doing what God says is necessary in order to enjoy a successful family life.

Do you believe that this is asking too much? Many parents by their actions indicate that they feel it is. Yet, these gifts from God—your children—really do deserve extra-special attention.

How to Care for Them

Wisely, consider the example of those who have enjoyed success in rearing children. One

magazine, in the cover story "Amazing Families," noted four things that are important in rearing young ones successfully: "[1] Dinner-table conversation that provokes intellectual inquiry, [2] the companionship of great books, [3] the inspiration of creative role models, [4] the sense that there is a family tradition to uphold." —*U.S. News & World Report*, December 12, 1988.

Regarding "dinner-table conversation," recall that God instructs parents to teach their children when they sit in the house. Does your family regularly sit around a table at meals, thus providing daily opportunities for companionship and stimulating conversation? Such times are vital and memorable for children, offering them a sense of stability and security. A six-year-old said he liked mealtimes "because you don't have to worry about each other," since all are together.

What about the quality of your dinner-table conversation? Does it frequently center on the contents of "great books," including the Bible and Bible-based literature discussing our service to God or matters relating to God's creation? In addition to dinner-table conversation of this kind, by means of a regular study program, parents need to cultivate within their children a love for Jehovah and his righteous laws.

"Having meals together regularly was no problem," explained the father of six mentioned earlier. "This was automatic, and it served to unite us. But having a regular program of Bible study was difficult." Because of sheer exhaustion after a day of hard labor, he at times fell asleep during the study. Yet, he never gave up conducting a regular Bible study with his children, and he regularly talked with them individually and listened to them for extended periods.

Besides taking the lead in meaningful

dinner-table conversation and providing the companionship of great books, do you see to it that your children receive "the inspiration of creative role models"? The truth is, arranging for your children to associate regularly with those who imitate the greatest man who ever lived, Jesus Christ, is vital if they are to become successful adults.

Finally, what about "the sense that there is a family tradition to uphold"? Your children need to understand that there are family standards that they are expected to uphold—that certain conduct, speech, dress, manners, and so forth, are unacceptable and violate family tradition. They need to realize that to violate family tradition is a serious matter—that you would be hurt terribly, as was the ancient patriarch Jacob, whose boys by their shameful conduct made him "a stench to the inhabitants of the land."—Genesis 34:30.

The father of six who viewed his children as God's property especially emphasized "family tradition." He constantly reasoned with his children on how the family standard of dress, grooming, and separateness from the ways of the world were in keeping with the spirit and direction of the Creator, Jehovah God. As a result of the great amount of time, love, and deep concern given them—being trained in the way they should go—all six of the children have responded by 'not turning aside from the way for them.'—Proverbs 22:6.

Worldwide, there are thousands of such strong family units. What a praise these are to their Creator, and what a reward they are to unselfish, loving parents! As the years pass, such parents are appreciated more and more by the children who have benefited from their efforts. Please consider next the story of one woman reared by godly parents, and note the valuable lessons that can be learned from it.

A RARE CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

AS TOLD BY BLOSSOM BRANDT

There was a snowfall in San Antonio, Texas, on January 17, 1923, the day I was born. It was cold outside, but I was welcomed into the warm arms of loving Christian parents, Judge and Helen Norris. From my earliest memories, everything my parents did centered on their worship of Jehovah God.

IN 1910 when Mother was eight, her parents moved from near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to a farm outside Alvin, Texas. There they rejoiced to learn Bible truths from a neighbor. Mom spent the remainder of her life seeking to interest people in the Kingdom hope. She was baptized in 1912 after the family had moved to Houston, Texas.

Mother and her parents first met Charles T. Russell, first president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, when he visited their congregation in Houston. The family often entertained in their home traveling representatives of the Society, who were then called pilgrims. A few years later, Mom moved with her parents to Chicago, Illinois, and Brother Russell would also visit the congregation there.

In 1918, Grandmother got the Spanish flu, and because of its weakening effect on her health, doctors recommended that she live in a warmer climate. Since Grandfather worked for the Pullman train company, in 1919 he obtained a transfer back to Texas. There, in San Antonio, Mom met a young,



Mom with me

zealous member of the congregation named Judge Norris. They were attracted to each other right away, and in time they married, and Judge became my father.

Father Learns Bible Truth

Judge was given his unusual name at birth. When his dad first saw him, he said: "That baby is as sober as a judge," and that became his name. In 1917, when Dad was 16, he was given the tracts *Where Are the Dead?* and

What Is the Soul? printed by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Dad's father had died two years earlier, and the tracts provided him answers that he had been looking for about the condition of the dead. Shortly afterward he began attending meetings of the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known.

Dad immediately wanted to share in congregation activities. He obtained a territory where he could preach, and after school he would ride there on his bike to distribute tracts. He became totally absorbed in sharing the Kingdom hope, and on March 24, 1918, he symbolized his dedication to Jehovah by water baptism.

The following year when Mom moved to San Antonio, Dad was immediately attracted to what he said was “the sweetest smile and the bluest eyes” he had ever seen. They soon let it be known that they wanted to marry, but they had a hard time convincing Mother’s parents. Yet, on April 15, 1921, the wedding took place. Both had as their goal the full-time ministry.

Early Start in the Ministry

When Mom and Dad were busy planning to attend the Cedar Point, Ohio, convention in 1922, they discovered that Mom was expecting me. Shortly after my birth, when Dad was only 22, he was appointed congregation service director. This meant that he made all the field service arrangements. In just a matter of weeks, Mom had me out in the door-to-door ministry. The fact is, my grandparents also liked to have me in the ministry with them.

When I was only two, my folks moved to Dallas, Texas, and they began the full-time ministry as pioneers three years later. At night they slept on a cot by the road and put me in the backseat of the car. Of course, I thought this was fun, but it soon became evident that they were not prepared for pioneer life just yet. So Dad started a business. In time, he built a small trailer in preparation to start pioneering again.

Before I began school, Mother taught me to read and write, and I knew up to the fourth multiplication table. Her focus was always on helping me learn. She would stand me on a chair next to her so I could dry dishes as she washed them, and she would teach me to memorize scriptures and sing the Kingdom songs, or hymns as we called them then.

Serving God With My Parents

In 1931 all of us attended the thrilling convention in Columbus, Ohio, where we received the name Jehovah’s Witnesses. Al-

though I was only eight, I thought it was the prettiest name I had ever heard. Shortly after we returned home, Dad’s business burned to the ground, and Dad and Mom took this as “the Lord’s will” that they start pioneering again. Thus, beginning in the summer of 1932, we enjoyed many years in the full-time ministry.

My folks pioneered in central Texas to stay near Mom’s parents, who were still in San Antonio. Moving from assignment to assignment meant that I changed schools quite often. At times thoughtless friends would say, “Why don’t you settle down and have a home for that child,” as though I wasn’t properly cared for. But I thought our life was exciting and that I was helping Dad and Mom in their ministry. Actually, I was being trained and prepared for what was later to become my own life-style.

For months I kept telling Dad and Mom that I wanted to be baptized, and they often talked to me about it. They wanted to make sure I knew how serious my decision was. On December 31, 1934, the day came for this momentous event in my life. However, the night before, Dad made sure I had gone to Jehovah in prayer. Then he did a beautiful thing. He had all of us get on our knees, and he offered a prayer. He told Jehovah that he was so happy about his little girl’s decision to dedicate her life to Him. You can be sure, in all the ages to come, I’ll never forget that night!

Training From My Grandparents

Between 1928 and 1938, I spent much time visiting my grandparents in San Antonio. The routine with them was much the same as with my folks. Grandmother had been a colporteur, as they used to call pioneers, and then she became a part-time pioneer. Grandfather was appointed a pioneer in December 1929, so field service was always the rule of the day.



1. My first convention: San Marcos, Texas, September 1923
2. Dad's last convention: Fort Worth, Texas, June 1991 (Dad seated)



Grandfather would hold me in his arms at night and teach me the names of the stars. He would recite poetry to me from memory. I made many trips with him on the Pullmans when he worked for the railroad. He was always one I could turn to when I had trouble; he comforted me and wiped my tears away. Yet, when I was disciplined for misbehaving and went to him seeking consolation, he would simply say (words that I didn't understand at the time, but their tone was very clear): "Honey, the way of the transgressor is mighty hard."

Years of Persecution

In 1939, World War II began, and Jehovah's people suffered persecution and mob violence. By the end of 1939, Mom was very ill and eventually needed surgery, so we moved back to San Antonio.

Mobs would form as we did magazine work on the streets of San Antonio. But each week, as a family, we were there, each on our assigned corner. I often watched as they hauled Dad away to the police station.

Dad tried to continue pioneering even though Mom had to stop. However, he

couldn't earn enough working part-time, so he had to stop also. I completed school in 1939, and I too went to work.

Dad's name Judge came in handy during those years. For example, a group of friends went to witness in a town just north of San Antonio, and the sheriff started putting all of them in jail. He had arrested about 35, including my grandparents. They got word to Dad, and he drove up there. He walked into the sheriff's office and said: "I'm Judge Norris from San Antonio."

"Yes Sir, Judge, what can I do for you?" the sheriff asked.

"I've come to see about getting these people out of jail," Dad replied. With that the sheriff let them go without bail—and no further questions!

Dad loved to work the downtown office buildings, and he especially liked to call on judges and lawyers. He would tell the receptionist: "I'm Judge Norris, and I've come to see Judge So-and-So."

Then, when he met the judge, he always said first: "Now, before I talk about the purpose of my visit, I want to explain that I've been a Judge longer than you have. I've been one all my life." And then he would explain how he got his name. This got them off to a friendly start, and he cultivated many good relationships with the judges in those days.

Grateful for Parental Direction

I was in those tumultuous teenage years, and I know Dad and Mom held their breath many times as they watched and wondered what I would do next. As all children do, I tested Dad and Mom many times, asking to do something or to go somewhere knowing ahead of time that their answer would be no. Sometimes there were tears. Actually, I would have been devastated if they had ever said: "Go ahead, do what you want. We don't care."

Knowing I couldn't push them into changing their standards gave me a feeling of security. In fact, this made it easier for me when other young ones suggested unwise entertainment, for I could say: "My dad won't let me." When I was 16, Dad made sure I learned to drive and that I got my driver's license. Also, about this time he gave me a key to the house. I was so impressed that he trusted me. I felt so grown-up, and it gave me a sense of responsibility and a desire not to betray their trust.

In those days not much counsel was given about marriage, but Dad knew the Bible and what it said about marrying "only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39) He made it clear to me that if I ever brought home a worldly boy, or even looked at one, his disappointment would be overwhelming. I knew he was right, for I had seen the happiness and unity in their marriage because they did marry "in the Lord."

In 1941, when I was 18, I thought I was in love with a young man in the congregation.

He was a pioneer and studying to be a lawyer. I was excited. When we told my parents we wanted to get married, instead of showing disapproval or being discouraging, they simply said: "We would like to make one request of you, Blossom. We feel that you are too young, and we would like to ask you to wait one year. If you are really in love, one year won't make a difference."

I am so thankful that I listened to that wise advice. Within the year, I matured some and began to see that this young man did not have the qualities that would make for a good marriage mate. He eventually left the organization, and I escaped what would have been a disaster in my life. How wonderful to have wise parents whose judgment can be relied on!

Marriage and Traveling Work

In the winter of 1946, after I had spent six years pioneering and working part-time, the finest young man I had ever met walked into our Kingdom Hall. Gene Brandt had been assigned as a companion to our traveling servant to the brethren, as the circuit overseer was then called. It was mutual attraction, and on August 5, 1947, we were married.

Shortly, Dad and Gene opened an accounting office. But Dad told Gene: "The day this office keeps us from a meeting or a theocratic assignment, I'm going to lock the door and throw away the key." Jehovah blessed this spiritual outlook, and the office provided sufficiently for our material needs and allowed time to pioneer. Dad and Gene were good businessmen, and we could easily have been wealthy, but this was never their goal.

In 1954, Gene was invited into the circuit work, which meant a big change in our lives. How would my parents react? Once again, their concern was not for themselves but for the interests of God's Kingdom and for the

spiritual well-being of their children. They never said to us: "Why don't you give us grandchildren?" Instead, it was always: "What can we do to help you in the full-time service?"

So when the day came for us to leave, there were only words of encouragement and rejoicing at our grand privilege. They never made us feel that we were abandoning them but were always 100 percent behind us. After we left, they kept themselves busy in the pioneer work for another ten years. Dad was appointed city overseer of San Antonio, which position he held for 30 years. He rejoiced to see the growth from one congregation in the city in the 1920's to 71 before he died in 1991.

For Gene and me, life was filled with excitement. We had the rich joy of serving dear brothers and sisters in over 31 states and, probably the highlight of all, the privilege of attending the 29th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead in 1957. Afterward we returned to the traveling work. In 1984, after 30 years in the circuit and district work, the Society kindly granted Gene a circuit assignment in San Antonio, since the folks were in their 80's and in poor health.

Caring for Parents

It was only a year and a half after we had returned to San Antonio that Mom slipped into a semicoma and died. It happened so quickly that I didn't get to say some of the things I wanted to say to her. This taught me to talk a lot with Dad. After 65 years of marriage, he missed Mom very much, but we



Gene and Blossom Brandt

were there to give love and support.

Dad's lifelong example of Christian meeting attendance, study, and service continued right up to his death. He loved to read. As he had to be alone while we were in service, I would come home and ask, "Were you lonely?" He had been so busy reading and studying, the thought had not even occurred to him.

There was another lifelong habit that we maintained. Dad had always

insisted that the family eat together, especially at breakfast time, when the daily Scripture text was considered. I was never allowed to leave home without doing it. Sometimes I would say: "But Dad, I'm going to be late for school (or for work)."

"It's not the text that's making you late; you didn't get up in time," he would say. And I had to stay and hear it. He made sure this good example existed right up to his last days of life. This is another inheritance he left me.

Dad stayed mentally alert right up to the end. What made caring for him easier was that he never got fussy or complained. Oh, sometimes he'd mention his arthritis, but I would remind him that what he really had was "Adamitis," and he would laugh. As Gene and I sat beside him, Dad quietly went to sleep on the morning of November 30, 1991.

I am now over 70 years of age and am still benefiting from the good example of my loving Christian parents. And it is my earnest prayer that I will prove my full appreciation for this heritage by properly using it through all the ages to come.—Psalm 71:17, 18.



DOES GOD REALLY KNOW YOU?

"O Jehovah, . . . you have become familiar even with all my ways."

—PSALM 139:1, 3.

DOES anyone really understand the anxieties, pressures, and problems that you face? Worldwide there are millions of people, young and old, who have no family or relatives who care what happens to them. Even within families, many wives—yes, and husbands too—feel that their marriage mates do not truly comprehend the pressures that weigh them down. At times, in frustration, they protest: "But you don't understand!" And not a few young

people have concluded that no one understands them either. Yet, among those who have longed for greater understanding from others are some whose lives have later taken on rich meaning. How is that possible?

² It is because, regardless of whether fellow humans fully understand their feelings or not, they are confident that God does understand what they are going through and that, as his servants, they do not have to face their problems alone. (Psalm 46:1) Furthermore, God's Word coupled with the help

1. How widespread is the feeling that 'others do not understand' the anxieties, problems, and pressures that we face?

2. What can enable worshipers of Jehovah to have lives that are richly satisfying?

of discerning Christian elders enables them to see beyond their personal problems. The Scriptures help them to appreciate that their faithful service is precious in the eyes of God and that there is a secure future for those who rest their hope in him and the provisions he has made through Jesus Christ.—Proverbs 27:11; 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18.

³ You may be acquainted with Psalm 100:2, which says: “Serve Jehovah with rejoicing. Come in before him with a joyful cry.” How many truly render worship to Jehovah in that manner? Sound reasons for doing so are given in verse 3, which reminds us: “Know that Jehovah is God. It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people and the sheep of his pasturage.” In the Hebrew text, he is there referred to as ‘Elo-him’, thus indicating his greatness in majesty, dignity, and excellence. He is the only true God. (Deuteronomy 4:39; 7:9; John 17:3) His servants come to know his Godship, not merely as a fact that has been taught to them but as something they experience and of which they give evidence by obedience, trust, and devotion.—1 Chronicles 28:9; Romans 1:20.

⁴ Because Jehovah is the living God, able to see even our heart, nothing is hidden from his eyes. He is fully aware of what is happening in our lives. He understands what causes the problems that we face as well as the mental and emotional turmoil that may result from these. As the Creator, he knows us better than we know ourselves. He also knows how to help us to cope with our situation and how to provide lasting relief. Lovingly he will help us—like a shepherd who holds a lamb in his bosom—as we trust in him with all our

3, 4. (a) How can appreciation of the fact that “Jehovah is God” and that he “made us” help us to find joy in his service? (b) Why do we have complete confidence in Jehovah’s loving care?

heart. (Proverbs 3:5, 6; Isaiah 40:10, 11) A study of Psalm 139 can do much to strengthen that confidence.

The One Who Sees All Our Ways

⁵ With deep appreciation, the psalmist David wrote: “O Jehovah, you have searched through me, and you know me.” (Psalm 139:1) David was confident that Jehovah’s knowledge of him was not superficial. God did not see David as humans might, noting only his physical stature, his speaking ability, or his skill in playing the harp. (1 Samuel 16:7, 18) Jehovah had “searched through” into David’s innermost self and had done so with loving concern for his spiritual welfare. If you are one of Jehovah’s devoted servants, he knows you just as well as he did David. Does that not stir within you feelings of both gratitude and awe?

⁶ All of David’s activities were exposed to the view of Jehovah, and David was aware of that. “You yourself have come to know my sitting down and my rising up,” the psalmist wrote. “You have considered my thought from far off. My journeying and my lying outstretched you have measured off, and you have become familiar even with all my ways.” (Psalm 139:2, 3) The fact that Jehovah is in the heavens, far removed from the earth, did not prevent his knowing what David was doing or what he was thinking. He “measured off,” or carefully examined, David’s activities, both by day and by night, so as to know their nature.

⁷ When love for God and confidence in His power to deliver moved David as a young man to volunteer to fight the Philistine

5. What does Jehovah’s ‘searching through’ us mean, and why is that desirable?

6. How does Psalm 139:2, 3 show that Jehovah knows everything we do, even all our thoughts?

7. (a) Using incidents from David’s life as a basis, comment on some of the things in our lives that God is aware of. (b) How should awareness of this affect us?

giant Goliath, Jehovah knew that. (1 Samuel 17:32-37, 45-47) Later, when the hostility of men caused David's heart severe pain, when the pressure was so great that he gave way to tears at night, he was comforted by the knowledge that Jehovah heard his supplication. (Psalm 6:6, 9; 55:2-5, 22) Likewise, when a heart filled with gratitude caused David to meditate about Jehovah during a sleepless night, Jehovah was well aware of it. (Psalm 63:6; compare Philippians 4:8, 9.) One evening when David watched the wife of a neighbor bathing, Jehovah knew that too, and he saw what happened when David, even for a brief period, allowed sinful desire to crowd God out of his thoughts. (2 Samuel 11:2-4) Later, when the prophet Nathan was sent to confront David with the gravity of his sin, Jehovah not only heard the words that came from David's mouth but also discerned the repentant heart from which they came. (2 Samuel 12:1-14; Psalm 51:1, 17) Should that not make us think seriously about where we go, what we do, and what is in our heart?

⁸ Since God knows everything that we do, it should not surprise us that he is aware of how we use a body member even as small as the tongue. King David realized this, and he wrote: *"For there is not a word on my tongue, but, look! O Jehovah, you already know it all."* (Psalm 139:4) David well knew that those who would be welcomed as guests in Jehovah's tent would be people who did not slander others and who refused to use their tongue to spread juicy tidbits of gossip that would bring reproach on an intimate acquaintance. Those whom Jehovah favored would be people who spoke the truth even in their hearts. (Psalm 15:1-3; Proverbs 6:16-19) None of us are able to keep our tongue

8. (a) In what way do the 'words on our tongue' influence our standing with God? (b) How can weaknesses in the use of the tongue be overcome? (Matthew 15:18; Luke 6:45)

under perfect control, but David did not weakly conclude that there was nothing he could do to improve his situation. He spent much time composing and singing psalms of praise to Jehovah. He also freely acknowledged his need for help and prayed to God for it. (Psalm 19:12-14) Is our use of the tongue also in need of prayerful attention?

⁹ Jehovah does not see us or our situation from just a limited perspective. He has the full picture, from every side. Using a besieged city as an example, David wrote: *"Behind and before, you have besieged me."* In David's case, God was not a besieging enemy; he was, rather, a watchful guardian. *"You place your hand upon me,"* David added, thus indicating God's control and protection exercised for the lasting benefit of those who love him. *"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is so high up that I cannot attain to it,"* David acknowledged. (Psalm 139:5, 6) So complete, so thorough, is God's knowledge of his servants, that we cannot fully comprehend it. But we know enough to be confident that Jehovah truly understands us and that the help he provides will be the very best.—Isaiah 48:17, 18.

Wherever We Are, God Can Help Us

¹⁰ Viewing Jehovah's loving care from another standpoint, the psalmist continues: *"Where can I go from your spirit, and where can I run away from your face?"* He had no desire to try to get away from Jehovah; rather, he knew that wherever he might be, Jehovah would know and, by holy spirit, could help him. *"If I should ascend to heaven,"* he continued, *"there you would be; and if I should spread out my couch in Sheol, look!*

9. (a) What does the description at Psalm 139:5 indicate as to how thoroughly God knows our situation? (b) Of what does this make us confident?

10. What encouraging truth is conveyed by the vivid description at Psalm 139:7-12?

you would be there. Were I to take the wings of the dawn, that I might reside in the most remote sea, there, also, your own hand would lead me and your right hand would lay hold of me. And were I to say: 'Surely darkness itself will hastily seize me!' then night would be light about me. Even the darkness itself would not prove too dark for you, but night itself would shine just as the day does; the darkness might just as well be the light." (Psalm 139:7-12) There is nowhere that we might go, no circumstance that we might face, that would put us beyond Jehovah's view or beyond the reach of his spirit to help us.

¹¹ At one point the prophet Jonah lost sight of that. Jehovah had assigned him to preach to the people of Nineveh. For some reason he felt that he could not handle that assignment. Perhaps because of the fierce reputation of the Assyrians, the thought of serving in Nineveh frightened Jonah. So he tried to drop out of sight. At the seaport of Joppa, he obtained passage on a ship bound for Tarshish (generally associated with Spain, over 2,200 miles west of Nineveh). Nevertheless, Jehovah saw him board the ship and go to sleep down in the hold. God also knew where Jonah was when he was later thrown overboard, and Jehovah heard Jonah when he promised from within the belly of the big fish that he would pay his vows. Delivered back to dry land, Jonah was again given an opportunity to fulfill his assignment.—Jonah 1:3, 17; 2:1-3:4.

¹² How much better it would have been for Jonah from the start to have relied on Jehovah's spirit to help him fulfill his assignment! Later, though, Jonah did humbly record his experience, and that record has helped many since then to manifest the con-

11, 12. (a) Even though Jonah lost sight of it for a time, how was Jehovah's ability to see and to help demonstrated in Jonah's case? (b) How should Jonah's experience benefit us?

fidence in Jehovah that it seemed so difficult for Jonah to gain.—Romans 15:4.

¹³ Elijah's experience was somewhat different. He had faithfully delivered Jehovah's decree that Israel would suffer drought as chastisement for their sins. (1 Kings 16:30-33; 17:1) He had boldly upheld true worship in the contest between Jehovah and Baal at Mount Carmel. And he had followed through with the execution of 450 prophets of Baal at the torrent valley of Kishon. But when Queen Jezebel in a rage vowed to have Elijah put to death, Elijah fled the country. (1 Kings 18:18-40; 19:1-4) Was Jehovah there to help him at that difficult time? Yes, indeed. If Elijah had climbed a high mountain, as if to heaven; if he had hid in a cave deep within the earth, as if in Sheol; if he had fled to some remote island with speed like that of the light of dawn spreading over the earth—Jehovah's hand would have been there to strengthen and lead him. (Compare Romans 8:38, 39.) And Jehovah did strengthen Elijah not only with food for his journey but also with marvelous displays of His active force. Thus fortified, Elijah undertook his next prophetic assignment.—1 Kings 19:5-18.

¹⁴ The prophetic words of Psalm 139:7-12 do not mean that God is omnipresent, that he is personally present in all places at all times. The Scriptures clearly show otherwise. (Deuteronomy 26:15; Hebrews 9:24) Yet, his servants are never beyond his reach. That is true of those whose theocratic assignments have taken them to distant

13. (a) What assignments had Elijah faithfully fulfilled before he fled from Queen Jezebel? (b) How did Jehovah help Elijah even when he sought to go into hiding outside the territory of Israel?

14. (a) Why would it be wrong to conclude that God is omnipresent? (b) Under what circumstances has Jehovah lovingly sustained his servants in modern times? (c) How is it that even if we were in Sheol, God would be there?

places. It was true of loyal Witnesses in Nazi concentration camps during World War II, and it was true of the missionaries held in solitary confinement in China during the late 1950's and early 1960's. It was true of our dear brothers and sisters in a Central African country who had to flee repeatedly from their villages, even from the country. If need be, Jehovah can reach right into Sheol, the common grave, and bring faithful ones back by means of a resurrection.—Job 14:13-15; Luke 20:37, 38.

The One Who Truly Understands Us

¹⁵ Under inspiration, the psalmist draws attention to the fact that God's knowledge of us precedes even the time of our birth, saying: *"For you yourself produced my kidneys; you kept me screened off in the belly of my mother. I shall laud you because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, as my soul is very well aware."* (Psalm 139:13, 14) The combining of

15. (a) From how early a time was Jehovah able to observe our development? (b) How is the extent of God's knowledge of us indicated by the psalmist's reference to the kidneys?

What Is Your Comment?

- ☐ How does our knowing that "Jehovah is God" help us to serve him with rejoicing?
- ☐ How should our lives be influenced by God's knowing everything we do?
- ☐ Why is the fact that we are never out of God's view encouraging?
- ☐ Why is God able to understand us in ways that no human can?
- ☐ Why does a study such as this make us want to laud Jehovah?

genes from our father and our mother at the time of conception produces the pattern that profoundly influences our physical and mental potential. God understands that potential. In this psalm special mention is made of the kidneys, which are often used in the Scriptures to represent the innermost aspects of personality.* (Psalm 7:9; Jeremiah 17:10) Jehovah has known these details about us since before we were born. He is also the one who with loving concern designed the human body so that a fertilized cell within a mother's womb produces a protective housing to 'screen off' the embryo and protect it as it develops.

¹⁶ Then, emphasizing the penetrating power of God's vision, the psalmist adds: *"My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in secret, when I was woven in the lowest parts of the earth [evidently a poetic reference to his mother's womb but with an allusion to Adam's creation from the dust]. Your eyes saw even the embryo of me, and in your book all its parts were down in writing, as regards the days when they [the body parts] were formed and there was not yet one [distinct body part] among them."* (Psalm 139:15, 16) There is no doubt about it—whether fellow humans understand us or not, Jehovah does. How should that affect us?

¹⁷ The writer of Psalm 139 acknowledged that God's works about which he was writing were wonderful. Do you feel that way too? Something that is wonderful makes a person think deeply or show rapt attention. Likely you react that way to Jehovah's

* See *Insight on the Scriptures*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., Volume 2, page 150.

16. (a) In what way does Psalm 139:15, 16 highlight the penetrating power of God's vision? (b) Why should this be encouraging to us?
17. When we view God's works as being wonderful, what does this move us to do?

works of physical creation. (Compare Psalm 8:3, 4, 9.) Do you also give that sort of thought to what he has done in establishing the Messianic Kingdom, to what he is doing in having the good news preached in all the earth, and to the way in which his Word transforms human personalities?—Compare 1 Peter 1:10-12.

¹⁸ Is it likewise your experience that con-

18. If we find God's work to be fear-inspiring, how will it affect us?

templation of God's work is fear-inspiring, that it produces in you a wholesome fear, one that is powerfully motivating, one that has a profound effect on your personality and on the way you use your life? (Compare Psalm 66:5.) If so, your heart will move you to laud Jehovah, to praise him, to make opportunities to tell others about his purpose and the marvelous things that he has in store for those who love him.—Psalm 145:1-3.

“SEARCH THROUGH ME, O GOD”

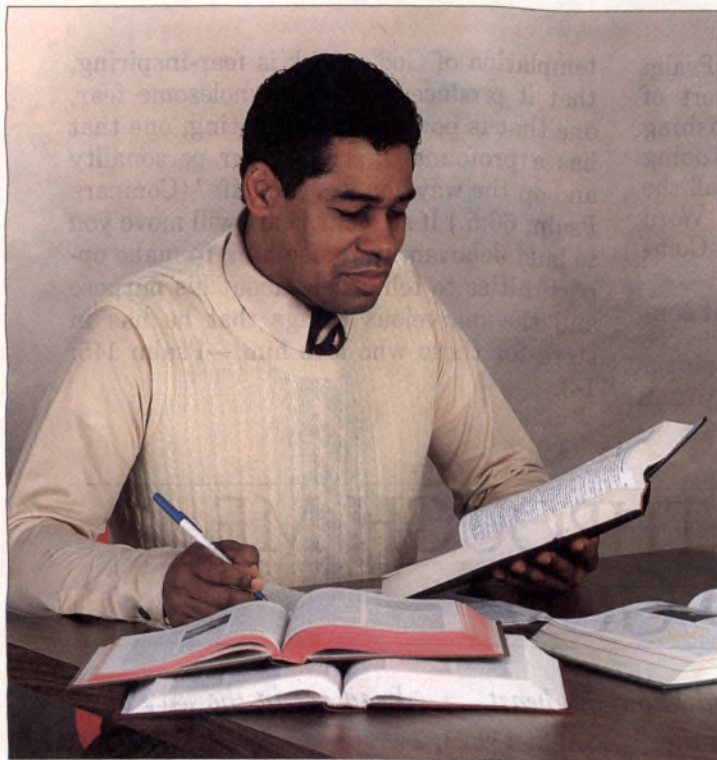
“Search through me, O God, and know my heart. . . . Lead me in the way of time indefinite.”—PSALM 139:23, 24.

ALL of us like to be dealt with by someone who is understanding, someone who takes into account our circumstances, someone who helps when we fall short, someone who does not demand of us more than we are able to do. Jehovah God deals with his servants in that way. Psalm 103:14 says: “He himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust.” And Jesus Christ, who perfectly reflects his Father, extends the warm invitation: “Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you [or, “Get under my yoke with me,” footnote] and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light.”—Matthew 11:28-30.

1. How does Jehovah deal with his servants?

² Jehovah's view of his servants is often very different from that of humans. He looks at matters from a different standpoint and takes into account aspects that others may know nothing about. When Jesus Christ walked the earth, he was “despised and was avoided by men.” Those who did not put faith in him as the Messiah “held him as of no account.” (Isaiah 53:3; Luke 23:18-21) Yet, in the eyes of God, he was “[God's] Son, the beloved,” to whom the Father said: “I have approved you.” (Luke 3:22; 1 Peter 2:4) Among the followers of Jesus Christ are people who are looked down on because they are materially poor and endure much tribulation. Yet, in the eyes of Jehovah and his Son, such ones may be rich. (Romans 8:

2. Contrast Jehovah's view with that of humans as regards (a) Jesus Christ, and (b) followers of Christ.



**When studying, endeavor to make
God's thoughts and feelings your own**

35-39; Revelation 2:9) Why the difference in viewpoint?

³ Jeremiah 11:20 replies: "Jehovah . . . is examining the kidneys and the heart." He sees what we are inside, even those aspects of our personality that are hidden from the eyes of others. In his examination, he gives primary emphasis to qualities and conditions that are vital to a good relationship with him, those that are most lastingly beneficial to us. Our knowing that is reassuring; it is also sobering. Since Jehovah pays attention to what we are inside, it is important for us to examine what we are inside if we are going to prove to be the sort of persons that

3. (a) Why is Jehovah's view of people often very different from that of humans? (b) Why is it vitally important for us to examine the sort of person we are inside?

he wants in his new world. His Word helps us to make such an examination.—Hebrews 4:12, 13.

How Precious God's Thoughts Are!

⁴ After having meditated on the breadth and depth of God's knowledge of his servants, as well as on God's extraordinary ability to provide whatever help they might need, the psalmist David wrote: "So, to me *how precious your thoughts are!*" (Psalm 139:17a) Those thoughts, revealed in his written Word, are far higher than anything from humans, no matter how brilliant their ideas may seem. (Isaiah 55:8, 9) God's thoughts help us to keep in focus the really important things in life and to be zealous in his service. (Philippians 1:9-11) They show us how to look at mat-

ters the way God does. They help us to be honest with ourselves, to face up to the sort of person we truly are at heart. Are you willing to do that?

⁵ Humans are inclined to put too much emphasis on externals, but the Scriptures counsel us: "More than all else that is to be guarded, safeguard your heart." (Proverbs 4:23) Both by precepts and by examples, the Bible helps us to do that. It tells us that Cain went through the motions of offering sacrifices to God while in his heart he seethed with resentment, then hatred, toward his brother Abel. And it urges us not to be like him. (Genesis 4:3-5; 1 John 3:11, 12) It records the

4. (a) What motivated the psalmist to declare that God's thoughts were precious to him? (b) Why should they be precious to us?

5. (a) What does God's Word urge us to guard "more than all else"? (b) How can the Bible record regarding Cain benefit us? (c) Though we are not under the Mosaic Law, how does it help us to understand what pleases Jehovah?

Mosaic Law requirement of obedience. But it also emphasizes that the foremost requirement of the Law was that those who worshiped Jehovah must love him with their whole heart, mind, soul, and strength; and it states that next in importance was the commandment that they love their neighbor as themselves.—Deuteronomy 5:32, 33; Mark 12:28-31.

⁶ At Proverbs 3:1, we are urged not merely to keep God's commandments but to be sure that the obedience is an expression of what is truly in our heart. Individually we need to ask ourselves, 'Is that true of my obedience to God's requirements?' If we realize that in some matters our motivation or thinking is deficient—and none of us can say that we are flawless—then we need to ask, 'What am I doing to improve the situation?'—Proverbs 20:9; 1 John 1:8.

⁷ When Jewish Pharisees made a pretense of honoring God while craftily promoting a practice motivated by self-interest, Jesus denounced them as hypocrites and showed that their worship was in vain. (Matthew 15:3-9) Jesus also warned that to please God, who sees the heart, it is not sufficient to lead an outwardly moral life while, with a view to passionate pleasure, we also persistently indulge in thoughts that are immoral. We may need to take drastic measures to discipline our mind and heart. (Proverbs 23:12; Matthew 5:27-29) Such discipline is also needed if as a result of our secular work, our goals in education, or our choice of entertainment, we are becoming imitators of the world, allowing it to mold us according to its standards. May we never forget that the disciple

6. In applying Proverbs 3:1, what questions should we ask ourselves?

7. (a) How might Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees at Matthew 15:3-9 help us in safeguarding our heart? (b) What situations may require us to take strong measures to discipline our mind and heart?

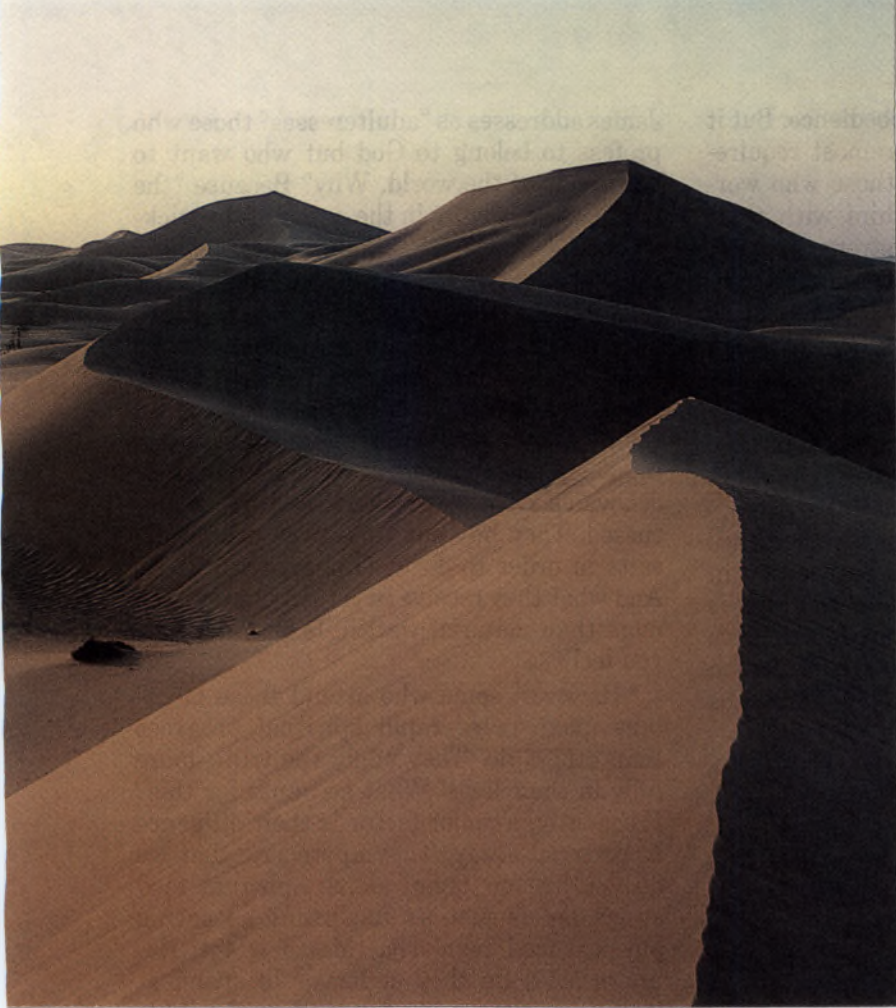
James addresses as "adulteresses" those who profess to belong to God but who want to be friends of the world. Why? Because "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one."—James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17; 5:19.

⁸ In order to benefit fully from God's thoughts on these and other matters, we need to set aside time to read them or hear them. More than that, we need to study them, talk about them, and meditate on them. Many readers of *The Watchtower* regularly attend congregation meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, where the Bible is discussed. They buy out time from other pursuits in order to do it. (Ephesians 5:15-17) And what they receive in return is worth far more than material wealth. Is that not how you feel?

⁹ However, some who attend these meetings make more rapid spiritual progress than others do. They apply the truth more fully in their lives. What accounts for this? Frequently, a major factor is their diligence in personal study. They appreciate that we do not live on bread alone; spiritual food every day is just as important as eating physical food regularly. (Matthew 4:4; Hebrews 5:14) So they endeavor to spend at least some time every day reading the Bible or publications that explain it. They prepare for the congregation meetings, studying lessons in advance and looking up the scriptures. They do more than read the material; they meditate on it. Their pattern of study includes thinking seriously about the effect that what they are learning should have on their own lives. As their spirituality grows, they come to feel as did the psalmist who wrote: "How I do love your law! . . . Your reminders are wonderful."—Psalm 1:1-3; 119:97, 129.

8. To benefit fully from God's precious thoughts, what do we need to do?

9. Why do some who attend Christian meetings progress more rapidly than others?



**Jehovah's thoughts are
"more than even the
grains of sand"**

doing that, when we woke up in the morning, there would still be much more to think about. Thus, David wrote: "*I have awaked, and yet I am still with you.*" (Psalm 139:17, 18) For all eternity there will be more for us to learn about Jehovah and his ways. We will never come to the point where we know it all.
—Romans 11:33.

Hating What Jehovah Hates

¹¹ Our study of God's Word is not merely with a view to filling our head with facts. As we let it penetrate our heart, we also begin to share God's

¹⁰ Whether we have studied God's Word for a year, 5 years, or 50 years, it never becomes simply repetitious—not if God's thoughts are precious to us. No matter how much any of us have learned from the Scriptures, there is more that we do not know. "*O God, how much does the grand sum of them amount to!*" said David. "*Were I to try to count them, they are more than even the grains of sand.*" God's thoughts are beyond our ability to count. If we were to enumerate God's thoughts all day long and fell asleep

10. (a) For how long a time is it profitable to continue to study God's Word? (b) How do the Scriptures show this?

feelings. How important that is! If we do not develop such feelings, what may result? Though we may be able to repeat what the Bible says, we may, nevertheless, view as desirable what is forbidden, or we may feel that what is required is a burden. It is true that even if we hate what is wrong, we may have a struggle because of human imperfection. (Romans 7:15) But if we do not put forth earnest effort to bring what we are inside into line with what is right, can we expect to please Jehovah, "the examiner of hearts"?—Proverbs 17:3.

11. Why is it important not only to know God's thoughts but to share his feelings?

¹² Godly hate is a powerful protection against wrongdoing, even as godly love makes the doing of what is right a pleasure. (1 John 5:3) Repeatedly the Scriptures urge us to cultivate both love and hate. "O you lovers of Jehovah, hate what is bad." (Psalm 97:10) "Abhor what is wicked, cling to what is good." (Romans 12:9) Are we doing that?

¹³ Jehovah has clearly stated his purpose to root the wicked ones out of the earth and to usher in a new earth in which righteousness is to dwell. (Psalm 37:10, 11; 2 Peter 3:13) Lovers of righteousness long for that time to come. They are in full agreement with the psalmist David, who prayed: "*O that you, O God, would slay the wicked one! Then even the bloodguilty men will certainly depart from me, who say things about you according to their idea; they have taken up your name in a worthless way—your adversaries.*" (Psalm 139:19, 20) David did not personally long to slay such wicked ones. He prayed that retribution would come at Jehovah's hand. (Deuteronomy 32:35; Hebrews 10:30) These were not people who had in some way merely offended David personally. They had misrepresented God, taking up his name in a worthless way. (Exodus 20:7) Dishonestly, they professed to serve him, but they were using his name to promote their own schemes. David had no love for those who chose to be God's adversaries.

¹⁴ There are billions of people who do not know Jehovah. Many of them in ignorance practice things that God's Word shows to be wicked. If they persist in this course, they will be among those who perish during the great tribulation. Yet, Jehovah takes no plea-

sure in the death of the wicked, nor should we. (Ezekiel 33:11) As long as time permits, we endeavor to help such people to learn and apply Jehovah's ways. But what if some people show intense hatred for Jehovah?

¹⁵ Regarding them, the psalmist said: "*Do I not hate those who are intensely hating you, O Jehovah, and do I not feel a loathing for those revolting against you? With a complete hatred I do hate them. They have become to me real enemies.*" (Psalm 139:21, 22) It was because they intensely hated Jehovah that David looked on them with abhorrence. Apostates are included among those who show their hatred of Jehovah by revolting against him. Apostasy is, in reality, a rebellion against Jehovah. Some apostates profess to know and serve God, but they reject teachings or requirements set out in his Word. Others claim to believe the Bible, but they reject Jehovah's organization and actively try to hinder its work. When they deliberately choose such badness after knowing what is right, when the bad becomes so ingrained that it is an inseparable part of their makeup, then a Christian must hate (in the Biblical sense of the word) those who have inseparably attached themselves to the badness. True Christians share Jehovah's feelings toward such apostates; they are not curious about apostate ideas. On the contrary, they "feel a loathing" toward those who have made themselves God's enemies, but they leave it to Jehovah to execute vengeance.—Job 13:16; Romans 12:19; 2 John 9, 10.

When God Searches Through Us

¹⁶ David did not want to be like the wicked in any way. Many people try to conceal what

15. (a) Who were the ones that the psalmist viewed as "real enemies"? (b) How can we today show that we "hate" those revolting against Jehovah?

16. (a) Why did David want Jehovah to search through him? (b) What is there about our own heart that we should ask God to help us discern?

12. How important are godly love and godly hate?

13. (a) With what prayer of David regarding the destruction of the wicked are we in full agreement? (b) As shown in David's prayer, who were the wicked that he prayed for God to destroy?

14. Are there wicked people who can be helped? If so, how?

they are inside, but David humbly prayed: *"Search through me, O God, and know my heart. Examine me, and know my disquieting thoughts, and see whether there is in me any painful way, and lead me in the way of time indefinite."* (Psalm 139:23, 24) When referring to his heart, David did not mean the physical organ. In harmony with the figurative meaning of that expression, he referred to what he was inside, the inner man. We too should want God to search our heart and discern whether we have any improper desires, affections, emotions, purposes, thoughts, or motives. (Psalm 26:2) Jehovah invites us: "My son, do give your heart to me, and may those eyes of yours take pleasure in my own ways."—Proverbs 23:26.

¹⁷ If there are hidden within us any painful, disquieting thoughts because of wrong desires or wrong motives or because of some

17. (a) Instead of covering over disquieting thoughts, what should we do? (b) Should it surprise us to find wrong inclinations in our heart, and what should we do about them?

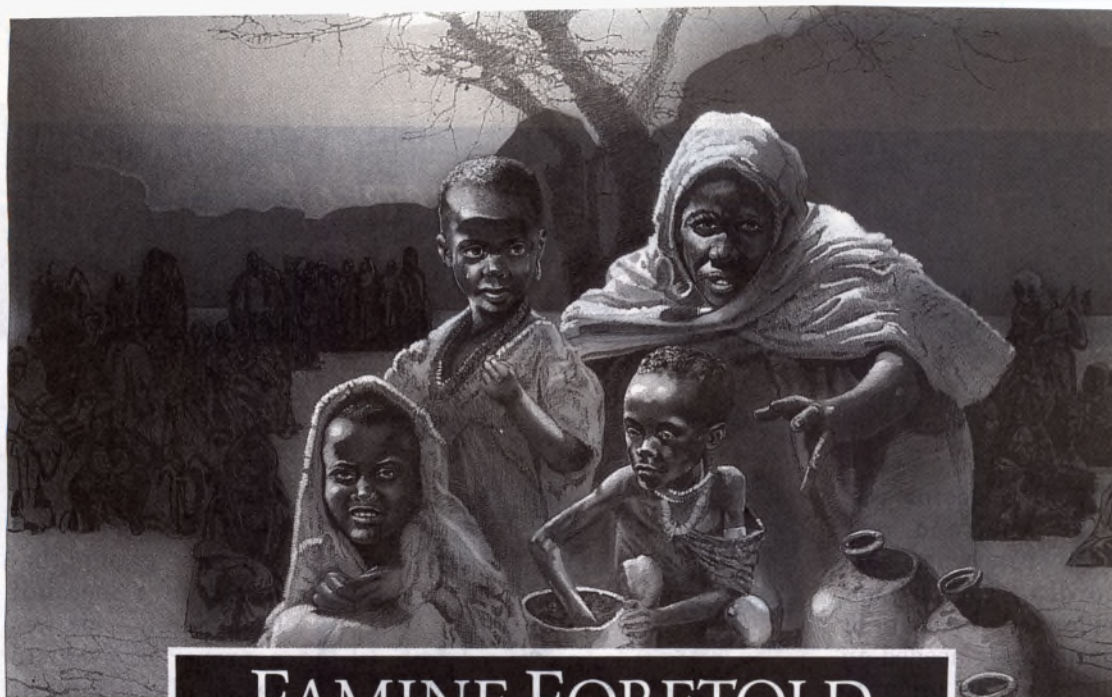
What Is Your Comment?

- ☐ Why is Jehovah's view of his servants often different from that of humans?
- ☐ What can help us to discern what God sees when he examines our heart?
- ☐ What sort of study assists us to learn facts and to safeguard our heart?
- ☐ Why is it important not only to know what God says but to share his feelings?
- ☐ Why should we personally pray: "Search through me, O God, and know my heart"?

wrong conduct on our part, then surely we want Jehovah to help us clear the matter up. Instead of the wording "any painful way," Moffatt's translation uses the expression "a wrong course"; *The New English Bible* says: "Any path that grieves thee [that is, God]." We ourselves may not clearly understand our disquieting thoughts and so do not know how to express our problem to God, but he understands our case. (Romans 8:26, 27) It should not surprise us if there are bad inclinations in our heart; still, we should not excuse them. (Genesis 8:21) We should seek God's help to root them out. If we truly love Jehovah and his ways, we can approach him for such help with the confidence that "God is greater than our hearts and knows all things."—1 John 3:19-21.

¹⁸ In harmony with the psalmist's prayer that Jehovah would lead him in the way of time indefinite, Jehovah does, indeed, lead his humble, obedient servants. He leads them not only in the path that can mean long life because they are not prematurely cut off for evil-doing but in the way that leads to life eternal. He impresses upon us our need of the sin-atonement value of Jesus' sacrifice. Through his Word and his organization, he provides us vital instruction so that we are able to do his will. He emphasizes to us the importance of responding to his help so that we become inwardly the sort of person that we profess to be outwardly. (Psalm 86:11) And he encourages us with the prospect of perfect health in a righteous new world along with an eternity of life to use in serving him, the only true God. If we continue to respond loyally to his direction, he will, in effect, say to us, as he did to his Son: "I have approved you."—Luke 3:22; John 6:27; James 1:12.

18. (a) How does Jehovah lead us in the way of time indefinite? (b) If we continue to follow Jehovah's direction, what warm commendation can we expect to receive?



FAMINE FORETOLD

IN RECENT years the specter of famine has become painfully familiar in world news reports. From Ethiopia and elsewhere have come unforgettable images of suffering. In 1992 world attention was riveted on Somalia's tragic victims of famine, caused by drought and war. The *International Herald Tribune* reported in September 1992: "No one knows how many Somalis have died, but the Red Cross puts the figure at above 100,000. Hundreds, if not thousands, die every day."

The figures do little to convey the misery and pain of the individuals involved. Yvette Pierpaoli, European representative of Refugees International, wrote in the UN magazine *Refugees*: "In New York or Geneva, the refugee question appears quite straightforward; figures are cited and the string of zeros attached to them is difficult to grasp. But thousands of miles away, on the frontiers of countries no longer under control, emotion seizes you by the throat and the magnitude of the suffering makes you want to scream."

While the Red Cross says that its efforts to aid Somalia represent its biggest ever humanitarian relief operation, many observers complain that the general picture is one of too little aid, too late. Pierpaoli laments: "Donor countries are reticent, tired of supporting an Africa which is disintegrating. . . . They blame Africans for their poor management, the greed of their leaders, the seemingly endless conflicts."

The Bible foretold a time when there would be food shortages "in one place after another." These food shortages, together with many other developments, such as wars, earthquakes, and pestilences, indicate that the Kingdom of God is near. (Luke 21: 11, 31) The Bible further shows that under this benevolent Kingdom of God, there will be an abundance of food for all humankind. "There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth," wrote the psalmist. "On the top of the mountains there will be an overflow." —Psalm 72:16.

Have a right view of GOD'S MERCY

THE doctor was kind and very concerned. According to his best judgment, his patient desperately needed an operation in order to save her life. When she hesitated and raised the matter of blood transfusions, he was surprised. When she explained that for religious reasons she could not consent to an operation that involved a blood transfusion, he was thunderstruck. He racked his brains for a way to help her. Finally, he thought he had found one. He said: "You know, if you don't accept a blood transfusion, you'll die. You don't want that, do you?"

"Of course not," said his patient.

"But, seemingly, if you accept one, you will go against your religious beliefs, which are also important to you. Well, here is my suggestion. Why not accept a blood transfusion and thus save your life. Then confess to God that you have sinned, and repent. In that way, you'll be restored in your religion also."

The well-meaning doctor thought he had



found the perfect answer. He was aware that his patient believed in a merciful God. Surely, this was a proper occasion to take advantage of God's mercy! But was his suggestion as reasonable as it sounded?

Do We Ever Reason Like This?

Sometimes we may find ourselves reasoning the way the doctor did. Perhaps we are frightened by an unexpected outburst of opposition at school or at work. Or we may find ourselves in an embarrassing situation where we are under pressure to do something that offends our conscience. Taken by surprise, we may be inclined to take the easy way out and do what we know is wrong, intending to ask for forgiveness later.

Or individuals may be tempted by their own wrong inclinations. For example, a young man may find himself in a situation where he is strongly tempted to commit immorality. Rather than fight the wrong desire, he may give in, intending to put matters right with God later on. Some have even

gone so far as to commit a serious sin despite knowing that they would probably be disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation. They have apparently reasoned, 'I'll let a little time go by. Then I will repent and be reinstated.'

All these situations have two things in common. First, individuals give in rather than struggle to do what is right. Second, they feel that after having done wrong, God will automatically forgive if they just ask.

What Is the Right View?

Does this show a proper appreciation for God's mercy? Well, think about that mercy for a moment. Jesus said: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) The apostle John explained how that mercy operates when he said: "I am writing you these things that you may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one." (1 John 2:1) Hence, if because of imperfection we fall into sin, we can come to God in prayer and beg for forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice.

Does this mean, though, that it does not matter whether we sin or not, as long as we ask for forgiveness afterward? Hardly. Remember the first words of that quotation: "I am writing you these things *that you may not commit a sin.*" John's further words in that verse show Jehovah's loving arrangement for dealing with our imperfection. Nevertheless, we have to try as hard as we can to avoid sinning. Otherwise we show a lamentable disrespect for God's love, rather like the ones referred to by Jude who used the undeserved kindness of God as an excuse for loose conduct.—Jude 4.

Viewing God's mercy as a kind of safety net that will always catch us no matter what

we do trivializes God's mercy and makes it seem that sin is not all that bad. This is far from the truth. The apostle Paul told Titus: "The undeserved kindness of God which brings salvation to all sorts of men has been manifested, instructing us to repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires and to live with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion amid this present system of things."—Titus 2:11, 12.

Paul showed his appreciation for God's mercy in the way he struggled against his own imperfection. He said: "I pummel my body and lead it as a slave, that, after I have preached to others, I myself should not become disapproved somehow." (1 Corinthians 9:27) Paul did not just casually take it for granted that he was bound to sin from time to time. Should we?

Jesus' Viewpoint

On one occasion, Jesus showed how he viewed the idea of compromising on what is right and taking an easier course in order to avoid suffering. When he started to tell his disciples of his coming sacrificial death, Peter tried to dissuade him, saying: "Be kind to yourself, Lord; you will not have this destiny at all." Jesus' reaction? "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you think, not God's thoughts, but those of men."—Matthew 16:22, 23.

Jesus' strong reproof of Peter showed dramatically that Jesus refused to take an easy course that involved going against God's will. The record shows that he unwaveringly followed the right path, undergoing constant harassment at Satan's hands. At the end he was mocked, severely beaten, and he suffered an agonizing death. Nevertheless, he did not compromise, and because of this he was able to offer his life as a ransom for us. Surely he did not endure all of this so that we can be 'kind to ourselves' when difficulties or temptations arise!



Absolute confidence in the resurrection helped the three Hebrews keep integrity

Of Jesus it is said: "You loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness." (Hebrews 1:9) Taking the easy way out usually involves lawlessness. Hence, if we truly hate this—as Jesus did—we will always refuse to compromise. In the book of Proverbs, Jehovah says: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me." (Proverbs 27:11) Jesus' balanced but uncompromising righteousness brought great rejoicing to Jehovah's heart. We can give Jehovah similar pleasure if we follow Jesus' course of integrity. —1 Peter 2:23.

Trained by Endurance

The apostle Peter wrote: "In this fact you are greatly rejoicing, though for a little while at present, if it must be, you have been grieved by various trials, in order that the tested quality of your faith, of much greater value than gold that perishes despite its being proved by fire, may be found a cause for praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6, 7) Because we are imperfect and living in the midst of Satan's world, we will constantly be faced with tests and temptations. As Peter shows, these can serve a good purpose. They test our faith, show whether it is weak or strong.

They also serve to train us. Jesus "learned

obedience from the things he suffered." (Hebrews 5:8) We too can learn obedience, as well as reliance on Jehovah, if we endure under test. And this learning process will continue until complete, as Peter said: "God . . . will himself finish your training, he will make you firm, he will make you strong." —1 Peter 5:10.

If, though, we compromise under test, we show ourselves to be cowardly or weak, lacking a strong love of Jehovah and of righteousness or lacking in self-control. Any such weakness gravely endangers our relationship with God. Indeed, Paul's warning may come true in our case: "If we practice sin willfully after having received the accurate knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins left." (Hebrews 10:26) How much better not to sin in the first place than to give in to weakness and run the risk of losing all prospect of life!

Unconditional Integrity

In the days of the prophet Daniel, three Hebrews were threatened with a fiery death if they would not worship an idol. Their reply? "If it is to be, our God whom we are serving is able to rescue us. Out of the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king, he will rescue us. But if not, let it become known to you, O king, that your gods are not the ones we are serving, and the image of gold that you have set up we will not worship."—Daniel 3:17, 18.

They took that stand because they wanted to do what was right. If it led to their death, so be it. Their confidence was in the resurrection. If, however, God delivered them, so much the better. But their firm stand was unconditional. So it should always be with God's servants.

In our day some who have refused to compromise have been imprisoned, tortured, even killed. Others have made material sacrifices, preferring to stay poor rather than

to get rich at the expense of sacrificing right principles. What happened with the Christian woman mentioned at the beginning of this article? She appreciated the kindly if misguided motive of the doctor, but she did not compromise her faith. Instead, her respect for Jehovah's law led her to refuse the operation. Happily, she recovered anyway and continued actively serving Jehovah. However, when she took her stand, she did not know what the outcome would be, but she was prepared to leave the whole matter in Jehovah's hands.

What helped her to remain so firm under pressure? She did not try to stand on her own, and neither should any servant of God. Remember, "God is for us a refuge and strength, a help that is readily to be found during distresses." (Psalm 46:1) How much better to turn to God for help while under trial than to sin and then have to turn to him for mercy!

Yes, let us never treat lightly God's great mercy. Rather, let us develop a genuine desire to do what is right, even in the face of difficulties. This will deepen our relationship with Jehovah, give us the training that we need for everlasting life, and demonstrate a proper respect for God's mercy. Such wise conduct will bring joy to the heart of our heavenly Father.

In Our Next Issue

A World Without Thieves

Love (*Agape*)

—What It Is Not and What It Is

The Trinity

—Is It Taught in the Bible?



PRINCIPLE OR POPULARITY

Which is your guide?

SIXTH-GRADER Norihito was taking part in a sports event. Suddenly, he was faced with a decision. All the students were required to participate in a patriotic ceremony. Should he join with his fellow students in this seemingly routine exercise?

Norihito had learned from the Bible that it is wrong to join in any act of worship to a god other than Jehovah. (Exodus 20:4, 5; Matthew 4:10) He also knew that Christians should remain neutral in all worldly political affairs. (Daniel 3:1-30; John 17:16) So even though his fellow students urged him to join in, he courageously but respectfully stood his ground. What would you have done in a similar situation?

The Desire to Belong

The Scriptures indicate that humans were created by God to be sociable, to get along with one another, and to enjoy doing things together. It is natural to want to be with

one's peers, to be accepted, to belong. Such feelings make life more pleasant and contribute to peace and harmony in our dealings with others.—Genesis 2:18; Psalm 133:1; 1 Peter 3:8.

The innate desire to belong is reflected in the strong emphasis on conformity seen in some cultures even today. Japanese children, for example, are trained from their earliest years to be aware of and to conform to the dictates of the majority. Their heritage teaches them that one of their greatest duties is to harmonize with the community. "The Japanese are much more likely than Westerners to operate in groups," said Edwin Reischauer, former U.S. ambassador to Japan and a keen observer of Japanese manners. He added: "Where Westerners may at least put on a show of independence and individuality, most Japanese will be quite content to conform in dress, conduct, style of life, and even thought to the norms of their group." The desire to conform, how-

ever, is by no means limited to the Japanese. It is universal.

Pressures to Conform

Even though it is desirable to do one's best to get along with others, there is danger in blindly conforming to what is popular. Why? It is because what is popular with the crowd often runs contrary to what is acceptable to God. "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one," the Bible tells us. (1 John 5:19) Satan cunningly uses every means at his disposal—materialism, low morals, racial prejudice, religious bigotry, nationalism, and so forth—to influence the masses and to turn them away from God. To conform to such practices would, in effect, put one in opposition to Jehovah God and his purposes. That is why Christians are counseled: "Quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."—Romans 12:2.

Living in this system of things, Christians are under constant pressure to conform to what is popular. Youths are particularly vulnerable in this regard. The desire to look and act like their schoolmates is extremely strong. It takes real courage for them to explain to their peers why they do not participate in certain activities. Failure to speak up, however, could mean spiritual disaster for them.—Proverbs 24:1, 19, 20.

Adults also face such pressures at their place of work. They may be expected to take part in certain social activities after working hours or on certain holidays. Refusing to comply may make them appear aloof and uncooperative, creating a difficult atmosphere in the workplace. Some may feel compelled to put in long hours of overtime simply because others are doing so and it is expected of them. Yielding in such matters

would be spiritually damaging to them as well as prevent them from fulfilling their other obligations.—1 Corinthians 15:33; 1 Timothy 6:6-8.

Pressures to conform are present even apart from school or the workplace. A Christian mother related that on one occasion she withheld discipline from her child, even though it was badly needed, simply because she felt that the other housewives present would not approve.—Proverbs 29:15, 17.

The Crowd Can Be Wrong

The Bible gives us much straightforward counsel when it comes to following the crowd. For example, the nation of Israel was told: "You must not follow after the crowd for evil ends; and you must not testify over a controversy so as to turn aside with the crowd in order to pervert justice." (Exodus 23:2; compare Romans 6:16.) This counsel was not always followed. Once, shortly after leaving Egypt, when Moses was absent, certain individuals influenced Aaron and the people to make a golden calf and to worship it in "a festival to Jehovah." The people ate and drank and enjoyed themselves in song and dance while sacrificing to the golden calf. For this licentious, idolatrous act, about 3,000 ringleaders were executed. But many of the others were also plagued by Jehovah for their thoughtlessly following the crowd.—Exodus 32:1-35.

Another instance of following the crowd to evil ends took place in the first century in connection with the death of Jesus Christ. Persuaded by the jealous religious leaders, many of the people joined in calling for Jesus' execution. (Mark 15:11) When Peter pointed out their grave error at Pentecost following Jesus' resurrection and ascension, many were "stabbed to the heart" and realized what they had done in following the crowd.—Acts 2:36, 37.

Bible Principles Better

As these accounts clearly illustrate, blindly following what is popular can lead to serious consequences. How much better it is to follow the Bible and let its principles be a guide in our lives! "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts," says Jehovah. (Isaiah 55:9) In matters of morals and human relations—indeed, in all of life's decisions—it has been demonstrated time and again that following Jehovah's ways is far better than following what is popular. It is the key to a happier and healthier way of life.

Take, for example, the experience of Kazuya. Although he had studied the Bible for some time, he continued to follow the popular course—striving to get rich and get ahead. His efforts to please his superiors and to be well thought of by his fellow workers often led to his going out on drinking sprees till the early hours of the morning. He became demanding, intolerant, and irritable. His extreme life-style soon led to a stroke, which left him partially paralyzed. As he lay recovering in a hospital bed, he had time to reflect on what he had learned from the Bible and the way he was living his life. He decided that it was time to start applying what he had learned. He resigned from his managerial position and changed his associations. He also made earnest efforts to put on the Christian personality and adjust his view of material possessions. As a result, his values changed, and his health improved. Finally, he dedicated his life to Jehovah and was baptized.

To succeed in following an unpopular course, one must know the principles involved and be fully convinced that they are right. What Masaru went through shows this to be the case. When he was in the sixth

grade, primary school, he was recommended by his classmates to be a candidate for president of the student council. With some embarrassment he recalls that because of not fully understanding the Bible principles involved, he was unable to explain to his classmates why he could not run for political office. His fear of man had kept him from revealing that he was a Christian. All he could do was hang his head and repeat in tears, "I can't do it."

This painful experience caused him to investigate why a Christian does not get involved in political activities. (Compare John 6:15.) Later, when he was in junior high school, a similar situation came up. This time, however, he was prepared to explain with conviction his stand to his teacher. The teacher accepted his explanation, as did several of his classmates who asked him about his Bible-based beliefs.

When All Will Do What Is Right

In the coming new world under Christ's rule, the popular thing to do will be the right thing to do. Until then, we will have to be on guard against the urge to conform to what is popular. We can draw encouragement from Paul's admonition: "Because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."—Hebrews 12:1.

When issues and challenges come your way, what will you do? Will you succumb to fear of men and give in to doing what is popular? Or will you turn to God's Word, the Bible, and follow its principles? Taking the latter course will not only benefit you now but also give you the prospect of being among those who "through faith and patience inherit the promises."—Hebrews 6:12.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Would it be fitting for a Christian to go into business with an unbeliever, since the Bible tells us: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers"?

We find that counsel at 2 Corinthians 6:14-16: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what sharing does light have with darkness? Further, what harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what portion does a faithful person have with an unbeliever? And what agreement does God's temple have with idols?"

There is no reason to believe that the apostle Paul offered this counsel with the intent of establishing specific prohibitions, such as against a Christian's being in business with an unbeliever. Yet, his counsel certainly bears on that, as well as on other avenues of life.

Paul wrote that counsel to his Christian brothers in ancient Corinth. Dwelling in a city that was particularly corrupt, they daily had to contend with moral and spiritual dangers. Unless they were careful, exposure to unwholesome influences could gradually weaken their resolve to be a distinct people, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession."—1 Peter 2:9.

Before writing what appears at 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, Paul had dealt with a serious problem among his Corinthian brothers. They had allowed a case of gross immorality to exist in their midst, so Paul directed them to expel, or disfellowship, the unrepentant sinner. (1 Corinthians 5:1) That man's wrongdoing showed that bad association or unguarded immersion in the world's moral climate could affect Christians.

The Corinthian Christians were to avoid association with the expelled man, but did that mean that they needed to separate themselves entirely from unbelievers? Were they to avoid virtually

all contact or dealings with non-Christians, becoming a sort of monastic sect, like the Jews who withdrew to Qumran near the Dead Sea? Let Paul answer: "In my letter I wrote you to quit mixing in company with fornicators, not meaning entirely with the fornicators of this world . . . Otherwise, you would actually have to get out of the world."—1 Corinthians 5:9, 10.

The implication of those words is plain. Paul realized that Christians were still on this planet, living among and having almost daily contact with unbelievers whose morals were low and whose standards were different. Since that was basically unavoidable, Christians should be alert to the dangers of such contacts.

Now let us again consider Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. He pointed out that anointed Christians are qualified as God's ministers, ambassadors substituting for Christ. He told them to guard against any cause for stumbling that might bring their ministry into a bad light. (2 Corinthians 4:1-6:3) Paul directly urged his Corinthian brothers, who were like his spiritual children, to widen out in their affections. (2 Corinthians 6:13) After that he urged: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers." He used a series of rhetorical contrasts to underscore that point.

The context shows that Paul was not focusing on some specific area of life, such as business or employment, and setting out a formal rule to be enforced in that regard. Rather, he was providing broad, sound, helpful counsel to brothers he dearly loved.

Would this counsel apply, for example, in the case of a Christian who was interested in marriage? Certainly. In his first letter, the apostle counseled Corinthians who wanted to marry to do so "only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39) He emphasized the wisdom of those words by what he later wrote, as stated at 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. If a Christian was to contemplate

marriage to someone who was not a servant of Jehovah and not a follower of Christ, he or she would be considering becoming linked with an unbeliever. (Compare Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:10.) Clearly, the fundamental incompatibility would invite problems, including spiritual ones. For example, the unbeliever might presently or in the future pursue the worship of a false god. Paul reasoned: "What harmony is there between Christ and Belial?"

What, though, about another avenue of life—going into business with an unbeliever? In some cases a Christian might feel that earning a living and caring for his family requires entering into a business relationship with someone who is not a fellow Christian. (1 Timothy 5:8) Consider what are merely examples:

A Christian might want to begin a business of selling a type of merchandise, but the only way would be to accept a partnership with a man who has access to needed products or funds. Another Christian wants to do farming (or raise a type of livestock); yet there is no land available, so he would have to do it jointly with someone willing to lease him the land for a share in any profit. Perhaps another Christian is not able to enter into the plumbing business because Caesar grants only a few licenses, and they are already taken; the only way would be for him to join an unbelieving relative who is licensed.—Mark 12:17.

These are just illustrations. We are not trying to exhaust the possibilities, nor are we making any statement of approval or disapproval. But with these examples in mind, can you not see why the counsel at 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 should not be ignored?

A Christian who went into a business with an unbeliever, whether a relative or not, might well encounter unexpected problems and temptations. Perhaps the partner concludes that the way to make a reasonable profit is to under-report earnings or employ workers off the books, even if that violated government rules. He might be happy to pay deliverymen under the table for

goods not listed on the official invoice. Would a Christian have any part in that or similar dishonesty? And what would the Christian do when it came time for both of them to sign tax papers or other legal documents about how they do business?—Exodus 23:1; Romans 13:1, 7.

Or the unbelieving business associate might want to stock items related to pagan holidays, send holiday cards in the company's name, and decorate the business for religious holidays. Paul asked: "What agreement does God's temple have with idols? For we are a temple of a living God." How appropriate is the comment: "'Therefore get out from among them, and separate yourselves,'" says Jehovah, "and quit touching the unclean thing"; "'and I will take you in'"! (2 Corinthians 6:16, 17) In applying that wise counsel, many Christians have chosen types of secular work that would expose them to as few potential problems as possible.—Hebrews 13:5, 6, 18.

The congregation is not charged with keeping watch over or investigating all that Christians do in their secular work, whether as employees or as owners of businesses. Of course, if it became known that a Christian is party to wrongdoing, such as promoting false worship or some form of lying or stealing, the congregation would have to take steps to uphold Jehovah's standards.

The key point is, however, that Paul's inspired counsel, "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers," can help Christians avoid problems and any needed judicial action. Wise Christians will take that counsel to heart and not choose to enter situations where they will be under added pressure to compromise Bible principles. If someone feels that he must go into business with an unbeliever, others need not be quick to judge or criticize him, realizing that he will have to bear the responsibility for his choice. Basically, Paul was not setting out a formal, enforceable rule against going into business with an unbeliever. Still, his counsel should not be ignored. God inspired that counsel and had it recorded in the Bible for our benefit. We are wise to heed it.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

"Happy Is the Man That Has Found Wisdom"



THIS proverb has proved true in Korea, where there are now over 71,000 happy Jehovah's Witnesses. (Proverbs 3:13) And imagine, 42 percent of these ministers are in the full-time service! The following experiences will show that happiness is the lot of those who search for true wisdom.

A woman in Pusan had attended one of Christendom's churches for 16 years. She had observed so many unscriptural practices that she began to think that there could be no God. On the other hand, she could not deny God's existence, so she sincerely prayed to God that she might find the true church if there was such a thing. At this point she suddenly thought of Jehovah's Witnesses, and she remembered that her church had despised them and warned churchgoers against them because the Witnesses did not believe in a Trinity, hellfire, and other doctrines of Christendom. Maybe they were the true church? With the help of a neighbor, she found the location of the Kingdom Hall. The very next day, she attended a meeting.

She was amazed at the orderliness of the meeting. There was no fanatical shouting or emotional singing as was the case in her church. She was

introduced to a Witness who was willing to study the Bible with her, and the first study lasted several hours because of her many questions. At the second study, she announced that she would resign from her church and become a Witness. She told the sister that she would not need to study with her anymore, as she could just attend the meetings. However, she was shown the value of having a personal Bible study in addition to attending the meetings. She accepted the suggestion, applied herself to her studies, and in due time was baptized.

Now she is so happy that she has found the wisdom of the true God, Jehovah, and has the hope of living forever in God's new world.

Retired General Learns the Truth

The wife of an army general was baptized in 1962. Her husband opposed her at first, but later he stopped opposing her, and on and off for the next 28 years, various brothers studied with him, trying to interest him in the truth. He attended some meetings and conventions, but he was one of those who held back from taking the truth seriously. In 1990 he and his wife went to Japan, where they attended a district convention. On this occasion he listened intently to the talks—something he had not done before. He was shocked by the bold talks exposing false religion, but these certainly opened his eyes to the hypocrisy of Christendom. He was impressed by the orderliness and happiness of God's people in Japan, which was just the same as he had seen in Korea. Returning to Korea, he began a serious Bible study and finally was baptized.

So after his baptism what should he do? He resigned his position as president of a famous tourist hotel and joined his wife in the full-time pioneer ministry. He feels that being a regular pioneer is the best way to make up for the 28 years he lost while holding back.

He now realizes that the proverb "happy is the man that has found wisdom" also applies to him!

Have you ever started a forest fire?

OF COURSE NOT, you say. But wait! Perhaps you have. Listen to the words of the disciple James: "The tongue is a little member and yet makes great brags. Look! How little a fire it takes to set so great a woodland on fire!" —James 3:5.

The tongue is a vital organ of speech, but how it has been misused! People use the tongue to lie and slander. With it they harshly criticize others, destroy their reputations, and swindle them. Rabble-rousers use the tongue to foment revolution. Adolf Hitler used his to mobilize a nation for war—a 'forest fire' indeed!

Even those with good motives can cause little 'forest fires.' Have you ever said something and then immediately wished you could unsay it? If so, you understand what James meant when he said: "The tongue, not one of mankind can get it tamed." —James 3:8.

Nevertheless, we can *try* to use our tongue for good. Like the psalmist, we can resolutely say: "I will guard my ways to keep from sinning with my tongue." (Psalm 39:1) Rather than harshly criticize others, we can try to build them up. Rather than slander people, we can speak well of them. Rather than defraud and deceive, we can speak the truth and instruct. When motivated by a good heart, the tongue can speak wonderful words of healing. Jesus used his tongue in a marvelous way to teach mankind about salvation.

Truly, "death and life are in the power of the tongue." (Proverbs 18:21) Is your tongue death-dealing or life-giving? Does it start 'forest fires' or put them out? The psalmist prayed to God: "May my tongue sing forth your saying, for all your commandments are righteousness." (Psalm 119:172) If we cultivate the psalmist's attitude, we too will use our tongue for good.

U.S. Forest Service photo

